

**D**espite the introduction of the workload agreement five years ago, research by *The TES* last month found that only a tiny minority of teachers (less than 5 per cent) had seen a substantial reduction in their workload. One in 10 teachers confessed that their workload had actually increased.

Not being able to manage your work is a key source of stress, as Sally Hewitt, a 59-year-old languages teacher from Salisbury, knows too well.

“We were under pressure to acquire more skills using the latest technology, set and reset targets every half-term, write reports to parents, re-write schemes of work, and organise and attend after-school activities,” she says.

“It all added hours to the working week. It became so time-consuming and stressful that it sapped teachers’ energy and left them less enthusiastic.”

Organising your time efficiently can help you to avoid this stress. Remember that if you put more hours into your working day, the job will expand to fill those hours. Planning can go on indefinitely, so you may never experience that satisfying feeling of having done everything.

Being effective is more important than the number of hours you put into the job. Everyone also has an optimal period in the day, and knowing which hours of the day you work most effectively is important, because you can concentrate

on those parts of the day to get through most of your work.

If you look at your day, you might find some “dead time” that can be put to good use. I used to mark books on the train and found that this released time so I could leave school earlier.

Efficient organisation and an effective routine prevents stress and saves time. Plan your week, setting aside periods in the week for “regulars” such as preparation and marking.

Set aside time to get away from the job and do something totally different so that you can keep things in perspective. But before you go home, make it part of your routine to check that everything is ready for the next day – you are less likely to have peace of mind if you are worrying about tomorrow.

Always think ahead. When it comes to those extra things such as assemblies, start preparing well in advance. Keep clearly marked copies of all your resources, or past assemblies at hand, so you never have to do the same work twice.

And take time to support colleagues. Sharing skills saves time, reduces stress and creates a happier working atmosphere ■

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## Give stress the boot

- **Have a cut-off time and stick to it.** Whatever you have done at say, 6pm, is enough. Go home.
  - **Prioritise.** Acknowledge that you can’t do it all. Start with what is absolutely necessary and drop the optional.
  - **Never work when you are exhausted.** The quality of your work will be low and make you more stressed.
  - **Always stop for a drink at breaktimes.** It is not a waste of time, because you can work more effectively after the break.
  - **Work as a team.** Always share out the planning and preparation with colleagues. Never plan a set of lessons without looking at the previous years’ first, to avoid duplication.
  - **During the school holidays, stay off campus and do something completely different.** A refreshing change makes you work more efficiently.
  - **Exercise reduces stress.** Take time to raise your heartbeat every day.
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