Effective Stress Reduction Strategies to Help Prevent and Manage Burnout

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OBJECTIVES

1. Identification of the difference between stress and burnout
2. What types of situations trigger stress and eventual burnout
3. Discussion around what stresses you
4. Explore ways to reverse and prevent teacher/staff burnout
WHILE MANY TEACHERS DO MAKE TEACHING A LIFELONG CAREER, WITH NEWER TEACHERS, AS MANY AS 41.3% LEAVE THE PROFESSION WITHIN 5 YEARS.

Source: Perda, D. 2013 Transitions Into and Out of Teaching. A Longitudinal Analysis of Early Career teacher Turnover University of Pennsylvania
WHAT CAUSES TEACHER BURNOUT?
CURRENT STATISTICS

“In March 2021, 42% of teachers declared they have considered leaving or retiring from their current position during the last year. Of these, slightly more than half say it was because of COVID-19.”

Data via a survey of 1,045 teachers administered in March 2021.
DIVING DEEPER

Top 3 reasons for considering leaving teaching:

1. First, a larger proportion of those approaching retirement age reported having considered leaving or retiring because of COVID-19, which could be problematic if schools begin to lose their more-experienced teachers.

2. Second, most teachers had to change instructional mode at least once during the year (and many experienced multiple disruptions) and having to change instructional modes was associated with an increased probability of considering leaving or retiring.

3. Finally, COVID-19 health concerns were also associated with an increased probability of considering leaving.
What is the Difference Between Stress and Burnout?

STRESS vs BURNOUT

- Overengagement
- Reactive or over reactive emotions
- Sense of urgency and hyperactivity
- Lost or diminished energy
- Leads to anxiety
- Physically tolling

- Disengagement
- Blunted or distant emotions
- Sense of helplessness
- Motivation is lost or diminished
- Leads to feeling depressed
- Emotionally tolling
WHY DO WE HAVE TO MANAGE STRESS?

• Stress is a part of every-day life.
• Our tolerance for stress is in constant flux due to several factors:
  – Sleep, nutrition, exercise, sense of self-efficacy, internal vs. external locus of control, etc.
• If we don’t manage stress, we can be sure it will manage us – it’s a decision.
The difference between Stress and Burnout is the ability to recover in your time off. Burnout begins when you are NOT able to recharge your batteries between school days. You begin a downward spiral that has three distinct symptoms:

1) Physical and Emotional Exhaustion
2) Depersonalization: cynicism, sarcasm, feeling put upon
3) Reduced Sense of Personal Accomplishments
What is the Difference Between Clinical Depression and Burnout?
### DEPRESSION VS BURNOUT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>DEPRESSION</strong></th>
<th><strong>BURNOUT</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inability to find pleasure in once pleasurable activities</td>
<td>Ability to enjoy non-work activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anger directed internally</td>
<td>Anger directed externally</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unrealistic feelings of guilt</td>
<td>No (or realistic) guilt</td>
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<tr>
<td>Significantly ambivalent</td>
<td>Somewhat ambivalent</td>
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<tr>
<td>More dependent</td>
<td>More dependent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoids conflict</td>
<td>Interpersonal conflicts increase</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overeating / under eating</td>
<td>Appetite unaffected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wakes up early</td>
<td>Difficulty falling asleep</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ARE YOU AT RISK?
DO THE ANSWERS TO THESE QUESTIONS GIVE YOU PAUSE?

- How many nights a week do you eat dinner with your family?
- Can you have a date or dedicated time with your family or friends without threat of interruption?
- What do you normally do from the time you return home from work to the time you go to bed?
RISK FACTORS – WORK ENVIRONMENT

- Work overload
- Lack of control over one’s work
- Insufficient reward for one’s contributions
- Absence of community
- Lack of fairness
- Conflict in values
- Safety concerns
RISK FACTORS – DEMOGRAPHICS

- Younger age
- Early in career
- Lack of life partner or children
- Higher level of education
RISK FACTORS – PERSONALITY TRAITS

• Low self-esteem or confidence
• No recognition of personal limits
• Need for approval
• Overachieving
• Need for autonomy
• Impatience

• Intolerance
• Empathy
• Extreme conscientiousness
• Perfectionism
• Self-giving
THE MODERN SCHOOLTEACHER

Disheveled hair from getting up at 5:00 after getting to bed at 1:00.

Prank from student (future cartoonist).

Lesson plans, papers to grade and grade books to update by tomorrow.

Money for classroom supplies (out of her own pocket).

Note from parent saying teachers get paid too much.

Shoes for traffic duty, playground duty, cafeteria duty and that really fast brat.
• High level of responsibility and little control over the outcome
• Intense encounters with sick, scared or disabled individuals
• Lack of training on how to create and maintain boundaries with our students/parents of students AND between work and life
• Lack of formal leadership skills training
• Pressure to perform at full steam all day long
INVISIBLE DAILY STRESSORS & OBSTACLES

- Care occurs behind the closed door – when we are one-on-one with our students
- Confusing financial incentives
- Legal risks, reform and politics
- Documentation
- Shifting organizational structures
Fuel Sources:
Physical level (Body) - ability to get up and go
Emotional level (Mind) – emotionally availability and compassion for self and others
Spiritual level (Spirit) – your connection to your professional/ personal Purpose in your work ... “WHY”

Our Goal is to keep the “TANK” full because you can operate for a very long time on empty
BURNOUT – SYMPTOMS

- Can not recharge, depleted at all three levels
- Physical, Emotional, Spiritual Exhaustion
- Depersonalization - cynicism, sarcasm, feeling put upon
- Reduced Sense of Personal Accomplishment-Doubt
BURNOUT – SIGNS

- You have a high tolerance of stress
- Your practice is exceptionally chaotic
- You don’t agree with your boss’ values or leadership
- You’re the emotional buffer
- Your job constantly interferes with family events
- You lack control over your work schedule and free time
- You don’t take care of yourself
BURNOUT – STAGES

1. Burnout and stress vary from day to day - asymptomatic
2. Burnout symptoms are intermittent - feeling fine more often than not
3. Symptomatic of more often than not - occasionally feel at full strength and “your normal compassionate self”
4. Long time since you felt at full strength “hanging in there” and “doing the best you can”, trying to convince yourself this is how all teachers feel ...
5. Chronically symptomatic - occasionally enters the danger zone
6. Something is going to break very soon - contemplating quitting teaching, self medicating with drugs or alcohol, major depression, deterioration of significant relationships, health
What can you do to reverse it?
BURNOUT – SOLUTIONS

- **Recover** energy lost at work and refuel your tank

- **RESTORING BALANCE.** What is important to you outside of your career? What are those things that fill you up, recharge your batteries and your bank accounts.

- Sleep, good nutrition and regular exercise are a great start. What relationships, activities, hobbies, experiences build you up, make you smile? What is on your Bucket List?

- **Restore is also about creating (and defending) BOUNDARIES** between your work life and your larger life. This skill is absolutely essential when preventing burnout.
BURNOUT – SOLUTIONS

Respond rather than react to lower the stress present in your workplace by exerting some control in one or more of the following four ways.

1) Keep doing what you are doing now ... just less of it
2) Change the stressors that lead to burnout without changing jobs
3) Change jobs to a position that is less stressful inside education
4) Quit teaching to retire and/or make a living doing something different.
BURNOUT – SOLUTIONS

• Check in and assess what Resilience, Replenish, Respond are at on a regular basis
• Learn and practice Mindfulness
RESOURCES

• Intelligence, learning agility, hard working, the drive to do our best
• Focus on “WHY” you became an educator, your purpose
• Invested many years of your life in school for teaching
• Respected member of the community
• Our families love and support
• Life outside teaching where you can recharge and recuperate
How do you prevent it?
PERSONAL BURNOUT PREVENTION MEASURES

• Self awareness and mindfulness training
• Work/Life balance and healthy boundaries between work and non-work life areas
• Lowering stress by
  • Practicing good self-care
  • Learning effective leadership skills
  • Exerting control where possible over your work hours
    Creating focus where possible on work activities that provide the most meaning
IMAGINE...

• You are able to remain centered, calm, focused and compassionate at work in the midst of chaos
• Your energetic TANK is full, life is balanced because you have proactively structured it to be this way
• You work with a well functioning team, seeing students you enjoy in a reasonable volume for a satisfying salary
• Individually none of these points are earth shattering ... however, in combination they significantly reduce Teacher Burnout
Thank you!!!