



Welcome Back from the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for Teachers

by GAIL M. CARROLL & KENDA RIGGS

W elcome back to all NLTA members. We have been available and in touch with many of you since the onset of the pandemic and understand that this new school year will also be an unprecedented experience for all. We hope that you each had a restful summer despite these unusual times. We wanted to let you know that we are here for you as always in EAP throughout the school year. We are offering continued supports to teachers through mental health assessment and referral to counsellors in your communities. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing public health emergency, counsellors are offering services in a variety of different ways: telephone, various virtual platforms, and/or in person (based on the changing public health guidelines, in-person services may or may not be available). This provides many possibilities for all teachers in Newfoundland and Labrador to access a variety of counselling services through different platforms.

Supports for counselling services through the EAP for Teachers work in partnership with benefits available through the NLTA Group Insurance Program. Through the EAP, teachers have access to a career maximum of \$2,000 of funding dispensed at \$40 per counselling hour. The Health plan of the NLTA Group Insurance Program provides coverage of \$1,600 per calendar year for counselling services. If you are referred to a counsellor through the EAP, the counsellor will bill EAP directly for \$40 per hour with the balance payable by you, for which members of the NLTA Group Insurance Health plan can then submit a claim to Johnson Inc. in accordance with the plan coverage (members who do not have health coverage under the NLTA Group Insurance Program may have alternate insurance coverage). Counselling fees in Newfoundland and Labrador typically vary from \$100 to \$200 per hour depending on the professional service provider. EAP referrals can be made to Registered Psychologists, Registered Clinical Social Workers and Certified Canadian Counsellors (CCPA). EAP Coordinators work with a list of approved counsellors for our program who have been carefully screened to provide optimal, quality and timely service to teachers.

We strongly encourage members to look after their own mental and physical health and well-being at all times, but especially throughout this pandemic. Please consider consulting with an EAP Coordinator about possible wellness supports for you personally or at the school level.

A recent television commercial seems to keep re-playing this theme: “We have learned a lot this year from COVID and our quarantine...” While this may feel like a continuous loop these days, EAP Coordinators know from our own experiences and our engagement with NLTA members that this is so true. The conversations we have had with teachers about their individual and collective well-being throughout the pandemic have had such a significant impact on us. We have seen so many creative ideas for promoting and supporting wellness from individual teachers, school staffs, and wellness committees who have drawn upon their unique experiences. We have heard from members who have found valuable support in online meditation experiences, Yoga, Tai Chi and other fitness/wellness classes. We have heard from teacher wellness groups that hosted virtual games, such as Murder Mystery evenings, and other social activities through platforms as fun and creative ways to maintain connections and help keep each other’s spirits up during challenging and isolating times.

With the return to in-school classes, we are offering a few helpful tips and tricks for taking care of yourself as you navigate the different realities of teaching and interacting with students and colleagues this school year. We are hoping they will provide a little guidance to maintaining a healthy work-life balance.

- Set good boundaries for yourself. Remember that you are only human and it is important with all that is going on to be able to feel that you are still in your own driver’s seat. Don’t be afraid to say no to extras people may ask you for at this time, whether it is at work or at home. Don’t over extend yourself. This is a new learning curve for everyone, so be kind to others but be very kind to yourself.
- Ask yourself, “What do I need today?” It is okay to

have your own needs and name them. You might just need a few extra minutes to gather your thoughts. Take time to breathe and be in the moment with your thoughts.

- What are you feeling? It's okay to name your feelings. Some days are good and others are not so good. When you are in the midst of change, some over which you have no control, you may have periods when you feel blue or sad. Know that this is okay and be gentle with yourself. Talk to your family, friends and colleagues about it and ask for help when and where you need it. Empower yourself, and you can reach out to EAP.

- Ask yourself, "What do I have control over?" and, "What don't I have control over?" Where you are able to make changes, exercise that ability in your decisions/choices. Learn to use your self-talk to accept what you don't have control over and what you might need to adjust on your part to move to this acceptance. Your energy is important. Make choices for you and your well-being wisely.

- Enjoy the little things each and every day. Be mindful of this and pay attention to anything that lifts your spirits, puts a smile on your face or makes you happy. Sometimes that could be a nice memory or experience, noticing a new flower that has bloomed in the garden, or simply the perfect cup of tea or coffee. Sometimes noticing just one little thing can get you through the day.

- Say thank you and be kind. Having and showing appreciation for and acknowledging the people and goodness in your life, big or small, is gratitude. More research is focusing on the brain and how the expression of gratitude is associated with improved health outcomes. Pay your gratitude forward. Altruism can make us feel good about ourselves by having a positive impact on others – something teachers do every day. It creates a feeling of connectedness, which can brighten your inner and outer self.

- Take a bit of time for yourself each and every day. Close your eyes and breathe/relax. Visit the COVID-19 Wellness and Mental Health Resources section on the NLTA website and choose a Guided Imagery session of 2-3 minutes for yourself. Do any little thing that gives you a breather and lifts your spirit (within reason that is).

We wish you a safe, happy and well work year!

Gail Carroll and Kenda Riggs are Coordinators with the Employee Assistance Program for Teachers. For confidential assistance contact Gail (ext. 242) or Kenda (ext. 265).

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Elect Derek Drover NLTA President

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