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Practical Solutions for Teacher Stress

Developing meaningful solutions for the problem of teacher stress and burnout is more complex than it may appear. It involves change in human attitudes and behavior, a type of change very difficult to bring about, even when an individual's job satisfaction and physical health are at stake. It is one thing to list stressors and possible solutions; it is another thing to act on what we already know to be in our best interest.

A "holistic approach" to the problem of teacher stress and burnout recognizes the complexity of this problem. Mind and body are viewed as interconnected. Thoughts, feelings, and physiological responses are related. Each of us is seen as ultimately responsible for our health and happiness because we make numerous decisions each day that influence to a large extent what we will become, both emotionally and physically.

The holistic approach assumes that problems will be resolved most effectively when they are approached on several fronts simultaneously. Consequently, teachers need a diverse set of skills and understandings related to stress and burnout management. These skills and understandings can be defined and taught. Osipow (1979), in discussing a general orientation to the improvement of occupational mental health, suggests:

We should use a "deliberate psychological education" approach (Mosher & Sprinthall, 1971) to explicitly teach people some of the principles

of affective work attitudes that might reduce job stress that is induced internally. In other words, giving people a greater awareness of the sources of their control over their work environment would be potentially helpful (p. 69).

Many of the processes of "deliberate psychological education" (self-awareness, understanding the cognitive sources of feelings, etc.) will be discussed below.

Blocks to Change

Individual change can be difficult. Changing an institution, such as a school, is likely to be even more difficult. Even though this article will focus more on individual change than school change, it is important to keep in mind that ongoing teacher renewal will be at the heart of any lasting institutional growth and innovation.

Why is it that in spite of our best intentions to alter ourselves in some way, we often persist in undesired habits? Inertia is certainly one reason. Once a person is "at rest," it requires extra effort to be set "in motion." Another factor seems to be the sense of powerlessness that develops when individuals establish overly ambitious goals for themselves. For example, a teacher may decide that in the next three months she wants to learn some new teaching strategies to motivate her students, lose 50 pounds, and improve the way she relates to her principal. While these may be worthy goals, the frustration and sense of failure that may result when they are not achieved is likely to produce a mind-set that says, "Nothing I can do will make any difference anyway, so why try."

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Three additional factors seem to be important in blocking change in school settings. They are "red pencil mentality," "the bitching syndrome," and "Yes, but. . . ." Each of them will be considered individually.

Red pencil mentality. The papers we received back from our teachers were often marred by red slashes that indicated what was wrong with our efforts. Over time, the hidden message was: "It's more important to look at what's wrong than it is to consider what's right with things." As adults, we often tend to look immediately for the reasons an idea or plan is not applicable, rather than remain open to its potential usefulness in our situation.

Bitching syndrome. For our purposes, bitching is defined as endless, repetitious complaining about things over which we have no control, or things we would not attempt to influence if we did have control over them. Venting feelings can be constructive; verbalizing the same feeling in an endless, whining manner is not.

Yes, but "Yes, but-ers" prefer to assign responsibility for their lives to other people. There is always a "good reason" why they cannot make a change.

Effective management of stress and burnout requires that these blocks be recognized and overcome. It is essential that we look for the strengths in an idea or plan as well as its weaknesses. We need to move past "passive bitching" to "active problem solving." Most importantly, we must assume personal responsibility for developing a stress management program that fits our unique situation. Unless these things are done by individual teachers, and collectively by a school faculty, no lasting purpose will be served by an infinite number of workshops, articles, and books on this topic.

Stress and Burnout Management Goals

A comprehensive stress and burnout management program for teachers requires that at least four broad goals be addressed:

Reducing isolation: Teachers spend most of their work day physically isolated from each other. Although a teacher's colleagues are among the best problem solving resources available, there are few opportunities to develop mutually supportive relationships. Teachers must be provided with a structure and time for the expression of professional concerns and the constructive sharing of ideas and strategies.

Restoring perspective and balance: 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. Teachers' perspectives need to be balanced through a careful examination of their professional successes, satisfactions, and competencies. It is also common for adults to lose balance in their life-styles. Valued recreational activities are neglected, and unhealthy, dissatisfying habits are formed. It is helpful for teachers to periodically step back from their daily routines to objectively consider the effect life-style factors may be having on their emotional and physical well-being.

Increasing self-awareness: Because the symptoms of stress and burnout are somewhat unique to each teacher, it is imperative that every person be aware of his/her personal warning signs that indicate the onset of these problems. Symptoms may range in severity from an inability to concentrate through serious heart disorders and chronic depression. Teachers must also identify the sources of their distress. Without this insight, it is difficult to design a personalized stress management plan to fit each individual's circumstances.

Identifying "next steps": It is not enough to simply memorize a list of tension reducing strategies. Rather, these must be incorporated into a teacher's ongoing life-style if they are to make any lasting differences. The practices described below are of sufficient power that the inclusion of only one or two on a regular basis into a teacher's personal and/or professional life can make a marked difference in attitudes, feelings, and behavior.

These goals only point out a general direction for travel. A more detailed description follows.

Some Common Understandings

As we all know, stress can be unpleasant and even debilitating. Yet, Hans Selye has said that "stress is the spice of life" (1976, p. xv). To explain this apparent contradiction, Selye has used the word "distress" to describe the negative physiological consequences of adaptation, and the term "eustress" to label the pleasant sensations or consequences that may accompany certain stressors (eu- is the Greek prefix meaning "good").

This distinction is important because it helps us understand that not everyone responds to a stressor in the same manner. One teacher's distress may be another's eustress. Some teachers feel tension just thinking about interpersonal conflict between staff members, while other individuals may thrive on the creative energy for problem solving that is generated in this situation.

It should also be noted that distress can become eustress, and vice versa. A teacher who feels overwhelmed by discipline problems (distress) can learn classroom management skills that will enable him or her to feel successful and competent (eustress). Teachers who experience tension during conflict (distress) can acquire assertiveness and conflict resolution skills that will increase their sense of professional efficacy in those situation (eustress). The creative challenge of designing a lesson to teach a difficult concept (eustress) can evolve into boredom (distress) when that same lesson has been taught numerous times throughout a career.

Watts (1980) summarizes both of these phenomena: "Burnout has two major causes, and several subsidiary ones. The first is exhaustion, which comes after mobilizing all one's resources to meet a crisis—and in teaching that 'crisis' may be one of several years' duration . . . Teachers talk of being drained, losing perspective, needing more support. . . . A second kind of burnout occurs for just the opposite reason—there is no challenge in it anymore. Boredom sets in, it's all old hat . . ." (p. 5). Obviously, a teacher must begin to deal with this problem by discovering its idiosyncratic sources within his or her personal or professional life.

Self-Awareness

Each of us must develop a stress and burnout management plan that reflects our optimal stress level and unique stressors. The Stress Inventory (Sparks & Ingram, 1979) can help teachers acquire a more objective view of the factors that are currently producing tension in their lives. This process encourages teachers to move from vague and confused complaints ("I just don't seem to like teaching anymore") to more concrete statements of concern ("My job isn't meeting my needs for recognition and a creative outlet"). The self-understanding that results is a prerequisite to the selection of specific stress management strategies.

Teachers can complete the Stress Inventory (Figure 1) by following these instructions. First, all events that are currently producing distress, both personally and professionally, should be listed in the left-hand column. Teachers need only to jot down a few words or a phrase that can later serve as a reminder of that stressor. They should work quickly, allowing their minds to free associate so that the lists will be as complete as possible. It is also useful to be as specific as possible.

Next, the codings in the appropriate columns are filled in. More than one code per column may

be required for some stressors (e.g., both students and administrators may be involved in the same situation). In addition to the codings, teachers should indicate with an asterisk (*) the stressors for which they have some thoughts about what might be done to improve the situation. The number 1 is then written next to the distressful event the teacher would most like to do something about. Usually, this process permits teachers to see their stressors from a fresh perspective.

In the final step, teachers are asked to draw conclusions from the data that has been accumulated on the Stress Inventory. The codings should be examined for themes and patterns. Do certain categories of people tend to be involved in distressful situations more than others? How often does the "me" coding occur? Did the teacher have more or less control in these events than was expected. Were most of the stressors from the individual's personal life or professional role? Did the teacher tend to respond to distress in habitual ways (e.g., anger is always used with students, events at home tend to provoke worry, etc.)?

Observations regarding stressors and codings can be recorded in the form of "I learned . . ." statements. "I was surprised that . . ." or "I reaffirmed that . . ." may also be appropriate sentence stems. These summary statements often elicit significant insights. Typical conclusions include, "I learned that I have more control over my stressors than I would have initially thought," or "I was surprised that most of my stressors were in my personal life. In many ways, work is my salvation." Many teachers find it helpful to further clarify their findings by talking them over with a colleague. The Stress Inventory seems to be most effective when completed with a group of teachers who then discuss the meanings and potential implication of their learnings.

Another form of self-awareness concerns symptoms of distress. Symptoms are as unique to individuals as stressors. A teacher's symptoms of distress are a combination of genetic predisposition, prior experiences, and learning. Heredity or previous illnesses may produce "weak areas" such as the circulatory system or upper respiratory area. Individuals may have learned responses to distress such as the tightening of muscle groups or an overwhelming sense of sadness or depression.

A list of symptoms would be virtually endless. However, it would certainly include common complaints such as insomnia, headaches, lower back pain, hypertension, chronic fatigue, an upset stomach or ulcers, and colds or upper respiratory in-

fections. It is critical that each of us learn to identify our characteristic symptoms at the earliest possible moment. For example, the tightening of neck muscles that indicate an impending headache can be systematically relaxed once the individual learns to attend to that particular symptom. Teachers should be encouraged to individually record their most prevalent symptoms in an accessible location so that their awareness of these warning signs is kept fresh. Some teachers have also found it worthwhile to discuss their symptoms in a group setting to deepen their sensitivity to various symptoms in others and to increase their own self-awareness.

Stress Management Strategies

Space limitations dictate that not all potential remedies for teacher stress and burnout can be discussed here. Some of the approaches that teachers have found most valuable will be presented. Additionally, in a faculty group teachers can be made more aware of their current resources and the wide diversity of strategies available to confront this problem by responding to the question, "What things do you already do that work for you when you feel tense and frustrated with your job?" Numerous techniques are typically mentioned: talking with a friend, playing racquetball, going for a walk, shopping, dancing, reading a book, watching a television program, among others.

Pearlin and Schooler (1978) suggest three general categories of stress management activities: (1) responses that control the physiological or emotional consequences of distress (physical health factors, muscle relaxation, etc.), (2) responses that control the meaning of the distressful experience (modifying tension-producing thoughts, developing a balanced perspective, etc.), and (3) responses that change the situation out of which the distress arises (professional support groups, organizational change strategies, staff development programs, alternative careers, etc.). These categories will be expanded upon in the following discussion.

Physical Health

Just as distress can cause illness and disease, an individual's physical health can affect his or her ability to be a good stress manager. Poor health can rob teachers of the stamina and patience to cope with certain stressors. Because of ill health, situations that could otherwise be managed with little or no strain become sources of chronic tension. A circular relationship is established. Distress produces less than optimal health, and this condition

interferes with our ability to respond effectively to our stressors.

A holistic approach to wellness is recommended. A teacher's total life-style must be considered, not just the activities that occur during the work day. Personal habits (diet, exercise, smoking, etc.), life-style variables (interpersonal support systems, pace of living, recreational activities, etc.), and environmental factors (noise, air and water pollution, aesthetics of the workplace, etc.) must be critically examined by each person.

Belloc & Breslow (1972), in a 5 1/2-year study of 7,000 adults, found that seven factors were related to life expectancy and health: (1) three meals a day at regular times and no snacking, (2) breakfast every day, (3) moderate exercise two or three times a week, (4) adequate sleep, (5) no smoking, (6) moderate weight, and (7) no alcohol or alcohol only in moderation. Men who practiced at least six of these behaviors had a life expectancy of 11 years longer than those who could respond affirmatively to three or less of these indicators.

Dietary factors play an important role in obtaining optimal health. Miller (1980) uses the term "high stress" to describe a diet with large amounts of sugar, refined flour, and beef. Several books may be particularly helpful to teachers who want to better understand the effects of diet on their mental and physical health, as well as that of their students: *Let's Eat Right to Keep Fit* (Davis, 1970), *Sugar Blues* (Dufty, 1975), and *Psychodietetics* (Cherashkin, Ringsdorf, & Brecher, 1974).

Regular, vigorous physical exercise also has numerous health and stress management benefits. Not only does exercise tone the body and relieve tension, it can increase mental alertness and provide a sense of well-being. While the type of physical activity may vary (running, cycling, aerobic dancing, swimming, etc.), it is generally agreed that the exercise must occur three or more times a week for at least 20-30 minutes if it is to be of real value to the participant. Cooper, in *The Aerobics Way* (1977), provides a comprehensive exercise program that includes dietary considerations, equipment, and specific methods for measuring improvement in fitness.

Relaxation Techniques

As is true with exercise, relaxation techniques can reduce bodily tension and restore energy. Fortunately, relaxation techniques such as transcendental meditation, yoga, and biofeedback can be acquired through systematic training.

Relaxation techniques are based on the relationship between thoughts, feelings, and physiological responses. In essence, cognitive processes determine emotional states, which in turn produce physiological changes. To illustrate, thinking a particularly frightening thought (cognitive process) can cause a feeling of fear (emotional state). This results in an increase in heart rate and respiration, as well as other internal adjustments (physiological changes).

Benson (1975) has developed an easily learned relaxation strategy that is based on the modification of cognitive processes so that emotional and physical changes will occur. The "relaxation response" has four basic components: (1) a quiet environment, (2) a mental device (a stimulus such as a word, sound, or visual object), (3) a passive attitude (non-critically pushing aside distracting thoughts), and (4) a comfortable position. Benson has found that individuals who practice this technique often report a feeling of refreshment and a sense of greater calmness and well-being.

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, 1975, pp. 114-115).

Through the use of this technique, the thinking/imagining process can be consciously controlled, and a period of deep relaxation can be induced once or twice a day. Some teachers use this 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.

Distress Producing Thoughts

Woolfolk and Richardson (1978) point out that most stressors in themselves are neutral. It is an individual's perceptions or appraisals of these situations that produce the unpleasant emotional or physical consequences. Events that are viewed as unimportant or inconsequential (this appraisal is a cognitive process) are not perceived as distressful.

Woolfolk and Richardson demonstrate how most distressful situations can be reduced to a few emotionally charged and evaluative beliefs about ourselves and the world. These mistaken notions impose tremendous demands upon ourselves and others. Some of these distress producing ideas include:

1. A superstitious belief that worry will help prevent future mistakes and bad fortune (e.g., worrying about the parent conference will somehow make the meeting go better). Worrying should be viewed as distinct from a problem solving process that leads to constructive action.
2. Evaluating oneself as a failure because of shortcomings on some standard of performance or expectation of others (e.g., "I'm inadequate because I can't consistently get through to all my students").
3. Engaging in moralistic thinking about how others should behave, which often leads to feelings of frustration, anger, and moral indignation (e.g., "Kids should be different than they are today. They're just a bunch of irresponsible losers!").
4. Believing that life should be free of discomfort, resulting in a low tolerance for life's inevitable frustrations ("Why do there always have to be problems?").

The meaning we assign to an event can determine whether the situation is perceived as distressful, eustressful, or even neutral.

Brammer and Abrego (1981) underscore the power of these internal sources of distress: "Perceptions toward change hold an important rela-

relationship to how people interpret events. Two important perceptions are: a) the acceptance of problematic situations as a normal part of living, and b) a belief that each person has a variety of strengths which can help him or her to cope with most of these situations effectively. When these beliefs are adopted, the individual gains an increased sense of self-control and self-esteem" (p. 26). To illustrate, a teacher who loses his or her job through reduction-in-force may view this event as catastrophic because of the potential loss of income and changes it may require. Another teacher in the same situation believes this problem is not insurmountable and perceives the layoff notice as an opportunity to try his or her skills in another field that had been considered and dismissed when in college. While the latter individual may experience mild amounts of frustration and insecurity, the "opportunity" mind-set will pull that person through the distress of this crisis.

Unrealistic expectations for self and others is often a source of distress for teachers. Bishop (1980) noted that, "A common feature of the occupations affected most by burnout is that they attract people . . . who measure success and failure largely by standards other than pay scales, profits, or status symbols. Psychologists say that many such people enter their occupations with unrealistically high expectations of making the world a better place. Sooner or later they're disillusioned" (p. 31). The professional support group model discussed in a later section is an excellent means for teachers to discuss and adjust their expectations using the feedback provided by respected colleagues.

A great deal of teachers' self-induced distress is caused by "catastrophizing." This term describes a mode of thinking that predicts the worst possible outcome for events ("I know the principal wants to see me to tell me what I'm doing wrong, and that the conference will go badly. I'll probably end up with a reprimand in my file.") Teachers can minimize catastrophizing by asking themselves questions such as "What's the worst possible thing that could happen in this situation?" "What's the probability that this horrible thing will actually occur?" "Have I survived situations like this in the past?" As can be seen, modifying cognitive processes by changing the statements we make to ourselves can put events in perspective and reduce tension to more manageable proportions.

Woolfolk and Richardson (1978) suggest several guidelines for a "low stress life-style." Among their suggestions are:

1. Find activities in which you find intrinsic satisfaction. Distress can be reduced by focusing on the process of things you do, rather than the results.
2. Find something other than yourself and your achievements to care about.
3. Learn to recognize and accept your personal shortcomings and lack of control over much of what will ultimately happen to us.
4. Develop an unhostile, benevolent sense of humor.
5. Learn to tolerate and forgive yourself and others.
6. The struggles of life may change, but they never end. Stop waiting for the day when "you can relax" or when "your problems will be over." We must take ultimate responsibility for our own happiness. (pp. 103-106.)

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

Developing a Balanced Perspective

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.

In a typical work day, teachers experience numerous successes and satisfactions. However, because of their tendency to focus on weaknesses and mistakes, many teachers leave school with overwhelmingly negative biases about themselves and teaching. The "Successes, Satisfactions, and Personal Strengths" activity (Sparks & Hammond, 1981) is designed to correct this imbalance in perspective. In this activity, teachers are asked to make a list of recently occurring job-related successes and satisfactions. The successes may be major events (implementing a new course) or brief episodes in the classroom (clearly explaining a difficult concept). Job satisfactions might include moments of spontaneous humor in the classroom with stu-

dents or watching a child's eyes light up with learning.

It is also recommended that teachers make a second list of professional strengths. This list would include all the skills and personal characteristics that make them successful teachers. Typical strengths include organizational skills, patience, and creativity. While this process may at first feel uncomfortable to some individuals because it seems like bragging, it is important to remember that conceit and bragging refer to an over-inflated sense of self. "Telling it like it is" helps teachers develop an accurate perception of reality.

It is recommended that both of these lists be completed and shared with selected peers in small groups so that each person can receive affirmation and support from others. In addition, this process encourages teachers to savor their successes, satisfactions, and use of professional strengths. Savoring draws attention to the positive aspects of teaching and helps immunize the individual against some of the unavoidable stressors of the job.

Professional Support Groups

Rogers (1977) has observed: "A new approach to education demands new ways of being and new methods of handling problems. Individuals are also finding that if they carry out a quiet revolution in the schools, they definitely need a support group. This can be small, perhaps only two or three people, but a resource of persons where one does not need to defend one's point of view, and can freely discuss the successes and failures, the problems faced, the difficulties unresolved" (p. 80). As Rogers suggests, teachers can be very helpful to one another in numerous ways. While mutually supportive relationships may occur spontaneously, they are too important as a stress management strategy to be left solely to chance.

Brammer and Abrego (1981) point out that because of the diversity of human needs, individuals should have various types of people in their support system. They recommend that these networks include people (1) to depend on in a crisis, (2) with whom to discuss concerns, (3) to feel close to, (4) who can make us feel competent and valued, (5) who can give us important information, (6) who will challenge our stereotyped thinking, and (7) with whom we can share good news and feelings. Professional support groups can provide a systematic approach to meeting the various needs represented by these categories.

Kirschenbaum and Glaser (1977) define such a

group as "a small group of professionals, with a common area of interest, who meet periodically to learn together and to support one another in their ongoing professional development" (p. 3). They recommend a group size of 8-12 members who stimulate one another's thinking, offer practical help, and provide a sense of emotional support.

Kirschenbaum and Glaser suggest several formats for support group meetings. The "each-one-teach-one model" provides for rotating leadership; the leader can facilitate a discussion, invite a guest speaker to the session, or address a topic of interest. The "structured model" asks each member to respond to a common topic or question. The "revolving focus time" approach allows each participant to have the group's undivided attention while he or she discusses an idea or concern. At the individual's request, the group may simply listen, ask clarifying questions, and/or brainstorm alternative solutions to a problem.

The professional support group, as outlined by Kirschenbaum and Glaser, uses several helping modes. Participants can teach and learn from one another (e.g., classroom management strategies, motivational techniques, time management, etc.), be involved in mutual problem solving ("I need some help with a low ability student in my third hour class who's causing a lot of discipline problems"), or role-play situations that are distressful to a participant (e.g., parent conferences, an evaluation meeting with the principal, etc.). Professional support groups reduce isolation and highlight the vast amount of knowledge and skills teachers can bring to mutual problem solving.

Organizational Change/Job Redesign

There are some distressful events over which individual teachers have little or no control. Overcrowded classrooms, violence in the schools, and lack of adequate resources are but a few of the problems requiring complex educational and political solutions. However, there are many job-related stressors that can be remedied, or at least alleviated, through creative approaches and collective action.

Veninga and Spradley (1981) argue that in even seemingly hopeless situations, individuals can find ways of redesigning their jobs. Within 10-15 minutes, a group of 6-8 teachers can brainstorm dozens of strategies that can be applied in distressful circumstances. To illustrate, a group of teachers who felt restrained by an apathetic administrator brainstormed several options: provide him with books

and articles on important topics, negotiate with him regarding what resources and time he will commit to important projects, establish a building level curriculum committee that will consider instructional improvement in the school, and, when possible, go ahead with innovations that do not require his direct support. The implementation of only one or two brainstormed ideas can make a significant difference to the affected teachers. Not only may the situation improve, but they will have gained a sense of power and self-esteem that will in itself be satisfying.

Organizational change, at best, is a difficult, long-term task. Fortunately, research on organizations and innovative management practices in business and industry can provide direction for educators. For example, Cooke and Kornbluh (1980) found that teachers' job satisfaction was higher in schools with good communication and shared decision making between teachers and administrators. Industrial "quality of work life programs," such as the one developed at General Motors, and managerial approaches like Theory Z (Ouchi, 1981) illustrate the importance of high quality communication, participative decision making, and respect for the individual worker. Minimally, all school districts and teacher organizations should study these programs carefully for transferable strategies that will improve morale, increase job satisfaction, solve instructional problems at the building and classroom level, and have a positive effect on student performance.

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).

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.

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. It is generally known that knowledge of priorities and goal setting is an important aspect of time management (Sparks & Hammond, 1981). However, Selye (1974) emphasizes the value of this process as a basic stress management technique. He writes:

The aim of life is to maintain its own identity and express its innate abilities and drives with the least possible frustration. To remain healthy, man must have some goal, some purpose in life that he can respect and be proud to work for. Each person must work out a way to relieve his pent-up energy without creating conflicts with his fellow men and, if possible, to earn their good will and respect (p. 103).

Realistic long-term goals that require hard work and the use of potential can provide a focus and eustressful motivation for teachers' ongoing personal and professional renewal.

Alternative Careers for Teachers

Often, distress is caused by an inappropriate "person-job" fit. The individual temperament and personality do not match the requirements of the work. While the complex topic of career change cannot be dealt with fully in this article, several key points will be outlined.

A successful career change requires that teachers take several concrete steps (Sparks & Allan, 1980). First, they should identify their professional strengths and competencies. Positions in business and industry may not require extensive retraining, but rather the use of "transferable skills," such as communication, organization, and the management of people. Second, teachers must systematically think about their values, interests, and goals, preferably with the assistance of a counselor or career change workshop.

Third, teachers need to develop a "functional resume" that clearly highlights their career objective and skills. Fourth, a job search should be conducted that uses a network of friends, colleagues, neighbors, and acquaintances. Person-to-person contact and informational interviews are used rather than unproductive mass mailings of resumes to hundreds of potential employers. Finally, teachers may want to brush up on interviewing skills that have lain dormant for years (or were never developed at all) and practice responding to typical interview questions. While the career change process is often

frustrating, many teachers have successfully made the transition to new jobs that more closely match their current interests and skills and that provide opportunities for advancement and salaries far beyond those that were available to them as educators.

Conclusions

As can be seen, 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.

Skovholt & Morgan (1981) emphasize the relationship between a balanced life-style and job satisfaction: "Most of us will work over 50 years during our lives. How does an individual continue with zest during this period until the twilight years of senior adulthood? Our assumption here is that the fuel of human renewal is a balance between work, loving relationships, and recreation . . . If one listens closely to an adult of either sex, the themes of affiliation and achievement and their interplay often seem prominent" (p. 232). Nowhere is the interaction of complex human needs more pronounced than in the classrooms and lives of teachers. Not only must they deal with the normal requirements of marriage, family life, and friendships, but they must also spend each work day meeting the needs of students who require the utmost in patience, wisdom, and stamina. These traits are reflective of the highest levels of emotional and physical health.

Pines (1980) reports that Kobasa and Maddit of the University of Chicago have found that "Stress resistant people . . . have a specific set of attitudes towards life—an openness to change, a feeling of involvement in whatever they are doing, and a sense of control over events" (p. 35). Those characteristics go a long way in the direction of describing an effective teacher.

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