



# Wellbeing for Leaders


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**Betty McLaughlin**

Chartered IGC Guidance Counsellor

# What do we mean by Wellbeing?



Wellbeing is a term that is used a lot, however despite it being the very thing we all desire, wellbeing is not well understood. Perhaps this is the reason why so few of us report experiencing it as often as we would like.

The dictionary definition of wellbeing is ‘the state of being comfortable, healthy, or happy.’ This however, is more of a description of wellbeing rather than a definition. Feeling comfortable, happy and healthy are the outcomes of wellbeing, but they don’t actually define what it is.

# What Challenges Our Wellbeing?

Situations you are faced with on a daily basis that demand you respond. These include:

Everything that is happening inside of you and outside of you

Relationship with yourself

Relationship with your partner, friends, family, colleagues and community

Any event that is planned or unplanned

Any event that is favourable or unfavourable.







# **Stress and School Leaders- Some Brief Statistics**



# Stress-Burnout- Support: A Study

The data provides strong evidence for:

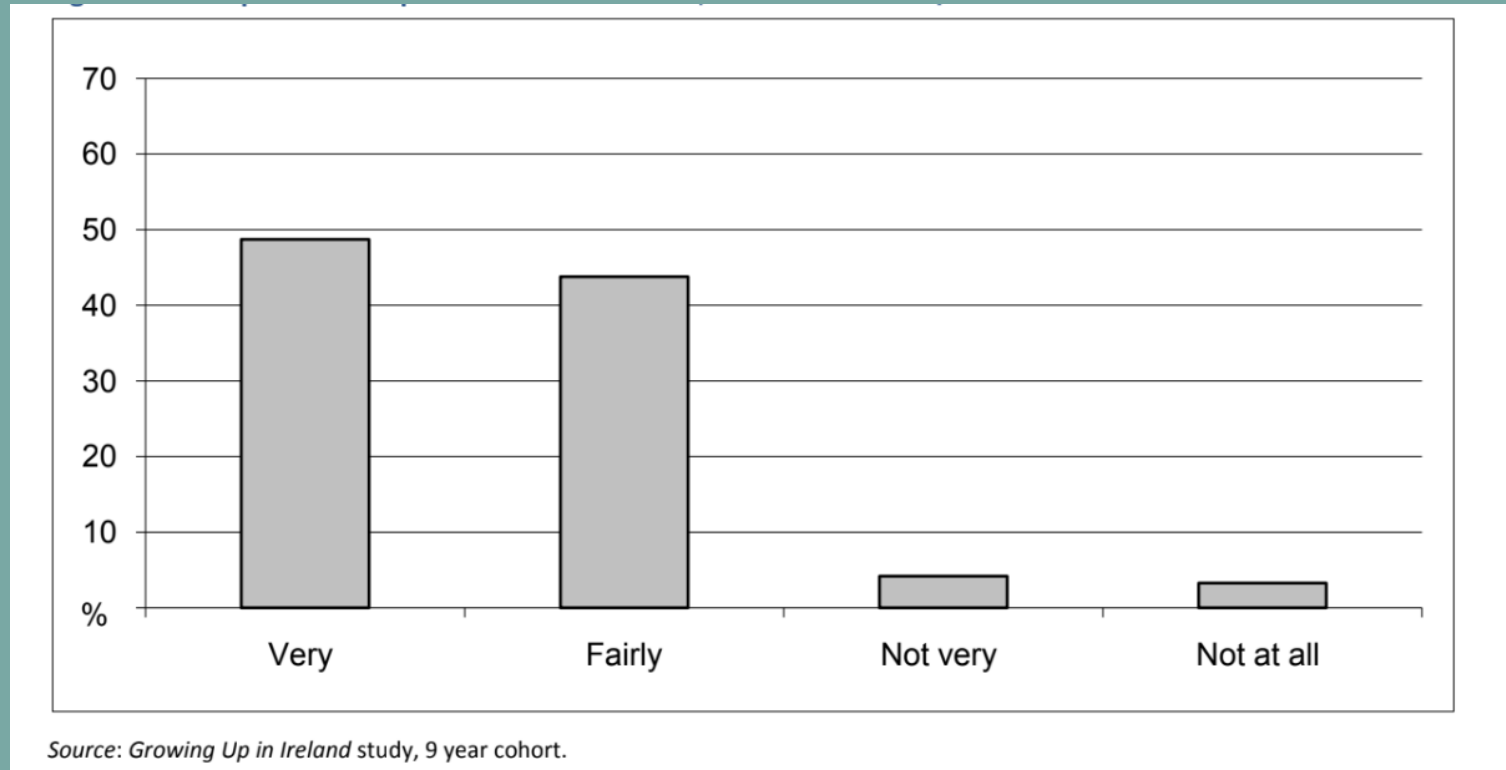
- a positive effect of stress on burnout e.g. the more stress at time , the more burnout in principals at time )
- partial support for indirect negative effects of social support on burnout

However in some cases:

The more support principals receive from the broader community, the more likely they are to show burnout symptoms. This might be explained as the ‘the downside of empathy’, where principals who are strongly supported by their community might also feel more connected to that community. When their community is struggling, they are probably struggling as well.

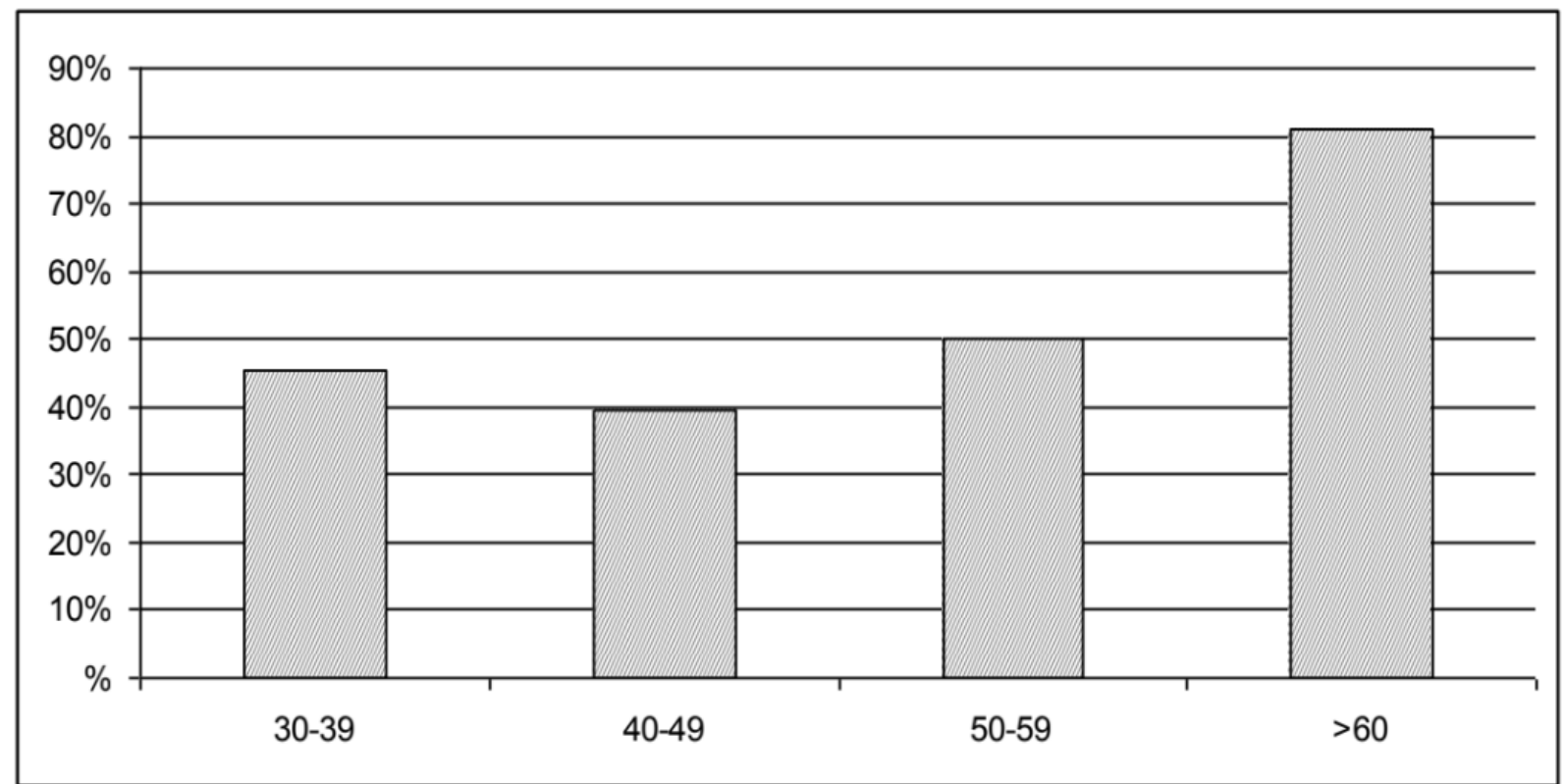
Simon Beusaert, Dominik E. Froehlich, Christelle Devos & Philip Riley (2016)  
Effects of support on stress and burnout in school principals, Educational Research, 58:4,  
347-365,

# Principals' Self-Reported Job Satisfaction



Job Satisfaction and Occupational Stress among Primary School Teachers and School Principals in Ireland  
A Report Compiled by the ESRI on Behalf of The Teaching Council (Merike Darmody and Emer Smyth)

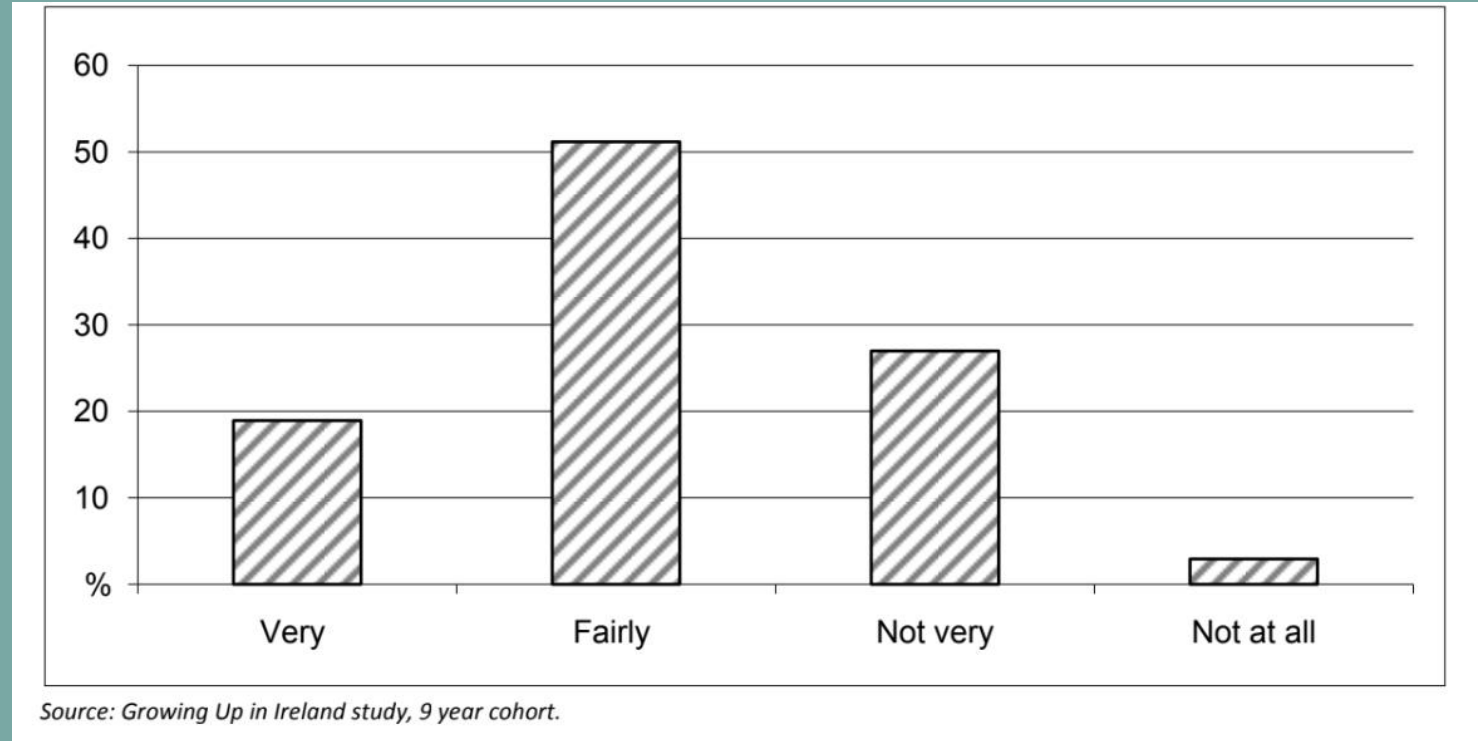
# Principals' Self-Reported Job Satisfaction by Age Group



Job Satisfaction and Occupational Stress among Primary School Teachers and School Principals in Ireland  
A Report Compiled by the ESRI on Behalf of The Teaching Council (Merike Darmody and Emer Smyth)



# Principals' Self-Reported Occupational Stress Levels



Job Satisfaction and Occupational Stress among Primary School Teachers and Secondary School Principals in Ireland

A Report Compiled by the ESRI on Behalf of The Teaching Council (Merike Darmody and Emer Smyth)



# Contrast between Teachers and Principals

**Table 6: Job Satisfaction and Occupational Stress Among Teachers and Principals**

	<b>Teachers (%)</b>	<b>Principals (%)</b>
Very satisfied, not stressed	38.3	20.3
Very satisfied but stressed	20.0	27.1
Not very satisfied, not stressed	14.8	9.6
Not very satisfied and stressed	26.9	43.0

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**What does  
wellbeing mean  
for you?**



It is...

- A unique journey
- Unique for each person
- Certain factors are consistently shown to be important





# We have so much in common:

- We are all vulnerable
- We will all face challenges, crises
- We underestimate our own potential to cope during the challenging times

# We need:

- A toolbox for coping in crisis
- How 'not to take a hit' lessons in school
- The science of the survivor
- How to thrive despite adversity





Ask Yourself :  
Am I my own best  
or worst coach?

# Supporting Our Own Wellbeing

Supporting our own Wellbeing is not a luxury it is our duty!

- Self-compassion: Minding yourself
- Self-blame...forgive yourself
- Cultivating self-awareness and self-care
- Over analysing
- Exclusive rights to stress
- You're not on your own!
- Resilience is knowing when to ask for help!





# Simple Ways to help yourself:

- Eating well
- Exercising
- Taking a moment to pause and breathe when you can
- Spending time with people who make you feel good
- Being aware of those who bring you down and making attempts to limit your time with those people where you can
- Spending time in nature
- Laughing.
- Listening to music you love.
- Meditating.
- Practicing gratitude every day.





# Obstacles:

- I don't have time.
- I have too many responsibilities inside and outside of work.
- I don't fancy all this 'Mindfulness malarkey!'.
- Too much on my list – I have to put myself last.
- I have too many duties/responsibilities to even think of myself.

Are these within my control?



# Strategies to Support Your Wellbeing

Emotional Awareness

Resilience

Reflection- self/colleagues

Empathy

Optimism

Being Social

# Emotional Awareness:

- The ability to identify your feelings and express your emotions and when necessary, the ability to control your feelings (Reivich).
- Not being governed by your emotions.
- Allowing for your emotional state.
- Minding yourself.
- There is a separation between who you are at your core.
- Not being consumed by crisis.
- Pick your Battles carefully





# Resilience

*noun*

ability to recover readily from illness,  
depression, adversity, or the like;  
buoyancy.

# Resilience Is:

The capacity to recover quickly from difficulties

The ability to spring back into shape

It involves...elasticity, spring, flexibility, pliability, durability, ability to last, strength, sturdiness, toughness, strength of character, hardiness, buoyancy, bouncebackability

It is the ability of an individual to return to their usual state of happiness ...still being successful after something difficult or bad has happened: after being bent, stretched or pressed...





# Developing Resilience:

The science of bouncability...Our lifeline

“More than education, more than experience, more than training, a person’s level of resilience will determine who succeeds and who fails. That’s true in the cancer ward, it’s true in the Olympics, and its true in the boardroom.”

Dean Becker, Harvard Business Review 2016

# Resilience:

- Can be learned.
- Knowing when to ask for help
- Keep going
- Face the challenges-Don't give up
- Feel the life affirming affirmation of overcoming the challenge and surviving...
- New research and new interventions (particularly for children)-same interventions improve resilience in adults.





# When Developing Resilience:

- Resilience doesn't mean that you have to become as hard as nails.
- You are still entitled to the best possible life.
- The next chapter in your life could be the best one ever.
- Change can be terrifying but it also presents opportunities .



# The Power of Reflection

Take time to think things through....

“I will get back to you on that..”

- Internal dialogue, Automatic self talk.
- Weighing up the pros and cons.
- Our private world of thoughts.
- Our interpretation of issues.
- Past and present.
- Vision: our predictions for the future
- Are all very powerful influences on mood, our state of mind, our health and Wellbeing



*Reflection is about exploring the thought.  
False assumptions can lead to mistakes.*

*Ask Yourself:*

- 
- Is it helpful?
  - Is it fair/rational?
  - Is it absolutely true?
- 





# Reflection and Self Talk/Internal Dialogue

- Is there another way of making sense of this?
- Am I right to be as annoyed as I am?
- Would this annoy you as much as it's annoying me?
- Does it really matter?
- Have I got good advice or am I making conclusions on my own?



# Accept that we are not perfect

- Foster: kindness/compassion/an understanding human error , faults and failings.....
- The clinical benefits of kind acts.
- Putting our worries into context.
- Physiological rewards.
- Seeing the world with an open mind.



# Empathy

The ability to read and understand the emotions of others

- Understand how your situation affects others
- Seeing others, supporting others
- Enhancing our sense of family/ team
- Building relationships



# Being Optimistic

- Having an optimistic ‘explanatory’ style
- Realistic optimism
- Optimism which facilitates problem-solving‘
- Engaging with the optimist
- Contemplating the optimistic view





# Keep It Social:

- People need people
- Remaining social/keeping friends
- The powerful resource of family
- The crucial role of the 'significant other'
- Keeping good company / leaning on resilient people
- Taking all the help you can get-enlisting the team/family
- Sustaining the team/family





# The Importance of Social Ties:

Psychologists have shown that social ties and increased contact with family and friends are associated with a lower risk of illness

A 2010 meta-analysis of 148 studies showed that social connection doesn't just help us survive health problems but the lack of it causes them (Williams, 2011)



# Spirituality:

Spirituality/religiousness.

Sense of purpose.

It's not all about me.

See life as a journey.

Value silence.

Investing in our spirituality:

**MINDFULNESS**

# TO HAVE FAITH

**is to trust yourself to the water.**

When you swim you don't  
grab hold of the water,  
because if you do  
you will sink and drown.  
Instead you relax, and float.

Alan Watts

# Remember to Laugh:

## Laughter


- The gift of humour
- Humour therapy
- Hanging around with good humoured people





“Laughing one hundred times amounts to the same exercise as riding a stationary bike for fifteen minutes. Five minutes of intense laughter can double the heart rate. Three minutes of laughter is equivalent to three minutes on a rowing machine. Laughter stimulates circulation, tones muscles, energises lungs and stimulates endorphins in the immune system.”  
Dr William Fry (Stanford University)

# Stress Leading to Distress



Distress happens when life's challenges outweigh your resources and skills to meet the demand. The most common trigger for distress is high levels of stress and fatigue. When you are overwhelmed with stress and fatigue you rapidly burn through your essential resources. If you don't have a strategy for replenishing these resources, your skills rapidly decreases.

The reality is, life's challenges are constant coming at you thick and fast. If you are unable to build on your resources and skills, life will be overwhelming and wellbeing only ever a nice idea.



# Dealing with Difficult or Stressful Situations



# Analyse the Situation

This means the ability to think comprehensively about the problems /challenges you confront. Looking at problems from many perspectives, considering many factors and consulting with others

- Seeking the best possible advice
- Adhering to that advice





## Cultivating a compassionate response:

- You share imperfection with your fellow beings.
- We all make mistakes.
- Worse things have happened others.
- You need to ‘mind’ yourself not ‘hammer’ yourself.



## Tap into your inner strengths:

- We all have inner-strengths
- Building our confidence around these strengths.
- Relying on your strengths to cope
- Playing to your strengths
- Tapping into the strengths of others - delegating, affirming

# Responding:

*A compassionate response supports wellbeing and can empower us all*

- You share imperfection with your fellow beings.
- We all make mistakes.
- There is always hope.
- Every problem has a solution
- Self belief



# Making Decisions:

AVOID hasty panic decision making...

- Hasten Slowly
- Highly resilient people are able to tolerate ambiguity so they don't rush to make decisions.
- They sit back and look at things in a thoughtful way before acting.
- The need for rational thinking – thinking straight.
- Being objective, neutral and fair-minded.
- Opening yourself up to advice.



# The Danger of Thinking when stressed or under pressure.

- Bias thinking.
- Irrational thinking.
- Private thinking.
- Powerful thinking.



# Remember:

- Failures are temporary setbacks!
- Never underestimate your own potential
- Doing different things, doing things differently
- Change (even forced change) can produce opportunities





# Finally: Five ways to build Wellbeing in your School





## 1.Connect.

School Principals and executive must build positive relationships with staff if they are to be effective leaders and if they are going to build a culture of wellbeing and a sense of belonging for their staff. Relationships are proven to be the strongest indicators of a successful, contented life (Vaillant, 2012) and people will stay in jobs with less remuneration when they have strong connections with their colleagues.



## 2.Be Active.

As a school leader, it is essential to lead staff in health and wellbeing practices beginning with physical wellbeing. Demonstrate that you value physical health by taking time in the school day to walk outside and take a breather, getting away from the computer to walk around the school and look into classrooms, participating in school sports days, fun runs or staff/student games and incorporating physical activity into your daily routine.



### 3. Take Notice.

In the same way teachers build relationships with students by being aware of their needs and interests, school leaders must do the same with staff. Be interested in what interests them because you care about them and want them to feel valued and recognised. The behaviour you model to your staff will be replicated between staff, and toward students and parents, creating the culture of the school.



## 4. Keep Learning.

Teachers pride themselves on being life-long learners. It is a vital quality of an effective teacher. As a school leader, demonstrate this characteristic by being open to learning novel skills, taking up new interests, or reimagining a past interest.

Doing something that you love improves wellbeing by making you more confident and gives you a hit of oxytocin just because it is fun!

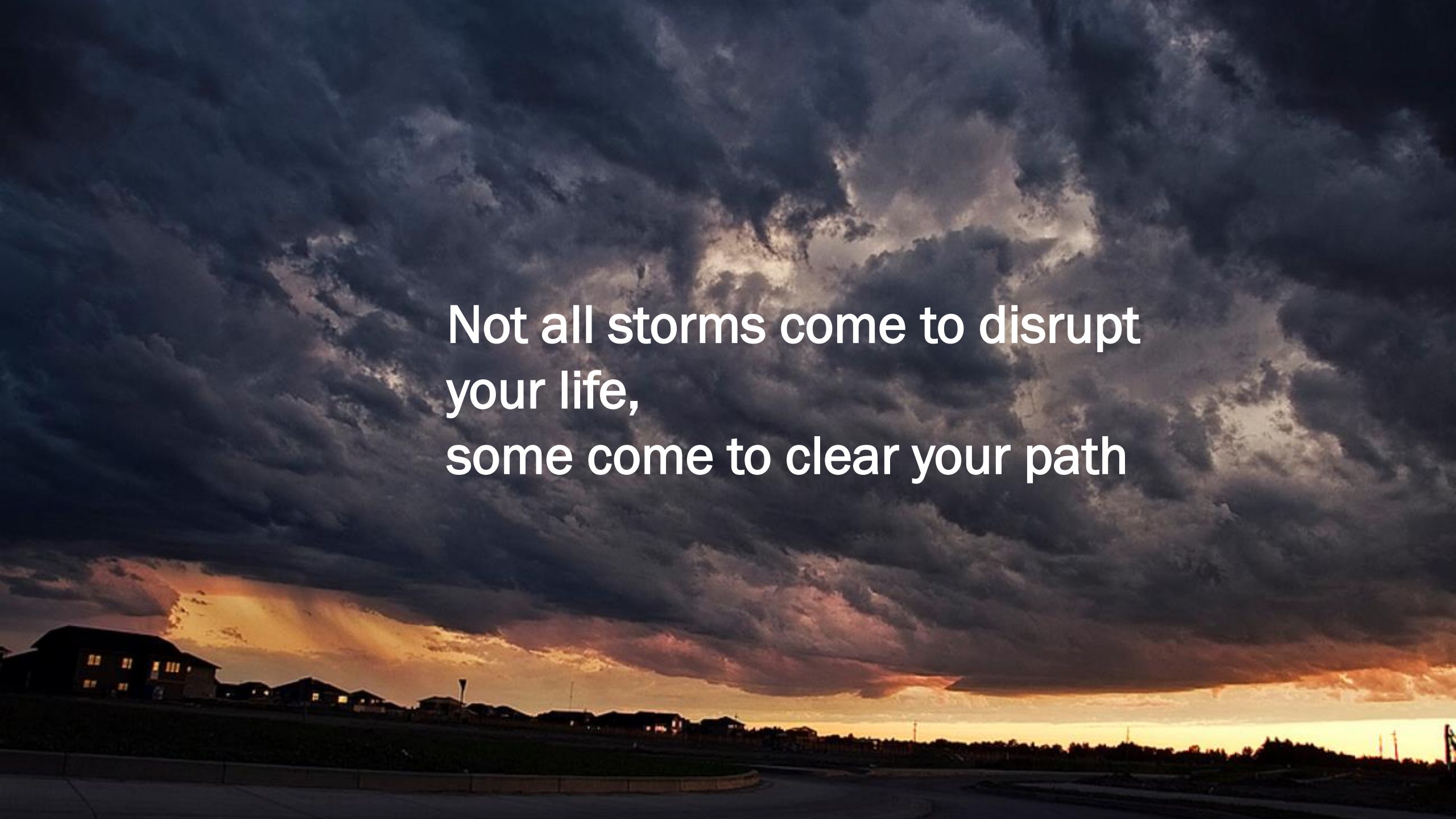


## 5. Give.

Doing something for someone else has been shown to be more beneficial for the giver than the receiver (Smith & Davidson, 2014). Giving is indeed its own reward.

Start a Gratitude Wall either in the staff room or school foyer, and provide coloured post it notes for people to express gratitude, and be the first to write something up.

**Everyone will enjoy reading all the positivity!**



Not all storms come to disrupt  
your life,  
some come to clear your path

# References:

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