

**KEEPING THE SPARK ALIVE: A HANDBOOK OF IDEAS  
TO HELP TEACHERS MANAGE STRESS AND AVOID BURNOUT**

**MASTER'S PROJECT**

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by

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**Approved by:**

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## DEDICATION

To my husband, Gary

To my children, Danny and Jill

To my parents, Howard and Cyril Smilack

For their love and encouragement

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A special thanks to Dr. Paul N. Lutz  
for his guidance and support

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

### Background

The rate of teacher turnover is high. The statistics are grim and they are revealing. As Martinez (1989) notes:

A . . . Harris poll [in the mid-1980's] of teachers in the United States predicted that one-fourth would leave teaching by 1990 . . . ; the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy (Task Force on Teaching as a Profession, 1986) increased that estimate to 50% by 1992. (p. 271)

Furthermore, nearly one-third of all teachers quit their profession within the first five years of teaching (Schlechty and Vance, as in Martinez, 1989).

Competent teachers at every level are leaving the profession. That is the plain and simple truth. It is true of the kindergarten teacher and of the professor of graduate courses. They have been leaving for years, and they will continue to do so in ever-increasing numbers. Why? (LeBar, 1984, p. 51)

The answer to "Why?" may be found in an examination of teacher stress and burnout, "which may cost as much as \$3.5 billion annually [in the United States and Canada] in absenteeism, turnover, and poor job performance" (Truch, as in Martinez, 1989, p. 271). As Farber (1991, p. 2) states, "Too many teachers become stressed or burned out."

Stress and burnout directly affect the teacher: ". . . stress and burnout affect every facet of a teacher's life — relationships with students, colleagues, administrators, family, and friends" (Farber, 1991, p. 85).

Stress and burnout affect the administration. An indication of teacher stress and burnout is an increase in the time spent recruiting, hiring, and providing orientation for new teachers because of high turnover rates (Fimian, 1982).

And most critically, stress and burnout affect the children. As Calabrese (1987, p. 67) states,

[Problems associated with negative stress in teaching] have a devastating effect on classroom instruction. Teachers who suffer from the effects of stress are prone to become less effective.

This researcher — who has taught as a full-time and substitute teacher in public and private schools and in rural, suburban, and urban settings — has seen the effects of stress and burnout: teachers who spend their free time in the teachers' lounge complaining about the administration, parents, and students; teachers who have lost the spark of creativity and their enthusiasm for teaching — who repeat the same lessons year after year; teachers who have advised the researcher to do "just what you need to do to get by," because "nobody cares."

This researcher has also realized, based on an evaluation of her own undergraduate and graduate training in teacher education, that she has been adequately trained in the methodology of teaching, but has received an inadequate preview of the stress that can accompany teaching and inadequate guidance in the many ways that are available to handle the stress. As Farber (1991, p. 66) notes,

Many teachers, particularly new teachers, feel that their formal education has ill prepared them for the realities of a classroom, much less of a school and its culture.



Teacher stress and burnout have potential far-reaching negative consequences for the teacher, the school administration, the student, and the state of education in our country. Based on a review of the literature on stress and burnout, and on personal experience, this researcher believes that teachers need to develop an awareness of stressful conditions and the effects these conditions have on them, as well as an awareness of the ways they can manage stress and avoid burnout.

### Problem Statement

The purpose of this study was to design a handbook of ideas to help teachers manage stress and avoid burnout.

### Procedure

#### Subjects and Setting

This handbook was designed for teachers at all grade levels and in all school settings (public, private, rural, suburban, urban), because as Farber (1991, p. 263) notes, "at least 10 percent of teachers are burned out regardless of the setting in which they are working." Furthermore, although there may be stressors "unique to specific types of educators," many of the factors that are stressful to teachers in one setting are also stressful to those in other settings (Farber, 1991, p. 246). This handbook will also be of interest to administrators, parents, and other individuals who are concerned about the problems facing teachers in our society.

## Data Collection

The researcher began with a computer search. Information and research data was obtained from journals, periodicals, published educational documents, books, and personal experience.

## Format

The researcher has created a handbook of ideas to help teachers manage stress and avoid burnout. These ideas were collected by the researcher from books, journals, periodicals, and personal experience. Ideas to help teachers manage stress on an individual level, as well as on a school-wide level, are included.

## Definition of Terms

### Burnout —

a work-related syndrome that stems from an individual's perception of a significant discrepancy between effort (input) and reward (output), this perception being influenced by individual, organizational, and social factors. It occurs most often in those who work face to face with troubled or needy clients and is typically marked by withdrawal from and cynicism toward clients, emotional and physical exhaustion, and various psychological symptoms, such as irritability, anxiety, sadness, and lowered self-esteem (Farber, 1991, p. 24)

### Stress — a phenomenon that

occurs when there is a substantial imbalance (perceived or real) between environmental demands and the response capability of the individual. As environmental demands increase or an individual's response capability decreases, the likelihood of stress becoming a negative experience — and ultimately effecting a burned-out state — becomes more probable (Farber, 1991, p. 30).

## Results

The result of this project was a handbook of ideas that can help teachers manage the stress they encounter in their individual teaching situations and, thereby, avoid burnout.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The problem of teacher stress and burnout is a reality. As Farber (1991) states,

The problems facing the teaching profession today are indeed serious, with burnout affecting 10 to 20 percent of all teachers and an attrition rate that, while declining, still eliminates 30 to 40 percent of all new teachers before they've taught for five years. Moreover, even among those teachers who are neither burned out (viewing this condition as an end state) nor leaving the field, many feel chronically stressed. (p. 124)

Kiff (1986) also notes the gravity of the problem:

The effects of teacher burnout are difficult to measure directly, but statistical trends indicate the problem is significant and widespread. Large numbers of teachers have left the profession in the past decade or two. They left or are leaving for jobs they consider more personally and financially rewarding and most importantly, less stressful. Teachers with only a few years on the job are more likely to leave the profession, a fact researchers interpret as caused largely by burnout. The most telling trends are those that indicate increasing numbers of career teachers are opting for early retirement. As a corollary the number of medical claims filed by teachers and teacher absenteeism have also risen. The net effect of teacher burnout is one of costs — costs in human terms to victimized teachers and resultant costs of staggering proportion imposed on the public. (p. 16)

And, while it is clear that the problem of stress and burnout affects the individual teacher, Farber (1991) suggests that "from a societal point of view, the impact of

teacher stress and burnout may be greatest in terms of its potentially devastating effects on pupil education . . . " (p. 85).

The concept of burnout began with the work of Herbert Freudenberger in New York and Christina Maslach and Ayala Pines in California in the early 1970's (Gold, 1985). "Freudenberger . . . coined the term burnout to explain the 'state of physical and emotional depletion resulting from conditions of work'" (Friesen, Prokop, and Sarros, 1988, p. 9). He observed that the "'dedicated and the committed' were the ones most prone to burnout, because they 'work too much, too long and too intensely'" (Friesen et al., 1988, p. 9). Although the initial work on burnout was with child care workers and other social service providers, more recent research has continued with public school teachers (Whiteman, Young, and Fisher, 1985).

Burnout has been defined in various ways during the history of the term (Gold, 1985). One widely accepted concept of burnout has a social-psychological orientation; Maslach and Jackson defined burnout as a "continuous variable consisting of feelings of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment" (Friesen et al., 1988, p. 10).

Emotional exhaustion represents feelings of overextension and exhaustion caused by daily work pressures, particularly as these pressures occur among helpers and clients in the helping service professions. Depersonalization refers to the development of negative attitudes and impersonal responses towards the people with whom one works. . . . Personal accomplishment refers to a demoralized sense of personal achievement, accompanied by a diminished self-esteem. . . . Burnout then is a maladaptive form of coping with work conditions which may be demanding, stressful, and unrewarding. This maladaptive form of coping has deleterious effects on both the individual and the organization in which the burned out individual works. (Friesen et al., 1988, p. 10)

Burnout has also been defined as "behaviorally manifest emotional and physical exhaustion deriving from stressful situational events not adequately met by effective coping strategies" (Farber; Hoover-Dempsey, as in Brissie, Hoover-Dempsey, and Bassler, 1988, p. 106).

"The issue of burnout emanates from the history of stress research" (Richter; Selye, as in Whiteman et al., 1985, p. 299). In the mid-1930's Hans Selye first proposed the concept of stress as an equilibrium state existing between the individual who responds to the demands of the environment and the actual environment; "disequilibrium may have actual causes, perceived causes, or . . . a combination of both actual and perceived causes" (Fimian, 1982, p. 101).

"Although the difference between stress and the phenomenon of burnout may at times be obscure, it seems that burnout is one reaction to stress" (Cherniss, as in Whiteman et al., 1985, p. 299).

Furthermore, burnout seems uniquely applicable to those individuals who spend considerable amounts of energy in order to understand and guide others in gaining insight and overcoming problems. Evidently, working with people rather than objects causes a qualitatively different form of stress, either real or phenomenal. (Whiteman et al., 1985, p. 299)



Stress is a relative phenomenon that "exists not only in the work environment . . . , but in the messages that individuals send themselves about the environmental events that occur around them" (Fimian, 1982, p. 101). The same situation that may prove harmful to one individual, may cause other individuals to thrive (Fimian, 1982). "Stress can be good, bad, or neutral depending on one's reaction to it" (Swick and Hanley, as in Calabrese, 1987, p. 67).



Burnout may follow for those individuals who have a negative reaction to stress. According to Farber and Miller (1981), symptoms of teacher burnout include:

. . . anger, anxiety, irritability, depression, fatigue, boredom, cynicism, guilt, substance abuse (alcohol or drugs), psychosomatic symptomatology, and, in extreme cases, paranoid ideation. Marital and family crises are also likely to arise among teachers who are burned out. On a professional level, the consequences of these symptoms may include diminished professional performance, excessive sick leave, and premature retirement. Stated more descriptively, teachers who become burned out may plan classes less often or less carefully, may be less sympathetic toward students, may expect less effort from their students and less reward from their jobs, may have a lower tolerance for frustration in the classroom, may frequently feel emotionally or physically exhausted, may develop a numbed or "depersonalized" state as a way of distancing themselves from perceived threats, may fantasize or actually plan on leaving the profession, and, in general, may feel less committed and dedicated to their work. (p. 237)

Wiggers, Forney, and Wallace-Schutzman (1982) emphasize that "in keeping with the individualized nature of burnout, no specific set of symptoms characterize all people who are burning out" (p. 14). They state:

\* People experience a variety of physical symptoms such as muscle tension, headaches, sleeplessness, tiredness, and psychological states such as apathy, defensiveness, and anger. The authors have noted, however, a significant trend toward extremes, seeing burned out individuals who are very detached from their work and those who are overly involved in it. (p. 14)

W. Werner (1982), reporting the results of a study involving 1,400 teachers in Clark County, Nevada who were asked how stress had affected their health, noted:

A majority (51.4 percent) of respondents said they had experienced stress-related physical illness (i.e., tension headaches, sleeplessness, hypertension, colitis, ulcers, asthma, heart problems, respiratory problems, lower back pain, stomachache, teeth-grinding, and kidney infection) during the previous four years. A surprising proportion

(58 percent) indicated that they had seriously considered leaving the profession because of stress-related problems. (p. 13)

While the symptoms of stress and burnout vary from individual to individual, Farber (1991) has described in detail his understanding of the general course of teacher burnout as follows:

Ordinarily, teachers begin their work with enthusiasm and dedication, with a sense that their work is socially meaningful and will yield great personal satisfactions. The inevitable difficulties of teaching . . . interact with personal issues and vulnerabilities, as well as social pressures and values, to engender a sense of frustration and force a reassessment of the possibilities of the job and the investment one wants to make in it. The task (educating children) seems overwhelming and one's efforts insignificant, virtually useless. With less investment in the work, fewer rewards accrue and greater withdrawal occurs; one attempts to balance investment in work with the perception of available rewards. The demands of teaching begin to feel more debilitating, the distractions more annoying, the classroom disturbances more aggravating, the pupils less caring, the parents more demanding, the administrators less sensitive, and the colleagues less supportive. Caring fades; energy is depleted; attempts to recruit support grow more infrequent and haphazard. Anger comes easily; patience becomes a scarce commodity. The children, once perceived as innocent victims, are now viewed as spoiled, or undersocialized, or lacking in values. Their needs, even when seen as legitimate, are no longer of greater priority than one's own. Headaches, backaches, and stomachaches abound and are resentfully attributed to the job; too often they're treated with alcohol or inappropriate drugs. Absences increase and are viewed as "mental health days." Increasingly, one thinks of quitting; the idea of spending one's whole life in the classroom becomes intolerable. The job has become devoid of its original meaning; ultimately, paychecks alone serve as motivation to come to work. Burnout is now apparent to others and even personally acknowledged – but where to go and what to do are difficult issues, and so preparations to teach another day are resignedly and perfunctorily undertaken. (pp. 35-36)

What causes teachers to burn out and lose their zest for teaching? The teacher who experiences burnout is under stress – stress which, depending upon the individual and the situation, may have many different origins.



Feitler and Tokar (1980), in a study of 3,300 teachers in grades K-12, found that "the majority of teachers, 58 percent, ranked 'individual pupils who continually misbehave' as the number one cause of job-related stress" (pp. 456-457). Furthermore, "it seems that teacher stress was produced more often by one or two students who chronically misbehave, rather than general lack of discipline or widespread student behavior problems . . ." (p. 457). As Farber (1991) states,

That the problem of student discipline ranks at or near the top of teacher stress surveys is not surprising; my experience is that nothing gets teachers so worked up and so ready to leave the profession as this issue. . . . Having to constantly deal with violent or disruptive students reduces teachers' status in their own eyes. . . . Keeping control is difficult and personally exhausting, yet failing to keep control results in a still worse outcome. (pp. 53-54)

"Teacher stress and burnout are particularly significant in elementary education" (Raschke, Dedrick, Strathe, and Hawkes, 1985, p. 559). Raschke et al. (1985) conducted an investigation involving 300 K-6 public school teachers that provided information regarding educational concerns and job-related stress factors from the perspective of the elementary school teacher. The findings of the study indicated that "elementary teachers perceive lack of time to be the greatest impediment to job satisfaction. Disruptive students ranked a close second as a major source of stress" (p. 561). Almost 45 percent of kindergarten and first-grade teachers ranked students who are disinterested or uninvolved in academic learning as a significant stressful factor in teaching. Dealing with students of various ability levels was ranked as a source of stress by 49 percent of the teachers. Lack of support from parents and lack of positive feedback from administrators were among other sources of stress identified in the study.

Sweeney's (1981) investigation into the causes of job stress and dissatisfaction involved 1,295 teachers in 23 Iowa high schools. His findings "suggest that job satisfaction may be directly related to fulfillment of psychosocial needs and to the amount of discretion accorded teachers in professional matters" (p. 676).

A study of burnout among 1,211 teachers – supporting the findings of Sweeney – found that "burnout in teachers . . . may be the consequence not only of work stress but also of the perceived failure of the job to satisfy adequately the motivational needs of teachers" (Friesen et al., 1988, p. 17). In addition, the study found:

The degree to which teachers are satisfied with the positive feedback or recognition received on the job appears to be a consistent predictor of burnout. For this reason, lack of feedback and recognition need to be considered as potential causes of burnout in teachers. (Friesen et al., 1988, p. 17)

Similarly, Fimian (1982) noted:

[those teachers] who feel that their contributions in the classroom and in the field have little worth, and who find that they are not growing in and learning from their job often come under a great deal of day-to-day stress. (p. 102)

A significant source of stress for teachers often lies in their relationship with the administration. Teacher stress, according to some researchers, is increased when teachers are not incorporated into the school's decision-making process (Calabrese, 1987, p. 68). "This lack of involvement produces a sense of powerlessness . . ." (Calabrese, 1987, p. 68). An administrator's poor communication skills "can create a sense of job ambiguity, misunderstanding concerning working conditions, and insecurity in terms of what should be and how

it should be done" (Calabrese, 1987, p. 68). Furthermore, "a lack of administrative support reinforces teachers [sic] perceptions that they are totally 'on their own'" (Fimian, 1982, p. 102).

Isolation is yet another source of job stress. As Farber (1991) notes:

For the most part, . . . teachers are terribly alone in their helping roles. They not only function independently but, within the confines of their classrooms, they become the sole repository for skills, stamina, and enrichment – a role that cannot long be endured by a single individual. (pp. 65-66)

Fimian (1986) states that

. . . there is growing evidence that teacher stress levels are strongly related to the degree to which the teachers receive on-the-job administrative, supervisory, and peer support. The greater the support, the lower the stress and burnout levels. (p. 51)

Other variables that evoke job-related stress for teachers are low salary, lack of promotional opportunities, and large classes (Eskridge, as in Eskridge and Coker, 1985). The responsibility one has for others is also (as early research in burnout has indicated) a significant source of stress (Gupta, as in Eskridge and Coker, 1985).

While burnout negatively affects the teacher, it also negatively affects the students. Farber (1991) observes that "burned-out teachers tend to lose perspective on the seriousness of certain offenses, taking some far too seriously and others not seriously enough. Intolerance of minor 'offenses' is commonplace" (p. 83). Farber (1991) also observes:

The burned out teacher . . . loses patience more easily, more frequently, and more intensely [than teachers who are not burned out] . . . Incidents that may have once been handled with compassion or patience or wisdom are now reacted to with unabashed anger, threats, or selfish solutions. (p. 83)

Similarly, Calabrese (1987) states "that classroom management problems seem to be more pronounced as students are subjected to erratic teaching behavior" (p. 67).

Fimian (1982) reported Fuller's observation that

when teachers are placed in stressful situations, their priorities change. In order of importance, these become: (a) survival training; (b) classroom performance; (c) methods on how to make an impact on students; and (d) concerns about increasing what pupils learn. Under less stressful situations, these priorities become reversed, with concern for students receiving first priority. (p. 103)

Questions concerning the consequences of impaired teaching on students' self-concepts have been raised. A study by Whiteman et al. (1985) involving 123 elementary school teachers compared the extent of their burnout to their perception of student interaction along a friendliness-hostility dimension. "The results suggest that as experiences of burnout increase, the interpretation of student behavior becomes more negative" (p. 299). Thus, "burnout not only presents a real danger to the teacher's mental health and physical health but may negatively impact on his/her attitude toward students" (Whiteman et al., 1985, p. 303). Citing the Pygmalion effect in which expectations influence the behavior of others, Whiteman et al. (1985) suggest:

Those educators who experience burnout but continue teaching would appear to expect undesirable, even hostile behavior from students. Should this be the case, the degeneration of classroom behavior seems inevitable . . . Discipline problems have consistently been a major nemesis for education, but combined with the burned-out teacher's growing antipathy for the conduct of children, a self-perpetuating, self-reinforcing path of mutual disdain seems to lead toward their respective disappointment. (p. 304)

It is clear that a teacher faces many potential sources of stress in the course of a teaching career. A question remains to be asked: "Why do some teachers burn out and others do not?" (Martinez, 1989, p. 281). Research has identified three factors that seem to contribute to "stress hardiness" (Holt, Fine, and Tollefson, as in Martinez, 1989, p. 281):

1. commitment – "the tendency to be involved in (rather than alienated from) many aspects of one's life";
2. challenge – "the belief that change, rather than stability, is characteristic of life";
3. control – believing and acting "as if one is influential (rather than helpless) in the course of events in one's life" (Holt, Fine, and Tollefson, as in Martinez, 1989, pp. 281-282).

Brissie et al. (1988) found that "perceptions of personal efficacy in teaching, possibly including confidence that one can cope with stressful events and circumstances, may be importantly involved in decreasing the likelihood of burn-out" (p. 111). Albertson (1987) found:

The more teachers endorsed a relatively authoritarian attitude toward pupil control, the more occupational stress they tended to perceive, particularly in relation to a lack of administrative support, working with students, and relationships with other teachers. (p. 74)

Finally, McEnany (1986) conducted research to identify the attitudes of "teachers who don't burn out" (those having teaching careers for twenty-five years or more) (p. 83). The study concluded:

Teachers who maintain a dynamic career for an extended period of time are people who have particular attitudes rather than particular skills . . . The surviving teachers see their mission and goal as the development of young people whom they gladly teach. (p. 84)

Stress-induced burnout, with its negative effects on the teacher, school, administration, and the student, is not "inevitable or terminal" (Martinez, 1989, p. 283). Teachers need to become aware of the stressful conditions they face and



the effects these conditions have on them (Eskridge and Coker, 1985). From that point the literature on stress and burnout suggests many possible ways to help teachers manage the problem of stress and burnout.

Weinberg (1990) suggests stress reducing attitudes for teachers "derived from teachers who seem to have learned to think about their work, amidst imposing difficulties, in ways that decrease discomfort and increase satisfaction with teaching" (p. 41):

1. It's your world – stop blaming . . . Energy restores itself in positive action and exhausts itself in negative action, which is what blaming and complaining amount to . . . 2. Fight against boredom, our number one enemy . . . Teachers who find teaching enjoyable plan against boredom. They devise strategies, games, visual demonstrations . . . that are guaranteed to evoke interest, excitement, . . . for both teacher and students . . . 3. [To keep perspective] abhor cynicism; embrace humor . . . 4. Take it one day at a time; plant yourself in the here and now . . . 5. Get your ego out of the way of your teaching. You are not what you teach, or even how well or badly you teach it . . . 6. Concentrate on your own development – Instead of asking, "What do I know that I can teach the kids?" teachers can ask, "What do the kids know that they can teach me, or what can we all learn together?" 7. Engage in processes that make time disappear. We are least stressed when we do not notice the passage of time – during recreation, entertainment, and creativity . . . The idea is to treat teaching as doing creative work, being entertained by one's life in the classroom, and making the class day seem like a trip down the Colorado River on a raft . . . 8. Understand and overcome the conditions of alienation . . . Teachers with high job satisfaction have either fallen nicely into the personality/career fit or managed to change one or the other (sometimes both) to achieve that fit . . . (pp. 41-44)

Martinez (1989) presents additional strategies for coping with stress and avoiding burnout:

1. Find some wiggle room . . . [by focusing] on what can be done . . . 2. Cycle intensity . . . saving the worst or the best or the hardest for last can be disastrous unless you have also saved enough energy to meet the challenge. Similarly, planning a schedule that

requires all-out effort from day one is like planning a race course that is all uphill; few will reach the top . . . 3. Balance high-stress with low-stress activities . . . letting your private life become a mirror of your professional life . . . almost guarantees stress overload . . . 4. Learn to relax under stress as well as during rest times . . . (pp. 277-278)

Brissie et al. (1988) note the relationship between social support and levels of burnout. Their study, involving 1,213 elementary teachers from eight school districts in a mid-southern state, found that "greater teacher perceptions of principal support, peer support, family and friends' support, and parents' support were associated with lower levels of burnout" (p. 109). Gold (1985) also emphasizes the importance of teacher support groups which provide an opportunity to analyze and discuss problems, citing research conducted by Maslach which shows that burnout rates are lower when support groups are present.

From an administrative standpoint, Brissie et al. (1988) suggest factors that are modifiable in the school setting which can help teachers cope with and reduce burnout:

[1] allow teachers to be involved in setting goals and structure for the school and periodic democratic review of those goals and structures; [2] provide ongoing professional support for school faculty members, with the school principal offering strong and visible support; and [3] structure the setting, through informative feedback or regular evaluation sessions, so that teachers can perceive themselves as effective and feel rewarded in the role of teacher. (p. 112)

Calabrese (1987) notes that "the goal of the principal is not to create a stress-free environment, but to create a climate for the development of positive stress" (p. 68).

Other coping strategies suggested include exercising regularly (Martinez, 1989; Sparks, 1983); ". . . becoming knowledgeable about . . . issues . . . such as . . . time management, and disciplinary techniques through reading professional journals and attending local, state, and national conferences" (Raschke et al., 1985, p. 563); and attending in-service programs on the topic of stress reduction (Calabrese, 1987).

Burnout has serious ramifications for all those affected by it. But the situation is not hopeless. By developing awareness and coping skills, teachers are "capable of showing initiative and resilience in response to accumulated stress, rather than being vulnerable and passive victims" (Holt, Fine, and Tollefson, as in Martinez, 1989, p. 283).



**CHAPTER III**

**KEEPING THE SPARK ALIVE: A HANDBOOK OF IDEAS  
TO HELP TEACHERS MANAGE STRESS AND AVOID BURNOUT**

**by**

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**July 1992**

# Handbook

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## Introduction

The problem is serious:

Teacher stress and burnout have affected and will continue to affect the lives of teachers and their families, administrators and their families, students and their families, and all of society. (Farber, 1991, p. 313)

The solution is complicated:

. . . preventing and remedying teacher stress and burnout is a complicated process. There is no single solution that can be prescribed for every person. Teachers must act individually to strengthen their own emotional and physical resources so that together they have the stamina to attack institutional problems which require endurance and collective action. (Sparks, 1983, p. 42)

This handbook presents ideas that can help teachers manage stress and avoid burnout. However, "because reactions to stress are so individualized, it is difficult and perhaps dangerous to over-generalize about ways to avoid or manage stressful conditions" (Eskridge and Coker, 1985, p. 389). Teachers must therefore "assume personal responsibility for developing a stress management program that fits [their] unique [situations]" (Sparks, 1983, p. 34).

In addition to stress management ideas for the individual, this handbook presents ideas for stress reduction that require the involvement of school administrators and teacher training institutions for their implementation. Certainly, as Paine (1981, p. 33) states, ". . . the organization has a responsibility to reduce job-related stressors contributing to burnout."

Iwanicki (1983, p. 30) reminds us that "[stress reduction techniques or coping skills] are appropriate in situations where the source of distress cannot be alleviated. Whenever possible, however, it is better to alleviate the problem."

Unfortunately, "where education is concerned, there are no panaceas" (Farber, 1991, p. 312), and "organizational change, at best, is a difficult, long-term task" (Sparks, 1983, p. 41). Furthermore, teaching is a demanding job, and as Farber (1991, p. 313) suggests, "It is quite possible that no discrete set of reforms can ever be sufficient to eradicate teacher stress or burnout." Therefore, as long as a certain degree of stress remains inherent to teaching, and until solutions to stress-producing problems can be found, the ideas presented in this handbook can help teachers in their attempt to manage stress and avoid burnout.

## Time Management

A key to managing stress in teaching is the development of effective time management skills. As Riccio (1983, p. 45) states:

One of the most effective ways of managing stress effectively is to avoid unnecessary fatigue by learning how to use one's time effectively. Such a skill enables one to have large blocks of free time to engage in satisfying, growth-enhancing activity.

Furthermore, "the sense of organization that results [from time management] is itself a stress reducer" (Wangberg, 1982, p. 453).

Effective time management is important both on and off the job. The following time management suggestions can help to ease or eliminate some of the stress associated with teaching, but "you must pick the time-management techniques that work best for you – there is no single solution that will work for everyone" (Sparks, 1980, p. 61).

1. Discover your time thieves. Self-observation and analysis of one's time usage patterns is the first step in gaining control over wasted time and realigning priorities. Keep a time journal for a week, recording how you actually use each 15-minute block. To be helpful your journal must be specific, accurate, and honest. (Partin, 1982, p. 4)
- ② Use a school-year calendar, or a July-to-July datebook and start marking in dates. Has parent night been scheduled? Does your grade level focus on any specific units according to time of year? Get as much as you can slated in now. ("Not For Rookies Only," 1987, p. 53)
3. ... set realistic and achievable goals. In setting goals future necessities are identified and plans made for their achievement. Job-related and personal goals should be integrated to form the complete picture. (Kiff, 1986, p. 17)
4. Three sets of goals are essential: long-range (yearly/monthly), weekly, and daily. Goals and deadlines should be stated in writing. Thoughtfully committing to paper what one wants to achieve gives a picture of things that are considered important. There is also a sense of accomplishment when completed goals can be crossed off the list. (Kiff, 1986, p. 17)

5. The calendar should be kept in pencil as goals will be reshuffled as priorities change. Scheduled events over which you have no control like faculty meetings . . . should be the first items placed on the weekly and daily calendars; professional and personal goals should be planned around those happenings. An adequate amount of time should be allowed for the completion of each goal in order for the planning to be successful. (Kiff, 1986, p. 17)
6. [Your daily schedule] should be organized so that you feel you are in control of your life and accomplishing the things that you have decided are important. (Hammond and Sparks, 1981, p. 59)
7. Make a "to do" list every day. But include only items that require special attention and are not part of your daily routine. Jotting something down on a list relieves tension that accompanies continually reminding oneself about a task. Alan Lakein suggests categorizing items on the list by placing the letter A next to those that are high priority, B beside things that are of medium importance, and C next to low-priority items. Then, when there isn't enough time to complete all the tasks, make choices based on the importance given each task. Sometimes you'll find that C items can be easily and harmlessly ignored for days or even weeks. (Hammond and Sparks, 1981, p. 59)
8. "Ask yourself, 'How terrible would it be if I didn't do this low-priority item?'" If the answer is, 'Not too terrible,' don't do it." (Sparks, 1980, p. 62)
9. " . . . get into the habit of not leaving school until you've prepared a list of 'musts' for the next day." (Johanson, 1981, p. 43)
10. Develop plans for a specific subject in groups. In the long run, it takes less time to prepare a week's worth of related lesson plans than to plan one day at a time. Keep your classes flexible, though, so extra time can be spent on certain areas or condensed if needed. (Samuels, 1981, p. 60)
11. "Keep anecdotal records on each student. Then when report-card time comes, the facts will be at your fingertips." (Samuels, 1981, p. 60)
12. "Use overhead and opaque projectors to present information rather than taking time to write on the chalkboard. File materials for reuse." (Kiff, 1986, p. 17)
13. Use a word processor to prepare all materials rather than a typewriter. Errors can be corrected much more easily and materials may be stored and retrieved when needed. (Kiff, 1986, pp. 17-18)

14. "Enter grades in the computer. Let the computer average grades." (Kiff, 1986, p. 18)
15. "Don't spend hours making decorations for the walls. Put up the students' work; it'll be more meaningful to them anyway." (Samuels, 1981, p. 60)
16. Use periods of rest and diversion during the day to restore your energy. It is inefficient to work when tired – a few minutes of rest may increase your productivity to higher levels. (Sparks, 1980, p. 62)
17. Establish time limits for a task. Parkinson's Law reminds us that work expands to fill the time available for its completion. A focused half hour at school finishing report cards is likely to be more fruitful than two hours of work that night in front of the television. (Hammond and Sparks, 1981, p. 59)
18. Team up with other teachers for special events and projects – if you don't already. Many times two or more teachers can save themselves individual time by planning things together. They can combine two classes into one for a physical education program, for example, or for a social studies or science field trip. Having a guest speaker address two classes at the same time instead of one at a time can save program preparation time (as well as make the speaker happy). Also, classes can be combined in groups as large as 60 to 90 students so flexible subgroups can be formed with attention given to special areas (remedial activities, projects, independent activities). (Samuels, 1981, p. 60)
19. Avoid duplication. Don't reinvent the wheel. Find out how [others] have handled problems like yours. Learn from their mistakes and successes. Read professional journals for ideas, and keep up with current issues and procedures by attending conferences and workshops. (Partin, 1982, p. 6)
20. Start meetings on time. Hundreds of working hours are lost each year in a single school district when teachers are required to attend meetings that predictably do not start on schedule. Make a habit of starting meetings that you are responsible for on time. People who attend your meetings will quickly learn that you mean business and will appreciate your thoughtfulness. When you expect to find yourself in a situation over which you have little or no control, bring along materials so you can read, write, or plan while you wait for the meeting to begin. (Hammond and Sparks, 1981, p. 60)
21. Don't assign homework every day. Teachers deserve a break from grading, and students need a break from preparing homework occasionally. (Kiff, 1986, p. 17)



22. Find an alternative to correcting every paper yourself. Checking papers can take an enormous amount of time, whether you correct them before leaving school or at home. Students can check their own and each other's papers, thus freeing your after-school hours. You might likewise identify a responsible child you had in class in the past year or two who is likely to feel privileged to assist you. Or take advantage of an aide or volunteer in this area, if you have one. (Hammond and Sparks, 1981, p. 59)
23. Keep a substitute file handy. Then on those days when you're too ill to plan, you won't have to get up early to produce spur-of-the-moment plans for a sub. (Samuels, 1981, p. 60)
24. Think of time as a rubber band; let it stretch when necessary. If a language arts activity is going well but math period is coming up in five minutes, don't disturb that quality learning time – scrap the math lesson for the day or begin it when the enthusiasm for the present activity wanes. Don't be afraid to be flexible. (Samuels, 1981, p. 60)
25. "Group telephone calls at one or two times of the day, and keep them brief." (Sparks, 1980, p. 62)
26. Keep a list of student telephone numbers and addresses. These can be gathered from individual students on index cards or from the office. Then, when you have to call a student's home you won't have to waste time with school records or phone books. (Samuels, 1981, p. 60)
27. Try to reduce the number of papers you take home to check. Some teachers separate their professional and personal lives by taking as few papers home with them as possible. They prefer to stay late on occasion rather than work inefficiently in the evening when demands from their families and their need to relax compete with school tasks. (Hammond and Sparks, 1981, p. 59)
28. Teachers who carry satchels of work home to be graded on nights and weekends are making the mistake of surrounding themselves with their work 24 hours a day . . . Teachers must be shown effective ways of avoiding so much paper work, must be shown ways of involving students in creating instructional materials as a way of better delivering instruction because of heightened student involvement. (Kossack and Woods, 1987-88, p. 52)
29. Handle each piece of paper only once. As you stand at your mailbox in school, you may find a memo asking which in-service program you plan on attending, a ballot to select your education association representative, an invitation with RSVP for the PTA dinner, as well as numerous pieces of junk mail, announcements, and so on. You are likely to take this handful



of paper back to your desk, take a moment to skim it, and then put it down. At the end of the day, you look up at this pile and wonder, "What were these things about?" The following day you repeat the cycle, and suddenly you find that you have a huge stack of . . . mail on your desk . . . It is much more time efficient to skim each item while still at your mailbox and immediately throw away advertisements that are of no interest to you and announcements that require no further action. Brief responses to items requiring them can be quickly jotted on the letter or memo and put in the outgoing mail before you even leave the office. (Hammond and Sparks, 1981, p. 59)

30. Persons in stressful professions should . . . be aware of the ebb and flow of their energy patterns. Each of us is, to some degree, either a diurnal or nocturnal. Diurnals wake up early in the day full of run. They get more done before noon than many people get done all day. However, diurnals often become exceedingly weary early in the afternoon. Nocturnals, on the other hand, don't begin functioning effectively until noon. But nocturnals are often capable of working late into the evening. To the extent possible, we should schedule our most challenging and important work tasks for that time of the day when our energy power is at its peak. (Riccio, 1983, p. 44)
31. Teachers often should arrange their days to accomplish first those tasks which give the greatest pleasure and most clear success. This inspires one to tackle less rewarding tasks with vigor. (Kossack and Woods, 1987-88, p. 52)
32. "Identify your best 'internal time' (time for thinking, planning, creating, etc.) and best 'external time' (time to meet with people)." (Sparks, 1980, p. 62)
33. "Do routine tasks at the end of the day when you are tired." (Sparks, 1980, p. 63)
34. "Get 'absolute musts' out of the way early in the day when you have the most energy and to avoid a frantic feeling throughout the day." (Sparks, 1980, p. 62)
35. "Do the toughest tasks early in the day. It is a good feeling to begin your day with a sense of accomplishment . . . " (Hammond and Sparks, 1981, p. 59)
36. Plan something you are excited about for each week. You are more likely to be productive and enthusiastic about your work when you can look forward to special activities. (Hammond and Sparks, 1981, p. 60)

37. Try to determine how best to use your energy. Do you personally need to check every assignment? Which deserves more of your attention, guiding children who are working on a project, or calculating the number of mistakes each child makes? To better use your time and your students' time effectively, decide how many workbook pages, written assignments, and drill tests you need to see and how many kids can evaluate themselves. Direct your energy away from tasks a student can do to planning exciting lessons. ("Not For Rookies Only," 1987, p. 53)
38. "A good question to ask yourself frequently is, 'What is the best use of my time right now?'" (Sparks, 1980, p. 62)
39. Delegate as much work as possible. Let honor students, teacher aides, and student teachers grade papers, prepare transparencies, type, file, prepare materials, etc. Develop a new philosophy: Do not put off until tomorrow what you can get someone else to do for you today. (Kiff, 1986, p. 17)
40. Increase student responsibility for learning. If students understand classroom routines and know what is expected of them, they can work on many assignments independently. This will free you to concentrate on children who need special help. (Hammond and Sparks, 1981, p. 59)
41. Never do anything a student can do just as well. Students can take lunch count, run errands in the school, decorate bulletin boards, and help clean the classroom, among other tasks. Having students pitch in will not only save you time but also contribute to their self-esteem and awareness that this is "our classroom." (Hammond and Sparks, 1981, p. 59)
42. Use peer tutoring. Not only will this save you time, but students will learn a great deal as they share curriculum projects, art activities, stories, writing, and any number of games, skills, and tasks. (Samuels, 1981, p. 60)
43. "Talk with your colleagues periodically about how time might be used more effectively." (Sparks, 1980, p. 63)
44. Learn to say no. There are always crafty folks around who can get the new teacher or the obliging one to take on extra work. Do your share and sometimes even a little more, but when you start feeling you are being used, that's the time to say no. (Moe, 1979, p. 36)
45. "Learn to say 'no' to anything that will result in non-achievement of goals." (Kiff, 1986, p. 17)
46. "Learn to say no. Set priorities on the importance to you of the person making the request and the consequences of not doing it." (Sparks, 1980, p. 62)

47. . . . don't procrastinate. Putting things off does not get things accomplished. Instead, thinking and worrying about them is stressful . . . (Kiff, 1986, p. 17)
48. Procrastination can be attacked by:
- Setting up leading tasks (a physical step that leads you into a big job that you have been postponing)
  - Making a commitment to someone else who is willing to offer support
  - Rewarding yourself for completion of the project or of tasks that will lead to the completion of the project
  - Recognizing that habits change slowly – start small and selectively
  - Concentrate on one thing at a time (Sparks, 1980, p. 62)
49. Break large projects into smaller parts. The thought of a monumental project hanging over your head is enough to burn anyone out before they have a chance to tackle it. Most projects can be broken into smaller, more manageable components; so break them down and treat each one as a separate task with its own timeline and set of requirements. Once divided, you can conquer each separately. As the old adage goes: by the mile it's a trial, by the yard it's hard, by the inch it's a cinch. (Gmelch, 1983, p. 12)
50. Remember the 80/20 rule: 80 percent of the value may come from the first 20 percent of the work time; or 80 percent of the value comes from 20 percent of the items on your TO DO list; etc. (Sparks, 1980, p. 62)
51. "Perfectionism can be a large time waster. Perfectionism only makes sense if 80 percent of the value comes from the last 20 percent of the effort." (Sparks, 1980, p. 62)
52. Avoid perfectionism. You can waste many hours refining a product until it is "perfect." For example, it may take 10 hours to complete a slide presentation for social studies so that it is 90 percent perfect. Another 10 hours may be needed to make it 95 percent perfect, with an additional 10 hours required to achieve 97 percent perfection. Is a 7 percent gain in quality worth 20 hours of your time? (Hammond and Sparks, 1981, p. 60)
53. "Take time to enjoy the children you teach." ("Not For Rookies Only," 1987, p. 53)
54. Teachers should begin their day . . . slowly. Get up 30 minutes to one hour before the rest of your family. Use this time to begin your day and put yourself in a good frame of mind. Sip your coffee. Read something inspirational, read the newspaper rather than just scanning the headlines, and do a few easy-to-do exercises. The little things you do for yourself early in the morning can prepare you to meet any pressures you will confront during the day. (Kiff, 1986, pp. 16-17)

55. Shop from catalogs whenever possible to avoid wasting time trying to get the attention of a sales clerk in a store, and take advantage of products that are available through home delivery. (Kiff, 1986, p. 18)
56. With a modest expenditure of funds on slow-cookers or microwave ovens, teachers who are also parents can take much of the drudgery out of such tasks as cooking. At the same time, they will feel good about themselves because they realize how effectively they are coping. (Riccio, 1983, p. 45)
57. Use waiting time effectively. The time spent waiting for a faculty meeting to start, riding home on a bus, or waiting for someone to arrive for an appointment can be productively used to write letters, read, develop lesson plans, or jot down tomorrow's "to-do" list. (Hammond and Sparks, 1981, p. 59)
58. Avoid standing in line whenever possible. Do grocery shopping and banking during noncongested hours to avoid wasting time. Have a paperback book to read when line standing cannot be avoided. (Kiff, 1986, p. 18)
59. Skim reading materials. A conscientious teacher can spend hours a week reading professional books and periodicals. Skimming articles and books for main ideas can save a great deal of time, and it is likely that you will retain as much or more of the content as you would with a slower, more thorough reading. (Hammond and Sparks, 1981, pp. 59-60)
60. Plan tomorrow tonight. Make lunches and place in the refrigerator, select your attire, and put coffee and water in the percolator tonight to gain a head start on tomorrow. (Kiff, 1986, p. 18)
61. Don't schedule all your leisure hours. You put in a day's work at school, so don't be surprised if you don't feel up to vacuuming the house or writing that novel or visiting your mother on evenings and weekends. Don't fret and nag yourself silently about not getting these things done. You will only end up hating yourself and that will surely affect your work the next day. (Moe, 1979, p. 36)
62. . . . don't let other people coerce you into doing things on evenings and weekends. Just remember, you need to do for yourself at those times — even if that means doing nothing. You owe it to yourself to spend your free time as you desire. (Moe, 1979, p. 36)



## Attitudes

The development of attitudes which reduce stress can play an important part in stress management. The following suggestions may prove helpful:

1. Don't minimize the intensity of the demands of teaching . . . accept the fact that you were not hired to be a teacher 24 hours each day. Set aside time for activities that ease the mental, emotional, and physical drain daily teaching life brings . . . don't ever feel guilty about deciding to spend time on yourself. ("Not For Rookies Only," 1987, p. 54)
2. Teachers have to restructure their definition of what it means to help, for therein lies the source of much of their dissatisfaction. If they see themselves as caretakers, exclusively as givers, they will exhaust themselves from giving and resent those who refuse their gifts. Teachers who seem most satisfied with their daily efforts are those who would not think of themselves as Albert Schweitzers or Florence Nightingales. They are teachers because they get more than they give, and they are not content to define what they get exclusively in terms of the bright, happy faces of children learning. It may be more self-centered than most teachers would like to admit but [the author thinks] it is the best protection against accumulating those feelings of resentment and anger that turn us against ourselves, or our students. (Weinberg, 1990, p. 43)
3. Maintain enthusiasm . . . Enthusiasm begins with a positive attitude, a perspective of excitement and the thrill of challenge and opportunity. While you are not expected to jump to attention and immediately present an entire new demeanor, new life and enjoyment can come out of an enthusiasm for your work and the opportunities you have. The educational setting in particular provides an atmosphere of dynamic, positive growth and an opportunity to make a life-long contribution to many other people; that is something to be excited about. (Newbrough, 1983, p. 272)
4. Take it one day at a time; plant yourself in the here and now. The teacher who despairs over yesterday's disappointment and worries about tomorrow's evaluation will not relish the challenge of the present. Those who teach to get through the day to move on to something else leave little room to enjoy the day. Teachers who are least "at risk" are those who are least engaged in a means-to-an-ends philosophy of teaching. Of course, things happened yesterday that benefited us, and we can hope tomorrow will be better for what we have learned today, but every teaching day should be viewed as an end in itself . . . What one does every day is the core of one's existence. Teaching requires a focus on the present moment, which, in the classroom, is the present challenge. (Weinberg, 1990, p. 42)

5. We must help our teachers realize that when they have done their best to apply the professional skills at their disposal, they have done all that may legitimately be expected of them. Educational expectations must be tempered by the constraints and restraints of the work situation. (Riccio, 1983, p. 44)
6. People fail. Occasional failure is to be expected. True courage comes from the ability to analyze one's failures and then adjust one's goals and expectations to meet the demands of reality. (Skinner, 1980, p. 19)
7. "Be creative. Look at a situation through different colored glasses. See promise and opportunity in problems. Re-label situations." (Felder and Schomburg, 1983, p. 194)
8. Reaffirm your own philosophy of education and your personal goals for teaching. Do not lose sight of the ideological reasons for which you entered the teaching profession. Remember, the position you adopt on these issues can guide and inspire during your normal work day. (Pagel and Price, 1980, p. 47)
9. Decide to be at least as tolerant, encouraging, and nonjudgmental of yourself as you are of your students and co-workers. The type of stress we have the most control over is the kind we place on ourselves. You can reduce it! ("Not For Rookies Only," 1987, p. 54)
10. Get your ego out of the way of your teaching. You are not what you teach or even how well or badly you teach it. One's ego involvement in the choice of what one teaches and the success of the lesson is counterproductive. Teaching should be an endless experimenting with topics to teach and ways of teaching them . . . The stressed-out teacher is so fixed on agenda as an expression of self that failures in any form are taken personally. (Weinberg, 1990, p. 43)
11. Understand and overcome the condition of alienation . . . To bring our work life into some compatible arrangement with our personality, we have to be honest about who we are as personalities . . . Teachers with high job satisfaction have either fallen nicely into the personality/career fit or managed to change one or the other (sometimes both) to achieve that fit. If these changes cannot be made, both teacher and students would be better off if alternative career choices were made. (Weinberg, 1990, p. 44)
12. Self-acceptance is another major way of coping with stress. Awareness of individual strengths and weaknesses, the ability to tolerate ambiguity, and the ability to tolerate failure (and, interestingly enough, success) help tremendously to avoid stress or at least reduce its debilitating results. (Skinner, 1980, pp. 19-20)

13. It's your world — stop blaming. Blaming is counterproductive . . . Teachers who see themselves as partners with students in their mutually disadvantaged world, who struggle to accomplish as much as they can under the circumstances, suffer the least. These teachers do not share complaints with their colleagues as a way to defuse frustration, but engage in collective action to improve conditions. Energy restores itself in positive action and exhausts itself in negative action, which is what blaming and complaining amount to. Teachers who see themselves as "taking arms against a sea of troubles" like themselves for their struggles, no matter how little they achieve. (Weinberg, 1990, p. 41)
14. Those who seem best adjusted to the classroom in general are most accepting of students who don't like what is being done to them or with them. Of course, thinking this way about not feeling affronted by so-called "failures" in the classroom leads to taking less responsibility for the "successes," but this seems a very fair exchange to teachers who are most satisfied with their work. (Weinberg, 1990, p. 43)
15. "Acknowledge the things you do well and accept your successes." ("Not For Rookies Only," 1987, p. 54)
16. "Don't feel guilty because you haven't lived up to your ideal of the perfect teacher . . . Feeling guilty will only make you miserable . . ." (Moe, 1979, p. 36)

## Irrational Beliefs: Identification and Modification

### Identification

"Ellis and other cognitive therapists," according to Wiggers, Forney, and Wallace-Schutzman (1982, p. 19), "believe that strong negative feelings are the result of 'irrational thinking' that is highly biased, illogical, unrealistic, and self-defeating." In addition, Forman (1990, p. 316) notes that "a number of authors have written about specific irrational beliefs . . . that may contribute to stress in teaching":

1. "I must have constant approval from students, other teachers, administrators, and parents."
2. "Events in my classroom should always go exactly the way I want them to."
3. "Schools should be fair."
4. "Students should not be frustrated."
5. "People who misbehave deserve severe punishment."
6. "There should be no discomfort or frustration at school."
7. "Teachers always need a great deal of help from others to solve school-related problems."
8. "Those who don't do well at school are worthless."
9. "Students with a history of academic or behavioral problems will always have problems."
10. "Students or other teachers can make me feel bad."
11. "I can't stand to see children who have had unhappy home lives."
12. "I must be in total control of my class at all times."
13. "I must find the perfect solution to all problems."
14. "When children have problems, it's their parents' fault."



15. "I must be a perfect teacher and never make mistakes."
16. "It's easier to avoid problems at school than to face them."

Irrational beliefs identified by Wiggers et al. (1982, p. 19) include:

17. "My job is my life."
18. "I must be totally competent, knowledgeable, and able to help everyone."
19. "Things have to work out the way I want them to."
20. "I must be liked and respected by everyone with whom I work."

### Modification

We can control what we think. And as Sparks (1983, p. 39) states,

"Because we have control over cognitive processes, their modification represents a powerful tool for managing distress."

To counter irrational thinking, Wiggers et al. (1982, p. 19) recommend that the "individual . . . [ask] himself/herself a series of questions, looking for rational responses." These questions include:

1. "What is the evidence that this is true?"
2. "Am I overgeneralizing and/or ignoring pertinent facts?"
3. "Am I using 'shoulds,' 'oughts,' 'musts,' and 'have to's' to demand things I cannot control?"

Wiggers et al. (1982, p. 19) also suggest:

Making a worse case analysis and determining how one would cope with the most negative situation can also help counter the irrational assumption that a negative consequence would be awful.

## Perspective

Sparks (1983, p. 34) notes that "over time, many teachers lose perspective about their work. Rather than viewing their work as 'partly sunny,' their attitudes are covered by a 'partly cloudy' haze." The development and maintenance of a balanced perspective can be an important part of a teacher's stress management program. When trying to gain perspective on teaching and on life, the following suggestions and comments may prove helpful:

1. "Believe in yourself. Remain optimistic. Use the power of positive thinking." (Felder and Schomburg, 1983, p. 194)
2. A good way to gain perspective is to think of the many "crises" you have faced in the past. Did the outcome actually turn out to be as dreadful as you initially imagined? (Felder and Schomburg, 1983, p. 194)
3. Examine your perspective. How much energy do you waste fretting? Does your blood pressure go up 20 degrees when a kid forgets to take her hat off in the building? Consider the motto: Don't sweat the small stuff. Your work is too important to let the little things get in the way. ("Not For Rookies Only," 1987, p. 54)
4. Don't worry. Worry has never undone a wrong or prevented a problem. Instead it makes you less effective on the job. If you are a worrier, run, don't walk, to the nearest bookstore for a copy of Wayne W. Dyer's book Your Erroneous Zones. Especially don't worry about next year's contract. Do the best job you can every day of the year, and you'll likely get another contract. If you don't, it's not the end of the world. (Moe, 1979, p. 36)
5. Control [the] level of "Seriousity." The new term [refers to] the frequency with which we all tend to take ourselves too seriously. If things don't appear to be going exactly your way, or the problems you face are overshadowing your existence, take a deep breath and mentally stand back and put it all into perspective. After all, we are only a minute part of the Milky Way galaxy, approximately 100,000 light years in diameter which appears to be but a speck in a universe believed to be at least 10 billion light years in diameter. Such a recollection can sometimes reduce the relative import of the moment's stresses. (Newbrough, 1983, p. 271)
6. Many teachers feel bombarded with negative messages about themselves and their profession. They perceive themselves as under continual attack

from students, parents, their communities, and the media. Frequent criticism can diminish self-esteem and undermine a sense of professional competency and pride. Coupled with this, many of us have been taught that self-improvement is best accomplished by criticizing ourselves and others. We have also been told that speaking well of ourselves is conceit and bragging. This is a sure-fire prescription for distress: high levels of criticism with no counterbalancing view of successes and strengths. (Sparks, 1983, p. 39)

7. "Teachers' perspectives need to be balanced through a careful examination of their professional successes, satisfactions, and competencies." (Sparks, 1983, p. 34)
8. ... commit yourself to developing a humorous outlook on life. Take yourself, life, and school less seriously. Laugh at the stressors of the days. Your laughter . . . may even help you say, "School is too important to be taken seriously." (Walter, 1990, p. 44)
9. Abhor cynicism; embrace humor . . . Cynicism is tacit acceptance of a distressing condition, our attempt to insulate ourselves from the raw impact of being victimized by it . . . Humor achieves something else entirely. It is an expression of our mind's independence (albeit temporary) from the institution. Seeing the world, or events in the world, as arbitrary, allows one to laugh at the way things or events have turned out. Aside from claiming that laughter is healthy, we can also argue that humor is liberating. It frees us from viewing things in their most devastating light. Cynicism invests what is devastating with even more power over us than it might have. Humor forces on us a healthy distance. (Weinberg, 1990, p. 42)
10. "Give yourself positive messages when things are not going well. Laugh and appreciate the incongruities of life." (Felder and Schomburg, 1983, p. 194)
11. It is psychologically impossible to harbor negative feelings while laughing, which is a cleansing experience and a bond. Cartoons, jokes liberally exchanged, and good-humored ribbing . . . can be effective releases which alleviate mounting gloom or discouragement. (Kossack and Woods, 1987-88, pp. 51-52)
12. "Try not to dwell on mistakes. If you can learn something from a poor decision, examine it. Otherwise, move on." ("Not For Rookies Only," 1987, p. 54)

13. Education is too important to be taken seriously. When people take anything too seriously, they put on blinders which cause them to miss the important aspects of what is going on around them. (Walter, 1990, p. 43)
14. Laughter can produce a great deal of relaxation. When your body is relaxed, the vista broadens, and you can see things you were missing before. (Walter, 1990, p. 43)
15. [Remember] to appreciate the humor permeating life. Humor surrounds us as we busily rush about wrinkling our brows and stifling laughter. Lighten up and smile; a sour, serious style won't likely change one's environment; nor will a smile or a giggle, but it will be much more enjoyable. (Newbrough, 1983, p. 271)

## Goals and Expectations

Unrealistic goals and expectations can produce stress. Skinner (1980, p. 19) suggests "[setting] realistic goals and expectations for oneself and others," noting:

Nothing can be as stressful as constantly beating one's head against the solid wall of unrealistic goals, unless it is attempting to drive one's spouse, students, or children to achieve beyond their respective capacities.

Suggestions and comments to consider when setting goals and expectations include:

1. Set realistic goals for yourself. You wouldn't assign a goal to a child when failure was inevitable. Be as wise for yourself. Take smaller steps and let yourself feel the satisfaction of success. ("Not For Rookies Only," 1987, p. 54)
2. Set achievable goals for students' learning and behavior by concentrating on short-term gains. Be sure these initial goals are in keeping with the resources available to the students and to the school as well as to your own personal resources. (Pagel and Price, 1980, p. 48)
3. "... define a goal, then break it down into manageable chunks." (Styles and Cavanagh as in Fimian, 1980, p. 66)
4. "Set realistic and flexible goals for yourself. Expect great things of yourself, but don't expect to do them all after school on Wednesday." (Moe, 1979, p. 36)
5. Recognize the role expectations play in experiencing gratification or frustration. Try to set realistic expectations for yourself and your students. Avoid the dilemma experienced by many teachers who formulate laudable goals for themselves but fail to recognize their own limitations in the work environment. Misconceptions of what can be accomplished on a routine basis may lead to subsequent feelings of failure and depression. (Pagel and Price, 1980, pp. 47-48)



## Social Interaction

. . . the most powerful and effective means of reducing stress is through satisfying social interaction . . . The person who is involved with many people at home and at work and during leisure activities has many avenues for assistance when stress lowers his self-esteem. (Skinner, 1980, p. 20)

The following ideas may prove helpful in the development and maintenance of a network of social support:

1. Seek new opportunities to discuss and analyze stressful experiences with other teachers. Discuss options and solutions: "ain't it awful" sessions don't facilitate constructive change. (Pagel and Price, 1980, p. 49)
2. Meet someone new. When you next attend a meeting, social gathering, or even go out to lunch, try inviting someone that you wouldn't normally spend time with. ("Fresh Ideas," 1984, p. 5)
3. Pursue a satisfying social life apart from work. After many hours, days, or weeks of intense involvement with children, a close association with compatible adults can be very gratifying. (Pagel and Price, 1980, p. 50)
4. It is sensible for people with stressful jobs to ride home from work with a colleague with whom they can share some of the frustrations of the day. These colleagues in effect become therapeutic agents for each other. Talking about one's frustrations to a caring, understanding colleague enables one to engage in a psychological catharsis between the workplace and home. It also reduces the likelihood that a stressful day at school will be followed by an even more stressful evening at home. (Riccio, 1983, p. 45)
5. Support your support system. Encourage a colleague to brag to you. Be there to commiserate with. And let others share your ups and downs. Mutual support is a powerful tonic. ("Not For Rookies Only," 1987, p. 54)
6. The routine of always eating lunch with the same companions may be easy and safe, but easy and safe are not stimulating emotions. If you can, avoid co-workers for lunch-time companionship; too frequently the tendency is to mire in discussions of work problems and quite honestly, who needs it? What we need is a break, both mental and physical, away from work, not a rehashing of the day's events. There are so many interesting people around us that it is wasteful not to tap into their experiences and learn from them. ("Fresh Ideas," 1984, p. 5)

7. Find a person to team teach with. Two individuals can shoulder a lot more frustration when they are working together. And if you like to teach math, by all means arrange to teach it to both groups. Your partner can be responsible for reading. You'll find yourself feeling better when you have control of your work responsibilities and you teach only what you enjoy. (Hendrickson, 1979, p. 39)
8. Arrange to get away on a retreat with your colleagues. You'll find that you are not alone with your concerns. Retreats tend to warm up relationships between teaching staff members, and when you are feeling good about your co-workers, you can work on identifying shared problems and their solutions. (Hendrickson, 1979, p. 39)
9. Develop relationships with teachers and administrators who seem to like what they are doing. Their positive approach and enthusiasm will rub off on you. (Hunter, 1986, p. 6)
10. Two teachers . . . [can] make an agreement that once a week they will meet away from school "for their own good" and allow each other to talk or gripe to their hearts' content. (Knowing there is an outlet might help contain bitterness that would be personally destructive if vented elsewhere or at those who don't understand.) (Scherer, 1983, p. 46)
11. Find someone to eat lunch with each day, someone you can talk to about your ideas and your feelings. Don't organize "ain't it awful" sessions for commiserating. Focus on options and solutions and, by all means, share the good news too. (Hendrickson, 1979, p. 38)
12. Bring a picnic lunch to school to share with two or three other faculty members. Take it outside to a secluded grassy area to eat. Try not to talk about school-related matters. Take turns preparing the lunch whenever convenient. ("77 Ways to Prevent Burnout," 1981, p. 50)



## Exercise

"Physical exercise is one of the most effective ways to offset stress" (Kiff, 1986, p. 17). As Martinez (1989, p. 280) observes,

Exercise has both general and specific benefits for those under stress. Generally, the person who exercises regularly is better able to meet the demands stress places on the body and also better able to maintain emotional as well as physical equilibrium in stressful situations.

Kiff (1986, p. 17) notes that "exercise does not have to be lifting weights or preparing for the marathon," and suggests:

Choose a physical activity you like and begin slowly. Build up to about 30 minutes of activity three or four times a week to maintain an excellent level of fitness.

Since "the physical involvement of chasing after children or directing physical education sessions from the sidelines is not sufficient for the needs and stress experienced by most teachers" (Kossack and Wood, 1987-88, p. 51), the following suggestions may prove helpful as you plan an exercise program to meet your needs:

1. Build fresh air and exercise into your daily life. Park a half mile from school or get off at a bus or train stop a half mile from school and walk the rest of the way. ("77 Ways to Prevent Burnout," 1981, p. 49)
2. Join a community pool and go to it often. Set a reasonable goal of the number of laps you'll swim each time and do them all. Increase your goal by a few laps each time you go. ("77 Ways to Prevent Burnout," 1981, p. 50)
3. Take an exercise or dance class in the evening. Really put an effort into stretching and movement. If the weather's bad and you feel too worn out to even make it to the class, force yourself to go anyway. You'll be glad you did. ("77 Ways to Prevent Burnout," 1981, p. 51)

4. "If you don't own a dog to take for a walk, borrow one. Your neighbors will love you for it and it will do you more good than the dog." ("77 Ways to Prevent Burnout," 1981, p. 49)
5. "Turn on the radio to some zippy music when you're alone, and dance around to it. Don't look in the mirror — just let yourself feel good." ("77 Ways to Prevent Burnout," 1981, p. 49)
6. "Get in some big-muscle action: saw wood, dig up the garden, chop down trees, scrub the floor." ("77 Ways to Prevent Burnout," 1981, p. 49)
7. "[Meet] . . . other teachers for a 30-minute exercise workout . . . at the end of the school day . . ." (Kiff, 1986, p. 16)
8. After a day of teaching, you owe it to your body to shake off the dust. If you feel tired, exercise will revive you. Get out and jog, run, walk, or work out in a gym. (Moe, 1979, p. 36)
9. "Take a hike, ride a bike." ("77 Ways to Prevent Burnout," 1981, p. 49)
10. You can slip in a few minutes of energy-boosting exercise right in your classroom — and all it takes is a chair! So when you're waiting for your kids to return from recess, don't just sit there. Exercise!
  - Sit erect with feet flat on the floor. Breathe in as you slowly roll your head backward in a half circle. Then lower your chin to your chest. Exhale. Relax. Rotate your head in the opposite direction and repeat three times.
  - Sit tall. Extend your right leg with the knee straight. Flex your toes. Slowly raise your leg as you breathe in deeply. When you've raised your leg as high as you can, point your toes, then flex them, moving back and forth five times. Roll your ankle to the left, to the right, then in a circle. Point your heel, and slowly lower your leg, while exhaling. Take a deep breath. Relax. Repeat with other leg. Relax. Now extend your legs and crisscross them 10 times. Slowly lower your legs to the ground while exhaling.
  - Grasp the sides of your chair for balance and "bicycle ride." Lower your feet slowly to the ground while exhaling.
  - Sit erect with your feet flat on the floor. Allow your head to fall back. Move your lower lip up and down as if to touch your nose. Repeat 10 times.  
("Got a Minute?", 1981, p. 50)

## Diet and Rest

Proper diet and rest, in addition to exercise, are important factors in an effective stress management program. As Pagel and Price (1980, p. 50) state, "A strong relaxed body not only helps you to feel better but also increases your tolerance and endurance when under stress." Consider the following suggestions and comments relating to diet and rest:

1. Go to bed to sleep, not to worry or brood. If you find you're in a bad mood at bedtime, take a walk, read a chapter of a book that gives you pleasure, talk to someone you love about the good things in your life . . . ("77 Ways to Prevent Burnout," 1981, p. 49)
2. "Get plenty of sleep . . . Don't lie in bed thinking about how you should have handled Johnny when he poured black paint on the piano keys." (Moe, 1979, p. 36)
3. . . . certain foods to some individuals can spark a stress response . . . diet can cause low blood sugar, headaches, and dizziness . . . stress can drain certain vitamins from our bodies which diminish a person's skill to cope with stress. (Kiff, 1986, p. 17)
4. We are advised by doctors and nutritionists to eat moderately from all major food groups. Cut down on cholesterol, sugar, and salt. Drink plenty of water, drink no more than a moderate amount of coffee, and limit alcohol consumption. (Kiff, 1968, p. 17)
5. "Try to maintain the correct weight for your age, height, and overall body frame. Avoid fad diets. If you need to lose weight, consult your physician." (Kiff, 1986, p. 17)

## Relaxation

"As is true with exercise, relaxation techniques can reduce bodily tension and restore energy" (Sparks, 1983, p. 37). Consider the following ideas for relaxation:

1. Give yourself a chance to unwind from school before you face responsibilities at home. Stop for a walk in the park or a visit with a friend. Let your family and friends know how they can support you. If you need a few minutes of undisturbed time when you get home, ask for it. They can help you if you let them know how. ("Not For Rookies Only," 1987, p. 54)
2. Learn to decompress between the time you leave the school building and the time you arrive home. Leave behind the conflicts you are involved with at school. Keep home a place to enjoy. Share the good things you experience at school; recounting the successful times will help you focus on them. (Hendrickson, 1979, p. 39)
3. Retreat and regroup. Find a haven — behind the closed door of your room during recess, immersed in a favorite magazine, enjoying a walk around the school alone. A few minutes spent in a restful way leaves you ready to make better decisions. ("Not For Rookies Only," 1987, p. 54)
4. Choose a quiet, calm environment with as few distractions as possible in which to relax. Close your eyes and concentrate on relaxing all your muscles, beginning with your toes. Doing this for 10 to 20 minutes a day can do wonders for a tired, overworked mind and body. ("77 Ways to Prevent Burnout," 1981, p. 51)
5. "Take a good book into the library at lunchtime. Choose a comfortable, isolated seat and enjoy the peace and quiet." ("77 Ways to Prevent Burnout," 1981, p. 49)
6. "Take three long breaths, hold and let them out slowly before you enter the classroom." ("77 Ways to Prevent Burnout," 1981, p. 51)
7. Schedule times during the week when you do something you consider relaxing: reading (not for a course); listening to music; soaking in a hot tub; or meditating. The benefits from relaxation come when it is practiced on a regular basis. (OFlynn-Comiskey, 1980, p. 70)
8. After school on a cold day, enjoy a mug of hot cocoa (with marshmallows, of course) while taking a steaming hot bubble bath. On a hot day, sip a

glass of cold lemonade or juice while you sit in a tub of cool water. ("77 Ways to Prevent Burnout," 1981, p. 50)

9. "Go out to dinner at one of your favorite restaurants with a friend, a relative or your spouse every Friday night for a month." ("77 Ways to Prevent Burnout," 1981, p. 50)
10. Learn to relax under stress as well as during rest times. While some prefer standard methods of relaxing such as Transcendental Meditation (TM), many develop their own techniques . . . one [administrator's] . . . office is filled with plants; when the stress is great, she closes her door and putters in her indoor garden for 10 minutes. Another teacher smiles and jokes with students or colleagues to release tension. Others think "happy thoughts"; sing or enter into an art project with their students; play games; drink herbal tea; plan a vacation; use photographs to recall memories of a relaxing beach, lake, or stream; or spend a few minutes reading a story, either to themselves or to their students. Whatever the method, it is equally important to develop a turn-off switch to problems. Particularly in human interactions, we tend to rerun in our heads the dialogue of confrontations or the details of tension-causing situations. Turning off the record and relaxing, even briefly, will help you slow down the emotional reactions and, when you return to the problem, begin thinking rationally about a solution. (Martinez, 1989, pp. 278, 280)
11. Images often help achieve a real sense of peacefulness. For example:
  - Imagine you are very heavy; then let your body sink further and further into the chair, bed, etc.
  - Imagine you are light and airy, floating peacefully on a cloud
  - Imagine you are very happy, peaceful, and relaxed
  - Imagine a place where you were happy and relaxed. Really experience that place, the sights, sounds, smells, and your feelings (OFlynn-Comiskey, 1980, p. 71)
12. Balance high-stress with low-stress activities. If you are a teacher in your professional life, people often expect you to fill the same role in your private life, asking you to teach a class for a community center or church "because you are so good at it." . . . And because educators generally are caring and committed, too often they agree. But letting your private life become a mirror of your professional life eliminates the safety valve and almost guarantees stress overload. Maintaining a balance between the high-stress and low-stress activities that you participate in each week gives you recovery time. (Martinez, 1989, p. 278)
13. . . . there are many prerecorded relaxation tapes on the market which can be purchased through the classified advertising sections of the American



Psychological Association Monitor and Psychology Today. (Wiggers et al., 1982, p. 18)

14. Benson (1975) has developed an easily learned relaxation strategy . . . The relaxation response follows a six-step process.
1. Sit quietly in a comfortable position.
  2. Close your eyes.
  3. Deeply relax your muscles, beginning at your feet and progressing up to your face. Keep them relaxed.
  4. Breathe through your nose. Become aware of your breathing. As you breathe out, say the word "one" silently to yourself. For example, breathe in . . . out, "one", in . . . out, "one"; etc. Breathe easily and naturally.
  5. Continue for 10 to 20 minutes. You may open your eyes to check the time, but do not use an alarm. When you finish, sit quietly for several minutes, at first with your eyes closed and later with your eyes open. Do not stand up for a few minutes.
  6. Do not worry about whether you are successful in achieving a deep level of relaxation. Maintain a passive attitude and permit relaxation to occur at its own pace. When distracting thoughts occur, try to ignore them by not dwelling upon them and return to repeating "one." With practice, the response should come with little effort. Practice the technique once or twice daily, but not within two hours after any meal, since the digestive processes seem to interfere with the elicitation of the relaxation response. (Benson, as in Sparks, 1983, p. 38)
15. Some teachers use [Benson's relaxation] strategy, or similar ones, mid-morning instead of a coffee break and also immediately upon arriving home at the end of the work day. Not only do they feel calmer and more relaxed at that moment, but they also find that they respond to some stressors with less physiological arousal than was previously true. (Sparks, 1983, p.38)
16. Occasionally muscles are so tense that mental relaxation is not possible. In these cases, a frequently used method combines tensing and releasing muscle groups until the entire body is resting. (OFlynn-Comiskey, 1980, p. 70)

## Personal Growth

According to Hendrickson (1979, p. 39), "the greatest defense against burnout is personal growth." Pagel and Price (1980, p. 50) suggest that you "pursue your intellectual development through a wide variety of learning experiences," and state:

The acquisition of new knowledge and skills not only contributes to a greater sense of professional competence but also represents a source of joy and fulfillment.

Suggestions to consider when planning new directions for personal growth include:

1. Experiment with some gourmet recipes — try making a souffle, egg rolls or baklava. If the dish turns out a flop, just laugh and try it again some other time. ("77 Ways to Prevent Burnout," 1981, p. 51)
2. "Take up a new sport. Learn how to play tennis, take scuba diving lessons, join a community softball team or start ice skating." ("77 Ways to Prevent Burnout," 1981, p. 51)
3. Do something in your spare time that you have always dreamed of doing. Learn to fly an airplane or a helicopter. Climb a mountain. Put your dreams in action. You will feel good about yourself, and when you feel good about yourself, you will feel good about your teaching. (Moe, 1979, p. 36)
4. Volunteer some of your time to be with someone who needs you. Become a Big Brother or Big Sister, or visit a nursing home on a regular basis. You'll feel good about making others feel good. ("77 Ways to Prevent Burnout," 1981, p. 51)
5. Take up that hobby you've been thinking about for years. Set up that aquarium, teach yourself to develop film, research your family tree, learn to weave or refinish a piece of furniture. Start off small, though, so you don't get discouraged too quickly. ("77 Ways to Prevent Burnout," 1981, p. 50)
6. "Go to a book store and buy a novel you've always wanted to read. Take your time reading it and enjoy every page." ("77 Ways to Prevent Burnout," 1981, p. 50)



7. "Learn more about your ethnic heritage. Join your nationality organization and become involved in traditional activities and festivities." ("77 Ways to Prevent Burnout," 1981, p. 50)
8. Study something that is not related to school — ceramics, yoga, massage or guitar — or take up a hobby that provides your body with a chance to stretch. Because your work involves verbal, cognitive, future-oriented activities, it is important to have diversions that are nonverbal, physical and offer immediate gratification. (Hendrickson, 1979, p. 39)
9. "Go to a newsstand once a week and buy a different magazine each time. You will expand your horizons and find lots of new topics for conversation." ("77 Ways to Prevent Burnout," 1981, p. 50)
10. Keep learning. Read. Learn to work with leather, wood, plastics. Learn to ski, skate, swim, dance. Take up a foreign language. The only limits to your learning are those you place on yourself. Watch out, however, for those college courses offered on evenings and weekends during school months. Spend some time at summer school rather than give up your evenings or Saturdays when school is in session. Moreover, if you get into a class that drives you nuts, leave. (Moe, 1979, p. 36)

## Creativity

Fimian (1980, p. 66) observes that "the routine imposed by the [teaching] profession can cause feelings of boredom and discouragement." Creativity in the classroom can combat these feelings. As Weinberg (1990, pp. 43-44) states,

We are the least stressed when we do not notice the passage of time — during recreation, entertainment, and creativity . . . Teachers who appear gratified at what their work lives contain are in the constant process of serving up (experimenting with) simulations that make classroom life a center of creativity, recreation, and entertainment.

Consider the following suggestions and comments:

1. Teachers who take the time to set up classroom activities around student experience make time and the students work for them. The idea is to treat teaching as doing creative work, being entertained by one's life in the classroom, and making the class day seem like a trip down the Colorado River on a raft. (Weinberg, 1990, p. 44)
2. Creativity and entertainment (for teacher and student) depends on shifting the locus of responsibility from the teacher to the student. The teacher becomes the choreographer, the students, the dancers. Teachers who engage students at the level of their personal relationship to knowledge are less stressed by time than teachers who concentrate exclusively on knowledge and skills for their own sake. (Weinberg, 1990, pp. 43-44)
3. Even though teachers are bound by standards and certain institutional rules, many methods and techniques for teaching can be varied and done differently. As you grow in your experience, capability, and relationships with others, you should begin to find ways to vary teaching for yourself and [your] students. Try visual aids, simulations, role playing, buzz groups, and speakers. (Hunter, 1986, p. 7)
4. Think of ways to enrich your own participation in the classroom. Try something new and daring. Put away old curricula you have used for years – be flexible and innovative! New experiences tend to generate excitement and enthusiasm while dissipating much of the accrued frustration. (Pagel and Price, 1980, p. 49)
5. Find some "wiggle room." A major source of stress for many teachers is the feeling that they are locked in a bureaucratic straightjacket. Certainly, most teachers feel handicapped by external constraints – prescribed curricula and learning materials, regulations, working conditions, limitations

on resources and time. However, as Arthur Combs put it, "There is always room to wiggle. There is always at least a little room to experiment, to try to change things" . . . To find "wiggle room" focus on what can be done rather than what cannot be done." (Martinez, 1989, p. 277)

6. Concentrate on your own development. Teachers ask either too little of their work or too much of the children, who are supposed to provide them with their gratifications. The compensation for any job has got to lie in the work itself. Teachers can try things out and see how they work, experiment, and turn their teaching in directions that will lead to their learning about things in the world the same way as their students, and perhaps in collaboration with them. Instead of asking, "What do I know that I can teach the kids?" teachers can ask, "What do the kids know that they can teach me, or what can we all learn together?" (Weinberg, 1990, p. 43)
7. Fight against boredom, our number one enemy. Hard work can be exciting and fulfilling, but only if it's enjoyable . . . Teachers who find teaching enjoyable plan against boredom. They devise strategies, games, exercises, visual demonstrations, competitions, and challenges that are guaranteed to evoke interest, excitement, even enthusiasm for both teachers and students. (Weinberg, 1990, pp. 41-42)
8. "If you feel the kids don't care about anything you have to say, try to find out what they really do care about. Meet them where they are." ("77 Ways to Prevent Burnout," 1981, p. 51)
9. "If your plan for the day doesn't have some fun in it, change your schedule!" ("Not For Rookies Only," 1987, p. 54)
10. Pick a classroom focus or a theme that stirs your creative energies. Do research and prepare your lessons around this theme. You will find that having a focus gives a special liveliness to what you do in the classroom. (Hendrickson, 1979, p. 39)
11. By doing the unexpected, the extraordinary, the totally uncalled for, [teachers can lift] their own teaching spirits and the morale of those around them. (Scherer, 1983, p. 44)
12. Plan something unexpected and new in the classroom.
  - Hold a class contest.
  - Have a theme party.
  - Plan a theme a week. (How about celebrating something silly like summer in the middle of winter or exploring something the kids want to know about, such as special effects in the movies?)
  - Be hosts to a younger class. (Hold a music hour together.)

- Ask a child with a special interest or talent to teach that subject for a period.
  - Plan a yearly project (e.g., build a puppet stage; build a giant chessboard). (Scherer, 1983, p. 45)
13. Choose something you want to do. . . . make a list of all the things you like to do inside and outside of class (or would like to do if you had time for them). Include everything from carpentry to doing crossword puzzles to repairing home appliances to gardening to looking at pictures. Now write why you like to do each thing. Is it because you have an analytical mind that you like to play chess or that you like to work with your hands that you like woodworking? If bringing this particular interest itself to class does not work, think how to bring the personal skill behind the interest to class. (Scherer, 1983, p. 45)

## Variety

It isn't only the intensity of teaching that can wear a teacher down; the dailiness of the schedule and the set routine can also be deadening. (Scherer, 1983, p. 45)

The following suggestions may help you add variety to your life:

1. "Instead of doing the routine during your coffee or lunch break, try something different." ("Fresh Ideas," 1984, p. 5)
2. Take a sabbatical or a leave of absence. If you opt for the former, your school district will probably dictate, at least in part, what you must do with your time. If you can afford the latter, your time is your own. Live with relatives, get a 30-day bus pass and travel about visiting all your friends and relatives, apply for a grant and write about the mating habits of the grasshopper. Get a job on a farm or at the seashore or work as a salesclerk. (Moe, 1979, p. 36)
3. Change grade levels and subject areas periodically for a little variety. This strategy may prove to be a source of excitement for students as well as for teachers. (Pagel and Price, 1980, p. 49)
4. Put away the safe curriculum that you've used for years. Try something new and daring. It will revitalize you. On the other hand, if you are always trying something new, take a break and borrow an idea from a friend. You'll never lose your ability to innovate, even if you rest a while. (Hendrickson, 1979, p. 39)
5. Take a weekend excursion to the mountains, the beach, or your favorite hideout. Make sure the place you choose is relatively free from everyday hassles. Leave after school on Friday, and come back on Sunday afternoon in time to relax before Monday. ("77 Ways to Prevent Burnout," 1981, p. 51)
6. If you live in an urban or suburban area, plan a day trip into the country. Bring a picnic lunch and go fishing, explore a historical town that's off the beaten path or browse through a flea market. ("77 Ways to Prevent Burnout," 1981, p. 51)
7. "If you live in a rural area, go to the city for a day to shop, visit museums and galleries or take in a show." ("77 Ways to Prevent Burnout," 1981, p. 51)

8. During summer breaks, instead of teaching or working with children or youth, you may need to take the summer off and relax, do something completely different. (Hunter, 1986, p. 6)
9. Take a vacation whenever possible. Teachers, like other members of the work force, are quick to acknowledge the soothing effect of an excursion to an enjoyable setting, free of the pressures normally encountered at work. (Pagel and Price, 1980, p. 50)
10. Travel. Take a trip in the summertime. If possible, get out of the country. Take pictures of the places you visit, make recordings of the people and music you hear, and write down your impressions of your experiences. These will serve as wonderful memories of your trip – and may also prove useful in your classroom. (Moe, 1979, p. 36)



## Twenty-Five Additional Ideas

Twenty-five additional ideas to help you manage stress and avoid burnout

include:

1. Make a periodic needs assessment, focusing on ways to enhance your teaching and classroom functioning. For example, rearrange the physical environment of the classroom in order to facilitate student learning; order new materials; use older students as peer instructors or take advantage of the help resource staff and other teachers are able to offer. (Pagel and Price, 1980, pp. 48-49)
2. Reexamine the psychology of the group you are working with, particularly their problems, needs, and interests. Remember children vary considerably across age, class, and cultural groups. (Pagel and Price, 1980, p. 48)
3. Counter personal and professional depreciation. Through the games we play and the difficulty most people have in accepting praise or compliments from others, we often allow ourselves to be depreciated. How often have you heard one of your "friends" say:
  - "Are you still here? I thought the board finally figured out how insignificant your work was."
  - "Everyone knows counselors don't work."
  - "Science teachers play during experiment time."
  - "Coaches and physical education teachers play all the time."
  - "We all know those who work in education are not working in the real world."

Your charge is to begin by accepting compliments positively and graciously without one note of negation, de-evaluation or modesty. Then proceed to counter all the depreciation "zings" through sincere, quiet counters which effectively disassemble the put down. Don't succumb to the temptation of sending an "in-kind" remark. You'll feel surprisingly better about who you are and what you do as you opt out of the game of "put-down."  
(Newbrough, 1983, p. 271)
4. Expand your job requirements. Asking more of yourself, whether it means writing an article for a journal or learning a new technical skill, can lead to a sense of accomplishment and progress. ("Fresh Ideas," 1984, p. 5)
5. When you feel particularly depressed, take a day or two off. Called mental health days and recognized as legitimate by many school districts, these should be used to pamper yourself. Enjoy the solitude of your home when your family or roommate is away. Go to lunch in a fancy restaurant with a friend you haven't seen in a while . . . tour the city. (Hendrickson, 1979, p. 39)

6. "If you are coming down with a cold, stay home. You don't have to wait until you have a high fever and the school nurse sends you home." (Hendrickson, 1979, p. 39)
7. "Develop the skill you had as a kid – selective inattention – and use it to keep from drowning in a sea of petty irritations." ("77 Ways to Prevent Burnout," 1981, p. 50)
8. Avoid the urge to "fight." When you are first confronted with a problem, consider whether you should take the "flight" response instead. Some situations are either not worth dealing with or are so far out of your control that your best bet may be to "leave well enough alone." (Felder and Schomberg, 1983, p. 194)
9. If you have a disagreement with someone you work with, look at the situation from both sides. Remember that the other person may be having a bad day. Try to work out the problem instead of letting it nag you. ("77 Ways to Prevent Burnout," 1981, p. 51)
10. Invite each of your classes to your home for a dinner or a barbecue sometime during the semester. Talk to the students as people – find out about their hobbies and interests, their dreams and goals. Tell them about yours too. ("77 Ways to Prevent Burnout," 1981, p. 51)
11. Start a journal . . . Journals are excellent vehicles for sorting the day's events and putting them into perspective . . . Write whatever comes to mind – a spur-of-the-moment poem, an amusing anecdote from the classroom, your plans for the weekend, feelings about fellow teachers – anything goes. After a few weeks of writing, plan a relaxed evening spent rereading your entries. ("Got a Minute?", 1981, p. 50)
12. Keep a diary of the wacky things the kids say, do, and write on their papers. Who knows? You may have the beginnings of a good book or an article . . . (Moe, 1979, p. 36)
13. Encourage parent involvement in the pupil's educational process. Sensitize them to your problems. Listen to parents and respect their opinions. In addition, recognize that parents can provide valuable services (e.g., tutoring, typing, supervising, and making classroom presentations). (Pagel and Price, 1980, p. 49)
14. Educators [should] proactively [exercise] some degree of control over the little things in the school environment that, left unattended, can later function as significant stressors. (Lemley, as in Fimian, 1986, p. 52)

15. Try some "rose spray." Picture yourself successfully completing all your tasks, meeting all the challenges you have accepted. Mental health practitioners refer to this as imaging; coaches refer to it as positive mental practice. "Rose psychology" simply suggests you can come out smelling like a rose through good planning, hard work, good friends and a positive attitude. (Newbrough, 1983, p. 273)
16. Use "duck spray." "Duck spray" is simply a vehicle to prevent the bad times/moments/experiences from penetrating your defenses and becoming debilitating. You are resilient, strong and thick skinned; don't lose conscious sight of it. Whenever bad moments do arrive, when Murphy's law (whatever can go wrong does go wrong) is the only law, when the bottom is near, spray yourself with a protective perspective which will allow you to have some of your present tragedy roll off your psyche. (Newbrough, 1983, p. 272)
17. "Deal with problems when they occur, if you can. Don't let them pile up." ("77 Ways to Prevent Burnout," 1981, p. 49)
18. Consider your alternatives. If you think you're trapped, look for a way or ways out, and figure out how to get out. Then figure out if you want to do it. If the answer is yes, do it. If the answer is no, look for ways to change your daily work environment. ("77 Ways to Prevent Burnout," 1981, p. 50)
19. "Examine several solutions; there is always more than one. Choose one solution; it does not have to be perfect . . ." (Butt, 1980, p. 23)
20. "Try to keep other people's problems separate from your own." ("77 Ways to Prevent Burnout," 1981, p. 50)
21. If you see the need for change, figure out how to lead others toward that change. Work in the local chapter of your professional organization, join your local Rotary Club, get involved in politics or run for the school board. ("77 Ways to Prevent Burnout," 1981, p. 50)
22. "If you're popping aspirin, antacids or tranquilizers, cut down on the number you take, stop taking them, or get some professional counseling." ("77 Ways to Prevent Burnout," 1981, p. 50)
23. . . . try to avoid taking personally events occurring in our workplace that were not intended to be taken personally . . . We know that our bureaucratic schools in these days of compliance with a multitude of federal, state, and local regulations have become impersonal, frequently inept, and occasionally ludicrous. To attribute harmful intent when none is present is nonsensical and self-destructive. Taking everything personally is

to become like the football fan who thinks that when the home team huddles, they are talking about him. (Ricchio, 1983, p. 44)

24. "Learn to be candid and frank in your discussions, but always attempt to channel conversation into positive, solution-oriented conclusions." (Eskridge and Coker, 1985, p. 389)
25. ... keep "happy gimmicks." Pictures of former students who have won awards should be framed and placed in easy view. Laudatory letters from administrators, former students, or parents of former students should be placed in a file drawer. On days when you honestly think you are in the wrong profession, between classes look at the pictures and read the letters. You will realize that there have been better days, and there will again be better days. (Ricchio, 1983, p. 46)

## Teacher Preparation Programs

According to Eskridge and Coker (1985, p. 389),

Some researchers urge the need for teacher preparation programs to address topics of professional stress . . . Teacher preparatory institutions must develop programs that incorporate into their training the stressful realities of teaching and the problems teachers encounter daily. Potential teachers must be shown the actualities of teaching so that they are fully aware of the daily conditions faced by the profession.

This position is reinforced by Betkouski (1981, p. 36), who states:

. . . it . . . becomes clear that teachers are prepared for only a small portion of the reality of teaching; that while teacher education programs claim to stress the preparation of "competent" teachers, they woefully underemphasize survival skills, such as belief in self, decision making, . . . and constructive adjustment.

and by Gmelch (1983, p. 12) who advises:

Don't be caught off guard when you find out education is loaded with stress. Know in advance what stress your job entails: that the demands are high, challenges great, and time insufficient. Those who are not prepared for the conflicts and risks inherent to educating students may suffer the most.

Teacher preparation programs can and must develop programs to help teachers understand and cope effectively with the stress inherent to teaching. Suggestions and comments related to this goal include:

1. Teachers must be shown the realities of teaching; they must be involved in the classroom as much as possible to allow for the formation of coping strategies. Teacher trainers have an obligation to give guidance and training as teachers develop these strategies. It should be made clear that a teacher is not responsible for the frustrating conditions, only for the personal reaction to them. (Kossack and Woods, 1987-88, p. 54)
2. Teacher trainers must be aware of the realities of teaching and make active provision in training programs for effective solutions to the difficult problems today's teachers are facing: discipline, drugs, cultural differences, organizational difficulties inherent in individualization, etc. (Kossack and Woods, 1987-88, p. 54)



3. Teaching is a profession but not a 24-hours-a-day obligation. Teacher training should emphasize time-efficient strategies that do not regularly require work outside the normal working hours. (Kossack and Woods, 1987-88, p. 54)
4. "Student teachers should have practice in at least two different settings, one of which must be urban." (Ricchio, 1983, p. 43)
5. Teacher education must be expanded to include topics such as stress and tension reduction, conflict confrontation, acceptance of authority and control, resistance to physical and psychological threats, assertiveness, responsibility therapy such as gestalt and helping behavior, problem solving, and many others. In general, teachers need to be equipped to handle repeated, intense emotional interactions with people. (Cunningham, 1983, p. 46)
6. We must help students in our teacher education programs acquire realistic expectations as to what is probable – not what is ideal – in today's classroom. (Ricchio, 1983, p. 44)



## The Principal and Stress

"The building principal is a critical factor in teacher stress" (Eskridge and Coker, 1985, p. 388). Indeed,

Administrators play a vital role in helping teachers minimize and manage stress. The support system established for teachers by supervisors and principals is vital in helping teachers eliminate unnecessary obstacles that affect the teaching/learning conditions of the classroom. (Eskridge and Coker, 1985, p. 389)

Cunningham (1982, p. 22) adds:

Research suggests that professional burnout is reduced by leaders who support participation and are aware of and concerned about people . . . The ideal leader engages people, allows them to release their potential, and does not overcontrol, prod, or push them. [The ideal leader] is self-aware and has the capacity to integrate concern for results with concern for people.

"The ability of principals to reduce teacher stress will be greatly enhanced by their becoming aware of those areas believed by teachers to be stressful"

(Calabrese, 1987, p. 68). Toward this goal of helping principals reduce stress for teachers, the following suggestions and comments may also be of help:

1. Convey by word and action respect for teachers' work with children and the value of teachers' input in decision making about children and about school policy. Actively solicit teachers' opinions prior to the formulation of new policies, thereby conveying a positive regard for their judgment. (Pagel and Price, 1980, p. 51)
2. Convey an attitude of empathy rather than criticism toward teachers. Taking over teachers' classes periodically to permit them to attend a workshop or to have a conference with a parent is an effective way to demonstrate caring. (Pagel and Price, 1980, p. 52)
3. . . . make certain that teachers clearly understand their responsibilities to students, to the school system and to parents. Teachers have little difficulty understanding and accepting their responsibility to educate students. However, additional responsibilities often cause conflict. Ambiguity regarding a teacher's responsibility for discipline, sex education, teaching moral and ethical values, responding to the public's criticism and

demands, handling hostile parent conferences, completing endless piles of paperwork and counseling emotionally distraught students causes initial feelings of inadequacy, leading to anxiety and anger. These issues must be candidly identified and openly addressed to prevent overwhelming teachers with demands they do not have the training to handle, or do not feel comfortable accepting, or do not believe they are paid for. (Ryerson, 1981, pp. 40-41)

4. The principal can stimulate excitement by encouraging teachers to view their jobs in different ways and by providing, within the limits of the setting, opportunities to modify, restructure, or expand their responsibilities as teachers. (Werner, 1980, p. 60)
5. "The mind is like a tire," suggests Mortimer Feinberg, a New York City industrial psychologist . . . "If it isn't rotated, it is going to wear out faster. To rotate the mind, don't drive it constantly in the same gear." . . . Teachers can switch classrooms, grades, areas, curriculum – and stay rejuvenated. (Reed, 1979, p. 68)
6. Build self-esteem: . . .
  - When was the last time you popped into someone's class and said, "Hey, that lesson was really good"?
  - When was the last time you complimented a teacher on the handling of a difficult child?
  - Are you concerned more with what looks good (and what makes you look good) than with the problems your staff faces each day?
  - "Everyone has some expertise or specialized talent," [Feinberg] says. If you know that Tom Jones, a first-grade teacher, is an expert on furniture refinishing or the American Constitution, ask him to give a lecture or mini-course for other staff members. (Reed, 1979, p. 69)
7. Develop a system which gives teachers an opportunity to make an anonymous evaluation of administrators. Such a system can provide an acceptable outlet for staff feelings while it promotes positive behavior change in administrators. (Pagel and Price, 1980, p. 52)
8. "Make a periodic assessment of needs and demonstrate flexibility by changing to meet expressed needs." (Pagel and Price, 1980, p. 52)
9. Deliver what you promised . . . The principal can write down [oral] requests for future action. The principal's ability to deliver demonstrates support and timeliness, and negates potential stress situations. (Calabrese, 1987, p. 69)

10. Stress reduction and problem solving programs and meetings need to be held . . . regularly in an atmosphere of mutual respect and sharing between principals and teachers. (Pahnos, 1990, p. 128)
11. "Encourage an overall philosophy of education, a conceptual overview which provides a goal for staff to work toward together." (Pagel and Price, 1980, p. 52)
12. Flexible scheduling is another burnout prevention strategy that works. Rigid, seemingly arbitrary schedules are a major frustration to classroom teachers and a symbol of their lack of control over their professional lives. Seeking teachers' ideas and staff consensus on schedule problems is often a key step toward acceptance. Creative solutions to student management and supervision of nonacademic activities such as lunch, study hall and detention can also give teachers a much-needed chance for a break in routine. (Ryerson, 1981, p. 40)
13. "Design and implement programs to give teachers individual recognition, both tangible and intangible." (Wangberg, 1987, p. 80)
14. "Design and implement programs to increase parent and community support and involvement in the schools." (Wangberg, 1987, p. 80)
15. Push for professional growth . . .
  - Ask teachers what inservice courses they really need, then set them up.
  - If local experts are available in your area — administrators, university personnel, social workers, athletes . . . invite them to school to talk with teachers.
  - If well-known educators are visiting your town, invite them to school . . .
  - It helps, too, if teachers can have a specific place they can go to for professional renewal. For example, you might turn unused areas in your school into resource centers.(Reed, 1979, p. 69)
16. Structure the day so teachers have an opportunity to be away from the children. At one level, time out may be provided during lunch, or a coffee break. At another level, it can be offered by providing teachers with time to do important work apart from the children. Examples of such tasks include: making home visits or phone calls to parents and other professionals; keeping records; or perhaps conducting a miniresearch study on some aspect of the classroom. (Pagel and Price, 1980, p. 52)
17. Promote physical and mental well-being. A healthy body makes for a healthy mind. But how many teachers have access to good, nutritious food at the noon hour?

- One principal keeps the teachers' lounge stocked with apples, oranges, and bananas each day.
- Other principals have eliminated junk food machines and replaced them with salad bars or fought to improve their school lunch program so that teachers, as well as kids, benefit . . .
- Most schools are well-endowed with athletic facilities. Why not open them to teachers before or after school?
- If your school does not have such [athletic] facilities, find out how teachers in your school can use the local high school or community gyms, pools, and playing fields.
- Some principals also recognize the value of a "mental health" day as a preventive measure. If people look exhausted or under particular stress, give them breathing room. Suggest they stay home for a day or so.
- And when teachers are down with the cold or flu, don't give them a hassle or make them feel guilty.

(Reed, 1979, p. 70)

18. The fear of violence is very real for many teachers. In tough situations, teachers need a "take charge" principal to coordinate the activities of social workers, psychologists, parents, community workers, and security personnel; to keep the school calm for the sake of everyone's nerves. Don't hope that if you ignore a problem, it will go away. (Reed, 1979, p. 70)
19. Communicate in a rewarding and positive manner as often as possible: put people at ease, actively listen, and be positive. Express respect for the opinions of others. Affirm people's feelings and needs. Treat others as equals. State needs and feelings sincerely and openly. Confront others constructively. Keep confidences and your word. Use constructive humor. (Goens and Kuciejczyk, 1981, p. 27)
20. " . . . the supportive principal can play an important role in helping teachers formulate and realize their individual career goals." (Werner, 1980, p. 60)
21. "Attend to the group composition of the class and the teacher-child match, the balance between individual needs and group cohesion." (Pagel and Price, 1980, p. 52)
22. "Establish and maintain a low-conflict, low-stress climate emphasizing cooperation, not competition or continual confrontation." (Goens and Kuciejczyk, 1981, p. 27)
23. "Provide teachers with a supportive and encouraging environment — especially when teachers are interacting with parents." (Eskridge and Coker, 1985, p. 389)



24. Release the pressure. Bruce Davis, an elementary school principal in Alhambra, California, [states]: "Sometimes principals apply too much pressure, . . . to satisfy their own philosophy, values, or ambitions." With increasing paperwork being forced on teachers, with escalating public demands, principals need to help teachers relieve pressure by cutting, slashing, and consolidating some of their tasks. (Reed, 1979, p. 70)
25. Let go of the feeling that you are responsible for having all the answers . . . Principals who realize they don't have all the answers will involve other people. Thus, teachers will feel they have an active voice in the school, and are contributing to the school's effectiveness. (Calabrese, 1987, p. 69)
26. "Constantly work toward an equitable distribution of work load." (Eskridge and Coker, 1985, p. 389)
27. "Hire staff members who are well trained in the areas of expertise needed for positions under consideration." (Pagel and Price, 1980, p. 53)
28. Take time to provide a full and accurate job description. A complete statement of duties and competencies required encourages a certain amount of self-selection by prospective employees and helps to create realistic expectations for the teacher who is hired. (Pagel and Price, 1980, p. 53)
29. Administrators can foster professional development for teachers by exerting influence on graduate education . . . Teachers need to have graduate courses available in interpersonal and communication skills, stress management and career planning. (Ryerson, 1981, p. 41)
30. Workshops targeted for new teachers, focused counseling sessions, or pairing beginning teachers with "master" teachers provide realistic training, and are a few of the actions principals can take to help the first-year teacher experience success, rather than stress. (Werner, 1982, p. 15)
31. Promote and establish a confidential employee assistance program designed to give staff members the help they need with emotional, physical, family, or employment pressures. This should include assistance with alcohol and other drug dependencies. Get these problems out of the closet and into the clinic. (Goens and Kuciejczyk, 1981, p. 27)
32. "Encourage innovative, creative, higher-level teaching." (Wangberg, 1987, p. 79)

33. Provide support to help teachers establish clear and reasonable objectives for themselves and give them the autonomy and support to meet the objectives. (Goens and Kuciejczyk, 1981, p. 27)
34. Adapt yourself to the communication style of your school . . . Principals can help ensure that they are reaching teachers by communicating the same message both orally and in writing. And, in the case of a faculty meeting, the overhead projector can be used to assist those who receive communications best in a visual manner. (Calabrese, 1987, p. 69)
35. Provide opportunities for growth and development of new ideas by:
- Supporting and/or authorizing time to attend professional conferences
  - Encouraging the sharing of special skills and expertise among the staff
  - Inviting a specialist to lead a discussion on a topic of interest
  - Encouraging the development of a minicourse to help strengthen teachers in their major content areas
  - Holding workshops that encourage exploration of new materials
  - Providing experimental workshops to learn new teaching techniques
- (Pagel and Price, 1980, pp. 50-51)
36. Curtail work overload.
- Examine ways to reduce and consolidate paperwork.
  - Provide computers and/or aids to assist teachers with necessary paperwork.
  - Keep class size manageable.
  - Provide adequate planning time for teachers.
  - Use aids or volunteers to release teachers from non-teaching duties.
- (Wangberg, 1987, p. 80)
37. "Emphasize building level and classroom level decision making wherever possible." (Wangberg, 1987, p. 79)
38. "Unite the staff through a 'we' approach. Do not rely on superordinate-subordinate interactions." (Goens and Kuciejczyk, 1981, p. 27)
39. Offer released time.
- In Palo Alto, California, teachers have taken a year off to pursue a special project on their own under a program called Project Renew.
  - In other areas of the country, principals are helping teachers get sabbaticals, exchange programs, grants, and fellowships. Contact your central office and local colleges to get information for your teachers, and write state and federal funding sources . . .
  - Get information about schools [for visitations] and workshops so that teachers can take advantage of these visits.



- Sharing contracts is another increasingly popular form of released time. Rather than dropping out of the profession entirely, many teachers are working part time, sharing a position with someone else in their field. (Reed, 1979, p. 70)
40. Administrators can work with local politicians, the press, school boards and parents to enhance their respect for the teaching profession. The public will only pay for what it values. (Ryerson, 1981, p. 41)
  41. Apply a problem-solving model to find solutions to issues and compromises acceptable to the staff. Define and clarify the problem. Specify indicators of the problem and brainstorm alternatives. Select alternatives and build in feedback and evaluation. (Goens and Kuciejczyk, 1981, p. 27)
  42. Teachers and administrators need to acknowledge the added stress involved in working with large numbers of students (many of whom may be very demanding). Some alternatives for reducing the teacher-child ratio are:
    - Add another teacher or aide, full- or part-time
    - Use specialists within the school such as the speech therapist, LD specialist, school psychologist, or reading teacher
    - Use paraprofessionals or student teachers
    - Use older students to help younger students
    - Allow some students to participate in activities outside the classroom for short periods during the day
    - Regroup within teaching teams
 (Pagel and Price, 1980, p. 51)
  43. Improve the appearance of school buildings.
    - Furnish school buildings with appropriate, comfortable furniture.
    - Repair run-down school buildings.
 (Wangberg, 1987, p. 80)
  44. "Keep building temperatures at reasonable settings." (Wangberg, 1987, p. 80)
  45. "Reduce noise levels where these are unreasonable." (Wangberg, 1987, p. 80)
  46. It is possible to develop a career ladder by creating levels of teacher status based on skill not tenure, by providing opportunities and encouraging lateral moves between grades and subjects to enhance a teacher's knowledge and skill; and by developing a master teacher/mentor system. (Ryerson, 1981, p. 41)

47. "Be aware of individual differences and needs. Try . . . to learn which types of support [your staff values] most." (Schlansker, 1987, p. 34)
48. "Increase the possibility for teachers to interact positively with students and with each other." (Wangberg, 1987, p. 79)
49. Administrators can explain clearly how the information they solicit from teachers [for decision making] will be used and what ultimate control they will have over the final decision. (Ryerson, 1981, p. 40)
50. ". . . establish a system for letting teachers know the reasons for decisions that are made by methods other than consensus." (Ryerson, 1981, p. 40)

## School-Centered Strategies

There are many stress-reduction strategies that are "within the direct influence of the classroom teacher" (Pagel and Price, 1980, p. 50). And, "there are numerous other strategies that can reduce job stress but require the direct intervention of school administrators working in conjunction with the faculty" (Pagel and Price, 1980, p. 50). The following school-centered strategies can help minimize stress:

### 1. Induction Programs

- ". . . an induction program can be an effective means of reducing stress and burnout for the purpose of retaining beginning teachers." (Gold, 1989, p. 66)
- There are four key factors in induction programs which relate to stress reduction . . . :
  1. the need for teachers to become aware of their own stress and its effect on them;
  2. identification of perceived levels of burnout in the areas of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment;
  3. the development of an individual stress reduction plan to deal with stress and to prevent burnout; and
  4. establishment of support systems, both individual and group, to prevent loneliness and isolation and to provide necessary intervention strategies.
 (Gold, 1987, as in Gold, 1989, p. 68)

### 2. Staff Services

- Teachers should be provided confidential diagnoses, counseling/ training/conditioning, and referral services to help them deal with physical and emotional exhaustion. Schools must expand their traditional employee benefits to include sponsored physical and social activities, programs to improve teaching skills, nutrition programs, free confidential professional counseling, and hotlines for troubled teachers. (Cunningham, 1983, p. 46)
- Staff services within school systems must be expanded to include pre-service preparation for stress, stress and tension workshops, conflict/

stress confrontation, convenient and confidential drop-in counseling centers . . . (Cunningham, 1982, p. 21)

### 3. Staff Development

- Many distressful situations occur because teachers must face problems daily for which their training did not adequately prepare them. Certain stressors could be prevented if teachers could acquire the knowledge and skills to do their jobs more effectively. A well-designed, comprehensive staff development program is likely to be the most efficient means through which teachers can systematically acquire the necessary understandings and competencies. (Sparks, 1982, as in Sparks, 1983, p. 41)
- The topics of motivating students, classroom management, academic learning time, and school climate are but a few of teachers' concerns that could be dealt with through a responsive, ongoing staff development program. Teachers and administrators are likely to benefit from programs in communication skills, conflict management, participative decision making, and research-into-practice approaches to school improvement and effective teaching. (Sparks, 1983, p. 41)
- An often neglected aspect of staff development involves providing teachers with an opportunity to reflect on their work and establish short and long range goals for both their personal and professional lives. (Sparks, 1983, p. 41)
- "Provide teachers with seminars on self-concept building for themselves and their students." (Wangberg, 1987, p. 80)
- Inservice training can also focus specifically on the special problems of working closely and intensely with other people. Some pertinent topics should be:
  - The administrator-teacher relationship
  - Working with uncooperative parents
  - Working with children you dislike, etc.
  - Preventing and remediating occupational stress
 (Pagel and Price, 1980, p. 51)

### 4. Master Teachers

- Schools need to provide teachers with realistic and viable opportunities to advance professionally. The lack of connection between how well teachers teach and professional advancement is demoralizing. (Ryerson, 1981, p. 41)

- Teachers should be provided an opportunity to move into more complex, demanding, better-paying roles as assessment determines their readiness for such responsibility and increased status. (Cunningham, 1982, p. 20)
- With the creation of master-teacher positions in a school, the regular classroom teacher receives assistance from master teachers who help in analyzing and developing instructional programs for each student, facilitate the sharing of techniques and approaches within the school and also between the school and other schools, articulate problems of the teachers to administrators and to community and human service agencies, and serve as general resource persons aware of local and national services as well as educational developments and methods to help teachers improve performance and solve problems. (Cunningham, 1982, pp. 20-21)

##### 5. Programs to Reduce Isolation

- As it stands, teachers' needs for affiliation and support are often unfulfilled. For the most part, teachers are terribly alone in their helping roles. They not only function independently, but within the confines of their classrooms, they become the sole repository for skills, stamina, and enrichment — a role that cannot long be endured by any single individual. (Farber and Miller, 1981, p. 239)
- Retreats at the beginning and/or the end of a school year can do much for determining goals or for evaluating progress. Coming together away from the school develops shared values so important to an organization. It can also reduce feelings of isolation. (Rothberg, 1986, p. 322)
- Attendance at professional meetings should be encouraged . . . Exposure to other schools and people in and outside of the district can give us a totally different perspective. Many school systems allow teachers to visit other teachers in different buildings. (Rothberg, 1986, p. 322)
- Anything to improve and increase social interaction with and among the staff would be meaningful.
  - School breakfasts for the staff, parties, a faculty dining room, and other get-togethers are opportunities to get to know staff members better.
  - One principal in a large high school sets up the coffee pot and snacks in his outer office before school, which motivates staff members to come by.

(Rothberg, 1986, p. 322)



- Required peer observation could be extremely helpful. Too often teachers view only a few other teachers. To see how Mary Jones organizes and Sam Smith disciplines can do much to expand our own repertoire. (Rothberg, 1986, p. 321)
- Periodic staff get-togethers to discuss professional reading and/or teaching techniques would promote exchange . . . Why not plan an informal session once a month to discuss educational issues? (Rothberg, 1986, p. 322)
- . . . schools in which teachers experience a psychological sense of community might feature, for example, ongoing case conferences geared not only to acute student crises but to the long-term expression of teachers' needs, concerns, and interests; a team-teaching concept of education; variation in teachers' scheduled routines; consistent program- and problem-oriented contact with administrative as well as paraprofessional personnel (apart from the usual adversary meetings); an active in-school teachers center; use of school facilities for teachers after hours; recruitment and utilization of community volunteers; and effective coalitions among teachers, administrators, parents, and community leaders. (Farber and Miller, 1981, p. 240)

## 6. Support Groups

- The support group is a mutual aid group having its roots in the self-help and human potential movements. It is a therapeutic vehicle designed at one end of the intervention spectrum to assist people in crises and at the other end, to prevent maladaptive responses. (Kirk and Walter, 1981, pp. 147-148)
- The support group can offer the possibility of productive behavior change and mutual support as well as the opportunity to give others the benefit of one's successful coping experiences. A secondary benefit is increased staff and faculty morale which can serve to further prevent burnout predisposition. (Kirk and Walter, 1981, p. 148)
- [Support groups] meet at regularly scheduled times and allow each member to share while the rest of the group provides support. Between meetings individual members can give additional support through phone calls, notes, or visits. (Wangberg, 1982, p. 453)
- Guidelines for support groups usually provide for members to be (1) from similar circumstances, (2) noncompetitive, (3) willing to give constructive criticism, (4) unwilling to listen to negatives or griping, and (5) committed to staying in the same group over time. (Wangberg, 1982, p. 453)



- The goals [of the group] should be articulated carefully and should state clearly that the purpose of the group is not to provide therapy for personal problems for which professional assistance might be advisable. (Kirk and Walter, 1981, p. 148)
- Essentially, a productive group includes enough members to make discussion interesting but not so many as to make it cumbersome to achieve the established goals of the group. (Kirk and Walter, 1981, p. 149)

## 7. Quality Circles

- Quality circles are groups of volunteer employees who select and study problems, hear complaints, recommend, and, with management approval, implement changes in their working environment. The circle, not management, recommends the avenues along which school efforts to change will be directed. (Cunningham, 1983, p. 46)
- The circle members look at their own job environment, choose a problem and a solution, measure the costs and the gains, and see that solutions are implemented after management has given the go-ahead. By helping employees get perspective on their situation and to intellectualize about it, quality circles provide reduction of stress. (Cunningham, 1983, p. 46)

## 8. Professional Growth Committees

- David Halstead suggests the planning and implementation of a Professional Growth Committee, recognizing that "teachers today remain in the same position for longer periods, thus increasing the chance that they will become stale or burned out." (Werner, 1982, p. 15)
- [The Professional Growth Committee] would be selected by the principal from among the teachers expressing an interest to serve as members. After conducting a careful needs assessment, the committee would provide ongoing activities throughout the year such as "mini-growth programs" presenting recent research in areas such as affective teaching techniques, remedies for stress, curricular innovations, "food for thought" weekly handouts, or guest speakers to address common concerns such as learning to relax, getting proper exercise, or using leisure time well. Moreover, the committee members might serve as supports for some teachers who face difficulty in solving job-related problems. (Werner, 1982, p. 15)

9. Child Study Groups

- Another type of support system is the Child Study Group. Once a week, before school, members meet to discuss a student for which a group member needs advice. Members offer solutions, and the teacher with the problem decides which of these will be implemented in the coming week. These meetings focus on the resolution of problems with students, but an additional outcome is teachers supporting teachers. (Wangberg, 1982, p. 453)

10. Teacher Centers

- "Teacher centers may operate in individual schools, serving the staff of those schools, or in school districts, serving the entire district staff." (Farber, 1991, p. 306)
- Their purpose is to provide teachers with a place where they can meet to discuss common problems, pool resources, acquire new skills, and provide peer support. (Farber, 1991, p. 306)
- The Bay Shore Teacher Center in Long Island (New York) is one of the more successful of such establishments. Under the directorship of William Fibkins, this center was established in 1971 to combat teachers' feelings of isolation from the world outside the school and from each other. Lectures and workshops, many given by teachers within the school district, regularly take place in the center — a room adjoining the cafeteria of the junior high school — where teachers gather for lunch or on breaks. (Farber, 1991, p. 306)

## CHAPTER IV

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to create a handbook of ideas to help teachers manage stress and avoid burnout. After reviewing the literature on teacher stress and burnout, the researcher designed this handbook. Ideas to help teachers manage stress on both the individual and organizational levels are included. Because the effects of teacher stress and burnout are so far-reaching, this handbook should be of interest and value to teachers, administrators, parents, and other individuals concerned about the future of education in our country.

Based on personal experience and on research undertaken, this researcher believes that teacher stress and burnout are serious problems facing education. This researcher also believes that the strength and effectiveness of our educational system rests on the strength and effectiveness of classroom teachers. Stressed and burned-out teachers lose their strength and effectiveness in the classroom. Consider Farber's (1991, p. 82) observation:

Burned-out or worn-out teachers are no longer as motivated, patient, or optimistic. Comments from teachers reflecting these themes include:

"It's not worth the effort to keep trying . . . to be creative . . . to care . . . to attempt to educate everyone in the class."

"I'd rather spend time doing paperwork than interacting with students; most of the kids don't try, why should I?" . . .

To avoid burnout — to keep their spark of enthusiasm alive — teachers must learn how to manage the stress that accompanies teaching.

This researcher believes that there are several ways to help teachers manage stress:

1. Teacher training institutions must present the reality of teaching to future teachers. Teaching is a noble — but very demanding — profession. Before they enter this profession, teachers must be made aware of possible sources of stress, possible symptoms of stress, and possible ways to manage stress.
2. Beginning teachers need support from administrators and peers. Induction programs and experienced teachers can help new teachers manage stressful situations.
3. All teachers need support from administrators and peers. Support groups and in-service programs are two of the many possible ways for teachers — both beginning and experienced — to receive support.
4. Administrators need to develop sensitivity to the stress-producing problems faced by teachers, and need to develop an awareness of the important role they can play in reducing teacher stress.
5. Individual teachers need to develop an awareness of the sources of the stress they face, and of their reactions to stress. They need to then develop a personal stress management program.
6. Teachers need to continue to grow and develop professionally. The teacher who begins to fall into a "rut" becomes a candidate for burnout. Peer observations, master teacher programs, and teacher centers are a few

of the many ways in which professional growth and development can be fostered.

7. Graduate schools need to offer stress management courses designed specifically for teachers.

The problems of teacher stress and burnout are not easy to solve. This researcher agrees with Farber (1991, p. 313) who states:

I believe that as long as half the students in this country are in the lower half of their class, teachers will continue to be criticized and continue to be vulnerable to stress and burnout. And I believe too that without adequate financial and emotional support for teachers, without sufficient personnel to help teachers, and without adequate understanding either of the nature of teachers' tasks or the time necessary to reach socially established goals, teachers will continue to struggle to feel successful in the classroom. The hope must lie in society's eventual realization that education — and therefore teachers — are truly national priorities.

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