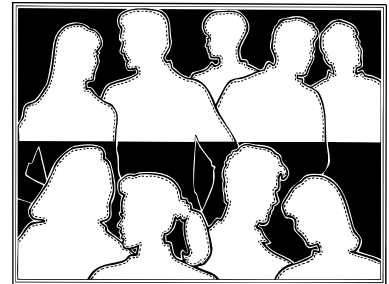




Introductory packet

Understanding and Minimizing Staff Burnout

(Revised 2015)



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Understanding and Minimizing Staff Burnout

The person-environment fit model of job stress holds that two kinds of fit exist between the individual and the work environment. The first involves the extent to which the person's skills and abilities match the demands and requirements of the job. The second type of fit involves the extent to which the environment provides for individual's needs. If a mismatch occurs involving either kind, the individual's well-being is threatened, and various health strains may result.
Bruce and West, 1996

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Preface

Anyone who works in schools knows about burnout. Staggering workloads, major problems, and endless hassles are the name of the game. The many frustrations, large and small, affect staff (and student) morale and mental health. As with so many problems, if ignored, burnout takes a severe toll. Rather than suffer through it all, staff who bring a mental health perspective to schools can take a leadership role to address the problem.

Any focus on minimizing burnout at a school site begins with an appreciation of the causes of burnout. This leads to an understanding that some of the problem arises from environmental stressors and some of the problem stem from characteristics and capabilities individuals bring to the situation. (And, of course, the way the environment and individual mesh is not to be ignored.) These causes play out differently with different roles and functions at a school.

All at a school site share some common stressors, but teachers and pupil service personnel also experience a range of different ones and all personnel differ in the characteristics and capacities they bring to the job.

Those dealing with students' psychosocial mental health problems over an extended period of time become fatigued because so many of the problems feel terribly intractable. Teachers burnout from the daily pressure of dealing with classrooms full of students who are encountering major barriers to learning.

Ultimately, the problem of minimizing burnout resolves down to

- reducing environmental stressors
- increasing personal capabilities
- enhancing job supports

Easy to say, hard to do.

Hopefully this intro packet will help in beginning the process.

“...Burnout is used to describe a syndrome that goes beyond physical fatigue from overwork. Stress and emotional exhaustion are part of it, but the hallmark of burnout is the distancing that goes on in response to the overload...”



“... while having too much to do can cause stress, it doesn't necessarily cause burnout.... More often, burnout happens when people feel out of control. If employees are working in a chaotic environment where it's not clear who is in control, they can burn out.... Other critical factors that contribute to burnout are a lack of recognition and reward, a lack of community and support in the workplace, or an absence of fairness.... The biggest contributing factor in burnout, however, is a mismatch in values. When there are value problems or conflicts, you see greater instances of burnout....”

Quotes excerpted from... A mismatch in the workplace sparks employee burnout
Carol Smith's Review of *The Truth About Burnout* by Christina Maslach
in the Seattle Post-Intelligencer

Introduction

To provide an example of the importance of supporting school staff in effective ways, consider the following request from a school staff member and our center response

Question: How Can I Help Staff Reeling from Increasing Accountability Pressures?

"In my 30 years as a school psychologist, I have never before seen so many teachers constantly on the edge of bursting into tears! We are all under pressure due to state mandated high stakes testing, the federal "No Child Left Behind" provisions of ESEA, budget cuts, larger class sizes, increases in special needs students, reductions in preparation time, increases in mandated meetings, increases in certification renewal requirements, reductions in health insurance benefits, increases in health insurance costs, below average salaries that don't keep pace with inflation, angry taxpayers writing degrading letters to the editors, and talk shows blaming all the world's woes on the failures of public school teachers.

Teachers tell me they are working 10-12 hours per day at school, then taking work home, and still they are falling behind. They wake up in the middle of the night and can't get back to sleep because their minds are spinning. Because of large class sizes, they cannot spend the individual time they want with struggling students and worry what will become of them. The union talks about morale being at an alltime low.

There are so many people in pain, I'm feeling overwhelmed and don't know where to start! Any suggestions for dealing with this?"

Response: What you describe might be the most explicit description of the experience that is leading so many to download our online document "Understanding and minimizing staff burnout."

In understanding all this, we recommend the research and related theorizing that underscores the impact of surveillance and monitoring as factors that can undermine one's feelings of competence and self-determination. A major resource here is the Self-Determination Theory website which features the work of Ed Deci and Richard Ryan at the University of Rochester (<http://www.psych.rochester.edu/SDT/index.html>). See, for example, in the section on Controversies, the brief piece entitled: "The High-Stakes Testing Controversy."

Here is some of what they say:

"Gathering information and providing feedback about performance in educational settings is extremely important for maintaining student and teacher motivation and for informing education policy. Nonetheless, a disturbing trend in information gathering currently exists in the American educational system. Referred to as high-stakes testing and advocated as a means of motivating students and prompting improved average performance in school, this trend will predictably lead to a variety of negative consequences in terms of the quality of students' learning and their psychological well-being....

Creating a test-driven evaluative focus leads teachers and students to be more ego-involved in the students' learning causing greater evaluation apprehension for all.... pressure to achieve usually translates into lower quality teaching and less effective motivational practices, unwittingly

undermining high-quality performance as well as the interest and task-involvement that facilitate it....The evidence is clear – if the bar appears to be too high, most humans will experience futility and withdraw their effort. People are simply not motivated by the prospect of failure....

Top-down evaluative pressure has prompted teacher to be more controlling in their classroom activities, in turn fostering a more outcome-focused orientation in students, a focus that has been found to promote impoverished learning, higher dropout rates, and greater alienation within schools.... Moreover, test-driven coverage of material decreases teacher enthusiasm for teaching, and this too has an adverse effect on students' motivation....

Meaningful reform begins by asking "What do students need in order to learn more and be better adjusted?" and "What do teachers need in order to teach more effectively?" Research has highlighted three critical points that answer these questions and represent a starting point for educational reform efforts. First, students as well as teachers need to feel effective, they need to be supported in their attempts to develop greater competencies rather than being evaluated and demeaned when they try. Second, students as well as teachers need to feel related to others, they need to feel recognized and appreciated as part of a learning community where they feel a sense of belongingness and relatedness. Third, students as well as teachers need to feel a sense of ownership over their learning and teaching.... Considerable research has shown that when students and teachers are able to satisfy these psychological needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy while in engaging in learning and instructional activities, they are not only more effective at those activities but they are also psychologically healthier...." (See the entire discussion at http://www.psych.rochester.edu/SDT/cont_testing.html).

Drawing on this base of research and theory, school support staff could play a crucial role in designing strategies to support staff and students and help create a caring, learning environment. Specifically, based on such an intrinsic motivational perspective, the focus must be on enhancing a strong collegial and social support structure and meaningful ways to participate in decision making for staff (and students). The aim should be to ensure that all experience the school as a place where they believe they can succeed, feel supported in their efforts, and feel they have sufficient control over what is happening to them.

Note that this is not a matter of pursuing a bunch of "morale boosters." Needed are systemic changes that both minimize threats to and enhance positive feelings of competence, self-determination, and connectedness. None of this is easy, but it is becoming increasingly essential if we are to reverse trends that undermine teacher well-being and result in so many leaving the profession within the first three years on the job.

In the era of high stakes testing, it has become essential for the system to pay greater attention to enhancing the quality of teacher life at school. Examples of what needs to be done include:

- inducting newcomers into the school culture in a welcoming and socially supportive way
- transforming working conditions by opening classroom doors and creating appropriate teams of staff and students who support, nurture, and learn from each other every day
- transforming inservice training into personalized staff development and support from first induction into a school through ongoing capacity building
- restructuring school governance to enable shared decision-making.

To get the ball rolling, the staff at a school probably needs a session to help them understand why they feel so on the edge. Then, they need to decide on how they want to proceed in reversing things. Given their training and skills, support staff could be an important catalyst in all this.

Following are ways to understand and address staff burnout.

I. About Burnout

A. School Personnel

- (1) School Staff Burnout
- (2) Student Support Staff
- (3) Teacher Burnout
- (4) When compassion runs dry

B. Various Views About Burnout

- (1) Stages of Burnout
- (2) Causes of Burnout
- (3) More About Burnout

C. Clues to Burnout:

Signs & Symptoms of Job Stress

Excerpted from the Annual Review of Psychology, v.52,2001, pp.397-422.

JOB BURNOUT.

By C. Maslach, W. B. Schaufeli, and M.P. Leiter

Burnout is a prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job, and is defined by the three dimensions of exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy. The past 25 years of research has established the complexity of the construct, and places the individual stress experience within a larger organizational context of people's relation to their work. Recently, the work on burnout has expanded internationally and has led to new conceptual models. The focus on engagement, the positive antithesis of burnout, promises to yield new perspectives on interventions to alleviate burnout. The social focus of burnout, the solid research basis concerning the syndrome, and its specific ties to the work domain make a distinct and valuable contribution to people's health and well-being.

I. About Burnout

A. School Personnel

Burnout is used to describe a syndrome that goes beyond physical fatigue from overwork. Stress and emotional exhaustion are part of it, but the hallmark of burnout is the distancing that goes on in response to the overload.

Christina Maslach

(1) School Staff Burnout*

It is easy to overlook the psychological needs of staff. Yet, when school staff don't feel good about themselves, it is unlikely they will be effective in making students feel good about themselves.

One of the resource packets most often downloaded from our Center website is this one. This suggests the need for greater attention to the problem. And, the end of a school year is the right time to think about how to make things better in the coming year. After reading this article, take a good look at next year's school improvement and staff development plans. If these plans don't reflect a concern for preventing burnout, now is the time to redress this oversight.

An Intrinsic Motivational Perspective of Burnout

The behavior referred to as burnout is a psychological phenomenon. One way to understand the problem is in terms of three psychological needs that theorists posit as major intrinsic motivational determinants of behavior. These are the need to *feel competent*, the need to *feel self-determining*, and the need to *feel interpersonally connected*. From this perspective, burnout can be viewed as among the negative outcomes that result when these needs are threatened and thwarted. And, such needs are regularly threatened and thwarted by the prevailing culture of schools.

*Originally published in the Center's e-journal/newsletter.

"It's too hard;" "it's unfair;" "You can't win;" "No one seems to care" – all are common comments made by school staff. They are symptoms of a culture that demands a great deal and too often fails to do enough to compensate for the problems it creates. It is a culture that too often undermines motivation for too many.

Each day elementary school teachers enter a classroom to work with about 30 students. Secondary teachers multiply that by a factor of at least five. These students bring with them a wide variety of needs. And, in some classrooms, many students have become disengaged from the learning process. Upon entering the classroom, the teacher closes the door, and all present try to cope with each other and with the designated work. The day seldom goes smoothly, and many days are filled with conflict and failure.

For student support staff, the list of students referred for special assistance is so long that the reality is that appropriate services can be provided only to a small percentage. Many support personnel find it virtually impossible to live up to their professional standards.

Others who work at a school, such as front office staff, are overworked, underpaid, often unappreciated, and seldom provided with inservice training. Their dissatisfaction frequently adds another layer of negativity to the school climate.

Accountability demands and daily problems produce a sense of urgency and sometimes crisis that makes the culture of schools more reactive than proactive and more remedial than preventive. The result is a structure oriented more to enhancing external control and safety than providing caring support and guidance. This translates into authoritarian demands and social control (rules, regulations, and punishment), rather than promotion of self-direction, personal responsibility, intrinsic motivation, and well-being.

(cont. on the next page)

Do youngsters who are “turned off” reflect instances of student burnout?

Given all this, it is not surprising how many staff (and students) find themselves in situations where they chronically feel over-controlled and less than competent. They also come to believe they have little control over long-range outcomes, and this affects their hopes for the future. And, all too common is a sense of alienation from other staff, students, families, and the surrounding neighborhood. Thus, not only don't they experience feelings of competence, self-determination, and positive connection with others, such feelings tend to be undermined.

What Needs to Change

As with so many problems, it is easiest to view burnout as a personal condition. And, as in many other instances, this would be the least effective way to understand what must be done over the long-run to address the matter. The problem is multifaceted and complex. While stress-reduction activities often are prescribed, they are unlikely to be a sufficient remedy for the widespread draining of motivation. Reducing environmental stressors and enhancing job supports are more to the point, but again, alone these are insufficient strategies.

The solution requires reculturing schools in ways that minimize the undermining and maximize the enhancement of intrinsic motivation. This involves policies and practices that ensure a daily focus on (1) promoting staff and student well-being and (2) addressing barriers to teaching and learning.

Promoting Well-Being

From an intrinsic motivational perspective, a school that wants to prevent burnout needs to be experienced by staff and students as a caring, learning environment in which there is a strong collegial and social support structure and meaningful ways to participate in decision making. Four key elements here are well-designed and implemented programs for

- inducting newcomers into the school culture in a welcoming and socially supportive way
- transforming working conditions by opening classroom doors and creating appropriate teams of staff and students who support, nurture, and learn from each other every day
- transforming inservice training into personalized staff development and support from first induction into a school through ongoing capacity building
- restructuring school governance to enable shared decision-making.

Mother to son:

Time to get up and go to school.

Son:

I don't want to go. It's too hard and the kids don't like me.

Mother:

But you have to go – you're their teacher.

Welcoming and social support. From a psychological perspective, learning and teaching at school are experienced most positively when the learner wants to learn and the teacher enjoys facilitating student learning. Each day goes best when all participants care about each other. To these ends, staff must establish a school-wide and classroom atmosphere that is welcoming, encourages mutual support and caring, and contributes to a sense of community. A caring school develops and institutionalizes welcoming and ongoing social support programs for new staff, students, and families. Such efforts can play a key role in reducing staff burnout and also can benefit students in significant ways.

Opening the classroom door. New staff need a considerable amount of support and on-the-job training. All staff need to learn more about mobilizing and enabling learning in the classroom. Opening the classroom door is essential for enhancing the learning of teachers, other staff, and students.

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The crux of the matter is to ensure that effective mentoring, support, teaming, and other collegial approaches are used. This includes having specialist personnel (e.g., school psychologists, counselors, special education resource teachers) mentor and demonstrate rather than play traditional consultant roles. Instead of *telling* teachers how to address student learning, behavior, and emotional problems, specialists need to be trained to go into classrooms to model and guide teachers in the use of practices for engaging and re-engaging students in learning.

In addition, teachers can do their jobs better when they integrate community resources. Anyone in the community who wants to help might make a contribution. In general, the array of people who can end the isolation of teachers in classrooms includes: (a) aides and volunteers, (b) other regular/specialist teachers, (c) family members, (d) students, (e) student support staff, (f) school administrators, (g) classified staff, (h) teachers and other professionals-in-training, (i) school and community librarians, and more.

Personalized staff development and support. As with any learner, staff need instruction and support that is a good match for both their motivation and capabilities. This includes:

- inservice programs that account for interests, strengths, weaknesses, and limitations
- approaches that overcome avoidance motivation
- structure that provides personalized support and guidance
- instruction designed to enhance and expand intrinsic motivation for learning and problem solving.

Some staff also require additional, specialized support, guidance, and accommodations.

Personalized staff development and support may encompass programs for cooperative learning, mentoring, advocacy, counseling and mediation, human relations, and conflict resolution. Regular mentoring is essential. However, learning from colleagues is not just a talking game. It involves mentors in modeling and guiding change (e.g., demonstrating and discussing new approaches; guiding initial practice and implementation; and following-up to improve and refine). Depending on practicalities, such modeling could take place in a teacher's own classroom or be carried out in colleagues' classrooms. Some of it may take the

form of team teaching. Personalized contacts increase opportunities for providing support and guidance, enhancing competence, ensuring involvement in meaningful decision-making, and attaining positive social status. All of this can productively counter alienation and burnout.

Shared governance. In any organization, who is empowered to make decisions can be a contentious issue. Putting aside the politics of this for the moment, we stress the motivational impact of not feeling empowered. There is a potent and negative impact on motivation when staff (and students and all other stakeholders) are not involved in making major decisions that affect the quality of their lives. This argues for ensuring that staff are provided with a variety of meaningful opportunities to shape such decisions. Participation on planning committees and teams that end up having little or no impact can contribute to burnout. Alternatively, feelings of self-determination that help counter burnout are more likely when governance structures share power across stakeholders and make room for their representatives around the decision-making table.

Addressing Barriers to Teaching and Learning

At some time or another, most students bring problems with them to school that affect their learning and perhaps interfere with the teacher's efforts to teach. In some geographic areas, many youngsters bring a wide range of problems stemming from restricted opportunities associated with poverty and low income, difficult and diverse family circumstances, high rates of mobility, lack of English language skills, violent neighborhoods, problems related to substance abuse, inadequate health care, and lack of enrichment opportunities. Teachers must learn many ways to enable the learning of such students. Schools must develop school-wide approaches that enable teacher effectiveness.

Too many teachers know too little about how best to support and guide students who manifest commonplace behavioral, learning, and emotional problems. In saying this, we are not teacher-bashing. We have the highest respect and empathy for anyone who pursues the call to work with young people. The problem is that teachers and student support staff are not being taught the fundamentals of how to help those youngsters who do not come to school each day motivationally ready and able to learn. Undoubtedly, this contributes in major ways to staff burnout.

High stakes expectations, low-powered staff development. In keeping with prevailing demands for higher standards and achievement test scores, the focus of school reform and pre-service teacher training is mainly on curriculum content and instruction. Analyses indicate that implicit in most instructional reforms is a presumption that students are motivationally ready and able to absorb the lesson being taught. Recognition that the teacher must deal with some misbehavior and learning problems generally is treated as a separate matter calling for classroom management and some extra instruction.

There is a major disconnect between what teachers need to learn and what they are taught about addressing student problems – and too little is being done about it.

For the most part, pre-service teacher preparation provides little or no discussion of what to do when students are not motivationally ready and able to respond appropriately to a lesson as taught. This lapse in training is less a problem for teachers in classrooms where few students are doing poorly. In settings where large proportions are not doing well, however, and especially where many are “acting out,” teachers decry the gap in their training. In such settings, one of the overriding inservice concerns is to enhance whatever a teacher has previously been taught.

Typically, schools offer a few, relatively brief sessions on various social control techniques. Examples include eye contact, physical proximity, being alert and responding quickly before a behavior escalates, using rewards as a preventive strategy, assertive discipline, and threats and other forms of punishment. All this, of course, skirts right by the matter of what is causing student misbehavior and ignores the reality that social control practices can be incompatible with enhancing student engagement with learning at school. Indeed, such practices can lead to greater student disengagement.

We hasten to stress that, in highlighting the above matters, we do not mean to minimize the importance of thorough and ongoing training related to curriculum and instruction. Every

teacher must have the ability and resources to bring a sound curriculum to life and apply strategies that make learning meaningful. At the same time, however, teachers and student support staff must learn how to “enable” learning by addressing barriers to learning and teaching – especially factors leading to low or negative motivation for schooling.

Reculturing Classrooms

Think in terms of strategies to engage student interest and attention, one-to-one or small group instruction (e.g., tutoring, cooperative learning groups), enhancing protective factors, and assets building (including use of curriculum-based approaches to promote social emotional development), as well as varied forms of special assistance. All this expands definitions of good teaching to encompass practices that enable teachers to be effective with a wide range of students. From this perspective, good teaching involves fostering a caring context for learning; it encompasses development of a classroom infrastructure that transforms a big classroom into a set of smaller units; it encompasses many strategies for preventing and addressing problems as soon as they arise.

Burnout is a school-wide concern. School-wide the focus must be on ensuring development of a unified, comprehensive, and equitable approach to addressing barriers to learning and teaching. A widely advocated framework for appreciating the necessary range of interventions outlines a continuum consisting of

- systems for promoting healthy development and preventing problems
- systems for intervening early to address problems as soon after onset as is feasible
- systems for assisting those with chronic and severe problems.

This continuum encompasses approaches for enabling academic, social, emotional, and physical development and addressing learning, behavior, and emotional problems. Most schools and communities have some programs and services that fit along the entire continuum.

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Concluding Comments

A second framework helps to further organize fragmented approaches into a cohesive component to guide policy and program development. Such a component has been called an enabling component, a learning support component, a supportive learning environment component, or a comprehensive student support system. Within the component intervention is categorized into six arenas of activity. These are intended to capture the essence of the multifaceted ways schools work with communities to address barriers.

The six categories encompass efforts to effectively

- enhance regular classroom strategies to improve instruction for students with mild-moderate behavior and learning problems (reculturing the classroom)
- assist students and families as they negotiate the many school-related transitions
- increase home involvement with schools
- respond to, and where feasible, prevent crises
- increase community involvement and support (including enhanced use of volunteers)
- facilitate student and family access to specialized services when necessary.

Each arena for intervention is described in detail in Center resources.

All school staff need to learn an array of strategies for accommodating and helping students learn to compensate for differences, vulnerabilities, and disabilities. Teachers can learn how to use paid assistants, peer tutors, and volunteers to enhance social and academic support and work in targeted ways with youngsters who manifest problems. Strategies must be developed for using resource and itinerant teachers and other student support professionals to work closely with teachers and students *in the classroom* and on regular activities. Support staff also must play a major role in creating an infrastructure for teaming together *to develop programs* in each of an enabling component's six areas.

Anyone who works in school knows about burnout. Staggering workloads, major problems, and endless hassles are the name of the game. The many frustrations, large and small, affect staff (and student) morale and mental health. As with so many other problems, if ignored, burnout takes a severe toll. Rather than suffer through it all, staff who bring a mental health and motivational perspective to schools can take a leadership role to address the problem. In doing so, they need to focus on both promoting well-being and addressing barriers to teaching and learning. Most of all, they need to imbue school improvement strategies with an intrinsic motivational perspective.

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A Few Resources on the Internet

Reducing Occupational Stress
<http://www.workhealth.org/prevention/prred.html>

About.com (search "Burnout")

<http://www.nea.org>
(search "Burnout")

*I don't suffer from stress.
I'm a carrier.*

Dilbert



I. About Burnout (cont.)

A. School Personnel

(2) Student Support Staff

I have heard counselors complain that they are just going through the motions of their job. They feel that whatever they are doing makes no difference at all and that they have nothing left to give. Some of these practitioners have convinced themselves that this feeling of burnout is one of the inevitable hazards of the profession and that there is not much they can do to revitalize themselves. This assumption is lethal, for it cements the feeling of impotence and leads to a giving up of hope. Equally bad are those practitioners who do not realize that they are burned out.

Burnout manifests itself in many ways. Those who experience this syndrome typically find that they are tired, drained, and without enthusiasm. They talk of feeling pulled by their many projects, most of which seem to have lost meaning. They feel that what they do have to offer is either not wanted or not received; they feel unappreciated, unrecognized, and unimportant, and they go about their jobs in a mechanical and routine way. They tend not to see any concrete results of the fruits of the efforts. Often they feel oppressed by the “system” and by institutional demands, which, they contend, stifle any sense of personal initiative. A real danger is that burnout syndrome can feed off itself, so that practitioners feel more and more isolated. They may fail to reach out to one another and to develop a support system. Because burnout can rob us of the vitality we need personally and professionally, it is important to look at some of its causes, possible remedies, and ways of preventing it.

From *Theory and Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy*
by Gerald Corey



I. About Burnout (cont.)

A. School Personnel

(3) *Teacher Burnout*

From:



Research Services

INFORMATION CAPSULE

Vol. 1003
September 2010

Christie Blazer, Supervisor

At a Glance

Burnout is a state of physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion resulting from chronic stress. It is characterized by feelings of alienation, indifference, and low self-regard, a loss of interest in work, and an inability to perform one's day-to-day job duties. Burnout within the teaching profession has been recognized as a serious problem. Studies indicate that teacher burnout has a negative effect on student motivation and learning. It has been estimated that between five and 30 percent of teachers show distinct symptoms of burnout at any given time. Teacher burnout costs school districts billions of dollars annually through absenteeism, disability claims, and high rates of turnover.

Stressful environments can lead to teacher burnout and personal factors, such as levels of self-efficacy and self-esteem and the existence of strong social support networks, can influence the likelihood that teachers will develop burnout. Most researchers believe burnout is the result of an interaction between school conditions and teachers' personality characteristics, but studies have produced contradictory findings regarding which variables play the most important role in the development of burnout. Strong feelings of self-efficacy in particular appear to act as a buffer between stressful school environments and burnout.

To the extent possible, district and school administrators have a responsibility to minimize stressors in the school environment. Activities schools can engage in to eliminate teacher burnout and reduce work-related stress include stress management workshops, peer support groups, and the provision of feedback, recognition, and supportive leadership. A list of strategies to help teachers manage chronic stress and avoid burnout is provided in this report. At the local level, results from administration of Miami-Dade County Public Schools' 2009-10 School Climate Survey indicated that staff morale and principal support were perceived as high by the majority of staff, but a large number of staff reported that they were frequently overloaded and overwhelmed in their jobs.

Burnout is a state of physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion resulting from chronic stress. It is characterized by feelings of alienation, indifference, and low self-regard, a loss of interest in work, and an inability to perform one's day-to-day job duties. The term "burnout" was first coined in 1974 by Herbert Freudenberger. He defined burnout as "the extinction of motivation or incentive, especially when one's devotion to a cause or relationship fails to produce the desired results" (in Scott, 2006). Burnout doesn't occur overnight. It is a cumulative process, beginning with small warning signals that, when ignored, can turn into an intense dread of going to work. Burnout is not a permanent condition. As working conditions change or as individuals develop coping skills or find supportive work environments, burnout often dissipates (Noushad, 2008; Hanson, 2006; Hutman et al., 2005; Potter, 2005; Dworkin, 2001; Leithwood et al., 2001).

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I. About Burnout (cont.)

A. School Personnel

(4) *When compassion runs dry: Recognizing and managing burnout**

Perspective of support staff in training -- From: **The School Psychologist**



Given the stressful situations graduate students will encounter in their internships and field placements, they should be aware of the cost of burnout and how to prevent it.

By Caitlin V. Hynes and David O. L. Cheng

As budding school psychologists, most graduate students are energized by the prospect of working with students in their field placements. While working with students can be very rewarding, encounters with students facing difficulties in their own lives can have a deep emotional impact. This, combined with additional institutional pressures, may lead some graduate students to experience burnout or compassion fatigue. Burnout results when an individual feels overwhelmed by work and is characterized by negative attitudes and lowered levels of commitment. Compassion fatigue is a gradual lessening of compassion that can result from repeated exposure to traumatized clients or an intense emotional experience with a single traumatized client. Both can lead to feelings of hopelessness and depression, as well as physical complaints such as headaches, gastrointestinal disorders, muscle tension, susceptibility to colds and the flu, and sleep disturbances (Rothschild, 2006).

While all clinicians may experience burnout or compassion fatigue at some point, several factors may place graduate students at an increased risk. Graduate students have not yet had experience setting emotional boundaries when working with clients and do not have practice balancing the needs of clients with additional demands such as working with parents, teachers, and administration. Furthermore, students completing field placements may be simultaneously balancing coursework, research, or other program requirements, leaving them with fewer resources to devote to their field placement than would a full-time professional.

Given that burnout and compassion fatigue have the potential to adversely impact professional performance, as well as personal lives, it is important for graduate students to be aware of strategies to prevent these phenomena and enhance coping skills.

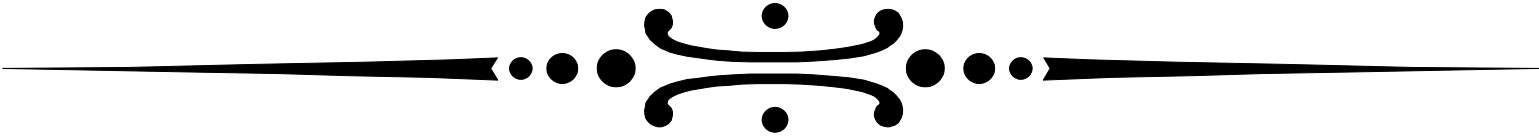
>*Practice self-care*: In preparing for a profession that is centered on caring for others, it can be easy to forget to take care of yourself. Self-care can take many different forms, but basics include getting adequate sleep, meals, and exercise, as well as setting aside time to engage in pleasurable activities and maintain social connections. While there are requirements that must be met during internship or field placements, many graduate students struggle to acknowledge their individual limits- not every intern will feel comfortable putting in the same number of extra hours and a case that may be triggering a stressful reaction for one intern may not elicit the same reaction from another.

>*Utilize your supervisor*: The literature identifies good supervision as a protective factor against adverse reactions such as compassion fatigue and burnout (Huebner, Gilligan, & Cobb, 2002). Supervisors can help graduate students process challenging cases and help find a balance between meeting institutional demands and respecting an intern's limits.

>*Advocate for trauma trainings and self-care*: Ensure that your placement offers trauma-specific training and advocate for elements of burnout prevention to be infused in your program's curriculum, as these are negatively correlated with burnout and may help to better equip us to handle the accumulation of stress (Craig & Sprang, 2010; Newell, & MacNeil, 2010).

>*Seek personal counseling*: Sometimes the effects of burnout or compassion fatigue may be too much for graduate students to manage on their own. Many training programs encourage their students to participate in personal counseling or therapy.

*For the references, see <http://www.apadivisions.org/division-16/publications/newsletters/school-psychologist/2014/07/compassion.aspx>



I. About Burnout (cont.)

B. Various Views About Burnout

- (1) Stages of Burnout
- (2) Causes of Burnout
- (3) More About Burnout



I. About Burnout (cont.)

B. Various Views About Burnout

(1) Stages of Burnout

From *Cultivating Teacher Renewal: Guarding Against Stress and Burnout* by Barbara Larrivee (2012).

In this book, Larrivee highlights the three-stage process of burnout formulated by Girdin, Everly, and Dusek (1996). These authors define burnout as "a state of mental and/or physical exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress." (Note that research studies suggest that two of the major causes of burnout are bureaucratic atmospheres and overwork.)

Three Stages of Burnout:

****Stage 1: Stress Arousal** (Includes any two of the following symptoms)

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Persistent irritability | 6. Forgetfulness |
| 2. Persistent anxiety | 7. Heart palpitations |
| 3. Periods of high blood pressure | 8. Unusual heart rhythms (skipped beats) |
| 4. Bruxism (grinding your teeth at night) | 9. Inability to concentrate |
| 5. Insomnia | 10. Headaches |

****Stage 2: Energy Conservation** (Includes any two of the following)

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Lateness for work | 7. Social withdrawal (from friends and/or family) |
| 2. Procrastination | 8. Cynical attitudes |
| 3. Needed three-day weekends | 9. Resentfulness |
| 4. Decreased sexual desire | 10. Increased coffee/tea/cola consumption |
| 5. Persistent tiredness in the mornings | 11. Increased alcohol consumption |
| 6. Turning work in late | 12. Apathy |

Again, any two of these symptoms may signal you're in Stage 2 of the burnout cycle.

****Stage 3: Exhaustion**(Includes any two of the following)

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Chronic sadness or depression | 6. The desire to "drop out" of society |
| 2. Chronic stomach or bowel problems | 7. The desire to move away from friends, work,
and perhaps even family |
| 3. Chronic mental fatigue | 8. Perhaps the desire to commit suicide |
| 4. Chronic physical fatigue | |
| 5. Chronic headaches | |

Again, any two of these symptoms may signal you're in Stage 3 of the burnout cycle.

These stages usually occur sequentially from Stage 1 to Stage 3, although the process can be stopped at any point. The exhaustion stage is where most people finally get a sense that something may be wrong. The symptoms include: chronic sadness or depression, chronic stomach or bowel problems, chronic mental fatigue, chronic physical fatigue, chronic headaches

or migraines, the desire to "drop out" of society, the desire to get away from family, friends, and even recurrent suicidal ideation.

Like the previous two stages, any two of these symptoms can indicate Stage 3 burnout. Remember, burnout is a process that usually occurs sequentially, it progresses through stages thus giving you the opportunity to recognize symptoms and take the necessary steps to prevent it.

The Toll of Unmanaged Stress

- *Addictive Behavior*
- *Relationship Distress*
- *Emotional/Behavioral Problems*
- *Professional Consequences*



- **Addictive Behaviors:**

Increased use of *tobacco, alcohol, prescription medications and/or illicit substances* "to help cope with stress" place the individual at great risk for physical and psychological dependence.

- **Relationship Distress:**

Depersonalization, which refers to treating people like objects, may arise as a protective mechanism in human services professionals to minimize emotional involvement that could interfere with functioning in crisis situations. In moderation, "detached concern" toward patients by physicians may be appropriate and necessary, but when excessive, it may lead to callousness and cynicism with subsequent negative effects on the physician-patient relationship.

- **Emotional/Behavioral Consequences:**

Emotional exhaustion is caused by excessive psychological and emotional demands made on people helping people that leave individuals drained and depleted. Low morale, reduced effectiveness, burnout and health problems are often the result.

- **Professional Consequences:**

Feelings of diminished personal accomplishment are reflected in symptoms of stress, depression, and a sense of inefficiency and diminished competence. With such feelings, the individual believes that his or her actions no longer can or do make a difference. This adversely affects the physician-patient relationship, patient satisfaction, and perhaps, ultimately, health outcomes.

I. About Burnout (cont.)

B. Various Views About Burnout (cont.)

(2) Causes of Burnout

In his book, *Theory and Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy*, Gerald Corey lists the following as the causes of burnout:

Rather than having a single cause, burnout results from a combination of factors. It is best understood by considering the individual, interpersonal, and organizational factors that contribute to the condition. Recognizing the causes of burnout can itself be a step in dealing with it. A few of them are:

- doing the same type of work with little variation, especially if this work seems meaningless;
- giving a great deal personally and not getting back much in the way of appreciation or other positive responses;
- lacking a sense of accomplishment and meaning in work;
- being under constant and strong pressure to produce, perform, and meet deadlines, many of which may be unrealistic;
- working with a difficult population, such as those who are highly resistant, who are involuntary clients, or who show very little progress;
- conflict and tension among staff; absence of support from colleagues and an abundance of criticism;
- lack of trust between supervisor and mental-health workers, leading to conditions in which they are working against each other instead of toward commonly valued goals;
- not having opportunities for personal expression or for taking initiative in trying new approaches, a situation in which experimentation, change, and innovation are not only unrewarded but also actively discouraged;
- facing unrealistic demands on your time and energy;
- having a job that is both personally and professionally taxing without much opportunity for supervision, continuing education, or other forms of in-service training;
- unresolved personal conflicts beyond the job situation, such as marital tensions, chronic health problems, financial problems, and so on.

I. About Burnout (cont.)

B. Various Views About Burnout (cont.)

(3) More About Burnout

Excerpts from *Job Burnout in Public Education: Symptoms, Causes, and Survival Skills*, which was written by Anthony J. Cedoline and published by the Teachers College, Columbia University.

Job burnout is “a consequence of the perceived disparity between the demands of the job and the resources (both material and emotional) that an employee has available to him or her. When demands in the workplace are unusually high, it becomes increasingly impossible to cope with the stress associated with these working conditions.”

Its roots are found in the daily transactions stemming from the debilitating physical and emotional overload that arises from stress on the job.

Job burnout is both an occupational hazard and a phenomenon induced by distress. It is generally characterized by: (1) some degree of physical and emotional exhaustion; (2) socially dysfunctional behavior, particularly a distancing and insulation from individuals with whom one is working; (3) psychological impairment -- especially strong, negative feelings toward the self; and (4) organizational inefficiency through decreased output and poor morale.

In *Job Burnout in Public Education: Symptoms, Causes, and Survival Skills* (1982), Anthony Cedoline offers the following analysis of seven causes of job burnout that have received the most attention in research findings:

Lack of Control Over One's Destiny

As organizations become large and impersonal, employees are frequently less involved in decision making. Even simple tasks can be delayed due to legal dictates, administrative policy, or lack of funds. Employees' participation in decision making promotes more positive job attitudes and greater motivation for effective performance.

Lack of Occupational Feedback and Communication

Like other workers, educators want to know the expectations of the organization, the behaviors that will be successful or unsuccessful in satisfying job requirements, any physical and psychological dangers that might exist, and the security of the job. Education employees need feedback to develop job values, aspirations, objectives, and accomplishments. Lack of clear, consistent information can result in distress. If evaluation only happens once or twice a year without regular, periodic feedback, the possibility of stress increases the longer the employee works in a vacuum. Regarding communication, organizational structures that foster open, honest, cathartic expression in a positive and constructive way reap large dividends from employees. When management reacts to open communication on a crisis basis only, it reinforces negative communications.

Work Overload or Underload

Researchers have found high levels of stress among individuals who have excessive work loads. Long or unpredictable hours, too many responsibilities, work at a too-rapid pace, too many phone calls, dealing directly with difficult people without sufficient relief, dealing with constant crises, and supervising too many people (e.g., large class sizes and overcrowding) or having broad multifaceted job descriptions are characteristics of a work overload. In addition, boring tedious jobs or jobs without variety are equally distressful.

Contact Overload

Contact overload results from the necessity for frequent encounters with other people in order to carry out job functions. Some occupations (teaching, counseling, law enforcement) require many encounters that are unpleasant and therefore distressful. These workers spend a large proportion of their work time interacting with people in various states of distress. When the caseload is high, control over one's work and consequent job satisfaction is affected. Contact overloads also leave little occasion or energy for communication and support from other employees or for seeking personal and professional growth opportunities.

Role Conflict/Ambiguity

Although role conflict and ambiguity can occur independently, they both refer to the uncertainty about what one is expected to do at work. Role conflict may be defined as the simultaneous occurrence of two or more opposing pressures such that a response to one makes compliance with the other impossible (e.g., mass education versus individualized instruction). The most frequent role conflicts are (1) those between the individual's values and those of the superior or the organization; (2) the conflict between the demands of the work place and the worker's personal life; and (3) the conflict between worker abilities and organizational expectations. In numerous studies, role conflict has been associated with low job satisfaction, frustration, decreased trust and respect, low confidence in the organization, morale problems and high degrees of stress. Role ambiguity may be defined as a lack of clarity about the job, that is, a discrepancy between the information available to the employee and that which is required for successful job performance. In comparison to role conflict, role ambiguity has the highest correlation to job dissatisfaction. Role ambiguity is especially common amongst school administrators.

Individual Factors

Personal factors such as financial stability, marital satisfaction, as well as personality factors such as neuroticism, excessive shyness, inflexibility, and poor stress management skills all contribute to how one is affected by stress on the job. The mutual interaction and accumulation of both personal and occupational stressors can certainly contribute to job burnout.

Training Deficits

Several different areas of job training are necessary to prevent occupational distress. The most obvious area is adequate initial preparation. Training and competencies are necessary to bolster confidence, as well as to allow the worker to get through each day without unnecessary dependence upon others or upon reference materials. On-the-job training is also necessary as technology advances. New professionals are most susceptible to some forms of distress. Secondly, training in communications skills is necessary in order to facilitate the ability of the employee to relate successfully with supervisors, fellow workers, and recipients of services or products. According to one survey, jobs are more frequently lost because of poor communication than because of any other factor. Finally, one needs to be taught how to deal with stress. Everyone needs to learn methods of coping with the variety of stressors faced each day.

Other Factors and Considerations

There are other secondary factors that can exacerbate stress such as poor working conditions, lack of job security, lifestyle changes, and a rapidly changing society that force individuals to make unexpected adjustments in their way of life and work. Administrators, teachers, and staff all face specific stressors that are unique to their position or role; however, most of these stressors fall within the general framework outlined above.

I. About Burnout (cont.)

C. *Clues to Burnout: Signs & Symptoms of Job Stress*



' **Behavioral:**

Frequent clockwatching
Postponing client contacts; resisting phone and office visits
Stereotyping clients
Treadmilling: Working harder and getting less done
Increasing reliance on rules and regulations: "Going by the book"
Avoiding discussion of work with colleagues
More use/approval of behavioral control measures (e.g., tranquilizers)
Excessive use of drugs and alcohol
Marital and family conflict
High absenteeism
Irritability with clients and colleagues
Avoiding work responsibility (e.g., paperwork, meetings)

' **Psychological**

High resistance to going to work every day
Sense of failure
Feelings of anger and resentment
Feeling discouraged and indifferent
Negativism
Loss of positive feelings toward clients
Self-preoccupation
Feeling powerless and hopeless
Rigidity in thinking and resistance to change
Suspiciousness and paranoia
Anxiety
Excessive number of "Bad Days"
Depression
Feelings of Guilt and Blame

' **Physical**

Feeling tired during workday
Fatigue
Exhaustion
Sleep disorders
Frequent colds and flu
Frequent headaches
Frequent gastro-intestinal disturbances
Frequent vague aches and pains

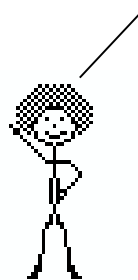
II. What Can We Do About Burnout?

- A. Overview: How do we deal with Burnout?
- B. Three General Approaches
- C. Preventing and Coping with Burnout
 - (1) Enhancing School Culture
 - (2) Personal Strategies
 - (3) Tips for Teachers
- D. Organizational Strategies
- E. Bouncing Back From Burnout
- F. Some Models
 - Supporting Professionals-at-Risk: Evaluating Interventions to Reduce Burnout and Improve Retention of Special Educators
 - School-Based Mutual Support Groups
 - Debriefing Debriefers

What's that strapped to your head?



It's a smoke detector. The principal thinks I'm headed for burnout!



II. What Can We Do About Burnout?

A. Overview: How Do We Deal with Burnout?

Excerpt from:

Maslach, C., Schaufeli, W.B., & Leiter, M.P. (2001). Job Burnout. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 52, 397-422.

The applied nature of burnout research has prompted calls for effective intervention throughout the research literature. This perspective has encouraged considerable effort, but relatively little systematic research. Various intervention strategies have been proposed—some try to treat burnout after it has occurred, whereas others focus on how to prevent burnout.

Interestingly, most discussions of burnout interventions focus primarily on individual-centered solutions, such as removing the worker from the job, or individual strategies for the worker, in which one either strengthens one's internal resources or changes one's work behaviors. This is particularly paradoxical given that research has found that situational and organizational factors play a bigger role in burnout than individual ones. Individual-oriented approaches (e.g. developing effective coping skills or learning deep relaxation) may help individuals to alleviate exhaustion, but they do not really deal with the other two components of burnout. Also, individual strategies are relatively ineffective in the workplace, where a person has much less control over stressors than in other domains of his or her life. There are both philosophical and pragmatic reasons underlying the predominant focus on the individual, including notions of individual causality and responsibility, and the assumption that it is easier and cheaper to change people than organizations (Maslach & Goldberg 1998).

Changing the Individual

The primary focus of studies of burnout reduction has been educational interventions to

enhance the capacity of individuals to cope with the workplace. . . . At the root of this approach are three questions: Can people learn coping skills? Can they apply this learning at work? Do new ways of coping affect burnout?

With respect to the first question, both the stress literature and a burgeoning self-help literature in the popular press have demonstrated that people can indeed learn new ways of coping. The similar conclusion to be drawn from the burnout research is that educational sessions can enhance the capacity of human service professionals to cope with the demands of their jobs. However, the second question does not receive such a positive answer. Applying new knowledge at work can be a challenge because people are operating under various constraints. Their roles at work require that they behave in specified ways, and organizational procedures stipulate the time and place in which much work occurs. Coworkers are designated according to their job functions, not their personal compatibility. Thus, if there is going to be significant change in the way work is done, it will require a degree of autonomy and an understanding of the organizational consequences of such change. Assuming that it is indeed possible for people to apply new coping skills at work, does this lead to reductions in burnout? The research findings are mixed. A wide variety of intervention strategies have been tried, including stress inoculation training, relaxation, time management, assertiveness training, rational emotive therapy, training in interpersonal and social skills, teambuilding, management of professional demands, and meditation. In some cases, a reduction in exhaustion has been reported, but in other cases it has not. Rarely do any

programs report a change in cynicism or inefficacy. Limitations in study design, especially difficulties in access to appropriate control groups and a lack of longitudinal assessment, have constrained the interpretation of the existing research.

Changing the Organization

In line with the findings from the research literature, a focus on the job environment, as well as the person in it, is essential for interventions to deal with burnout. This suggests that the most effective mode of intervention is to combine changes in managerial practice with the educational interventions described above. Managerial interventions are necessary to change any of the six areas of worklife but are insufficient unless educational interventions convey the requisite individual skills and attitudes. Neither changing the setting nor changing the individuals is enough; effective change occurs when both develop in an integrated fashion.

The recognition of six areas of worklife expands the range of options for organizational intervention. For example, rather than concentrating on the area of work overload for an intervention (such as teaching people how to cope with overload, how to cut back on work, or how to relax), a focus on some of the other mis-matches may be more effective. People may be able to tolerate greater workload if they value the work and feel they are doing something important, or if they feel well-rewarded for their efforts, and so an intervention could target these areas of value and reward.

Initial work in this area is encouraging but incomplete. One promising approach focused on the area of fairness and equity. Employees participated in weekly group sessions designed to identify ways of reducing the perceived inequities in their job situation. In comparison with control groups, participants reported a significant decrease in emotional exhaustion at six months and one year after the intervention. These changes were accompanied by increases in perceived equity. Again, however, the other two aspects of burnout did not change relative to baseline levels (van Dierendonck et al 1998).

One advantage of a combined managerial and educational approach to intervention is that it tends to emphasize building engagement with work. The focus on engagement permits a closer alliance with the organizational mission, especially those aspects that pertain to the quality of worklife in the organization. A worksetting that is designed to support the positive development of energy, vigor, involvement, dedication, absorption, and effectiveness among its employees should be successful in promoting their well-being and productivity. Moreover, the statement of a positive goal for intervention—building engagement (rather than reducing burnout)—enhances the accountability of the intervention. Assessing the presence of something is more definite than assessing the absence of its opposite.

Although the potential value of organizational interventions is great, they are not easy to implement. They are often complex in the level of collaboration that is necessary and they require a considerable investment of time, effort, and money. A new approach to such interventions has been designed on the basis of past research and consultation on burnout, and may provide better guidance to organizations for dealing with these issues (Leiter & Maslach 2000).

Leiter M.P., & Maslach C. (2000). *Preventing Burnout and Building Engagement: A Complete Program for Organizational Renewal*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

Maslach C., & Goldberg, J. (1998). Prevention of burnout: new perspectives. *Applied Preventive Psychology*, 7, 63–74.

van Dierendonck, D., Schaufeli, W.B., & Buunk, B.P. (1998). The evaluation of an individual burnout intervention program: the role of in-equity and social support. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 83, 392–407

II. What Can We Do About Burnout? (cont.)

B. Three General Approaches

In general, schools attempt to minimize burnout in three ways:

1. Reducing Environment Stressors

Urban School Restructuring

In the book, *Urban School Restructuring and Teacher Burnout* (1991), Barry Farber and Carol Ascher discuss how several components of school restructuring namely: school-based management accountability, career ladders, school-within-schools, curriculum initiatives, flexible scheduling and team teaching, have the potential of improving the context of urban teaching. Each can possibly promote a greater sense of efficacy and control among teachers, and a stronger teacher - student connection. However, the authors also underscore how the process involved in school restructuring can lead to teacher burnout. Ultimately, the authors conclude that unless the structural components directly address ways to improve teaching and learning such as district policies on pupil assignment, professional development, or evaluation which are all critical to teacher well-being, teacher burnout will continue to be a prevailing concern in the school system.

2. Increasing Personal Capabilities (job competence and stress coping)

News article: *New LAUSD Teachers to Learn How to Reduce Stress for Students and Themselves*

Los Angeles Unified administrators say stress is the number one reason why beginning teachers leave the profession.

So this month, the school district has organized a series of workshops for about 1,800 new teachers to give them tools to help students deal with difficult situations, and, reduce their stress as well.

This is the second year LAUSD has held the New Teacher Summer Institute, five days of workshops and classes open to starting teachers. They'll receive information that covers such topics as employee benefits and classroom management.

It's teacher stress, however, that LAUSD is highlighting, just as a long-anticipated teacher shortage takes hold and retaining instructors challenges many school districts.

Often, teachers say, their stress stems from dealing with students trying to cope with personal problems.

Stress Coping

Many school districts have established employee assistance programs that can help school professionals enhance their ability to cope with stress. As described by one district:

Employee Assistance Program -- Employee assistance programs are designed to help employees deal with personal problems. Most of us have stresses at some time in our lives. Generally we can manage them on our own. At times, however, it is helpful to discuss problems with someone other than our family or friends. This program provides you and your family with such an opportunity.

Examples of the type of assistance provided are: Crisis intervention, assessment, information, and referral services are available for a wide range of problems which affect personal lives, and may carry over into work. Stresses such as marital and family difficulties, problems with drinking or drugs, or emotional distresses, can be discussed confidentially through an early assistance program.

3. Social Support

From the National Education Association

Ideas and Activities for Celebrating National Teacher Day

<http://www.nea.org/grants/55148.htm>

Recognizing and celebrating the important roles and contributions of educators can take many forms. Below are some ideas to get you started in your community.

In the Community

- Run congratulatory messages on electronic signs outside banks or other businesses, or on billboards, banners or storefront signs.
- Offer teachers discounts on purchases made on Teacher Day.
- Invite all teachers to a reception in their honor, hosted by the mayor, school board, school administrators, Chamber of Commerce or other group.
- Invite teachers to a before-school "coffee, juice and pastries" salute at a local grocery store or other business - or even in a school parking lot (think tailgate party!).

In School

Consider the following actions that may be taken up by a school volunteer organization:

- Hang a sign on each classroom door saluting, by name, the teacher within.
- Have National Honor Society, Student Council or other student groups furnish punch and cookies for the teacher's lounge on Teacher Day.
- Give teachers candy, apples or other food gifts with appropriate notes attached (e.g., fortune cookies with a note about how fortunate the school is to have a teacher of such high caliber).
- Provide balloon bouquets and flowers for every teachers' lounge.
- Set up a lunchtime "Relaxation and Rejuvenation Spa" on Teacher Day, where teachers are treated to hand, foot, back and neck massages, perhaps while being serenaded by a student or parent playing a mellow cello.

II. What Can We Do About Burnout? (cont.)

C. Preventing and Coping With Burnout: A Sampling of Current Practices

(1) Enhancing School Culture

- Toward a Caring School Culture
- Reculturing Schools

(2) Personal Strategies

- Stress Busters
- Person Coping Techniques
- Preventing Burnout
- A Few Strategies for Burnout Prevention and Recovery
- Preventing Parent Burnout

(3) Tips for Teachers

- Coping with Stress in the Special Education Classroom
- Survival Guide for New Teachers
- A Stress Reduction Guide for Teachers and Other School Staff



II. What Can We Do About Burnout? (cont.)

C. Preventing and Coping With Burnout: A Sampling of Current Practices

(1) Enhancing School Culture

- Toward a Caring School Culture
- Reculturing Schools

II. What Can We Do About Burnout? (cont.)

C. Preventing and Coping With Burnout:

A Sampling of Current Practices

(I) Enhancing School Culture

Toward a Caring School Culture

From the Center's e-journal/newsletter

Schools often fail to create a caring culture. A caring school culture refers not only to caring *for* but also caring *about* others. It refers not only to students and parents but to staff. Those who want to create a caring culture can draw on a variety of ideas and practices developed over the years.

Who is Caring for the Teaching Staff?

Teachers must feel good about themselves if classrooms are to be caring environments. Teaching is one of society's most psychologically demanding jobs, yet few schools have programs designed specifically to counter job stress and enhance staff feelings of well-being.

In discussing "burn-out," many writers have emphasized that, too often, teaching is carried out under highly stressful working conditions and without much of a collegial and social support structure. Recommendations usually factor down to strategies that reduce environmental stressors, increase personal capabilities, and enhance job and social supports. (Our center provides an overview of this topic in an introductory packet entitled *Understanding and Minimizing Staff Burnout*.)

What tends to be ignored is that schools have no formal mechanisms to care for staff. As schools move toward local control, they have a real opportunity to establish formal mechanisms and programs that foster mutual caring. In doing so, special attention must be paid to transitioning in new staff and transforming working conditions to create appropriate staff teams whose members can support and nurture each other in the classroom, every day. Relatedly, classrooms should play a greater role in fostering student social-emotional development by ensuring such a focus is built into the curricula.

Helping Youngsters Overcome Difficulty Making Friends

A caring school culture pays special attention to those who have difficulty making friends. Some students need just a bit of support to overcome the problem (e.g., a few suggestions, a couple of special opportunities). Some, however, need more help. They may be very shy, lacking in social

skills, or may even act in negative ways that lead to their rejection. Whatever the reason, it is clear they need help if they and the school are to reap the benefits produced when individuals feel positively connected to each other.

School staff (e.g., teacher, classroom or yard aide, counselor, support/resource staff) and parents can work together to help such students. The following is one set of strategies that can be helpful:

- Identify a potential "peer buddy" (e.g., a student with similar interests and temperament or one who will understand and be willing to reach out to the one who needs a friend)
- Either directly enlist and train the "peer buddy" or design a strategy to ensure the two are introduced to each other in a positive way
- Create regular opportunities for shared activities/projects at and away from school (e.g., they might work together on cooperative tasks, be teammates for games, share special roles such as being classroom monitors, have a sleep-over weekend)
- Facilitate their time together to ensure they experience good feelings about being together.

It may be necessary to try a few different activities before finding some they enjoy doing together. For some, the first attempts to match them with a friend will not work out. (It will be evident after about a week or so.) If the youngster really doesn't know how to act like a friend, it is necessary to teach some guidelines and social skills. In the long-run, for almost everyone, making friends is possible and is essential to feeling cared about.

A useful resource in thinking about strategies for helping youngsters find, make, and keep friends is: *Good Friends are Hard to Find* book written for parents by Fred Frankl (1996; published by Perspective Publishing). The work also has sections on dealing with teasing, bullying, and meanness and helping with stormy relationships.

Applying Rules in a Fair and Caring Way

Should different consequences be applied for or the same offense when the children involved differ in terms of their problems, age, competence, and so forth?

Teachers and parents (and almost everyone else) are confronted with the problem of whether to apply rules and treat transgressions differentially. Some try to simplify matters by not making distinctions and treating everyone alike. For example, it was said of Coach Vince Lombardi

that he treated all his players the same -- like dogs! A caring school culture cannot treat everyone the same.

Teachers and other school staff often argue that it is unfair to other students if the same rule is not applied in the same way to everyone. Thus, they insist on enforcing rules without regard to a particular student's social and emotional problems. Although such a "no exceptions" strategy represents a simple solution, it ignores the fact that such a nonpersonalized approach may make a child's problem worse and thus be unjust.

A caring school culture must develop and apply rules and offer specialized assistance in ways that recognize that the matter of fairness involves such complicated questions as, Fair for whom? Fair according to whom? Fair using what criteria and what procedures for applying the criteria? Obviously what is fair for the society may not be fair for an individual; what is fair for one person may cause an inequity for another. To differentially punish two students for the same transgression will certainly be seen as unfair by at least one of the parties. To provide special services for one group's problems raises the taxes of all citizens. To deny such services is unfair and harmful to those who need the help.

Making fair decisions about how rules should be applied and who should get what services and resources involves principles of *distributive justice*. For example, should each person be (1) responded to in the same way? given an equal share of available resources? (2) responded to and provided for according to individual need? (3) responded to and served according to his or her societal contributions? or (4) responded to and given services on the basis of having earned or merited them? As Beauchamp and Childress (1989) point out, the first principle emphasizes equal access to the goods in life that every rational person desires; the second emphasizes need; the third emphasizes contribution and merit; and the fourth emphasizes a mixed use of such criteria so that public and private utility are maximized (in *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*). Obviously, each of these principles can conflict with each other. Moreover, any may be weighted more heavily than another, depending on the social philosophy of the decision maker.

Many parents and some teachers lean toward an emphasis on individual need. That is, they tend to believe fairness means that those with problems should be responded to on a case-by-case basis and given special assistance. Decisions based on

individual need often call for exceptions to how rules are applied and unequal allocation and affirmative action with regard to who gets certain resources. When this occurs, stated intentions to be just and fair often lead to decisions that are quite controversial. Because building a caring school culture requires an emphasis on individual need, the process is not without its controversies.

It is easy to lose sight of caring, and it is not easy to develop and maintain a caring school culture. In an era when so many people are concerned about discipline, personal responsibility, school-wide values, and character education, *caring counts*. Indeed, it may be the key to student well-being and successful schools.

Research on Youth and Caring

Protective factors. In the May 1995 issue of *Phi Delta Kappan*, a series of articles discuss "Youth and Caring." Included is an overview of findings from the Research Project on Youth and Caring (carried out through the Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago). Among a host of findings, researchers in that program report that caring and connectedness can protect against specific risk factors or stressful life events. The protective facets of caring are seen as transcending differences in class, ethnicity, geography, and other life history variables.

What makes for a caring environment? Karen Pittman and Michelle Cahill studied youth programs and concluded that youngsters experience an environment as caring when it

- creates an atmosphere where they feel welcome, respected, and comfortable,
- structures opportunities for developing caring relationships with peers and adults,
- provides information, counseling, and expectations that enable them to determine what it means to care for themselves and to care for a definable group,
- provides opportunities, training, and expectations that encourage them to contribute to the greater good through service, advocacy, and active problem solving with respect to important matters.

II. What Can We Do About Burnout? (cont.)

C. Preventing and Coping With Burnout: A Sampling of Current Practices

(1) Enhancing School Culture

Reculturing Schools

Excerpted *From Positive or negative?* by Ken Peterson in the *Journal of Staff Development*

Every organization has a culture, that history and underlying set of unwritten expectations that shape everything about the school. A school culture influences the ways people think, feel, and act. Being able to understand and shape the culture is key to a school's success in promoting staff and student learning. As Fullan (2001) recently noted, "Reculturing is the name of the game."

When a school has a positive, professional culture, one finds meaningful staff development, successful curricular reform, and the effective use of student performance data. In these cultures, staff and student learning thrive. In contrast, a school with a negative or toxic culture that does not value professional learning, resists change, or devalues staff development hinders success. School culture will have either a positive or a detrimental impact on the quality and success of staff development.

What Is School Culture?

School culture is the set of norms, values and beliefs, rituals and ceremonies, symbols and stories that make up the "persona" of the school. These unwritten expectations build up over time as teachers, administrators, parents, and students work together, solve problems, deal with challenges and, at times, cope with failures. For example, every school has a set of expectations about what can be discussed at staff meetings, what constitutes good teaching techniques, how willing the staff is to change, and the importance of staff development (Deal & Peterson, 1999). Schools also have rituals and ceremonies--communal events to celebrate success, to provide closure during collective transitions, and to recognize people's contributions to the school. School cultures also include symbols and stories that communicate core values, reinforce the mission, and build a shared sense of commitment. Symbols are an outward sign of inward values. Stories are group representations of history and meaning. In positive cultures, these features reinforce learning, commitment, and motivation, and they are consistent with the school's vision.

Positive vs. Toxic Cultures

While there is no one best culture, recent research and knowledge of successful schools identify common features in professional learning communities. In these cultures, staff, students, and administrators value learning, work to enhance curriculum and instruction, and focus on students. In schools with professional learning communities, the culture possesses:

- A widely shared sense of purpose and values-
 - Norms of continuous learning and improvement-
 - A commitment to and sense of responsibility for the learning of all students;
 - Collaborative, collegial relationships; and
 - Opportunities for staff reflection, collective inquiry, and sharing personal practice.
- (Stein, 1998; Lambert, 1998; Fullan, 2001; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Hord, 1998).

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In addition, these schools often have a common professional language, communal stories of success, extensive opportunities for quality professional development, and ceremonies that celebrate improvement, collaboration, and learning (Peterson & Deal, 2002). All of these elements build commitment, forge motivation, and foster learning for staff and students.

Some schools have the opposite--negative subcultures with "toxic" norms and values that hinder growth and learning. Schools with toxic cultures lack a clear sense of purpose, have norms that reinforce inertia, blame students for lack of progress, discourage collaboration, and often have actively hostile relations among staff. These schools are not healthy for staff or students.

By actively addressing the negativity and working to shape more positive cultures, staff and principals can turn around many of these schools. Principals are key in addressing negativity and hostile relations.

Staff Development

School culture enhances or hinders professional learning. Culture enhances professional learning when teachers believe professional development is important, valued, and "the way we do things around here." Professional development is nurtured when the school's history and stories include examples of meaningful professional learning and a group commitment to improvement.

Staff learning is reinforced when sharing ideas, working collaboratively to learn, and using newly learned skills are recognized symbolically and orally in faculty meetings and other school ceremonies. For example, in one school, staff meetings begin with the story of a positive action a teacher took to help a student--a ceremonial school coffee cup is presented to the teacher and a round of applause follows.

The most positive cultures value staff members who help lead their own development, create well-defined improvement plans, organize study groups, and learn in a variety of ways. Cultures that celebrate, recognize, and support staff learning bolster professional community.

Negative cultures can seriously impair staff development. Negative norms and values, hostile relations, and pessimistic stories deplete the culture. In one school, for example, the only stories of staff development depict boring, ill-defined failures. Positive experiences are attacked--they don't fit the cultural norms. In another school, teachers are socially ostracized for sharing their positive experiences at workshops or training programs. At this school's faculty meetings, no one is allowed to share interesting or useful ideas learned in a workshop. Positive news about staff development opportunities goes underground for those who still value personal learning (Deal & Peterson, 1999).

In some schools, professional development is not valued, teachers do not believe they have anything new to learn, or they believe the only source for new ideas is trial-and-error in one's own classroom. Anyone who shares a new idea from a book, workshop, or article is laughed at. In these schools, positive views of professional learning are countercultural. Those who value learning are criticized. The positive individuals may either leave the school (reinforcing the culture) or become outcasts, seeking support with like-minded staff.

Learning Communities

Principals and other school leaders can and should shape school culture. They do this through three key processes. First, they read the culture, understanding the culture's historical source as well as analyzing current norms and values. Second, they assess the culture, determining which elements of the culture support the school's core purposes and the mission, and which hinder achieving valued ends. Finally, they actively shape the culture by reinforcing positive aspects and working to transform negative aspects of the culture (Peterson & Deal, 2002).

Read the Culture

Principals can learn the history of the school by talking to the school's storytellers (they are the staff who enjoy recounting history), looking through prior school improvement plans for signals about what is really important, not just what is required, or using a faculty meeting to discuss what the school has experienced, especially in staff development, over the past two decades. It is important to examine contemporary aspects of the culture--a series of exercises can determine the core norms and values, rituals, and ceremonies of the school, and their meanings. For example, asking each staff member to list six adjectives to describe the school, asking staff to tell a story that characterizes what the school is about, or having staff write metaphors describing the school can reveal aspects of the school culture.

One approach asks staff to complete the following metaphor: "If my school were an animal it would be a because The principal then looks for themes and patterns. Are the animals strong, nurturing, hostile, loners, or herd animals? Are the animals stable or changeable? These metaphors can suggest deeper perceptions of the culture.

Finally, developing a timeline of rituals and ceremonies for the year--asking when they occur, what symbols and values are important in each, and what the ceremonies communicate about the school and its commitment to professional learning can fill in the culture picture. For example, what does the end-of-the year staff gathering communicate? Is it joyful, sorrowful, congenial, or standoffish? What are the rites and rituals of the gathering? What traditions keep going year-to-year, and what do they represent? Is the last gathering of the year a time for closure, goodbyes, and a sharing of hopes for the future?

Assess the Culture

Staff and administrators should then look at what they have learned about the culture and ask two central questions:

- N** What aspects of the culture are positive and should be reinforced?
- N** What aspects of the culture are negative and harmful and should be changed?

The staff can also ask: What norms and values support learning? Which depress or hinder the growth of energy, motivation, and commitment? What symbols or ceremonies are dead and dying and need to be buried--or need to be resuscitated?

There are other approaches as well. One way to assess the culture is to use the School Culture Survey (Tools for Schools, 2001) to examine core norms and values. Collect the survey results to see how strongly held different norms or values are, then determine whether they fit the culture the school wants.

Shape the Culture

There are many ways to reinforce the positive aspects of the culture.

Staff leaders and principals can:

- Celebrate successes in staff meetings and ceremonies-
- Tell stories of accomplishment and collaboration whenever they have the opportunity; and
- Use clear, shared language created during professional development to foster a commitment to staff and student learning.

Leaders also can reinforce norms and values in their daily work, their words, and their interactions. They can establish rituals and traditions that make staff development an opportunity for culture building as well as learning. As we saw at Wisconsin Hills Middle School, all workshops began with sharing food and stories of success with students. At other times, leaders can reinforce quality professional learning by providing additional resources to implement new ideas, by recognizing those committed to learning their craft, and by continuously supporting quality opportunities for informal staff learning and collaboration.

Staff and administrators may also need to change negative and harmful aspects of the culture. This is not easy. It is done by addressing the negative directly, finding examples of success to counteract stories of failure, impeding those who try to sabotage or criticize staff learning, and replacing negative stories of professional development with concrete positive results.

Conclusion

Today, shaping culture is even more important because of the national focus on higher curriculum standards, assessments, and accountability.

Standards-based reform efforts attempt to align content, teaching, and assessment. But without a culture that supports and values these structural changes, these reforms can fail.

Schools need both clear structures and strong, professional cultures to foster teacher learning. Carefully designed curriculum and assessments are keys to successful reform, along with teacher professional development. The school's culture either supports or sabotages quality professional learning. Developing and sustaining a positive, professional culture that nurtures staff learning is the task of everyone in the school. With a strong, positive culture that supports professional development and student learning, schools can become places where every teacher makes a difference and every child learns.

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II. What Can We Do About Burnout? (cont.)

C. Preventing and Coping With Burnout: A Sampling of Current Practices (cont.)

(2) Personal Strategies

- Stress Busters
- Person Coping Skills
- Preventing Parent Burnout
- Bouncing Back from Burnout

II. What Can We Do About Burnout? (cont.)

C. Preventing and Coping With Burnout: A Sampling of Current Practices (cont.)

(2) *Personal Strategies*

STRESS BUSTERS *Thoughts to Reduce Your Work Stress!*

<http://stressrelease.com/strssbus.html>

Stress and worry on the job can be harmful! They cause physical and emotional problems that may damage both your health and your performance. Furthermore, stress grows! Excessive worry is a major element in the vicious cycle of tension: the physical sensations of stress-tense muscles, headaches, insomnia and so forth-lead to catastrophic stress-building thoughts, which in turn aggravate unpleasant physical feelings, and so on up the tension cycle. Soon, just the thought of preparing an assignment or meeting a deadline triggers all the symptoms of stress, along with an overwhelming wish to avoid tasks.

But you can learn to avoid your "stress-building" thoughts and replace them with alternative "stress-busting" thoughts!

When you are under stress, what messages are you sending yourself? Are they alarming or reassuring? You can decrease your stress by learning to talk to yourself in a reassuring way. This is what "stress-busting" is about--getting your thoughts back on a reassuring track.

Stress-busting thoughts come from what we call the "Rational You." The Rational You thinks its way through life's events, evaluating the degree of safety versus danger involved. What happens to the Rational You in a stressful situation? It gets pushed aside by stress building thoughts which disrupt concentration and productivity at work.

Stress-Building Beliefs

Perfectionism

- Do you feel a constant pressure to achieve?
- Do you criticize yourself when you're not perfect?
- Do you feel you haven't done enough no matter how hard you try?
- Do you give up pleasure in order to be the best in everything you do?

Control

- Do you have to be perfectly in control at all times?
- Do you worry about how you appear to others when you are nervous?
- Do you feel that any lack of control is a sign of weakness or failure?
- Are you uncomfortable delegating projects to others?

People Pleasing

- Does your self-esteem depend on everyone else's opinion of you?
- Do you sometimes avoid assignments because you're afraid of disappointing your boss?
- Are you better at caring for others than caring for yourself?
- Do you keep most negative feelings inside to avoid displeasing others?

Competence

- Do you feel you can never do as good a job as other people?
- Do you feel your judgment is poor?
- Do you feel you lack common sense?
- Do you feel like an impostor when told your work is good?

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Yes answers indicate potential road blocks to a stress free work life. Challenge these beliefs. Experiment. Try acting in a way that is opposite to your usual behavior. Then, evaluate the results. For example, if you feel overburdened because of a need to control, delegate a task and observe the consequences.

Become aware of how your stress-building beliefs affect your behavior. Replace them with more realistic and less stressful thoughts.

Helpful Techniques

Keep a record of stressful situations and rate the actual level of stress from 0 (most relaxed) to 10 (most stressed). Start to monitor your stress on the "Practice Journal" worksheet before, during and after stressful events or situations. As you begin to observe your levels of stress, you will notice that these levels are not constant. You will find that stress levels increase when you are concentrating on your most alarming thoughts and bodily reactions, but stress levels fall when your attention turns away from these areas. This will show you that one way to reduce the level of stress in your life is to actively turn away from negative "stress building" thoughts and to concentrate on positive stress busting ways of thinking.

Combating negative thoughts and replacing them with positive ones takes practice, but the results are worth it. Review the facts. What is your evidence? Is there another way to view the situation? If not, what is the worst thing that could happen? You may have been concentrating on the worst possible, but by no means the most likely, outcome.

Stress Builders and Stress Busters

Stress Builder: "I'll never get this project in on time."

Stress Buster: "If I stay focused and take it one step at a time, I'll make steady progress."

Stress Builder: "My supervisor didn't say good morning. He's probably displeased with my work, and I'll get a bad evaluation."

Stress Buster: "I'm jumping to conclusions. My supervisor may have been in a bad mood. So far all my evaluations have been positive, so unless I get some negative feedback, I'll assume my supervisor is pleased with my work."

Stress Builder: "I can't get my mistake on page 53 out of my mind. The paper is ruined. I have disappointed everyone."

Stress Buster: "No one is perfect. I did my best. I'm overreacting to one mistake when the overall report is fine."

Add Stress Busters to your work life. Your ability to handle difficult challenges in the workplace will improve and the benefits will transfer over into other areas of your life as well. -Shirley Babior, LCSW and Carol Goldman, LICSW. (Portions of this article are taken from Babior & Goldman (1996). *Overcoming Panic, Anxiety and Phobias*. Whole Person Press.)

II. What Can We Do About Burnout? (cont.)

C. Preventing and Coping With Burnout: A Sampling of Current Practices (cont.)

(2) Personal Strategies

Person Coping Techniques

A variety of psychological techniques have been advocated for helping individuals cope with stress. The limitations of such a person-coping model should be evident from any comprehensive discussion of the causes of burnout. At the same time, every mental health professional will want to have some familiarity with specific coping techniques. The following list is from the work of John McManus.

- **Assertiveness** - becoming aware of personal needs, desires, feelings and rights and expressing them interpersonally in a considerate caring manner
- **Attention Training** - learning to focus better on performing a stressful task by using verbal reminders and reinforcement
- **Behavior Modification** - altering behavior through a variety of overt techniques, including behavioral assessment, positive reinforcement, shaping, extinction, and punishment
- **Behavioral Rehearsal** - practicing a stressful behavior many times before carrying it out in a real life situation
- **Cognitive Awareness (Life Style Assessment)** - increasing self awareness of personal stress by cognitively looking at all dimensions of one's life, then altering aspects of the environment and habitual behaviors which create stress
- **Cognitive Restructuring** - learning to recognize faulty, irrational, and self-defeating thinking patterns and self statements and replacing them with rational thoughts, self statements and behaviors (employed in rational emotive therapy approach)
- **Conflict Resolution** - reducing interpersonal stress in conflict situations through communication and problem-solving skills
- **Coping Reappraisal** - cognitively assessing potential coping responses and resources other than those currently being employed ineffectually
- **Coping Skills Training** - learning to manage stress from a comprehensive perspective, emphasizing the relationship among cognitions, physiological responses and behaviors and developing coping strategies in each area
- **Covert Modeling** - imagining other persons and yourself successfully overcoming obstacles in performing desired behaviors and practicing those behaviors in the mind
- **Covert Reinforcement** - pairing desired behaviors with positive reinforcement in the imagination in order to reduce associated stress
- **Covert Sensitization** - eliminating destructive habits which cause stress by associating them with a very unpleasant stimulus in the imagination
- **Performance Feedback** - receiving evaluative feedback from others regarding performance in stressful situations
- **Problem Solving** - acting systematically rather than impulsively to solve personal problems through a logical reasoning, step-by-step process
- **Relabeling (Reframing)** - verbally calling a problem something other than a problem, such as challenge, opportunity for personal growth, amusing episode, etc.
- **Role Reversal** - acting in the role of another person involved in a stressful situation, observing, how a model plays your role
- **Selective Ignoring (Selective Awareness)** - ignoring the bad parts of a stressful situation and focusing instead on the positive aspects
- **Self Controlled Relaxation (Cue Controlled Relaxation)** - learning to increase conscious awareness of the stressor's in one's life and having them serve as cues for immediate coping responses and cognitions
- **Self Talk** - changing negative perceptions of the self through repetitive positive self statements
- **Surrender** - acknowledging to the self that some stressful situations are indeed beyond personal control and accepting them as they are
- **Systematic Desensitization** - reducing anxiety associated with stressful situations through imagination and body relaxation
- **Think Aloud** - using verbal mediation skills to reduce stress in problem-solving situations, talking self through the problem in a step-by-step manner
- **Thought Stopping** - consciously interrupting persistent trains of stressful thoughts, such as those involved in obsessions and phobias, in order to gain control over thought patterns

II. What Can We Do About Burnout? (cont.)

C. Preventing and Coping With Burnout: A Sampling of Current Practices (cont.)

(2) Personal Strategies (cont.)

Preventing Parent Burn Out: Model for Teaching Effective Coping Strategies to Parents of Children with Learning Disabilities

by Sherry R. Latson

Learning Disabilities Association of America, Newsbrief

<http://www.LDonline.org/article/59531>

All families experience normative and transitional life event stressors such as birth, death, and moving. In addition, parents are subject to the inherent chronic stressors of parenting. Parental psychological stressors are related to the worries that parents have about the physical safety and the growth and development of their children. Parents generally take pride in their children's accomplishments and are hurt by their children's failures.

Parenting is particularly difficult and stressful when children do not measure up to family or community expectations. When a child is diagnosed with learning disabilities, all of the attention is focused on helping the child. But parents also need assistance in coping with their own feelings and frustrations.

The results of my doctoral dissertation revealed that parents of children with learning disabilities had very elevated scores on the Parenting Stress Index, signifying that they perceived far more stress in their role as parents than did parents of children without learning problems. Therefore, a workshop model for teaching parents how to cope with the stress associated with raising children with learning disabilities was developed. The basic premise of the model is that by increasing coping skills, parents can reduce their own stress and can become effective mediators in reducing stress in their children.

The first step in the study was to ask parents to list specific stressors they associated with raising their children with learning disabilities. Some of the most frequently mentioned were: parent guilt; worry about the future; parents' perception that other people think they may be the cause of the problem; difficult behavior of children with learning disabilities; feeling a need to protect their child; disagreement between parents about dealing with the child; disagreement between parents about the existence of a problem; increased financial burden; finding competent professional services; and sibling resentment of attention given the child with learning disabilities. All of the stressors identified by parents in the initial study were compiled into a Learning Disability Stress Index to be used with workshop participants. At the beginning of the workshop session, participants complete the index in order to identify their own specific stressors, and to determine if their stress is primarily internal, external, or physiological.

3/4 Internal Stress

Internal stress factors come from within the individual and include attitudes, perceptions, assumptions, and expectations. Expectations of parents about their child lie at the root of burnout. When expectations about parenting are not met, the first thought is What did I do wrong? Therefore, parents must learn how to develop realistic expectations and how to recognize when negative self-talk defeats effective coping. Parents should identify their own self-defeating assumptions and think of alternative messages. They must be kind to themselves, to accept themselves and their child as fallible, and to boost their own self-confidence by noting and using personal strengths and talents.

✦ Beliefs that Lead to Internal Stress

1. Giving 100% every day is what every parent is expected to do.
2. The success or failure of my children depends entirely on me.
3. I will never be bored as a parent.
4. I will be seen by society as a good and honorable person because of the effort I put into being a good parent.

5. I refuse to let anyone else care for or influence my children.
6. I should always deny my own needs for rest and recreation in order to help my children.
7. I should do everything for my children and not require that they take on the responsibilities that they are old enough to handle.
8. I should spend every possible moment with my children.
9. I should feel guilty if I need a break or want some attention for myself.
10. One role in my life can satisfy all my needs and can support all my dreams.
11. My children should appreciate everything I do for them.
12. My children must like me.
13. Other people must see me as a good parent, able to handle everything.

✦ Management Strategies

1. Renounce love, affection, and approval from children as needs-rather than bonuses.
2. Boost your own self-confidence.
3. See the positive side of stress.
4. Understand anger and use it constructively. Control anger by controlling wishes.
5. Practice positive thinking by daily affirmations. Repeat positive messages to yourself over and over.
6. Write them out and put them around the house.
7. Develop a support system by sharing honestly your feelings of frustration, anger, and concern.
8. Learn to tolerate change because children change often. You and the children both change moods and feelings.
9. Be able to live in the presence of imperfection.
10. Learn to catch yourself when you say negative statements to yourself and challenge them.
11. Develop the positive belief that you can control destiny. Be healthily selfish, free yourself from needing outside approval.

3/4 External Stress

External forces also impinge upon parents of youngsters with learning disabilities. Neighbors, friends, and relatives don't understand why such a normal-acting child is having academic problems. Teachers frequently don't fully understand the ramifications of a child's problem. Parents are called upon by the school to help make decisions about the child's academic program but often feel helpless as the child's advocate because of their own lack of understanding. Because external stressors are those that are situational, and often involve relationships with others, parents are encouraged to develop assertiveness skills. Problem-solving techniques, time management, and goal setting are helpful when dealing with stressors associated with raising children and running a household. Because coping with a child with learning disabilities is so emotionally draining, parents also are encouraged to develop intimacy skills and a support system.

✦ External Stress Factors

1. Dealing with school about child's placement or program.
2. Coping with difficult child behaviors.
3. Educating neighbors and relatives about the child's problems.
4. Helping siblings understand the problems associated with learning disabilities.
5. Getting child in right school.
6. Helping child with homework.
7. Financial pressures.
8. Working with spouse on child management.
9. Carpools.

✦ Managing External Stressors

Analyze Problems Thoroughly

1. Describe the problem with a specific statement.
2. State how it could be worse and how it could be better.
3. Determine what is keeping it from getting better. Propose solutions for the things over which you have control.
4. Plan action.

Use Time Management

1. List priorities both short and long term.
2. Do a time use audit.
3. Compare time use with priority of goals.

Develop Assertiveness

1. Know your limits and be realistic about what you can accomplish. Say no to unreasonable demands.
2. Learn about your child's problems and needs so that you can be an active participant in meetings with school personnel and can offer suggestions to coaches, neighbors, and relatives.

3/4 Physiological Stress

The final type of stress is physiological stress. Parents of children with learning disabilities need to recognize that children with learning disabilities require exceptional amounts of energy. In order to replenish energy, parents need to be sure they get sufficient rest, eat well balanced meals, and exercise vigorously. During the workshop, parents learn meditation or relaxation techniques to use when they feel stressed, anxious, or fatigued.

✦ Physiological Stressors

1. Diet
2. Exercise
3. Rest
4. Recreation

✦ Management Strategies: Everyone knows what to do, but doesn't always do it

1. Make a plan and stick to it. Make sure you include all of the elements necessary for a healthy life.
2. Follow your physician's advice.
3. Team up with a spouse or friend for time off.
4. Use relaxation tapes or exercises to calm down after a hectic day.
5. Find a place of retreat (the bathroom or the car, for instance), and go there for cooling off when the tension is very great.
6. Make recreation and relaxation a priority, so that you have some time off during the week. Studies have shown that psychologically healthy families have less-than-perfect house keeping.
7. Hire out or trade off chores that are time consuming and distasteful. Sometimes it is well worth paying someone else to do those chores so that you have more time and energy to devote to yourself and your family.

Parenting children with learning disabilities presents special challenges. Professionals working with parents need to recognize the difficulty parents face when dealing not only with the child's everyday problems but also the associated social and emotional problems of school failure. Parents are eager to learn better coping strategies and parent groups can provide both skill training and emotional support for parents of children with learning disabilities.

II. What Can We Do About Burnout? (cont.)

C. Preventing and Coping With Burnout: A Sampling of Current Practices (cont.)

(2) Personal Strategies

*Bouncing Back from Burnout**

Judy Downs Lombardi, in: *Do You Have Teacher Burnout* suggests the following:

Overhaul your job. Make a list of routine or tedious tasks you do as part of your job and come up with creative new ways to tackle them. Even tasks that seem fun-resistant can become more satisfying if you give free reign to your imagination.

Try new instructional strategies. Rather than relying on safe and predictable methods you've always used, try something different. If you're tired of writing student evaluations, consider switching to portfolio assessment. (To navigate through these new waters, you may find it rewarding to team up with a colleague and share the experience.)

Challenge yourself to keep learning. Even if you're a veteran, there's always more to learn about teaching. Identify an area, such as writing in math class or invented spelling, that you'd like to learn more about, and seek out professional development opportunities. Take a class, attend a conference, or organize a workshop.

Collaborate with colleagues. If you resent or disregard suggestions from colleagues on how to enhance your teaching, you may be cutting yourself off from a valuable idea-sharing and support network. The more isolated you are, the greater the risk that you'll become unsure about what you're doing, suspicious of your coworkers, or short on new ideas. Colleagues can provide helpful feedback and reassurance.

Try changing grade levels. If you've been teaching fifth grade for a while, why not consider trying your hand at kindergarten? Sometimes teaching an older or younger group of students will better fit your training, skills, and interests.

Give yourself permission to be less than perfect. Too many teachers believe that none of their successes count if they have one failure. Accept that teaching is difficult and challenging. Pain and failure will always be part of the profession, just as joy and success will be. Keep in mind that you can only thrive if you give yourself room to make mistakes and learn from them.

Also, if you overdo, overachieve or push yourself or your students too hard, your self-imposed pressures and demands will only stunt your growth because you'll push yourself to exhaustion.

Try not to wrap up your identity with your job. Remember that you are not just a teacher--you are a person who has chosen to be in the teaching profession. Cultivate outside interests and hobbies.

Realize that you can help students but you can't save them from society's ills. As difficult as it may be to accept, you can't solve all of your student's problems--you can't keep them from feeling the pain of divorce, economic hardship, and so on. Teachers can, and should, give students room to feel, think, and bear consequences, but they can't rescue students or fight their battles for them.

Learn to care for yourself. As caretaker professionals, teachers often over care for others and under care for themselves. Nurturing your students is important, but you must first nurture yourself. Self-preservation is an essential, healthy habit, so pay more attention to your own needs and well-being. Conserve and replenish your emotional and physiological resources--they're limited!

Practice techniques for stress reduction. If you're feeling the strains of teaching, practice strategies for relieving tension. Remember to carve out time to relax, pursue your hobbies, and spend time with family and friends. If you feel like you can't cope, consider seeing a trained counselor.

Examine other areas of education as natural extensions of teaching. Perhaps taking more college courses would enable you to become a reading specialist, school psychologist, diagnostician, staff development trainer, consultant, guidance counselor or other staff support person. Teaching experience is often the best avenue to these specialties.

Think through your career goals. Is teaching still right for you? Most teachers can probably think of a colleague who should have changed careers a long time ago. Don't wait until you're completely disenchanted to assess where you are going and whether it's time for a change in professions.

Dr. Judy Downs Lombardi, a professor at the University of Tampa, works with student teachers and teachers, and is always on the lookout for signs of burnout.

II. What Can We Do About Burnout? (cont.)

C. Preventing and Coping With Burnout: A Sampling of Current Practices (cont.)



(3) Tips for Teachers

- Coping with Stress in the Special Education Classroom
- Survival Guide for New Teachers (US Dept. of Ed.)
- A Stress Reduction Guide for Teachers and other School Staff (NEA)



Tips for Teachers:

Excerpted from Eric Digest #E545

Author: Mary Brownell

Coping with Stress in the Special Education Classroom: Can Individual Teachers More Effectively Manage Stress?

Meeting the daily learning and behavioral needs of students makes teaching a stressful job. Although not all stress associated with teaching is negative, stress that reduces a teacher's motivation can have deleterious effects such as alienation from the workplace, absenteeism, and attrition. In fact, when special education teachers are highly stressed by the unmanageability of their workload, they are more likely to leave the special education classroom (Miller, Brownell, & Smith, 1995). The ability to successfully manage stresses related to teaching is critical if special education teachers are to survive and thrive in the classroom.

COPING IN BUREAUCRACIES

Despite the current trend toward school-based decision making, many schools remain bureaucratic organizations where teachers have little control over major decisions in their environments and frequently work in isolation (Skrtic, 1991). Further, with increasing demands to be accountable, teachers' work is becoming more intense, leaving many teachers feeling emotionally exhausted (Hargreaves, 1994). Thus, in school bureaucracies, teachers may become stressed by role overload and lack of autonomy.

Additionally, since the focus of teachers' efforts is to help students, many teachers enter special education because of their desire to help children and youth. While the desire to help others can lead to strong student-teacher relationships and can provide teachers with commitment to education, this same desire can also make it difficult for teachers to leave their work at the schoolhouse door. In fact, professionals who are empathic, sympathetic, dedicated, idealistic, and people-oriented are vulnerable to experiencing excessive stress (Cherniss, 1980; Pines, Aronson & Kafry, 1981), particularly when they face the multitude of problems that students with disabilities present. Although special education teachers have many reasons to feel stressed, they can more effectively deal with stress by using specific strategies. As such, the following suggestions are provided to help teachers manage their stress levels.

SET REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

As a teacher, you can alleviate some of the stress caused by role overload by setting realistic expectations for yourself (Greer & Greer, 1992; Shaw, Bensky, & Dixon, 1981 as cited in ERIC Digest, 1989). As part of their preservice education, special education teachers are taught to identify the individual needs of students and develop individualized programs for these students. Thus, teachers may develop the expectation that being a successful teacher translates into the ability to solve all students' problems (Greer & Greer, 1992). Although this expectation is commendable, it is not always possible, particularly for beginning teachers. To competently manage the challenging, diverse needs of students with disabilities, professionals need to perform at a high level in the areas of curriculum, behavior management, instructional management, collaboration, and paperwork completion. Attempting perfection in each of these areas, especially early in your career, may be unrealistic. Instead, consider targeting one area for improvement over the course of a year and learn as much as you can either through reading, completing course work, or sharing with colleagues. You can also develop more realistic expectations of what you can accomplish. It is impossible to complete all aspects of an overwhelming job with perfection, so setting priorities is a must. List the jobs you must accomplish on a daily basis and determine those that are a priority to you personally and to your administration, and deal with those jobs in order of importance.

Develop more realistic expectations about what you can accomplish with students. Reduce the scope and intensity of the emotional relationship you have with students by learning to see them in a more objective light. When working with students with disabilities, teachers can find themselves frustrated by the slow progress students make in learning and in managing their own behavior. In this case, teachers need to remind themselves of the severity of their students' challenges and realize that lack of student progress does not necessarily indicate shortcomings on the teacher's part. Also, realize that although you care for your students, you can only accomplish so much in a school day. If you are working hard each day for your students, pat yourself on the back and recognize that you cannot do it all.

MAKE DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN YOUR JOB AND YOUR PERSONAL LIFE

Today, a host of sociological factors, such as poverty, child abuse, and single parent families, affect many school-age children. Consequently, teachers are faced with educating students who present a complex array of problems. Being able to show empathy for students and their problems without allowing those problems to consume you is critical. "Teachers who become closely involved and preoccupied with the personal and family problems of their students may increase their vulnerability to burnout" (Greer & Greer, 1992, p. 170). When you leave the classroom, do the mental work necessary to leave thoughts of your students in the work environment. If you need to share feelings or vent frustrations, set aside a time once or twice a week to discuss them with another teacher, friend, or significant other. When you discuss frustrations, try to find solutions to the stressful situation. Repeated discussion about your frustrations without any solution only heightens them.

EXERCISE PROFESSIONAL DISCRETION AND INCREASE YOUR AUTONOMY

In bureaucracies, authority is "commonly expressed in rules, job descriptions, and work schedules" (Pines & Arons, 1988, p. 109). Often the environment seems inflexible at first

glance, but in reality the rules are frequently general and open to interpretation. Thus, evaluate each aspect of your job and determine changes to improve your environment that you can reasonably make. Focus your energy on those changes, and leave behind changes that are not within your control. Focusing on "the possible" increases your sense of power and control.

DON'T EXPECT PRAISE FROM THE BOSS

Relying on the principal or district special education director to provide recognition for your hard work is most likely unrealistic. Look for alternative sources of reinforcement, such as students, colleagues, friends, or parents. Also, increase the probability of obtaining reinforcement by informing supervisors and parents of your successes. For example, keep records of student progress that you can share with others.

INCREASE YOUR EFFICACY

Teachers who have a heightened sense of efficacy, that is, confidence in their ability to teach and manage students, may be less vulnerable to stress because they perceive themselves as having the tools to do their jobs (Bandura, 1993). By keeping records of student progress, you can receive direct feedback on your efforts (Greer & Greer, 1992). Being able to observe student progress is essential, as it is likely to increase your sense of efficacy (Guskey, 1985) and thus reduce the stress you experience. Additionally, implementing best practices in your classroom can increase your sense of efficacy. When you implement best practices and see the resulting student progress, your sense of efficacy typically increases (Englert & Tarrant, 1995; Guskey, 1985).

DEVELOP PERSONAL COPING STRATEGIES

Teachers would be well-advised to develop strategies to cope with stress in their teaching positions and personal lives. Research on stress suggests that people have two basic approaches

to coping with stress: active and inactive coping strategies. People who use active coping strategies are attempting to change the source of stress or themselves. In contrast, persons who use inactive coping strategies avoid or deny the source of stress. Active coping strategies are considerably more effective in managing stress.

Direct active strategies

When teachers use direct active coping strategies, they directly intervene with the source of the stress in a way that minimizes the stressful situation. Pines and Aronson (1988) have identified three direct active strategies that employees can use to more effectively manage stress.

First, you can change the source of your stress. You can reduce stress by changing the nature of the stressful situation. For instance, if you perceive that general education teachers in your building are not supportive of your efforts to include students, you may be able to work with your building principal and a general education teacher who is an ally to provide staff development sessions focusing on effective instruction or behavior management for students with disabilities and high-risk students. These staff development sessions could be conducted at faculty meetings or during teacher workdays. By selecting adaptations that are concrete and easy to implement, providing opportunities for ongoing dialogue about the implementation, and supporting teachers in their efforts to learn selected techniques, you can begin to change the practices of your general education colleagues (Gersten & Woodward, 1990). Once your colleagues can see change in students with disabilities, they should be more confident in their ability to teach students with disabilities and more willing to teach these students (Guskey, 1985).

Second, you can confront the source of your stress. You can directly deal with stress by discussing problems you are having with a colleague or student. For instance, you may find that you are encountering difficulties working with your paraprofessional. To work through these difficulties, you can suggest to your paraprofessional that there appear to be some notable tensions when you work together. By airing these difficulties and attempting to negotiate a solution, you may be able to resolve

your problems.

Third, you can adopt a positive attitude. When you focus on the positive aspects of your work situation, you can change how you perceive stress and cope with stressful events more effectively (Pines & Aronson, 1988). Try keeping a cheerful, upbeat attitude and remind yourself continually about the aspects of your job that you enjoy. Also, focus on giving others in your environment positive feedback. When you exhibit a positive outlook, others may seek your company, and in turn, you might receive the recognition and support you need.

Indirect active strategies

When teachers use indirect active coping strategies, they attempt to reduce their stress by releasing it or engaging in activities known to reduce stress. They do not, however, attempt to change the source of the stress. The following are a list of indirect active strategies that have been cited in the literature as effective (Greer & Greer, 1992; Pines & Aronson, 1988).

First, you can talk about the source of your stress. As mentioned earlier, seeking the support of others to discuss your stress may be helpful. Talking stressful situations over with a trusted colleague or friend may help you to resolve problems you are encountering. Often, people find that after discussing issues that are disturbing them they are less stressed, particularly when they can generate solutions for the stressful situation. Carefully select the person with whom you want to share your troubles. A person who can keep confidences and help you see the situation more objectively is often the best source of support.

Second, you can change the way you perceive the source of your stress. When people change the way they view the stress, they are taking steps toward reducing their stress. As mentioned earlier, developing more realistic expectations about your students goes a long way toward relieving guilt, worry, and subsequent stress. Also, examine the personality and strengths of other professionals in your environment. Determining what you can realistically expect from these professionals will assist you in identifying those persons from whom you can solicit support.

Third, you can get involved in other activities that take your mind off school issues. Finding hobbies, exercising, and seeking social outlets outside of school will help you to mentally distance yourself from work. Exercising is documented to be particularly effective in reducing stress (Long, 1988) and the physical symptoms associated with stress. Also, having time for yourself, whether you are exercising or engaging in another enjoyable activity, is paramount to gathering your thoughts and rejuvenating yourself.

Finally, you can change your diet to reduce stress. Certain foods, such as coffee, chocolate, and soft drinks, are loaded with caffeine, a stimulant known to increase anxiety. If you are experiencing extreme stress, try cutting caffeine products out of your diet. Also, teachers' diets often overemphasize refined carbohydrates and fatty foods with an inadequate emphasis on fiber (Bradfield & Fones, 1984). Decreasing your fat, sugar, and caffeine intake while increasing your intake of fruits and vegetables may help you feel better physically and mentally.

Researchers have established that effective coping strategies reduce workplace related stress. District and school administrators, however, are ultimately responsible for reducing stress in the school environment (see Aronson & Pines, 1988). Expecting teachers to better manage their stress in an unsupportive environment where clear role expectations do not exist is an unproductive approach to resolving teacher burnout problems. Efforts to create more productive, caring, clearly defined work situations and improve teachers' skills are the best prevention against teacher stress.

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Excerpted from Eric Digest #E545

<http://www.eric.ed.gov/>



Tips for Teachers:
Available online from the U.S. Department of Education.....

Survival Guide for New Teachers:
**How New Teachers Can Work Effectively with
Veteran Teachers, Parents, Principals, and Teacher Educators**
<http://www.ed.gov/teachers/become/about/survivalguide/index.html>

- Message for New Teachers
 - The Importance of Support
 - What Does "Sink or Swim" Mean?
 - New Initiatives
 - A National Issue
 - The Age of Knowledge Meets the Little Red Schoolhouse

- Working With Veteran Teachers
 - Rich Rewards
 - The Negative Side of the Veteran Teacher Equation
 - The Toughest Students
 - Encouraging Best Practice

- Working With Parents
 - Connecting With Parents
 - Making Parents Allies and Helpers
 - Parents Make a Difference
 - Disinterested Parents

- Working With Principals
 - Professional Development
 - Mentors
 - Discipline
 - Other Helpful Supports

- Working With College and University Education Professors
 - Partnerships With Local Institutions
 - The Real World

- Conclusions: First-Year Teachers Need More Support
- Help Desk: Resources for First-Year Teachers
- Acknowledgments
- About Sallie Mae and the First Class Awards

For the user's convenience, this publication is also available in portable document format (pdf) [2.0MB]. To read pdf files you will need Adobe's Acrobat Reader; if you do not have Acrobat, you can download a free copy from Adobe.

VIOLENCE IN COMMUNITIES AND SCHOOLS

A Stress Reduction Guide for Teachers and Other School Staff

<http://www.neahin.org/programs/mentalhealth/stressguide-contents.htm>

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Stressor 1: Feeling isolated and/or powerless.

- Build/sustain peer connections by providing intern programs, providing mentoring programs; designating teacher leaders; and organizing teaching teams.
- Involve teachers in decision-making.
- Provide recognition.
- Provide performance incentives that increase cooperation rather than foster competition.
- Build/support effective community involvement in schools.

Stressor 2: Lack of training and/or skills needed to identify and address students' behavior that is potentially problematic.

- Build and maintain partnerships between schools and post-secondary schools of education and other post-secondary education institutions for pre-service and in-service training.
- Provide experiential learning and classroom simulation in pre-service and in-service training.
- Recognize and utilize existing expertise among school staff for in-service training and workshops.
- Develop and maintain school/community partnerships for access to community-based training and consultation resources.

Stressor 3: Lack of clear expectations and lack of classroom and school-wide management to meet those expectations.

- Develop clear, concrete, school-wide (i.e., for all classrooms and for all non-classroom school settings) expectations for student behavior.
- Effectively communicate expectations regarding discipline and student behavior to everyone in the school community.
- School leaders and administration must support school staff whenever they take action that is within school guidelines and/or policy to respond to student behavior or discipline problems.
- Identify/research best practices for your (i.e., the teacher's or the school's) particular needs.

Stressor 4: Fear of verbal, emotional or physical intimidation.

- Training/participation in violence prevention programs.
- Provide a realistic assessment of risk and facilitate adequate, accurate communication among school personnel, parents and others.
- Maintain school safety and crisis response plans and procedures.
- Create/maintain partnerships with law enforcement, mental health and other community-based agencies and personnel.

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II. What Can We Do About Burnout? (cont.)

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What Can We Do About Burnout? (cont.)

NATIONAL SCHOOL CLIMATE CENTER (NSCC)

Educating minds and hearts, because the Three Rs are not enough
www.schoolclimate.org



SCHOOL CLIMATE AND ADULT LEARNING

Schools can support and nurture effective adult learning through the following promising strategies:

1. Shared leadership provides the optimal foundation for successful professional improvement efforts.
2. Engage the entire adult school community in creating a shared vision.
3. Promote professional development through effective policies and supports.
4. Consider developing professional learning communities.
5. Use available resources to address identified needs.

February 2013

By Jonathan Cohen and Philip Brown

Overview

School climate reform, an evidence-based strategy, supports K-12 students, school personnel, parents/guardians and community members learning and working together to promote pro-social education. Done well, these efforts will result in even safer, more supportive, engaging, helpfully challenging and harmonious schools. The U.S. Department of Education, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, the Institute for Educational Sciences, President Obama's Bully Prevention Partnership, the US Departments of Justice and Education's School Discipline Consensus project, a growing number of State Departments of Education and foreign educational ministries support and/or endorse school climate renewal as a strategy to increase student learning and achievement, enhance school connectedness, reduce high school dropout rates, prevent bullying and other forms of violence, and enhance teacher retention rates.

School Climate and Adult Learning

First, this brief summarizes research about the inter-relationship between positive school climate and adult learning as well as a summary of helpful and research-based adult learning strategies. Second, this brief examines a series of strategies that schools can consider that support adult learning in ways that promote student learning and achievement as well as positive and sustained school climates.

School Climate and Adult Learning: The school's climate supports or undermines educators' capacity to be adult learners, which in turn has an important impact on their capacity to promote student learning and achievement.

II. What Can We Do About Burnout? (cont.)

E. Models

- (1) Supporting Professionals-at-Risk: Evaluating Interventions to Reduce Burnout and Improve Retention of Special Educators
- (2) Meeting the Challenge
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II. What Can We Do About Burnout? (cont.)

E. Models

(1) Supporting Professionals-at-Risk: Evaluating Interventions to Reduce Burnout and Improve Retention of Special Educators

Elizabeth Cooley, Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development
Paul Yovanoff, Alder Group, Inc.

Two interventions were designed to equip participants with specific problem-solving and coping strategies for dealing more effectively with the stressors they encounter on the job. The interventions targeted *self-preservation skill* for educators - those skills and strategies most likely to help an individual remain relatively “sane,” even in relatively “insane” places. On first glance, one might construe our approach to be a quick fix, because its duration was only 10 weeks at 2 hr/week. And naturally, given the complexity and scope of the systemic issues that contribute to teachers' burnout and attrition, a 10-week program might seem inadequate. Nevertheless, even as more large-scale organizational or political interventions are developed and implemented toward redress of the larger problems, we believed it would be worth while to assist practicing professionals in managing the immediate situations before them - that is, to do the best they can with what they've got. Specifically, the program consisted of two interventions.

Intervention 1: Stress Management-Burnout Prevention Workshops

As mentioned, many of the stressful aspects of the special education teaching profession are either inherent to the situation or difficult to change. Moreover, the burnout that often results from demanding and stressful working conditions can itself exacerbate difficulties because of its accompanying negative, self-defeating coping behaviors.

Coping takes many forms. Approaches to handling stress may be either *direct* (e.g., changing the source of stress) or *indirect* (e.g., changing the way one thinks about or physically responds to the stress to reduce its impact). In addition, coping strategies may be *active* (e.g., taking some action to change oneself or the situation) or *inactive* (e.g., avoiding or denying the source of stress). In general, active strategies are more effective than inactive ones, while both direct and indirect strategies can be constructive (Pines & Aronson, 1988).

The program consisted of five weekly 2-hr workshops that were informal and supportive, and that followed a format of interactive presentation, small/large-group discussion, applications during sessions, and practice between sessions. The content for these sessions targeted three types of coping skills:

1. Skills for changing the situation itself: Situational coping skills.

Drawing on management and problem-solving literature, these sessions offered two frameworks for looking at and changing stressful situations by first identifying the changeable aspects and then using a problem-solving approach to develop and carry out an action plan for creating solutions. Participants were also provided specific assertive communication tools for enlisting the cooperation of others in seeking and implementing positive change, and for setting and keeping appropriate limits.

2. Skills for changing one's physical response to the situation: Physiological coping skills.

Stress is fundamentally a form of wear and tear on the body. Thus, we drew on a variety of literature on physiological stress-coping strategies for these sessions. Participants learned both long (30-min) and very short (30-s) forms of muscle relaxation that can be used for self-renewal in everyday work situations (Woolfolk & Lehrer, 1984). As well, we touched on other physiological approaches for coping with stress (e.g., nutrition and stretching).

3. Skills for changing how one thinks about the situation:

Cognitive coping skills.

Simply put, much stress happens "between the ears" as a result of our thoughts and beliefs, or cognitions. These sessions drew on cognitive therapy literature and targeted ways to replace self-defeating, self-limiting beliefs with beliefs that are more constructive, realistic, and empowering. Participants learned first to recognize distorted or self-defeating beliefs and then to coach themselves and one another to think differently about themselves or about the situation. Specifically, they coached one another in ways to let go of unrealistic, even tyrannical expectations they held of themselves given the limitations and realities of the situations they faced and to give themselves permission to view their best efforts as good enough.

All sessions followed a format of interactive lecture, small-group discussions and role plays, with homework assignments that provided participants the opportunity to try out the skills and new behaviors in their work environments. Each session began with small- and large-group discussion of the experiences gained via the homework assignments, and assignments were turned in for the instructors' review and feedback.

Intervention 2: The Peer Collaboration Program

Because of the apparent value of collegial support in preventing or alleviating job stress and burnout, researchers have advocated creating more regular opportunities for peer support for special education teachers and others in stressful job roles.

Due to its emphasis on supportive, constructive dialogue between professional peers, this intervention seems to have potential for addressing issues of collegial isolation and lack of administrative support among special educators.

The Peer Collaboration Program, as originally developed, consisted of training pairs of teachers to use a four-step collegial dialogue to assist each other in identifying and solving student related problems. For this study, it was modified to apply other work-related problems as well. Via this process, each member of the pair takes a turn as - "initiator" (the one presenting a problem) and a "facilitator" (the one providing assistance in problem-solving). The four steps were as *follows*:

- 1. Clarifying.** The initiating teacher brings a brief, written description of the problem and responds to clarifying questions asked by the facilitator. This step is the longest of the four designed to assist the initiating teacher to think of the problem in different or expanded ways. This step continues until the initiating teacher feels that all of the relevant issues have been covered and is ready to move on to summarizing.
- 2. Summarizing.** In this step, the initiating teacher summarizes three facets of the problem being discussed: the specific patterns of behavior that are problematic, the teacher's typical response to them, and the particular aspects of the problem that fall under the teacher's control.
- 3. Intervention and Prediction.** The teachers together generate three possible action plans, and the initiator predicts possible positive and negative outcomes for each one. The initiator then chooses one of the solutions for implementation.
- 4. Evaluation.** The initiator develops a two part plan to evaluate the solution's effectiveness. The first part consists of a plan to answer the question "Did I do it?" (i.e., implementation of the solution), and the second part consists of ways to answer the question "Did it work?" (i.e., impact on targeted outcomes).

Participants attended one 3-hr training sessions in which the process was described, modeled, and practiced with feedback from other participants and from the instructors.

**From Supporting Professionals-at-Risk:
Evaluating Interventions to Reduce Burnout and Improve Retention of Special Educators.
E. Cooley & P. Yovanoff (1996). Exceptional Children, Vol. 62, No. 4, pp.336-355.**

II. What Can We Do About Burnout? (cont.)

E. Models (cont.)

(2) Meeting the Challenge: Recruiting and Retaining Teachers in Hard-to-Staff Schools

AFT Teachers: Excerpted from <http://www.aft.org/pubs-reports/downloads/teachers/h2s.pdf>

High-poverty schools do not exist in isolation—they exist in communities. The societal ills that plague these communities are beyond the control of the students that live within them: joblessness, poverty, gang violence, drug abuse...High-poverty students struggle to balance academic expectations with these non-school factors that impede learning. Teachers, administrators and other school-based educators cannot solve all of the societal problems that plague high-poverty communities. Providing students in these schools with the quality teachers and resources addresses their educational needs. Addressing the other needs of children requires support from other members of the community who are equally committed to student achievement.

School factors that draw teachers in—or push them away.

If we listen to the reasons teachers give regarding why they leave their schools or the profession, they often cite the following:

- Student discipline problems and personal safety concerns;
- Lack of on-site support and intervention for students experiencing learning difficulties;
- Poor administrative leadership and support;
- Unhealthy physical plant;
- Lack of faculty influence on decisions that affect student learning;
- Inadequate ongoing, job-embedded professional development and other supports;
- Lack of student academic success;
- Inadequate time for planning, preparation, instruction; and
- Excessive classroom intrusions.

Conclusions

Recruiting and retaining teachers to hard-to-staff schools is not an exact science. Success requires a strategic mix of best practice, with consideration of local conditions, political will and financial commitment.

All teachers want to succeed in the classroom. Teaching and learning cannot take place in environments where basic needs go unmet. Teaching and learning can thrive only in schools where safety is guaranteed, trust developed and the stage properly set for learning. When the necessary resources are in place and implemented properly, and when staff are trained to move forward with instruction to assist students in achieving at their highest levels, recruiting and retaining teachers in hard-to-staff schools will be much less difficult. To this end, drawing teachers to and keeping them in hard-to-staff schools requires the collective commitment of stakeholders to meet, discuss and promote this agenda. For some, this means developing new partnerships and letting go of past missteps. ultimately, it means moving forward and working together.

II. What Can We Do About Burnout? (cont.)

E. Models (cont.)

*From: Technical Aid Packet from the Center Downloadable
from: <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/support.htm>*

(3) SCHOOL-BASED MUTUAL SUPPORT GROUPS: AN OVER VIEW

On the experience of being in a mutual support group:

*There is the exhilarating feeling that one is no longer alone-- that
all are in the same boat, whether they can row it or not.*

What are Mutual Support Groups?

Essentially, mutual support groups are “composed of members who share a common condition, situation, heritage, symptom, or experience. They are largely self-governing and self-regulating. They emphasize self-reliance and generally offer a face-to-face or phone-to-phone fellowship network, available and accessible without charge. They tend to be self-supporting rather than dependent on external funding” (Lieberman, 1986,p.745).

Mutual support groups assume various forms, from the highly structured daily meeting format of the 12-Step programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous to the more informal gatherings of friends and co-workers. Among other variables, mutual support groups differ according to size, longevity, structure, technology, level of development, purported goals, public image, and relationships with other mutual support groups and community service systems (Borkman, 1990; Powell, 1987). The form of mutual support groups is limited only by the needs and ingenuity of their members.

What are the Benefits of Mutual Support?

Summarizing the benefits of mutual support, authors of the training manual for group starters produced by the California Self-Help Center (CS-HC) state that “groups of people with common concerns start with a potential for mutual understanding and empathy which helps build trust, openness and a feeling of belonging, which in turn, enhances coping, problem solving and self-empowerment.”

For the socially isolated, mutual support groups reduce the sense of aloneness, offering a new community of peers that can be supportive both during and between group meetings. In addition to receiving emotional members acquire practical advice and information from individuals in similar predicaments or life circumstances. Mutual support groups also provide the opportunity for optimistic peer comparisons, as members realize with relief that their problems really are not so extraordinary and that others with similar problems are working toward their resolution. Finally, members of mutual support groups benefit from what Reissman (1965) has called the helper-therapy principle. According to Reissman, helpers often benefit more than the helped. Helping others purportedly (a) increases feelings of independence, social usefulness, interpersonal competence, and equality with others, (b) begets social approval, and (c) results in personalized learning and self-reinforcement (Gartner & Reissman, 1977).

II. What Can We Do About Burnout? (cont.)

E. Models (cont.)

(4) DEBRIEFING DEBRIEFERS

There are at least three good answers to the first question: vicarious traumatization, cumulative stress and critical self judgments.

Vicarious traumatization is a term being used these days to define the phenomena of debriefers identifying with the pain or loss of the debriefees. It may be that they realize this could or has happened to them, or have had a recent loss of their own which makes them more vulnerable to the distress being discussed in the debriefing.

Cumulative stress is something we teach in CISM, but sometimes fall to pay attention to in ourselves. Too many debriefings in too short a time, or without a good self stress management system can set the scene for burning out in doing CISD work.

The last area, for this article, is the fact that debriefers often are very critical of their performance within the debriefing. We play the game of I coulda, I shoulda, if only I had (not) said.... and of course we play it on our way home alone. The debriefer who does this automatically sets themselves up for feelings of failure.

We feel that these areas are excellent reasons to make sure that debriefer's debriefings are a standard operating procedure. Most of the time this will only take a few minutes and can be done by the Event Team Leader, however, if it has been a long series of debriefings around a major event, or has been a particularly difficult debriefing, the Debriefers Debriefing should be done by someone not directly involved in the original debriefing(s). We believe that they should be done before the team goes home, but after particularly difficult ones, the next day or two will work.

When the topic of debriefing debriefers comes up, Two questions are frequently asked, why should we really take the extra time to do it? and how do you do it anyway?

We have evolved a four step process (collapsing the regular CISD steps) as follows:

- 1 How did it go? (Fact Thought)
 - Were the participants active?
 - What themes emerged?
 - Any surprises?
- 2 What was the hardest part of this debriefing for you? (Reaction Symptom)
 - Of all the things you said or did, about what are you most worried?
 - About what are you most likely to berate yourself?
- 3 Tell me one thing you learned from this. (Teaching)
- 4 What are you going to do to take care of yourself tonight? (Re-entry)

By using this model, team members are able to find that they are not alone in their reactions during the debriefing, that their fears about something they did were seen as minor or even helpful by the team and usually a great deal of group support is evident.

By now you clearly recognize that the purpose of this model is identical to why we do debriefings in the first place. Since we all believe so strongly in the model and helping others, let's not forget to model the behaviors ourselves!

Dennis Potter, MSW and Paul LaBerteaux, PsyD

Dennis and Paul are members of both local and statewide network of teams in Michigan. They have developed a training video on this topic which was presented at the 3rd World Congress. For more information, you can reach them at (616) 261-0626.



III. Resources & References

A. Center Quick Find on Burnout

B. Agencies, Organizations, and Internet Resources

C. Selected References for Minimizing Burnout

A. Center Quick Find

For additional resources related to Burnout, see the Center Quick Find entitled Burnout – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/burnout.htm>

B. Agencies, Organizations & Internet Resources Offering Assistance Related to Understanding and Minimizing Burnout

The following is a list of sites on the World Wide Web that offer information and resources related to issues such as burnout, professional development, and school reform. This list is not a comprehensive list, but is meant to highlight some premier resources and serve as a beginning for your search.

The Internet is a useful tool for finding some basic resources. For a start, search using the terms burnout and stress management.

American Institute of Stress (AIS)
<http://www.stress.org>

Anxiety Disorders Association of America
<http://www.adaa.org/>

STAR - Stress and Anxiety Research Society
www.star-society.org/

Stress Free NET
<http://www.stressfree.com/>

Stress Management Resources
<http://www.stresstips.com/>

Teachers Helping Teachers
<http://www.pacificnet.net/~mandel/>

C. Selected References for Minimizing Burnout

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Coda

Anyone who works in school knows about burnout. Staggering workloads, major problems, and endless hassles are the name of the game. The many frustrations, large and small, affect staff (and student) morale and mental health. As with so many other problems, if ignored, burnout takes a severe toll. Rather than suffer through it all, staff who bring a mental health and motivational perspective to schools can take a leadership role to address the problem. In doing so, they need to focus on both promoting well-being and addressing barriers to teaching and learning.

Finally, remember: ***Burnout is a school-wide concern.***

School-wide the focus must be on ensuring development of a unified, comprehensive, and equitable approach to addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students. The prototypes developed by the Center have delineated and operationalized such a component and it is being pioneered at state, district, and school levels as a learning support component and a comprehensive student support system. See the information provided by the *2015 National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html> .