

OCCUPATIONAL STRESSORS LEADING TO  
BURNOUT IN THE TEACHING PROFESSION

by

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A REPORT

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STATEMENT OF MASTER'S REPORT INTENTION

This report will consist of 4 distinct parts. Part I will explore stress in general, its causes and general physical and mental (emotional) effects.

Part II will delve into the specific area of teacher stress. Information contained in Part II will be from the published observations of various researchers.

Part III will consist of my own research project into the area of teacher stress. This part will show how I conducted my research project and the results I obtained.

Part IV will be the conclusion of the report in which I will show any differences or similarities between past research results and my study.

## Psychological Aspects of Stress

One seldom goes through a single day without encountering some form of stress. Stress appears in many forms; it may be a flat tire which prevents one from arriving at school on time, some parental criticism, classroom problems, etc. Each of these, for the most part, have little significance in and of themselves. However, the failure to cope with the most inconsequential problem or harrassing our daily living or teaching may eventually lead to serious stress related consequences.

Adjusting to life's many obstacles is a never ending process. Daily we are exposed to classroom problems, student apathy, and numerous other minor personal difficulties. The problem we must face is the manner in which we choose to cope with these constant irritations. Sometimes we are able to overcome them; sometimes we must yield to them, but most often, we must learn to live with them.

All human behavior is motivated or directed toward attaining some goal in order to satisfy a particular need. Human motivation springs from 5 basic needs or desires that require satisfaction. Each of these exerts a varying degree of influence (motivation) upon the individual while requiring fulfillment in one form or another. Failure to attain fulfillment causes stress in one form or another. (1)

The needs common to all people, including educators, are:

1. SECURITY- This need implies the certainty of food, shelter, financial independence, clothing, work, etc., knowing that friends are available and that other needs can be fulfilled.
2. LOVE- This is the human requirement to be loved and cherished by others for simply being a person.
3. RECOGNITION-The need for social approval for our actions or personal accomplishments.
4. STATUS-The need to achieve particular goals will elevate our prestige in the eyes of our peers and supervisors.
5. NEW EXPERIENCES-A need for activities that afford an escape from the monotonous rut of daily living. The need for new experiences takes on many forms. It may vary from physical activities to the search for increased knowledge through formal education or self-improvement. (1)

Adjustment is the process by which we try to cope with these obstacles that interfere with our desires and our source of stress. Adjustment mechanisms are the methods used to satisfy motives, reduce stress and resolve conflicts. These mechanisms are the means by which people circumvent frustrations and stress; they are NOT mental disorders. (3)

1. SELF-REALIZATION-This demands the insight to recognize and accept one's limitations and assets. Generally, this is the most difficult form of adjustment mechanism due to the re-

luctance of people to acknowledge personal inadequacies.

2. SUBSTITUTION-The process of substituting an alternate goal for the one we are unable to reach, not only provides an outlet for the expression of frustration and stress, but it also affords a real satisfaction.

3. COMPENSATION-Compensation is an attempt on the part of the person to disguise weak or undesirable traits that prevent one from attaining a particular need satisfaction by emphasizing the desirable ones.

4. DAYDREAMING-Daydreaming is the least desirable form of positive adjustment. It affords but a temporary escape from frustrations and stress which must eventually be dealt with. However, this form of withdrawing from obstacles has a positive side in that solutions which at the moment are not applicable are developed in the imagination. (3)

Often a person will resort to an adjustment mechanism that is intended to disguise or deny the existence of stress and frustration. Self-deception may afford a temporary solution but does not constructively surmount or solve problems. (2)

1. PROJECTION-Projecting is reading one's own behavior and motives into the behavior of others. Sometimes a person protects himself from awareness of his own undesirable traits and unacceptable feelings by convincing himself

that most everyone has similar characteristics.

2. RATIONALIZATION-Rationalization is the process of justifying undesirable behavior by making excuses. After rationalization represents logical thoughts, But, these are based on unsound reasoning and are not a realistic way of dealing with life.

3. DISPLACEMENT-Displacement results when an individual directs his hostility toward some object or person other than the one actually causing frustration and stress.

4. BELITTLING AND BLAMING OTHERS-Attempts to achieve or maintain status and recognition by constantly belittling others while failing to recognize personal inadequacies is another form of self-deception. (2)

The process of adjusting to life's trials should satisfy personal needs without inconveniencing or arousing hostility in others. A positive adjustment to stress is generally mutually beneficial to the individual as well as those around him/her.

Good health is another important factor conducive to adjustment. Poor health reduces the zest for living and the capability to enjoy the company of others. In addition, it becomes rather easy to allow illness to become the basis of rationalization for the inability to cope with personal problems. (1)

## Physical Manifestations of Stress

Prolonged stress not only leads to role alienation and burn-out, it also leads to real physical illnesses. A vast outpouring of medical sociology has revealed the role of stress in the causal chain of environmental factors (stressors) and the onset of disease. Stress has been implicated in such pathologies as heart disease, ulcers and insomnia. (4)

Physicians are reporting ever increasing rates of psychosomatic illness related to stress and consider it to be the number one health problem in the United States today. Some danger signs may include the cycle of fatigue and chronic exhaustion, or tightness of muscles which cause neck and lower back pain. Many researchers also feel that there is a direct relationship between stress and accident proneness because the less one focuses on the physical environment the more likely they are to bump into, trip over or fall down from things located within those physical surroundings. (6)

Other possible warning signs of working under stress are:

Bruxism (teeth grinding)

Increased inability to sit quietly and relax

Stuttering

High pitched voice or nervous laughter

Trembling or nervous tics

Dizziness or weakness  
Dryness of the mouth or throat  
Pounding heart  
Excessive sweating  
Excessive appetite  
Great weight loss  
Great weight gain  
Increased smoking, drug and/or alcohol use  
Frequent nightmares  
Stomach or intestinal disorders  
Impeded sexual functioning  
Kidney stones (6,5)

Other warning signs must include such factors as headaches blurred vision, shortness of breath, hyperventilation, frequent urination, delayed menstruation, itching skin, cramps and high blood pressure. (4,7,8) In short, "the body is placed in a slow destructive sequence of organ burnout!" (6)

#### Causes of Teacher Stress

Daily teachers are faced with events or situations which becomes sources of stress. In order to cope effectively with stress the first step is to identify the factors which produce it. (11) These factors can be divided into three main areas:



Environmental, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. (12)

For the teacher, environmental stressors may be as simple as "inanimate physical surroundings". All too often teachers have little or no control over this type of stress and this lack of control, in and of itself, is another source of teacher stress. (12)

Poor classroom working conditions are a continual source of stress. Frequently, the classroom is too small and the student enrollment too large. (12) Lack of adequate instructional materials and teaching resources are also major stressors. Because today's children are accustomed to being bombarded with fast-moving, highly charged action on television, it is not easy to hold their attention. (14)

Stress can result from lack of proper facilities within the school such as poor lighting, inadequate heating or cooling systems, outdated equipment, inaccessible media facilities, lack of teacher workspace, noise pollution, and room structures. (12)

Job security in teaching is becoming very poor. The declining birth rate of the past few years has meant declining enrollment in the public schools. As a result, many teachers are either laid off or transferred. (13)

Another environmental stressor pervading the teaching

profession is decreasing job mobility. Being a classroom teacher prepares one to continue being a classroom teacher. In order to move upward, to be promoted and financially rewarded, one must obtain additional education and advanced degrees, or further education in different areas, such as administration or supervision. To remain in the classroom as a teacher means that the individual will not rise to a higher rank or be promoted. The most the teacher can expect to receive is an annual increment salary raise that is usually several percentage points below the annual cost of living increase. Salaries that do not keep pace with the rise in inflation result in frustration and tension for many families in the teaching profession. (13,14)

Educators at every level complain about the large number of interruptions during teaching time. In a study by Hodge and Marker, teachers ranked class interruptions first in frequency and second in bothersomeness. Classroom work is continually being interrupted or rescheduled to accommodate announcements, special assemblies, fund-raising events, athletics, sick students, visitors, and other events. Teachers are expected to teach and maintain concentration and attention on learning in spite of such interruptions. (12)

For many classroom teachers, time pressures and scheduling is a serious source of stress. (13) So many tasks must

be accomplished during the school day and less and less time is available to complete them. Teachers must be clerks, counselors, imparters of knowledge, public relations specialists, nurses, mothers or fathers, and assume many other roles. The paper work pressure has also become tremendous; forms to complete; reports to write; assignments to compile; notices to compose, duplicate, and send; and curriculum materials to develop and write. (15)

Classroom teachers are not strangers to environmental stressors. Each one has been confronted with many of them. The problem seems to be that "when stress levels are high in two or more areas, this may create additional stress..". And perhaps the most frustrating aspect of environmental stressors is that they are in school systems to stay and often there is nothing a teacher can do to change them. (12)

Situations involving interpersonal communications and human relations skills may be subject to stress. In their personal lives, teachers interact with their families and friends, with merchants, doctors, and strangers on the street, in stores and at social gatherings. The quality of these relationships can affect the teacher's out-of-school interpersonal stress. (12)

Hodge and Marker define interpersonal stressors as those situations that involve interactions with one or more in-

dividuals in the school setting:

...teacher relationships with other colleagues,  
administrators, clerical staff and students;  
...those stresses involved when attempting to  
communicate with students of varying needs,  
interests and abilities;  
...reacting to inattentive students;  
...discussing discipline procedures with  
pupils;  
...responding to students' personal and  
academic problems. (12)

All these situations involve interpersonal communication and human relations skills requiring the teacher to be a good listener and to be responsive to others. (12)

Teachers are concerned about whether their students like them; they also feel compelled to try to reciprocate and like their students. Since discipline and behavior problems are interpersonal stressors, it seems obvious that it may not always be easy for a teacher to like all students. (16) If students assault a teacher physically or verbally, for example, it is extremely difficult for the teacher to remain calm and understanding. (16)

Leffingwell suggests two social factors related to class-

room control and discipline over which the teacher has little control:

1. Parents' unrealistic expectations of their child's ability
2. Mores and standards of the peer group (18)

According to Bardo, teachers suffer thousands of daily assaults. Not all these assaults are physical, nor do they come solely from students. Parents abuse teachers by cursing them; by expecting them to control children they have failed to discipline and control; by expecting them to accomplish the impossible academically with their children; by expecting public education to solve all the social problems. (19)

Classroom teachers are continually interacting with a variety of personalities—students, colleagues, administrators, and parents. They must be constantly attuned to the way they communicate with and are perceived by other people. Teachers are perpetually expected to be diplomats, mediators, councillors, disciplinarians, and imparters of knowledge. These are not easy roles and they sometimes conflict with one another. Communication is bound to break down occasionally, and anxiety and upset may result. Thus interpersonal stressors can place a great deal of strain and pressure upon relationships. (15)

According to Hodge and Marker, intrapersonal stressors relate to the teacher's education, classroom skills, self-con-

cept, and motivation. (12) These stressors affect each teacher individually and result from self-evaluation and feeling of personal inadequacy. These authors report that "feelings of intrapersonal inadequacy can be the most serious stress-inducing factor for an educator, resulting in the loss of self-confidence in teaching"

Out of school intrapersonal stress may arise with feelings of inadequacy about one's personal life. If teachers feel unsure about their capabilities or functioning as a spouse or parent, tension and stress have a grasp on them before they arrive at school. If a teacher's family life is unhappy or disorganized due to temporary or long-lasting familial changes, that teacher has the extra disadvantage of out-of-school stress to cope with in addition to whatever may be waiting at school. (11,20,21)

Additional intrapersonal stressors that teachers may encounter in school or out are the following: lack of self-fulfillment and unmet ego needs; high need for achievement; feeling unappreciated; doubting personal (and professional) competence; and poor self image. (21)

One of the most prominent intrapersonal stressors affecting teachers at school is the role conflict or role ambiguity. This stressor results from a lack of clearly delineated job descriptions for most classroom teachers. Everyone seems to

have a unique perception of what a teacher is expected to be and to do. Among the many role expectations are imparter of information, disciplinarian, evaluator, in-service participant, clerk and participant at professional meetings. Teachers are expected to be part executive to supervise and direct, part counselor to support and advise, and part support person to clerk and housekeeper. Edgerton observes that "not only do extraneous duties compete for the teacher's time...but more important, many of the roles assigned to teachers are mutually exclusive. They are inherently contradictory, continually in conflict" (22) The high cost of attempts to be all things to all people may be a heavy dose of guilt, frustration, and tension, with stress as the end result. (20)

Many classroom teachers feel they have little or no influence in curriculum or policy decisions affecting them or the school. (23) They feel that directives are frequently handed down from the central administration without respect for input from classroom teachers--those who are expected to implement the directives. (5)

Many classroom teachers begin to feel isolated and alone, cut off from peers and decision making. They leave school tired and fatigued and carry home so much work that they do not have time to relax. Not having free time to relax and unwind from job stress is itself stress-producing. (23)

Teachers must learn to be realistic about the problems and tensions they experience and realize that they are not caused solely by their own personal weaknesses or inadequacies. (22) They need to become good observers and to be constructively critical of daily classroom occurrences so that they may identify the sources of problems and tensions accurately and realistically, and learn to be teacher-or self advocates.

According to Caotes and Thoreson, the sources of stress experienced by classroom teachers are real, prevalent, and, to say the least, potentially harmful to both teachers and to the students. (24) Furthermore, Kyriacou and Sutcliffe report that the extent to which demands upon teachers result in stress depends directly upon the degree to which the teacher is already experiencing stress in other aspects of personal life. (15) As stated earlier by Hodges and Marker, when stress levels are high in two or more areas of one's life, additional stress may be created. (12)

While many teachers accept stress as a normal, inevitable part of their daily lives, they do not realize it can be as insidious as cancer, slowly destroying their mental and physical health. However, teachers respond to stress differently; sometimes in effective ways that lead to professional accomplishments, sometimes in ineffective ways that are self destructive. (7)

In an effort to verify or possibly find differences in the



information cited above a research project was conducted involving area schools. The schools involved in the study were:

Abilene	Atwood
Chapman	Council Grove
St. Xavier	Junction City High School
Wakefield	White City

Each school was contacted personally by telephone and supervisory personnel informed of the nature of the research project. Their cooperation was requested in providing a mailing address list for high school teachers from each of the schools. Each supervisor verbally agreed to forward a mailing list to assist in the research project. At the last moment supervisors from two schools failed to follow through with their verbal commitments to send mailing addresses for their teachers.

After reception of the teachers' mailing addresses each teacher was sent a survey form with a cover letter and a self-addressed, stamped envelop (SEE PAGES FOLLOWING NUMBERED 15a, 15b, and 15c).

Following are the schools actually involved in the research project, the number of survey forms sent to each school, the number of forms returned and the percentage of return:



FROM THE DESK OF  
**DON BOBZIEN**

Dear Colleague:

I am presently in the process of compiling information concerning teacherstress for a masters report in the area of Curriculum and Instruction. Your input would be most valuable and greatly appreciated. Please take a few minutes to complete the attached form and return it to me as soon as possible. A pre-addressed, stamped envelope has been enclosed with this letter for your convenience. Thank you for your assistance.

*Donald R. Bobzien*

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Junction City, Kansas  
66441

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Based on your personal experiences, what are the 3 principle causes of stress in the teaching profession?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

2. What types of behavior or reactions to stress do you find yourself engaged in which indicates to you that you are operating under stressful situations?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

3. What types of activities do you engage in to help you reduce stress?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. In general, what do you feel could be done within the educational system to reduce stress among professional teachers?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

5. Years of teaching experience: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



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A-9

<u>School</u>	<u>Number of Forms Sent</u>	<u>Number of Returns</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
St. Xavier	9	3	33%
White City	12	12	100%
Wakefield	10	8	80%
Council Grove	22	8	36%
Abilene*	0	0	
Chapman	31	10	37%
Junction City Senior High	32	11	34%
Atwood*	0	0	
	<hr/> 116	<hr/> 52	<hr/> 45%

The following is a compilation of stressors from several different groups of teachers in order of severity:

1. Clerical work
2. Interruptions that disrupt the class
3. Discipline problems with students
4. Lack of equipment and/or material
5. Lack of teacher input in decision making
6. Rigid curriculum
7. Destruction of school property
8. Conflicts with school administrators

\* Supervisors of Abilene and Atwood verbally agreed to forward mailing addresses of teachers but failed to follow through with their stated commitments.

9. Problems with parents
10. Class size too large
11. Lack of adequate time for planning, grading papers, etc.
12. Problems with other teachers
13. Feelings of powerlessness
14. Problems with racist and sexist attitudes and actions (7)

Anthony Dworkin, however, reports the highest levels of stress are associated with salary and benefits; student discipline, especially outside the classroom; teaching load; and interaction with administrators. The lowest levels of stress is associated with other teachers, and job security. (9)

Greenberg cited the top 10 stressors as follows:

1. Volume of work
2. Impact of external rewards on performance
3. Ease or difficulty of work
4. Deadlines
5. Unsatisfactory benefit and salary package
6. Internal communications with administrators
7. Job security
8. Intrinsic aspects
9. Opportunities for advancement
10. Administrator's support (8)

Anthony Cedoline, on the other hand, categorized eight major causes of teacher stress as follows:

1. Public pressure
2. Legislative proliferation
3. Extremes of assignments
4. School violence
5. Limited feedback and support from administrators
6. Student behavior
7. Salary
8. Media assault (6)

In the studies cited by Alschuler (7) and Dworkin (9) reflect stressors experienced by educators from larger, urban high schools. My research, consisting of mainly smaller, rural high schools, reflects several of the same stressors in varying order of priority, while at the same time showing that educators from smaller, rural schools experience a totally different set of some stressors than their urban colleagues. Following are the stressors I found in my research ranked in order of prominence:

<u>STRESSOR</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE OF RESPONSE</u>
1. Student behavior and lack of basic skills	23%
2. Insufficient time for planning, grading papers or preparation	18%

3. Conflicts with administrators	15%
4. Parental conflicts	12%
5. Sponsoring various activities	8%
6. Salary	6%
7. Personal expectations(includes recertification demands)	5%
8. Classes too large	4%
9. Curriculum changes	3%
10. Daily interruptions	1%

The remaining 5% of the stressor responses involved conflicts with co-workers, troublesome routines and boredom, and the lack of adequate material and/or equipment.

Unfortunately, teachers are not so finely tuned that they always react in a perfectly adaptable manner to all stressors.(4) Only after awareness and problem identification can a teacher effectively establish a plan for coping. (6) The importance of being able to identify the symptoms of stress cannot be underestimated. Identifying the symptoms of stress is no more different than identifying the symptoms of the most common illness. (8)

Although a vast range of stress symptoms are known and have been stated previously, all of which would indicate that a teacher is operating under stress, no studies were found which would indicate which sign or symptom was most prevalent or most



common. In my research I discovered 11 identifiable symptoms which accounted for 72% of the responses I received from the teacher survey forms which indicated to the individual teacher that he/she was operating under stress. Following are each of the 11 stress signs and the percentage they accounted for as indicated by teacher response on the survey forms:

1. Loss of patience.....23%
2. Moodiness(Apathy or bitterness).....10%
3. Fatigue..... 9%
4. Increased volume of voice..... 5%
5. Headaches..... 5%
6. Insomnia..... 5%
7. Overeating..... 5%
8. Depression..... 3%
9. Increase in family conflicts..... 3%
10. Inability to concentrate..... 2%
11. Paranoia..... 2%

The remaining 28% of the responses I obtained from the teachers surveyed which indicated to them they were operating under stress involved the following physical and/or psychological signs: shortness of breath, dizziness, talking or driving too fast, nervous tics, becoming disorganized,

increased conflicts with co-workers, digestive problems, back pain, increased blood pressure trouble, increased use of sick time for illnesses, decrease in eating or poor eating habits, increase in smoking, nail biting, dryness of the throat, procrastination, increased drinking of alcoholic beverages, and crying.

It is important to note at this time that the teachers surveyed accounted for a total of 658 years of total experience in the classroom. The average teaching experience was over  $12\frac{1}{2}$  years. Only two surveys received were from teachers who indicated that they had only 1 year of experience.

Once teachers realize they are operating under stressful circumstances, because of the symptoms they are experiencing, the next step is to counteract the stressors before this "rustout" develops into a fullblown burnout and a ruined career.

Many lists of stress reducing programs have been published and three examples of these programs will be given to illustrate the divergence of advice as well as the impractability of some of the suggested programs. Note how the following program advocated by Polunin stresses items which many, if not most, teachers would find useless even to attempt:

1. Work no more than 10 hours a day at your profession.
2. Have at least  $1\frac{1}{2}$  days each week free from normal routine.

3. Allow at least 30 minutes for each meal.
4. Eat slowly and chew well.
5. Cultivate the habit of listening to relaxing music.
6. Practice relaxation and/or meditation at least twice daily for a minimum of 15 minutes each time.
7. Cultivate the habit of walking, talking and moving slowly.
8. Smile and respond cheerfully whenever meeting anyone.
9. Plan one "away from it all" holiday each year.
10. Take 10 minutes of physical exercise outside every day.
11. Eat a balanced diet.
12. Seek professional advice for emotional and/or sexual relationship problems.
13. If you are unhappy with your work seek alternatives.
14. Cultivate a hobby that is creative and not competitive.
15. Have a regular massage or practice yoga
16. Concentrate on the present and do not dwell on the past or future.
17. Finish one task before starting another.
18. Express your feelings openly.
19. Do not set unrealistic deadlines.
20. Do not rely on drugs, or other props in order to cope. (25)

Another, more realistic, simplistic 9-point program was compiled by Masidlover. It is described as follows:

1. Take time to relax.
2. Talk out your problems.

3. Plan tasks so they can be handled.
4. Deal with anger.
5. Get away for awhile.
6. Have realistic goals.
7. Avoid self-medication.
8. Learn to accept what cannot be changed.
9. Look after your body. (26)

Kryiacou seems to provide the most realistic approach to stress management in his 5 maxism:

1. The first step is to accept that you are having pressures and reactions which you are not coping with effectively.
2. The second step is to decide that your coping resources can be strengthened. They need to be flexible. A coping skill used successfully in one situation may be unsuccessful in another area or even with the same problem at another time.
3. You will find it helpful to identify your pressures and reactions as separate problems which need to be tackled separately in a stress reduction program.
4. A stress reduction program will enable you to develop a wide range of personal, interpersonal, organizational and community resources which you can use to deal with your pressures and reactions.

5. Your stress reduction program should have 3 phases:
- (a) EDUCATION--so you can understand your pressures, reactions and resources.
  - (b) REHEARSAL AND APPLICATION--learn to use appropriate coping skills and resources.
  - (c) FEEDBACK AND REVIEW--evaluate your coping skills. (15)

Greenberg (8) strongly advocates a stress management program team approach. By using such an approach each team member would bring his or her own perspectives into the process for stressor analysis, support and management. The stress management team also provides input from various levels within the system and tends to reduce the "us versus them" attitude which all so often causes failure in many individual programs or programs initiated by the administrators of schools.

When questioned about the types of activities used for stress management in their own lives, the teachers I surveyed responded as follows:

<u>TYPE OF ACTIVITY</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE</u>
Physical activity/sports	28%
Reading	12%
Talking or sharing	9%
Biofeedback or emditation	8%
Movies or television	5%

Extra sleep	5%
Time with family and/or children	5%
Gardening	5%
Travel	5%
Hobbies (other than sports)	5%
Drinking	5%
Spending time alone	5%
Sewing	5%
Professional development	2%
Playing musical instrument	2%

The above figures account for 97% of the responses I received from the survey. Church attendance, journaling, and sexual activity accounted for the remaining 3% of the responses for dealing with stress.

Education, by its very nature, is loaded with stressors. As Greenberg stated, "Any teacher, regardless of years of experience, is likely to feel the anguish of disillusionment with the educational system!" (8) Herbert Greenberg, in his text Teaching with Feeling, referred to the "burden of the myth" of what teachers should be. The myth states that a teacher must:

1. Remain calm at all times
2. Assume a philosophy of moderation in all things

3. Place all students' feelings above his or her own
4. Love all students
5. Remain consistent
6. Be permissive
7. Hide his or her own true feelings
8. Have no prejudices
9. Have no favorites
10. Know all the answers
11. Make learning take place without confusion and uncertainty
12. Cope with life without stress, anxiety, or conflict
13. Teach students to live without stress, anxiety, or conflict
14. Protect students from negative feelings and situations (27)

It is a sad, but true, fact that many colleges, universities and public school systems adhere to and perpetuate this myth. When the community role expectations and the expectations of peers and the system are taken into consideration there is no conceivable way a teacher can avoid stress. This is more so because the system of education feeds on such misconceptions that result in poor teachers **and the** failure of the educational system as a whole. (28)

When teachers react to stressors and begin to experience the pain and anguish of "rustout," the unfair, extra burden of seeking their own coping mechanisms is placed on their

shoulders. When a person becomes physically ill and seeks medical treatment, the physician does not merely treat the symptoms (in this case coping with stress) but treats the cause of the illness (in this case what is the source of stress for the teacher). When teachers are advised to establish a program of stress management for themselves they are being asked to treat the symptoms and not attack the cause.

When surveyed teachers were asked what they felt could be done within the overall educational system to help reduce stress in their lives, and the lives of colleagues, the following responses were obtained:

Improved relations and/or communications with administrators.....	24%
Reduce teacher workload (class size and paperwork).....	23%
Improved relations and/or communications with parents and/or general public.....	9%
Reduce the amount of extra curricular sponsor- ship duties including ticket taking, time clock operation, etc. at athletic events.....	9%
Increase salary.....	8%



Alternative programs for students who are a discipline problem or who do not wish to be in school.....	7%
Allow more time for planning and preparation.....	5%
Establish a school-wide stress management program.....	5%
Allow more time for professional growth.....	3%
Stress academics rather than athletics within the school environment.....	2%

These responses account for 95% of the answers received. Allowing more autonomy within the classroom, providing more and/or improved equipment, establishing consistent policies for teachers and students, and hiring qualified teachers account for the remaining 3% of the responses received on my survey.

Some symptoms of stress affect probably more than 90% of all teachers. About 25% of the teaching profession find their job "very stressful" and many more are unlikely to remain in their careers. (4) In accepting the fact that teachers experience stress to varying degrees we must also accept the fact that stressors also vary from geographical area to geographical area, i.e., larger, inner city schools to schools situated in a more rural environment.

The problems facing public school teachers are numerous, and there appears to be no panacea for working under stress. It appears from my research, however, that there are three general categories of change which ought to be considered carefully and seriously by American educators. There must be changes in recruitment and training of preservice teachers by colleges of education; there must be significant changes in the employment and treatment of teachers by school districts; and there must be changes in the manner in which public school teachers are managed by school administrators, especially those directly supervising teachers and are in policy making positions. (9)

While teachers from smaller schools appear to experience, to a more or lesser degree, many of the same stressors as their colleagues from larger, urban schools, there also appears to be some major differences in the stressors experienced by teachers from larger school systems such as those used by researchers and teachers from the smaller schools I surveyed. For example, fear of being the victim of abuse and/or assault was one item mentioned by Walsh (16) in her work with the Tacoma, Washington, school teachers that was quite high on a priority scale but was never mentioned as being of any consideration by the teachers I surveyed. The same situation

applies to the destruction of school property as cited by Alfred Aschuler. (7)

Among the major causes of stress among the larger, urban school teachers which were not mentioned as stressors by the teachers in my survey were: racist and sexist attitudes and actions, job security, and job advancement, to name just a few of the top contenders. While salary and conflicts with administrators or policy makers were of common concern to both groups of teachers, the teachers I surveyed reported more stress due to the sponsorship of numerous activities over and above their normal teaching duties which were too numerous to handle properly. This item was apparently not significant enough to mention by the larger school systems used by the professional researchers.

While the list of symptoms of operating under stress was sometimes long and somewhat over-detailed there were some symptoms commonly experienced by teachers from larger schools and those teachers I surveyed. Among the shared symptoms we find: fatigue, digestive problems, trouble with appetite, increased smoking and/or drinking, and headaches.

The group of teachers I surveyed reported some symptoms not mentioned by the professional researchers. Among these

symptoms are: increase in domestic conflict, loss of patience (anger) and paranoia.

While many studies suggested activities or programs for managing stress among teacher-sufferers I found no studies which suggested which of the activities were most commonly practiced by teachers. My research survey indicated that 28% of the teachers surveyed managed their stress through some type of physical activity such as jogging or sports events. Getting lost in some type of literary works was the second highest activity at 12%

In conclusion, when it comes to interpersonal relationships which cause stress, I feel that Martin Luther King said it best when he said, "We must learn to live together as brothers or perish as fools!" The handling of self-imposed stressors such as personal achievement or expectations might best be summed up by Richard Bach in Jonathan Livingston Seagull. "The trick, Fletcher, is that we are trying to overcome our limitations in order, patiently. We don't tackle flying through rock until a little later in the program!"

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OCCUPATIONAL STRESSORS LEADING TO  
BURNOUT IN THE TEACHING PROFESSION

by

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AN ABSTRACT OF A REPORT

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Prolonged stress not only leads to alienation and burnout, it also leads to real physical illnesses. A vast outpouring of medical sociology has revealed the role of stress in the casual chain of environmental factors (stressors) and the onset of illness. Stress has not only been implicated in such pathologies as heart disease, ulcers and insomnia but has also been linked directly to total burnout in the area of professional educators.

Daily teachers are faced with events and situations which become sources of stress. These factors can be divided into three main areas: Environmental, interpersonal and intrapersonal.

Teachers must learn to be realistic that these are not caused by their own personal weaknesses or inadequacies. While many teachers accept stress as a normal part of their daily lives, they do not realize it can be destroying their physical as well as their mental health. Since people respond differently to stress, teachers need to discover effective ways to professional accomplishments in ways that are not self destructive.

The first step in this process is to discern the symptoms of operating under stress and to discover a means of combating the symptoms and the stress itself.

In a research project conducted as part of this report teachers were surveyed and asked how they knew they were operating under stress and what they did to combat those symptoms and the stress itself.

The highest stressor found among the teachers surveyed (23%) was student (mis)behavior and the lack of basic skills. The teachers surveyed indicated that they realized they were operating under stress when they noted a lack of patience on their part (23%). When asked what type of activity they engaged in to reduce stress in their daily lives 28% indicated some type of physical activity. Finally, when asked what they felt the educational system could do to relieve the stress in education 24% indicated improved relations and/or communication with administration.

While the list of symptoms of operating under stress is often long and detailed the group of teachers surveyed reported symptoms not mentioned by professional researchers. To mention just a few I found increased domestic conflict and paranoia. While many studies suggested activities or programs for managing stress among teacher-sufferers I found no studies which indicated which activity was most practiced by teachers themselves.

To insure proper handling of stress we need to first recognize that we are operating under pressure by symptoms. We can learn to recognize these symptoms and realize we are not unique. Secondly, we must learn to reduce either the stressors themselves or combat them through various outside activities. Only when we do this can we survive professional burnout.