

Teachit's wellbeing guides

Teachers' time and task management guide

teachit

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M Research by Education Support in their Teacher Wellbeing Index (2021) suggests that teachers have consistently lower wellbeing and higher rates of workplace stress, depression and anxiety than the general population, leading to increasing numbers of teachers sadly leaving the profession.

With this in mind, we've created a wellbeing collection of teachers' guides to support three key areas: self-care practices, time management and mindfulness. The writers of our wellbeing guides are experienced teachers who have worked long and hard to balance their professional and home lives.

They have also, with much trial and error, learned how to prioritise their wellbeing while doing a very challenging *and* rewarding job.

If you are trying to improve your time management, you might find that the strategies and approaches will work most effectively if they fit in with your life, responsibilities and plans. It can take a bit of experimentation to find the 'right' approaches for you, but we hope this practical guide offers you some tips, strategies and ideas to try as you set out on — or continue with — your wellbeing journey.

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Beating procrastination

Procrastination. We all know it and we all fear it, and we've probably all done it, at work and at home. If so, you might like to try an American strategy which is affectionately called 'Eat the frog'.

Eat the frog

Eat the frog is based on the principle that it's best to face a difficult or challenging task head-on. The challenging thing is considered to be the 'frog'.

When you complete your challenging task first thing in the morning, you have 'eaten' it. While it may not work perfectly with every challenge you face ('I want to redesign my bathroom today'), it does work well for daily admin and chores.

For example, if you know you want to get a run or workout into your daily routine and you're really not looking forward to it — or there's never time — you might want to try getting up an hour earlier than usual to get the workout done. Not only does this combat procrastination, but it can also lead to further productivity later in your day.

A professional example could be related to report writing. You know that all reports are due by the end of the week, so you start each working day by writing 5 reports in order to meet your deadline.

After using this productivity technique, you'll notice a world of difference in how you handle daunting or difficult tasks at home and at work. Jotting down your 'frogs' can help you focus, and there's nothing more rewarding than crossing these unpopular tasks off your calendar or to-do list!



In summary

What is Eat the frog?

A procrastination-beating technique which involves identifying the 'frog' (worst/most difficult task on your to-do list) and 'eating' it (doing the task first, before you do anything else).

When should I use it?

If you find yourself pushing important but unpalatable tasks down your to-do list on a regular basis.







Where should I use it?

Either at work or in your personal life.

Eat the frog template

How to eat the frog

1. Identify your frog. (Pick out your hardest thing to do, or the thing you really don't want to do. Just one per day.)
2. Do this first thing in the morning. Do not put it off.
3. Repeat every day — and end procrastination!

MONDAY'S FROG 		EATEN? Y/N
TUESDAY'S FROG 		EATEN? Y/N
WEDNESDAY'S FROG 		EATEN? Y/N
THURSDAY'S FROG 		EATEN? Y/N
FRIDAY'S FROG 		EATEN? Y/N
<p>Uneaten frogs? Why? Add some reflections, e.g. too ambitious etc.</p> <p>Then carry them over to next week's list.</p> 		

ABCDE method

The ABCDE Method, developed by Brian Tracy, a Canadian motivational public speaker, assigns different levels of importance to certain letters. It's essentially a more organised version of a normal to-do list.

'A' is the most important task.

'B' is for medium-priority tasks.

'C' stands for a task that has no consequences and is a 'nice to do' task.

'D' stands for delegate, so it's a task that can be passed off to someone else to be completed.

'E' is least important since it's the last in the series of letters.

In this context, E stands for elimination since it's a task that doesn't really matter. You can take any E tasks off your list right away. Using the ABCDE method gives you another way to look at your prioritisation and organisation.



In summary

What is the ABCDE method?

An effective approach to your to-do list!

When should I use it?

To structure and organise your to-do list — and push some items off it!

Where should I use it?

Either at work or in your personal life.

Personal kanban

The Personal kanban method is all about balancing priorities. It make tasks visual and can help by limiting work in progress. This avoids burnout. It can be used by anyone who is juggling a lot of tasks at once, so it's particularly useful for teachers.

Use a framework of columns such as: To do, In progress and Complete. You can even prioritise what needs to be done in order i.e. first, second, third (etc.) in the To do column.



In summary

What is a Personal kanban?

A system — adapted from technical project management — for managing team and individual tasks effectively.

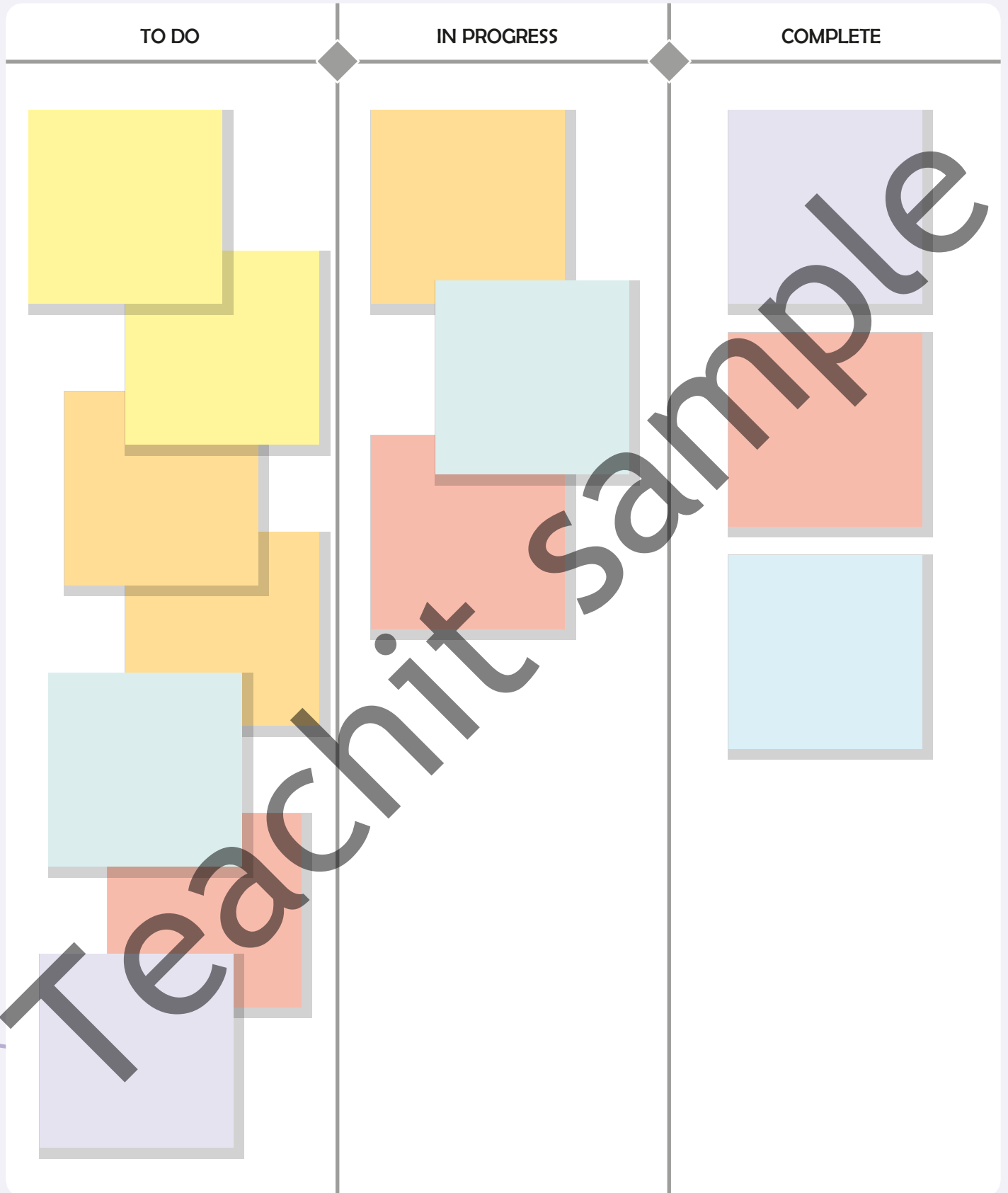
When should I use it?

When you need to juggle multiple tasks simultaneously and respond well to visual stimuli.

Where should I use it?

Either at work or in your personal life.

Personal kanban template



Circles of influence and control

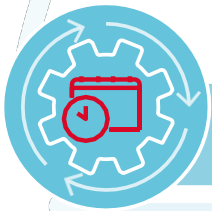
There will always be factors in your career (and life) that you can control and factors that you cannot control. By filling out the Circles of influence and control framework, you can get ahead of change, or handle it gracefully if and when it does happen to you.

Stephen Covey's theory encourages us to focus on what we can control and what we can influence, and to put the rest to one side.

An example of unwelcome change could be if you are asked to teach a new subject or key stage or at a different school site. Through careful reflection, you can manage feelings of anxiety, frustration and even sadness in order to work through them.

Use the Circles of influence and control template to detail — within the unwelcome change — all of the areas you can and can't influence and control. You can then create an action plan for tackling the items you *can* influence and control.

You will also have clarity around what is out of your control — so the next time you find yourself swept up in worry, you can try to focus your mind on a positive action plan and step back from issues you can't do anything about.



In summary

What is the Circles of influence and control technique?

A technique which involves proactively focusing your attention on things you can control and letting go of things you can't control.

When should I use it?

When experiencing an unwelcome change and find that your mind keeps returning to the same negative patterns of thoughts.

Where should I use it?

Either at work or in your personal life.

Nudge theory

Nudge theory is a popular behavioural sciences model that has to do with change and that can be applied in some form or another at work. It's based on the idea that you can nudge yourself — or other people — from negative to positive thoughts and actions.

Nudge theory proposes that choices should be based on how people actually think and decide (instinctively), rather than how leaders and authorities believe they think and decide (logically and rationally).

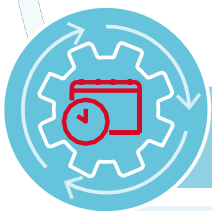
Traditional changes are often enforced by an authority figure or organisation. For example, an enforced technique could be telling your child to clean their room. However, a nudge technique could be turning tidying up into a game.

Famous uses of the nudge technique are:

1. Authorities at Amsterdam airport installed fly-shaped stickers in the men's urinals. Men now had something to aim for, and spillages were reduced by 80%.
2. Countries in which people have to opt in to donate organs typically have a donation rate of approximately 30%. Countries where people are automatically enrolled on an organ donation register — and have to opt out — have an opt-out rate of around 10–15%, providing a much bigger pool of organ donors (85%).

Think about the nudge rule in relation to your school life. It might be that a lot of change has been forced on you and on colleagues. If the change is unavoidable and not up for debate, is there any way you can nudge yourself or others into a more accepting frame of mind that will allow you to move on?

For example, if you find yourself being given a new subject to teach and feel really resentful and annoyed about it — and can't seem to get past that frame of mind — try using nudge theory to reframe the idea. You could write down all the aspects you could potentially enjoy about this new development. You could also think about how it might have a positive impact on your career.



In summary

What is Nudge theory?

A theory that uses of positive reinforcement or indirect suggestions as a way to influence individual and group behaviour.

When should I use it?

When trying to persuade others — or yourself — to move from resentment and resistance to acceptance.

Where should I use it?

Either at work or in your personal life.

Bridges transition model

This model is similar to the change curve in that it helps others process and work through change. It is often referenced by leaders in companies, and by department heads and SLT.

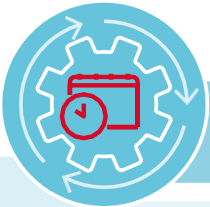
Created by William Bridges, an organisational consultant, the model proposes that you can help people transition more smoothly by guiding them through a change. It consists of endings, a neutral zone, and new beginnings. It's something any teacher can work through on their own, in any environment. The key is to not think of a change as a change but as a transition.

You can think about why an ending (or change occurred) and justify its occurrence. Use the neutral zone as a time for healing and acceptance by learning about a new role or process. Education and support are key here!

A new beginning can occur after understanding (through education) your new purpose in your new role or situation.

Use the framework to identify an ending that has happened to you, what you can do in the transition stage to empower yourself, and something you are looking forward to or have learned in the new beginning category.

In conclusion, change isn't always easy, and dealing with change isn't always easy when you're comfortable with your current routine. But, by using some of the tools mentioned above, you can support yourself as change occurs and — hopefully — process and adapt to the change more quickly than you would if you let the process happen to you.



In summary

What is the Bridges transition model?

A change tool that focuses on change as a transition from one state to another.

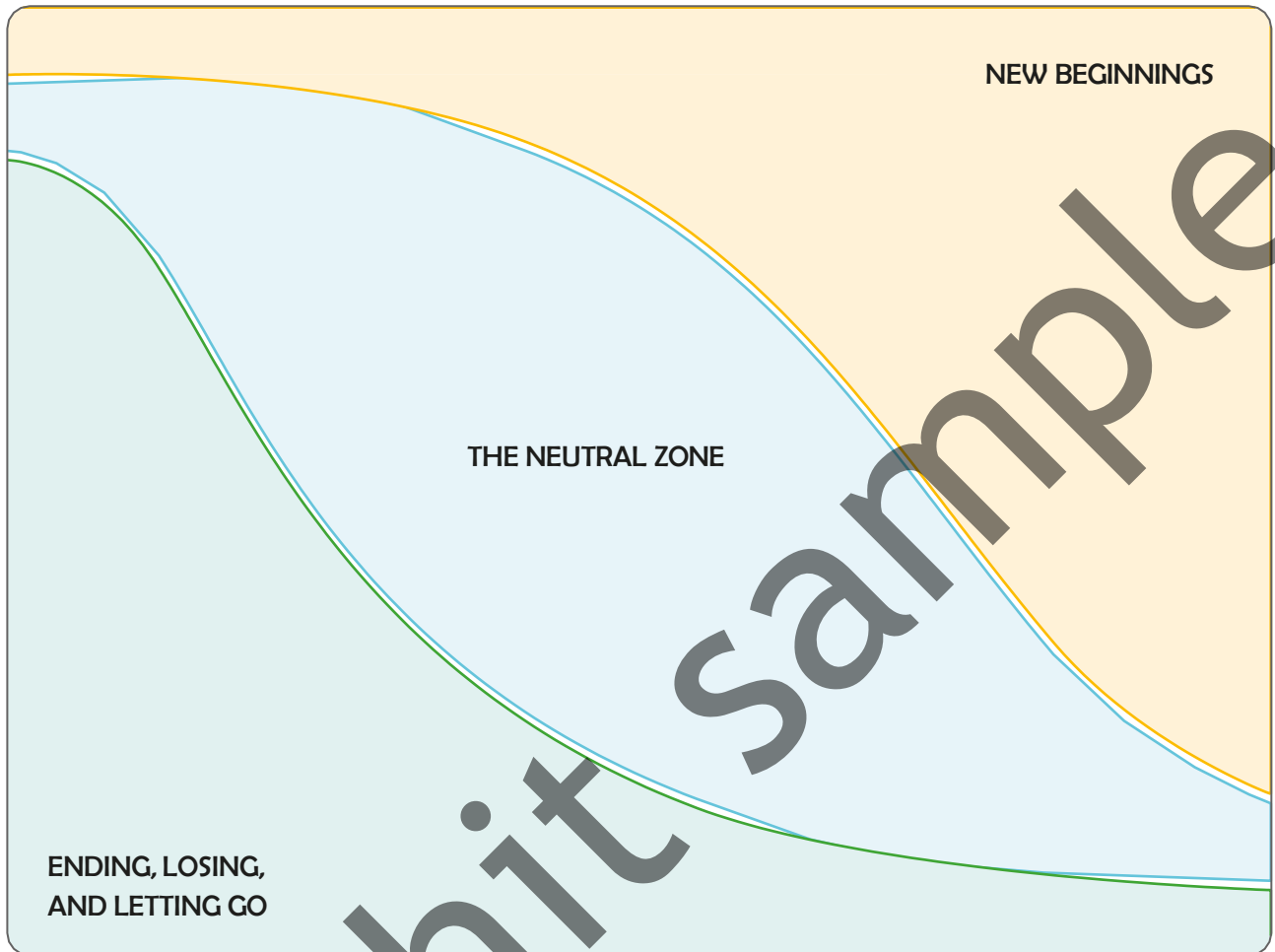
When should I use it?

During emotionally charged times, as part of the change process. If you are in management, as a way of closing the gap between leadership and the team.

Where should I use it?

Either at work or in your personal life.

Bridges transition model template



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