



# Newly Qualified Teachers' Project

## Time Management Tool

### CALIBRATING PRIORITIES

### BUILDING RESILIENCE

Time management is probably the single biggest challenge to the 21<sup>st</sup> century adult. It's the only resource we can't make more of. No matter how much we stretch, squash, squeeze and save our time, it never feels like enough.

The demands on a teachers' time are enough to make anyone feel exhausted. If you've done our "Wellness Thermometer" checklist, it means you're already concerned that your work is affecting your health and wellbeing. One of the key weapons in your armory against burnout is well adjusted and realistic time management.

#### Perfect is the enemy of good

One of the things NQTs really struggle with is letting go of intentions of perfection. It can't be perfect. It won't be perfect. Ever. It is better to realise this sooner rather than later.

Start honing your internal radar as to what is *good enough* so that you allocate reasonable amounts of time to tasks (see the Assessment Checklist for an example of this). You only have 24 hours in a day. It's no way near enough to do all the things you want to do. Try work smart, not hard, and you will be a better teacher for it.

#### The Big Stones

Contrary to popular belief, teachers are humans, not sorcerers. And this means we have human needs.



There are four fundamental needs you cannot ignore. If you try, your body will start to force you to pay attention whether you want to or not.

#### **Rest | Sustenance | Exercise | Connection**

Imagine your day is like a glass jar. The demands on your day are stones of different sizes. You have Big Stones, little stones, pebbles, sand. The four **Big Stones** are **rest, food, exercise and connecting with loved ones**. These are fundamental human needs, no matter who you are, no matter how superhuman you would like to be.

What happens if you put grit into your jar first? Fill it up with pebbles and sand? The Big Stones won't fit. And yet, this is what we do with our teaching work... we pour in the marking, the planning, the Perfect Classroom Display... and we ignore the Big Stones at our peril. Ask an experienced teacher how they survive and remain committed... they almost always answer that they put those big stones in first.



#### Filling up your jar

The next two pages have an exercise that's not just for teachers: it's for anyone who struggles to manage their time. It involves filling out two paper representations of your week. And then the hard part: making decisions.

#### HOW TO USE IT

Before you think about how your week looks, answer the following questions:

How much sleep is ideal for you to function at your best? \_\_\_\_\_ hours

What is the minimum sleep you require before you start struggling? \_\_\_\_\_ hours

What stresses you out?

What soothes you?

Then follow the extra instructions on the following pages.



Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
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01:00							
02:00							
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23:00							

### Step 1: Reality check

Fill out the week time chart on the left, **being absolutely honest about how you spend your time**. Leave nothing out: waiting for the bus, laundry, tossing and turning, making the kids' lunchboxes...

You can't make good decisions about your time if you don't know where it's going.

- Shade in the hours you are asleep
- Shade in (differently) the hours you are obliged to be at work
- Then include travel time between work
- What other obligations take your day? Children? Parents? Put these in.
- Also put in (honestly) your time working at home, whether planning or marking.

The idea is that *this* page should reflect what your average work week looks like.

Once you've filled in the week schedule, look at the chart you have completed and ask yourself:

- How much sleep am I really getting?
- How does this compare to what I know I need?
- Am I getting sufficient connection with loved ones?
- What can be changed? What can't be changed? (hint: there is more that **can** be changed than you might initially think)
- How much time am I working on weekends?
- Do I have one whole day a week off from work?
- Is there enough time allocated to eating properly and not takeaways in front of my computer?
- When am I seeing those who matter to me?
- Am I getting active at least three times a week?



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01:00							
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23:00							

## Step 2: How things could be...

Now fill in the chart to the left, putting in the big stones first. Use what you know about yourself: your needs and stressors.

- Shade in the hours you sleep. When do you wake? Work backwards from there to ensure you get enough.
- Shade in (differently) the hours you are obliged to be at work.
- Then include travel time between work
- Shade in one day on the weekend when you are not working. See this as untouchable. This day can include exercise, religious observance, hobbies, family, friends.
- Choose two more times to get some activity in. Walking, hiking, gymming, dance class, it doesn't matter.
- Think practically about when and how you will get food and eat it. Can you do a big cook for the week? Do you have a supportive household member who can do the shopping? Try to set aside time to eat healthily as much as you can.

Now your Big Stones are in. Rest, sustenance, exercise, connectedness.

You can see that there aren't huge numbers of hours to spend dreaming up the most exciting lessons, or spending a whole day marking. **This realisation must change how you frame your planning and assessment activities.**

Remember: perfect is the enemy of good. Your students will benefit more from regular *good* lessons taught by a well-rested, calm teacher throughout the year.

Try to stick to your time plan on this page for at least three weeks. Habits are hard to change, so be purposeful about it.

Idea: you can use this task with your students too to help them plan and manage their time.



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