# Transcript

**Improving Wellbeing   
with Thinking Strategies**

Duration 1:06:17

KATE MORRIS: Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome to Bastow: Improving Wellbeing and Thinking Strategies. It's fantastic to join you. It's Kate Morris here. As I said, I'm joining you from Bastow in North Melbourne and delighted to have Ben Palmer with us from Genos International. Hi, Ben.   
  
DR BEN PALMER: G'day, Kate. It's great to be with you here today and with Claire and her team and Rily and her team as well, and thank you for joining us. I hope you enjoy our session. We are expecting 100 or more people to join us today, so hang in there while we wait a few more minutes to allow your colleagues to come in and join us. Thank you and enjoy the session.

KATE MORRIS: Great. Thanks, Ben, and as you come into the room, if you could drop your school, your names, who's in the room with you. This is all about teams working together today and building strategies that are going to assist you to enhance your wellbeing. We've got Claire McInerney here and her team from Plenty Parklands Primary School - great to see you, Claire - and also Rily and her team from Tarneit P-9 College. Fantastic to have you here. We've also got Jane Greig-Hancock with us, who's Principal in Residence, and Jane's from Coburg Primary School - fantastic to have you with us, Jane - and also Maria Oddo leading the way as the Manager of the Principal Program team at Bastow. So just welcome, everyone. Drop your school name, your name, the people you've got with you. We're really all on about team today and thinking about how you can improve your wellbeing and thinking strategies.

DR BEN PALMER: Yes. Keep your eye on the chat box. You'll see we've got schools from all over the great State of Victoria joining us today. Thank you to everyone who's putting their school details in. It's great to have you. Great to see Kingswood Primary School. Great to see Featherbank - Featherbrook College, I should say; Bunbury College; Oakleigh South; Beechwood, you can see - Beechworth, I should say. You can see them coming in. I’ll do a shoutout out to St Helena Secondary College, where I did my secondary education, and Yallambie Primary. If there's anyone from those schools, past or present, a big shoutout to you both.

KATE MORRIS: Great. Thanks, Ben, and delighted to launch today's session. Fantastic to have our schools and their teams in the room. As I said, our focus is around improving wellbeing and thinking strategies and we're delighted to have David Howes join us. Thanks, David, for being with us. David is Deputy Secretary of Schools and Regional Services. And I'll hand over to you, David. Thank you.   
  
DAVID HOWES: Great. Thanks, Kate. Ben, you can hear me?   
  
DR BEN PALMER: Yes. I'm just going to mute a couple of our colleagues in the background so that the line becomes nice and quiet while you talk. Thank you, David.   
  
DAVID HOWES: Terrific and good afternoon, everyone. Can I begin by acknowledging that right across the State, wherever we're joining from, we meet on the lands of traditional owners - for me in East Melbourne the people of the Kulin Nation, and I pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging and acknowledge Aboriginal colleagues who are part of the conversation this afternoon. Thank you, Ben, to you and Genos. Thank you to Bastow, Kate, for stepping in and initiating this session. I think it's a session that every staff member in the State, education support staff, teachers and principals, should undertake if possible. I think the focus on our own wellbeing is critically important.

I was just reflecting in a conversation with Mary Jean Gallagher, who will be familiar to many people, who's from Ontario in Canada and has been doing a lot of work over the last couple of years of supporting us in working through our agenda for lifting student outcomes from their experience in Canada, but was reflecting with her just yesterday because they're still in lockdown, now more extended than we had, and I was saying as the jurisdiction that is coming out of - the first to come out really internationally from an extended period of lockdown, that what we know now that we didn't know in December I think was that the kind of lag effect of the experience/trauma of last year I think is going to be at least 12 months, and that fits with what we know from people like Dr Rob Gordon, who's been doing a lot of work, he's a trauma psychologist, of indicating that natural - the experience of natural disasters, and he would put COVID in that category, is that the lag effect is much longer than we think and more real, and we're seeing that play out in our schools. I think the dynamic is pretty clear that there are students - student behaviour and disruptive behaviour is up because of this lag. Our teacher resilience and our resilience is down, and so we're reacting to things that normally we'd just brush off or laugh off, and with students that creates another dynamic of further disruptive behaviour, we react, and so it's not a great cycle. And a key to that is self-management, and that's what this session is exactly about.

So I'm not suggesting this is a session about how to have a discipline program for schools, but I am saying the environment in which we're in means the imperative for this, and it would have been an important session to do last year in February. It's now really, really important. And I love the focus on thinking strategies as a way to enhance wellbeing. I think, from what I know of the work Ben's done previously, this will help us explore things that we'll be able to put in place tonight when we get home and that will be very valuable. So again, Ben, the timing is very important. This would be valuable at any time, but it's particularly pertinent for us here in Victoria at the moment.

Lastly, can I really commend and thank people for taking the time out to participate in this. I think that is a critical step in acknowledging that we can't work well with others, we can't live well with others, if our own wellbeing is not in good shape. So to have the self-discipline really and the self-management to take the time out to engage in this I think is really commendable and I'm very appreciative of people doing that at what is obviously an exceptionally busy time. So, Ben, thank you and we'll hand over to you and really look forward to the session.

DR BEN PALMER: Thank you, David, and it's a pleasure and a privilege to be here with all these great schools from across the great State of Victoria. So without any further ado, let's get into it. One thing I'd just like to call out right at the outset is one of the things people love about these webinars is not only learning from the content but learning from each other. So I'm going to really encourage you tonight to make contributions into the chat box, and when you do, make sure that you select "All Panellists and Attendees" so that everybody in our webinar can see the great contributions that you'll make to the questions and to the content and to the discussion that we have today. So I'm going to ask all my panellists if they could unmute themselves so that they're ready to talk as we get going, and here we go.

So there are three sources of learning that we're going to draw on in our session tonight. Firstly, we're going to obviously learn from the content, but we're also going to learn from the discussion. We've got Claire and her team and Rily and her team here to help contextualise things and bring them to life for us and, of course, we've got each other and we've got the contributions that you're going to make in the chat box. Claire, any tips on getting the most out of the session from you tonight?

CLAIRE McINERNEY: I think for me the most important thing in coming to anything like this and something particularly with our own wellbeing is to be honest with yourself. When I look at some of my thinking strategies, I have to go: okay, is that really what you do or is it what you would like to think you did? So I think if we can come and be really open about recognising some of the things we might actually need to work on ourselves, that will actually help us and we'll get more out of tonight.

DR BEN PALMER: Beautiful. Thank you. Be honest with ourselves. Wellbeing starts with us, absolutely. Thank you for that. Rily, over to you. Are there any key takeaways? I know you've had a chance to kind of overview the session. Anything you think we should be paying attention to or focused on as we go through the session today?   
  
RILY DORGAN: Yeah, Ben, I definitely think the self-mapping exercise helps you understand a bit about your personality perspectives.

DR BEN PALMER: Excellent. Okay. Well, this webinar tonight is one of a series of webinars. You may be aware of them. But as they finish, we'll be putting the recordings up. So we've already done the Science of Wellbeing, and you can go to the website and look at that recording if you like, if you missed it. Today, obviously, we're going to look at Improving Wellbeing with Thinking Strategies and the recording of this session will be made available soon on the website as well. We really obviously want to encourage you to run a version of this session, either as is or some version thereof, and I'd really encourage you to go back and watch the recordings because if there's a bit you missed or “How did Ben do that?” or “What did Claire or Jane, or whoever, say in these particular moments?”, you can go back and revisit the recording. We've also got two more coming up - on 20 May, Improving Wellbeing with Physical and Environmental Strategies, so if you can make it along to that, please do, and then we'll be finishing with the single biggest important element of wellbeing, Social Strategies. If you look into the research, this is one area that really contributes to our wellbeing, so join us for the rest of them if you can.

Tonight's session is obviously what we call a train the trainer. It's been designed to be led by you. So please, if you haven't, download the facilitation guide that's available, download the participant workbook, and if you can get together again either tonight, if you can spend 10 minutes at the end, or if you need to come together again as a little bit of a team, come together and just spend a little bit of time thinking about what you want to do with the materials. Indeed, you can deliver it as is. If this sort of stuff is quite new to you and you're, you know, sort of grumbling with, “Oh, could we really do that or not?”, this particular webinar that we're going to start in a moment is very scripted up. If you've looked at the facilitation guide, you'll see it says, you know, "Turn to page number 3”, “Say this", so really it should be something you'd be able to implement as is.

If you're quite familiar with this material and you want to add/edit to it, if you think it's too big in its entirety, for example, and you just want to run the stuff around boundaries, for example, please feel free to chop it up, to run certain sections of it as you see fit. If you're really experienced with this kind of material and want to take it up a level, then by all means feel free to take it up a level as well. We've also got Jane here to help us as we go through. And, Jane, I'd like to bring you in here. Any advice that you could give our participants in terms of what they could do with the materials?

JANE GREIG-HANCOCK: I think if they talk to their teams and just work out what's the best way and which group they're going to target, Ben. They might want to target their ES staff or their students or just a section, just a group of staff that might like to volunteer to do it and then work out what they need to do.

DR BEN PALMER: Excellent. So maybe a bit of a starting place thinking about an audience that you could run this for. Thank you. Indeed, in the facilitator guide, on page 31 - if you have it with you, you might want to get that out. Just have it to the side. It's a good place to jot down notes. This is what I'd like to encourage you to spend a little bit of time around at the end of the session, who might you be able to do this with, what will you include, add or edit, how will you actually do it and when might you run it. There's nothing like a good plan. It should fit on a page, but it will really just perhaps get the impetus behind it. As we heard from David Howes, this is a session that a lot of people could really benefit from and I really want to encourage you to not only participate tonight but to think about running some version of this back in your school.

So without any further ado, if you want to follow along now, this is where the formal session starts, and if you have the participant workbook, you can follow along with me. Indeed, I invite participants to turn to page number 3, where I introduce the session with them. Thinking strategies by their very nature involve things like reading and learning new things, planning and definitional work, and engaging in things like perspective taking and sense-making activities. These things don't just help us think clearer and feel better. They can also contribute to our physical, social and environmental wellbeing. And if you think about wellbeing, it's best defined as an interrelated and diverse set of areas of wellbeing, as we've got up on screen here.

So in this session we're going to deep-dive on three thinking strategies that really align to this, and the thing about wellbeing, if you like, is it's all like the fingerprints on our hands. We all have it but it's all unique to us. What works for one person in terms of an improvement in wellbeing doesn't always work for the other. So, as we go through these three different strategies tonight, I'd really encourage you to think about which of these strategies might work well for you personally and also just to stick with us if one of the strategies isn't resonating, remembering that while it might not resonate for you, it could really resonate for others. And, as Claire reminded us, wellbeing starts with us. So be thinking about yourself as we go through.

We're going to start by looking at boundaries, how do we create boundaries. If you look at people who have high levels of wellbeing, well-regulated boundaries are a real feature of it. Then we're going to look at perspective taking and sense-making activities and ask ourselves the question: how do we get up on the balcony and view things from different perspectives? How do we bring people together with different viewpoints around an issue, if you like, and create a common and shared understanding of what's happened, why it's happened and what should be done about it? And then we're going to finish off the session with the exercise that Rily was talking about, where we look at our own persona and use that, if you like, because a way of thinking about the sorts of things that trigger pleasant and unpleasant emotions in us and the way we react to that so that we can be more emotionally agile, and what I mean by that is how do we make better responses, if you like, to things that trigger our anger, our frustration, our annoyance, if you like - how do we turn reactions into responses?

So the objective: to really explore how we can use, if you like, these thinking strategies to improve our wellbeing. Claire, I’d love to bring you in here just for a comment on the content that we're going to go through tonight.

CLAIRE McINERNEY: Well, one of the things that I looked at particularly when I was thinking about this was all of those things because I thought I need to do them all. I'm going to be very honest. One of them was creating boundaries and I think that's something that we all struggle with - I do - and I found that particularly around the work and life balance because whatever role you've got in your school, if other people are seeing you coping with things well, that helps them, whether you're the principal or the wellbeing person or a classroom teacher or whatever you are within the school. And I think that that's - while I need to look after my own wellbeing, I need to model that for others, but I also have huge expectations of myself and what I need to do to manage my workload. So the creating boundaries one I thought, “Oh, I've got to get better at that. I really have to get much better at that.”   
  
DR BEN PALMER: Thanks for sharing. So we hear that individualised nature, and someone who's already been through at a high level this session and identified something that's going to work for them. So if you don't have the materials, don't worry. We can get them to you after the session. A pad and a pen is going to be the best thing to do at this stage. And let's start with our creating boundaries.

So can I invite everyone to turn to page number 4 in the participant workbook. Boundaries are an important part of our mental health and wellbeing and, by definition, they are simply a defined limit or space that we create between ourselves and something, something we do or someone. Most often we set up boundaries to protect ourselves from things that don't make us feel pleasant or have some sort of negative impact on ourselves. Boundaries can range from being loose to tight, with healthy boundaries often falling somewhere in between - thinking about my kids and the devices that they have at home, by way of example.

So let's think firstly about boundaries around things. What do these look and feel like? You can see them on page number 4. You might create a limit around how much time you spend watching TV or Netflix. You might create a limit around how much time you spend on your phone or other devices. You might create spending limits and shopping limits. You might create limits around news or social media. If you have a current boundary around things like this list that we've created here just to trigger those thoughts, let us know in the chat box. We'd love to hear from you. We're going to bring Rily and her team in now to get an example of current boundaries they might have in this boundary around things area. Thanks, Rily.

RILY DORGAN: I was just saying then - I was looking at that list that was created in the booklet, and spending limits is definitely one of mine. I watch money all the time. I’m constantly on the banking apps on my phone as well, checking how much my husband is even spending. (Laughter).

DR BEN PALMER: I like it. I like it. And I see Rachel's given us a great one into the chat box there. She turns the phone off at 6pm or whenever they get home. That's one of the ones that I've been doing to be more present and connected with the kids. So this is exactly what you should be doing with your audience. Share with them the examples up on screen. You can get this slide and tailor it a little bit and then ask your audience to think about something they might already be doing as a way of starting to draw out participant-led learning from your participants that you have in front of you and ask them for a few examples. Now, I'm only going to ask Rily for one example from her team, and you've just heard it, just as an example of the sort of dialogue you want to start creating when you're facilitating this on your feet.

Let's go to our next one now: physical boundaries. Physical boundaries might include things like a limit around how much you eat or drink. I've used Easy Diet, the app, to get my calories down to 8,000. I found it fantastic. You might do physical boundaries around when you go to bed. You might want to stop and define for yourself what's the optimum level of sleep that you need and how often are you getting it, by way of example. You might put a physical boundary around the number of social engagements you've had or how long you work for. If find yourself working back and too long too many nights of the week, you might set a simple boundary of saying, “Actually, I'm only going to do that four out of five nights of the week, then three out of five nights”, and so on. So these are just again some examples around this kind of stuff. If you have any current boundaries around things like these listed up on screen, put them into the chat box, just like Corey has. Thank you for that, Corey. We're going to bring Claire's team in now and ask Claire for an example of something that they're doing in this space. Thank you.   
  
CLAIRE McINERNEY: Sure. Well, I thought of one - and one is exercise. I like to put a boundary around that and not do it(!) So I think that's really important! And I'm going to keep that happening. But Jo has actually got one that's more helpful than that.

DR BEN PALMER: Very good. Hi, Jo.

JO: Hi, Ben. What I've told myself is that I actually won't open up my iPad and look at emails after 8 o'clock at night. If I have emails prior to that, then I won't respond unless it's actually required and I'll respond only then and then I'll ensure that I do something else prior to going to bed. So I get all of that out of my head and then I can move on to a more relaxed mode in order to be able to sleep.

DR BEN PALMER: Fantastic. And we see some similar things like that coming into the chat box. Sharon says she puts the school phone away for the weekend. Absolutely. I love that. Okay. So, again, if you're facilitating this, same method. Put the examples up. Ask your participants to think about it. You could give them a minute to jot down some thoughts in the workbook and then draw them in and ask them for their responses. The power of that, of course, is the power of the crowd. Within any group, unknown knowns exist; that is, there's knowledge in the group and it's just by asking for this sort of reflective question that that knowledge will start to come out and people will start to identify with things that they're not doing that they could start doing. Like if they're not putting their phone off after 6pm or if they're looking at it right up until when they go to bed, hearing somebody else and the benefits that are coming from doing that sort of thing might just be the right sort of inspiration to get them doing it too.

Our next and final bucket of boundaries, if you like, are relationship boundaries, things like not connecting with certain people on Facebook - I certainly have a couple of old school friends that I've had to put into the block category, if you like - defining how much time you're able to give someone; when you do and don't make yourself available. You might decline certain social engagements because they're just the sort of engagements that you actually don't feel comfortable with or that aren't working with you, or you might define things you are and aren't going to be responsible for in a relationship. And I'd like to bring in Jane here and ask Jane if she has a current relationship boundary in place like those listed above that she wouldn't mind sharing with us. Thanks, Jane.

JANE GREIG-HANCOCK: Thanks, Ben. I have tried in my work life to have boundaries and set times when people don't come into my office so I can just get - you know, just prioritise or quarantine some time where I can get stuff done. It has worked from time to time, but I've really got to make sure that I just, you know, let everyone know that that's my quarantine time and do that better.

DR BEN PALMER: Excellent. Good. Thank you for sharing. And again, you'd have your audience in front of you. You'd allow much more time than we're doing tonight. We're just giving those examples. I hope you found that useful.

So as it says on page number 5 in the workbook, there are four steps to creating healthy boundaries. Most of us create these boundaries in our heads, and that's good: you know, “I won't look at my phone for an hour before I go to bed”. But if you want to create really healthy boundaries, one of the things that the literature recommends is taking the time to do some of this proper definitional work for yourself around boundaries. So four simple steps: take time to write for yourself - it might be in your diary, it might be in your journal; define the limit or the space that you need; describe why it's important to you, what's the benefit of this boundary to yourself; identify how you'll put the boundary in place and regulate it; how will you keep yourself true to the boundary; and particularly for relationship boundaries, sometimes, to get them working really well, you need to set consequences, consequences either for yourself or consequences for the relationship. If you want to read more about that, I've put the URL of a great blog written by the positivepsychology.com website on the importance of all these steps, and I hope that you enjoy it.

So what we're going to do now is I'm going to give you three minutes to think about doing this definitional work for yourself. I'd love to encourage you to create a boundary that you put in place. Or if you already have a boundary, just take the time to define it that little bit more for yourself. If you turn over to page number 6 in the workbook, you'll see that we've got proper reflective questions there for you to create a boundary. Now, while you're doing this, I'm going to play a song. If you find music distracting, turn your volume down so that it's not distracting. If you like music and you find it stimulating, leave it on. When the song is finished, we're going to move on into the next activity. I’d really like to encourage you all to do this as participants so that you've got your example that you'll be able to share with your group when you're on your feet facilitating this session. Thanks, everyone.

(Music plays).

Okay. I hope that gave you some time to think about a boundary. Now, if you're facilitating this and you're looking at the facilitator guide, you'll see that I say in the facilitator guide to allow about 10 or 15 minutes for a group discussion here. We're not going to do that. We're going to turn to Rily and her team in a moment and we're going to hear from either Chris, Ben, David or Brianna. They're going to share with us one of the things that they created around those reflective questions. But, of course, if you're on your feet running this, you might ask people to volunteer and you might hear three or four different ones that people created. So I'd recommend allowing about 10 or 15 minutes, if you're on your feet running this session, for this exercise. Rily, who are we going to hear from? And over to you.

RILY DORGAN: Thank you. We've got David.

DAVID: No worries. So I thought I'd talk about a boundary that I've had put in place for a while now, which is when you talk to someone who's a bit frustrated about something and they're having a bit of a vent, I guess that people love to continue to loop over what the problem is, even when you're trying to talk to them about maybe a possible solution. So I usually explain that we're going around in circles and that venting is good, but at some point you need to put some of the actions in place, and then I basically say if not, which is a consequence, we're sort of going to go down a rabbit hole and it's just going to lead to more frustration. So trying to put a plan into action and getting something done might help, instead of just continuously looping over.

DR BEN PALMER: Thank you, David, that's an excellent one. A nice relationship boundary there, one that we can use on different situations if we like. So noticing when a conversation perhaps isn't being healthy and saying, “We should perhaps move on from it and come back to it”, or something like that. Thank you very much for sharing, and that's indeed exactly what you'd be doing, going around getting different thoughts and different boundaries from people. Thank you. That was excellent.

Okay. Let's go to our second area now: perspective taking and sense making. This next thinking strategy we're going to explore can work really well whenever there's an issue that's not making us feel very pleasant. One of the things that naturally happens to us is our thinking is narrowed and our beliefs, if you like, become a little bit narrowed. Unpleasant emotions by their nature are designed to focus our attention, and that can be really useful but at times it can mean that we don't see the forest from the trees. At times it can mean we can make choices that aren't really effective for us.

The other thing that's sort of related to this is sense making. If we've got an issue in front of us and multi people are involved in it, one of the things we can be pretty certain of is that different people are going to have different points of view about that issue. So learning the art of sense making, which is really holding a conversation, getting people's different views out on the table and looking to create from that, if you like, a shared understanding is what we mean by sense making.

So let's have a look at why this is important. As I was saying, when the stakes are high and emotions are present, our thinking is often narrowed and our perspective is limited. Have you ever sent an email to someone while you were a bit angry, only wanting to get it back just a few moments later? Or have you ever thought of all the great things you could have said in a verbal stoush about half an hour later? The reason we probably couldn't think of them at the time is that sort of narrowing and that limiting that can come from unpleasant emotions.

Let's have a look at some more specific examples. When people feel uncertain, they tend to make assumptions. When people feel stressed, they often become reactive. When people are worried, it's very common to become problem focused. When people feel fearful, often they blame. So it's just important to be aware of when there are unpleasant emotions, sometimes we need to jump up on that balcony and broaden our perspective.

The other thing that, of course, can happen is we can unintentionally fall into certain traps. There are a number of them, and one of them is confirmation bias, if you like; cherry-picking certain facts that are related to what we already believe to be true when there are really a bigger pool of facts that we could, in fact, draw from. So by engaging in perspective making and by engaging in sense making, we really can, if you like, broaden that perspective and really bring the best solutions to issues that are around us.

So, as you'll see in the facilitation guide, as you'll see on page number 8, all we've got around here really are some again reflective questions. When the stakes are high and emotions are present, what are the things we can do to broaden our perspective? I'm going to bring in Rily and her team and ask her to give us a response to that question. What questions can we ask others to encourage them to check their own assumptions and viewpoints? We're going to hear from Claire and her team on that one. And what are the things that can be done to bring different viewpoints together?

Now, if you were on your feet and you were running this, what I would recommend doing is putting up or on the table some definitions of what we mean by perspective taking and sense making, and they're in the facilitation guide; giving some time, maybe about five minutes, for people to do some individual work around this in their workbooks; and then asking them to come in and really just hosting a conversation around these three big reflective questions. So I'm going to speed that up for us all now. Imagine you've done that and we're sitting in a large group of people. I'm going to bring in Rily, Claire and Jane for their responses to these three questions. Rily, first over to you and your team. What things can be done to broaden our perspective?

RILY DORGAN: Thanks, Ben. I guess we spoke about seeing it from somebody else's shoes. So if somebody else has a different perspective to you, understanding how they've come to that conclusion and what information they have taken in. It might be different to us.

DR BEN PALMER: Excellent. Very good. So we can ask ourselves those questions and questions of others. Claire, what about this second one here? What questions can we ask others to encourage them to check their own viewpoints and assumptions? This can be a bit of a trickier one. Any thoughts on this from your team?

CLAIRE McINERNEY: Yes, thanks for that, Ben, because I did find it tricky and I think that really it's trying - as Rily said, it's trying to get people to say something like, "I can see you feel strongly about this", so sort of acknowledging where they are; What might others feel about that, what might others say about that?” and then sometimes it could even be - as Rily said, you could say, "Have you thought about it from" a particular person's perspective?” or “Let's try and brainstorm what they might be thinking". But then it's also helpful - I would probably use a tool in there where you were putting down the key word, so their reactions and their key words and then from this perspective these key words, and looking for perhaps some ties, some similarities and that might be able to help you to build perspective. But it's actually quite tricky because if you're heightened, some people are not going to take it well when you say, "Yeah, that's okay but think about somebody else's point of view". So we have to be - we have to be more skilled. I really had to think about what I would do. and I'll think further on that.

DR BEN PALMER: Thank you for that great contribution. One of the things that I found worked well here is to signpost it, you know, and what I mean by that is to simply say to your group before you start even conversing, "It's very common when there's an issue like this that we have heightened emotions around for us to see certain things and not others, to have a certain perspective on things and not others, and the power of bringing a group together, of course, is to get those different perspectives out so that we can sense-make from it and land on a common understanding of what's going on." I think if you frame it up that way, it allows people, if you like, to be more comfortable with different viewpoints, but also to relax around their own. Thank you for that great contribution, Claire.

Number 3. Jane, I'd like to bring you in here: what things can be done to bring different viewpoints together and create that shared understanding that I'm talking about?

JANE GREIG-HANCOCK: Thanks, Ben. I've been thinking about this too and, you know, everyone has different values and beliefs, and I think you've got to go back and try to understand where their values and beliefs come from. So a bit like what Rily said. You want to put yourself in their shoes. But when you do have two conflicting opinions going on, I really like to use protocols and make sure that those protocols are in place so that you can come up with a shared understanding, and there's some great ones out there where everyone gets a turn to talk, you share your ideas and then you work through a process to come to that shared understanding.

DR BEN PALMER: Excellent. So again, signposting and processes, some questions that get people thinking. I think it only takes sometimes 10 or 15 minutes of planning just to really think about how you're going to structure the conversation, the sorts of things you could say to set it up. All those things, of course, can work really, really well. One of the ones that I'll add to the conversation is when you bring your group together before you start, just do six deep breaths. Take a minute of mindfulness just to try and relax the room or start with a bit of humour, start with something that feels appropriate for the situation just to help everyone sort of exhale some of that stress and tension that they might have and really get into a little bit more of a relaxed state. If you have time to come to our Physical and Environmental Wellbeing Strategies, there will be some great other tips in there too that you'll be able to post in.

But, again, back into train the trainer mode. So if you're on your feet and you're going to deliver this session, I recommend maybe coming up with a few examples to each of these, having them out on the table to stimulate the conversation, give people some time individually to work on it, and then bring it in for that large group discussion.

Alright, let's move to our last strategy now: emotional agility. How do we, if you like, improve our capacity to move from triggers and reactions to triggers and responses, if you like, the very essence of emotional intelligence? How do we catch ourselves in that moment and not put forward our worst self, if you like, but put forward our best self and make a really great response to things?

So page number 9, I'd like to just overview the four main steps that are involved in enhancing emotional agility. The first of them is recognising your patterns, okay, your triggers and reactions, recognising the sorts of reactions that you commonly have, if you like, and labelling them. You're going to see me bold up these words, ‘labelling’. What I mean by that is try and come up with a singular word that defines what your reaction is, like ‘defensiveness’ or ‘criticism’ or ‘attack’ - whatever your word is, but something that helps you think about and label, if you like, the pattern, the trigger and the reaction that you can sometimes have.

The next step, if you're following along in the workbook then, is to do that definitional work, to think about defining a response. If my reaction is defensiveness, what would a more perhaps best self response look like? Take a moment to define that self, define it for yourself and to label it, again bringing up a nice single word that represents what a response, rather than a reaction, sounds like. And then the third step is to put your labels up in places that remind you to engage with them. It might be in your compendium. It might be up on the back door of your office at work. It might be little sticky notes on your computer or somewhere in the classroom that helps you remember what your reaction can be and what your response can be so that you can put your best self forward, I should say - my last point there, number 4 - when that situation arises. So let's have a look at these in a little bit more detail.

First step: recognising our patterns, thinking about the sorts of things that can trigger emotions, and I've got the famous toilet paper incident that happened back in the beginning of lockdown, obviously a situation recognising those kind of times, those people, maybe it's some of the ones that David was thinking about before, those kind of people that can trigger a certain reaction from you. Jane, I'd love to hear from you. Can you think of any typical reactions or triggers that can occur in schools for staff?

JANE GREIG-HANCOCK: Oh, I can think of many, but one that I can think of off the top of my head is, you know, when a specialist doesn't turn up to school and you can't get a CRT and people are going to lose their specialist time and it usually creates - some people are generally okay with it, but you always get the one who cracks it.

DR BEN PALMER: Yeah, okay. So sometimes this is easy and sometimes it's a little bit more challenging. Some of us can readily recognise our patterns. Some of us find them a little bit more challenging to identify. So for our next part of our workshop, I'm going to take you through a little exercise - this is the one Rily was referring to at the start of our session - that can help us think a little bit more about ourselves and the kinds of things that we can react to. So if you want to follow along with me, you can in the workbook. There's two primary needs that really shape, if you like, a lot of the emotional reactions that we can have to things, and the first of those is the need for control. Some of us have a very high need for control, and when we don't feel like we're in control, we can be more reactive. Some of us have a very low need for control. We need things to be more methodical, calm and careful, and when that's not the environment, that's what can cause us to have those reactions.

The other primary need that underpins who we are, if you like, that we're going to look at tonight is the need for affiliation, which sort of simply is that need to really feel a part of the group, a sense of belonging, a sense of connection with people. Some of us are very people-focused and really like that sociability and have a high need, if you like, to feel involved and feel connected with others. Some of us are a little bit more task focused and aren't so high on that need for affiliation. So we're going to have a look at these two. By understanding where we sit on the need for control and the need for affiliation, it can help us more readily think about the sorts of things that we can react to and the sorts of responses that we might be able to make that are more considered, if you like.

So, without any further ado, we're going to do this little self-mapping exercise. I invite you to turn to page number 10 in the workbook. We're going to start by looking at the need for control, okay? So the need for control - if you have a so-called high need for control, you might describe yourself as being someone who's quite decisive. You might be seen as someone who's quite active, assertive, energetic, perhaps even a little bit bold. Conversely, if you have a low need for control, you might be someone who describes yourself more as deliberate rather than decisive. You might be more thoughtful, calm, methodical or careful. Of course, all of us can be either of these but we tend to lean just a little bit or sometimes more towards one or the other; that is, a higher or a lower need for control.

So the first thing I want you to think about is: do you think you're more up here or more down here on this need? Then I'm going to invite you to choose two numbers, no zeros and no fives - two numbers that represent where you think you sit on this axis, if you like, okay? So if you're like me and you have a high need for control, you might choose 8 and 2. If, on the other hand, you've got a high need for control but it's not quite that strong, you might choose, say, 6 and 4. Conversely, if you think you're low and more deliberate, more methodical and careful about how you go things, your numbers might be the reverse. But choose two numbers, circle them on your graph on page number 10 that represent where you think you sit on the need for control.

Okay. Hopefully everyone has done that. The second thing we're going to look at now is the need for affiliation, okay? Now, if you have a high need for affiliation, you might describe yourself as someone who's being heart-led, if you like, someone who enjoys being liked, someone who's quite people-focused; you might be quite accepting and receptive to others and their points of views and what they have to say. Conversely, if you're lower in the need for affiliation, you might come from the head rather than the heart, if you like. You might be more task-focused than people-focused or enjoy being more task-focused and getting things done. When you start meetings, for example, you might jump into the work rather than ask everyone how they're going. Rather than being accepting, you might be quite challenging of what's being said. Rather than receptive, you might be quite questioning and tend to prefer, say, logic and objectivity. So think again about where you sit on this need for affiliation. Do you think you're higher or do you think you're lower in the need for affiliation? Once you've got that, choose two numbers that represent where you think you sit. We have, of course - we all have both of these, but one of them tends to come out more often. One of them tends to be that bit more descriptive of us. My numbers are 6 and 4. What are your numbers? Take a moment for yourself to circle a couple of numbers on the need for affiliation.

Okay. So you should have four numbers on the page, representing something like what we've got up on screen here. The next thing to do is to join your numbers with straight lines at 90 degrees. So, in other words, we shouldn't have too many diamonds. All of us should have some sort of square or rectangle like mine up here on screen now. So just take a moment to draw yours out in the book. Now, the purpose of the rectangle or the square is to help you think about how descriptive of you each of these components are. So, as I was saying before, each of these four areas are descriptive of us. Some of the areas are more descriptive than others. So this one for me is, as you can see, the least. This one is the next biggest, this is the biggest and this is kind of halfway in between those two. So you can get a definite sense, if you like, of how I am more often than not, if you like, and that's what your rectangle or your square on the page should be speaking to you.

Now, once you've done this, let's use it to help us think about our triggers and our reactions, okay? Before we do, those four words kind of describe where you're at. So my bigger self or where I spend my most time is in the practical space. Yours might be technical, it might be trusting, it might be more relational focused, but they're just words that might help you think about, more often than not, how you show up.

Okay, so what we've got on page number 11 - I invite you to turn there and draw your square on the page, if you like, to help you think about this - but on screen here now we have textbook triggers - textbook triggers, if you like, of unpleasant emotions organised by the need for control and the need for affiliation. What I'd like to invite you to do is to use these textbook triggers of unpleasant emotions to help you identify something that can trigger unpleasant feelings for you, okay? Once you've done that, capture down perhaps a short description of the typical context in which this occurs for you. Take a moment for that. In a moment I'm going to bring Rily's team in and we're going to hear again from either Chris, Ben, David or Brianna. They're going to share with us one of the things they identified in this model as a trigger of unpleasant feelings for them. Thanks, Rily, whenever your team is ready, let us know who's going to share with us.

RILY DORGAN: Thanks, Ben. I'll share there. What jumped out at me was lack of involvement, for me the emotional trigger can be boredom.

DR BEN PALMER: Okay, yes. So one up here in this quadrant is a trigger, excellent. And that's exactly what this is meant to kind of do, which is help people start to think just that little bit more about the sorts of things that might trigger unpleasant emotions for them. So I can imagine, Rily, if you are not consulted in decision making, if you're not brought into some of the things that might affect your work, that could be the time when you get a little bit frustrated and annoyed at your school. Would that be fair to say?

RILY DORGAN: Yeah, that's why I'm here today being involved with you. (Laughter).

DR BEN PALMER: Excellent. Okay. The next step then is to think about when that trigger occurs, when you're a little bit stressed, when you're a little bit tired, when you're perhaps not paying attention so much to being your best self, what can the reaction look like? How does it come out? I'm going to bring Claire's team in here in a moment and get them to share with us a typical trigger and also the reaction that they can have if they're not kind of on their game, so to speak. And again, if you're facilitating this, you'd be inviting your participants to do this for themselves in a workbook, and you can see the space that's there to do that, and then you'd be inviting, just as I'm about to invite Claire to come and do - you'd be inviting your audience to share with you and the larger group some of the things that they're identifying for themselves within this model.

Now, if your group is quiet, a little facilitation technique: get people in pairs to share with each other first and then go around the room a little bit. There's different techniques like that that you can use to help people feel more comfortable talking about this sort of stuff, and I'd recommend knowing your group and knowing whether you want to do this as a pairs activity first or as a small group, so three and four, and then a larger group discussion. But we're going to ask Claire and her group to be crazy brave now and come in and share with us one of the reactions that they can identify within this model. Thanks, Claire.

CLAIRE McINERNEY: No problem. Well, because my team said, "You wanted to be honest", they said, "You do it." So I said honesty was very important, so I'm doing it. So I think probably when I looked at it, the trigger might be criticism, and for me I possibly become overanalytical. But I didn't want to overanalyse that reaction, so I'll just leave that with you.

DR BEN PALMER: Boom boom! So you can see the critical there and it can lead to being overanalytical. And just as Claire was kind of alluding to there, if you're unsure, of course, but you've got a team around you or you've got a partner at home or a friend who's close, of course you can ask them, "What are some of the little triggers and reactions you might see coming out for me?", and that's the sort of thing that can be fun to do with people who are close with you. So I hope you're following along. Let us know some of your triggers or some of your reactions in the chat box. If you've got a moment, type them in. Let us know some of the things that are going on for you as you look at this material. What are some of the triggers and what are some of the reactions perhaps that you're experiencing?

So we're doing this definitional work. We're thinking about our persona. We're thinking about things that trigger us and we're thinking about some of the reactions that we can have. Let us know some of those in the chat box. Let's go to the next thing now, which are turning, if you like, our reactions into responses, and I'd invite you to all turn over to page number 13 of the workbook. Now, you were able to download the workbook hopefully in Word. If you weren't, we'll get it to you in Word. and the good thing about that is, as you can see on page number 13 in the workbook, our formatting didn't quite work out. So when you get the workbook out for your participants, drag those tables across so that they go right across the page and there is actually a space to write in them. They should be a little bit more like what they look like up on screen here. So, yeah, you'll get this in Word and you'll be able to make those edits to it as you see fit. But what I encourage people to do when I'm facilitating this is I ask people: “Okay, now we're going to look at doing more definitional work, how can we turn our reactions into responses?” and I encourage people to rewrite, if you like, one of their triggers into the first box so that they've got an example there and then to write the default reaction, if you like, what's the reaction. So we heard Claire becomes overanalytical, and to come up with that single-word label. So for Claire it might be ‘analytical’, by way of example. This is my own example here. When I get criticised by my partner at home, one of the reactions that I can sometimes have to that is to be a bit defensive, to explain the context, to say, "If only you were here an hour ago, you'd see why I am doing the right thing." Sometimes I get into a bit of mansplaining and tell my partner how things really should be done. In fact, she said to me not long ago that I was a bit defensive and I said, "No, I'm not" and you can imagine how the conversation went from there.

What's the benefit of this, which is the next bit of definitional work. This is all classic stuff from the textbook. There are benefits, of course, to these reactions and we should acknowledge them. The benefit of my reaction, of course, is it keeps my ego in tact and it helps me get my way, but it comes with costs, and a consequence of it, of course, is if I do it too much and too often, it's detrimental to my relationship and it's detrimental to my growth. So, again, if you're on your feet with an audience, this is the kind of thing you should be doing, asking them to think about doing this definitional work for themselves. And, Rily, I'm going to bring your team in here. Were your team able to do one of these as a bit of pre work? Are we going to hear from anyone there on their reaction and their benefit and consequence of it?

RILY DORGAN: Yeah, we had a go at nutting out one around losing control of a situation. The default reaction can be becoming disorganised or unsure. The response might be to let somebody else feel empowered and to have that voice and to take that lead, and the benefit of that might be - or the direction might become off course, if that's where the benefit - we would lose our sense of direction.

DR BEN PALMER: Excellent. So what you heard in Rily's response then was the full table, and that's where you go at that last bit, getting people to then think about what a considered response looks like and what the benefit of it was. So in this example that's in the book, the response, if you like, that's different from the reaction is the opposite. For me it's opposite anyway. What's the opposite of defensiveness? It's openness. What's the benefit of it? It leads to personal growth and it keeps my relationship intact.

So what I recommend doing, if you're facilitating this with a group of people, is stopping here after you've given this example, check in, see whether everyone understands what to do and then give them a few moments to do the exercise, and, indeed, I'm going to give you a few minutes here. I'm going to play a song again. During the song, I'd love you to do this for yourself so that you've got your own example in the book that you can share when you run this with a group of people at your school. Now, again, if you find music distracting, turn it down. If you like the music and you find it stimulating, keep the sound up.

(Song ‘Better Days’ plays).

Okay, and that song, of course, was ‘Better Days’. So what about you? Were you able to come up with some labels that you might be able to do? In summary, if you want to enhance emotional agility, you've got to be able to recognise your triggers and reactions and label them. You've got to be able to move from these reactions to responses, and doing this kind of definitional work can really, really help. Did you manage to boil it down to a couple of things? Have you got your labels like I have: defensiveness and openness? Let us know in the chat box if you were able to. It would be great to hear from some of you who are with us tonight.

And then, of course, the third step is putting your labels in places that remind you to engage with them. My defensiveness mostly happens in the kitchen. So up on our fridge at home for a while we had those two big words: defensiveness and openness. It used to generate quite interesting conversation with friends that came over, particularly because then they'd go to the bathroom and see them on the back of the toilet door as well. They thought there were big problems. Not really but we needed to move on from my defensiveness. Okay, so put them in places that remind you to engage with them so that you can put your best self forward and be your best self when that reaction comes up.

So today, everyone, in summary, we have looked at how we can use our mind to improve our wellbeing and we've looked at three key strategies: creating some boundaries; we've explored perspective taking; and we've engaged in some emotional agility. We're going to hear from Jane, who's going to wrap up something that stood out to her from the session. Thanks, Jane.

JANE GREIG-HANCOCK: Well, I think for me tonight I'm going to think about setting some clearer boundaries around my work and life balance.

DR BEN PALMER: Excellent. Thank you. What's been particularly useful to you? If you're there with your team, put some things into the chat box. Let us know. Of course, the session wraps up with an action plan, as you can see on page number 14 in the workbook. And, again, if you're on your feet here, what you'd be doing is you'd be pausing, giving people some time to think about the fingerprints on their hands, what stood out for them, what's unique for you, if you like, what's been most personally relevant, what will you do to invest in your wellbeing. Let us know what stood out for you and your team. We're going to turn quickly to Claire and Rily and just get some closing comments from them and then I'm going to hand over to Kate Morris, who will wrap things up for us. Claire, over to Julie and Jo and yourself. Anything that stood out for you guys that feels personally relevant?

CLAIRE McINERNEY: I think that situation of the reaction and response, that was really important and we've just had an experience right now, which is why Julie disappeared, where someone had a reaction and we're now going to have to deal with that and how we move forward from that. But one of the things to do for us is I really think we need to practise, practise, practise because we can think about these things when you're not in the moment, but it's about being in the moment and knowing then and drawing on them when you're in the moment, and a clear way for me that I would use is to identify the benefits, so the benefits of a response as opposed to the potential disaster of a reaction.

DR BEN PALMER: Yes.

CLAIRE McINERNEY: So that Will help me move forward I think.

DR BEN PALMER: Thank you. And this sort of definitional work will help you catch yourself in the moment. Those benefits are really important. Sometimes the reaction only comes once a year, but it can be that once in the year at Woolworths that really brings us undone. Thank you, Claire, and to your team for being with us. Rily, over to your team. Anything that stood out that's personally relevant there?

RILY DORGAN: It would be just sort of forward thinking about how we can apply this within our PLT meetings, as we've got a number of PLT leaders in the room. We've already introduced a wellbeing component of a warm-up in our PLT meetings, so just taking parts of this and putting it into those meetings to ensure that we can share it with staff on an ongoing basis.

DR BEN PALMER: Awesome, thank you, and thank you to everyone who's come. Remember, designed to be led by you. Have a look through the facilitator guide and all the material. Take some time as a team - it might only take 10 minutes - if you can, to think about the who, what, how and when, and if you can join us for our other sessions that we've got coming up on Physical and Environmental Strategies and Social Strategies.

Kate Morris, back over to you to wrap things up and thanks, everyone, for having me and for being with us tonight.

KATE MORRIS: Super work, Ben, and am I coming through loud and clear?

DR BEN PALMER: Absolutely.

KATE MORRIS: Great. Fantastic work, everyone. Absolutely love those knowing looks around the room as you encourage people to reflect, Ben, particularly around creating boundaries and defining boundaries. I loved the slide on perspectives and the tips and tricks. You know, sometimes our colleagues know us better than ourselves, and our challenge is for ourselves to know each other as well as our colleagues and that we live our true and best self both at work and at home. So thanks for helping us be our best self, Ben.

One of the things I love about these workshops is we get so much from each other, but also working with an expert. So your engagement with Bastow, with Victorian educators, is absolutely valued. And thanks, Claire and your team, Jo and Julie, Plenty Parklands Primary School, and what a great school it is. Thanks very much. And thanks, Rily and your team, Tarneit P-9 College, absolutely doing brilliant work. So thank you, all. The voice from the field is absolutely critical. Contacts matter, people matter and you are leading the way. So thank you very much. Thanks, Jane and Maria, too.

DR BEN PALMER: Thank you very much. Yes, thank you to Maria in the chat box as well. Thank you to everyone who contributed in the chat box. Leave us a comment on your way out. Enjoy this last piece of music. Get up on your feet and have a little dance with us, if you feel like it. Thanks, everyone, and enjoy the rest of your week.

KATE MORRIS: Good on you, guys. Thank you.

(Music plays).