

## STRESS IN TEACHERS: CAUSES AND TREATMENT

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### ABSTRACT

A teacher who is experiencing stress must note that he needs the assistance of others. The more he covers the situation, the worse the situation becomes. He needs to contact others who can help him out. A stressed situation calls for an external help which can be given by colleagues, immediate family members or the administration of the school. The bottom-line is that the present scenario, when everything is moving fast, the life with all its technologies is becoming complex and expensive, experiencing high levels of stress is common. Hence every teacher should learn how to handle stress whenever it occurs. A proper devices and strategy to handle high levels of stress will keep an individual fit for the teaching profession amidst the strain and stress. The work of a teacher is physically and mentally challenging. A teacher needs to use a lot of energy in his daily chores in the classroom coupled with his personal and family commitments. This trend, which is a routine for a teacher forwards a lot of strain and stress of them.

**KEYWORDS:** Stress, Distress, Work Stress, Coping Etc

### INTRODUCTION

The problem of the teacher may be compounded by the school culture and climate .A teacher's activities may be subjected to critical scrutiny by administrators. Colleagues, parents and students. This also mounts a serious pressure on the teacher. One can simply say that the task of a teacher is enormous.

#### Factors Responsible

As it is already stated, stress in teachers occurs when a teacher takes too much on himself. A teacher gets a full load coupled. With extracurricular activities , private tuitions , family commitments and other responsibilities from the community .In some schools, the administrators add to woes of teachers by assigning extra responsibilities from time to time .These extra assignments which a teacher may not refuse, for the respect he has for the principal may add extra burden to the teacher. These extra assignments come along with specified timings and dates for completion .These makes the existing situation worse.

A Teacher struggles to meet deadlines and also to make sure that things are done well in decent manner. This strain and stress condition of teacher leaves a mark of a stress in the life of a teacher. Another cause for stress in teachers can be lack of mastery in the subject taught by teachers. If a teacher is not eloquent in his subject, it puts a lot of strain on him .He may require a lot of time to prepare for his classes. The time spent, coupled with extra responsibilities which cannot be neglected, can cause burnout in that particular teacher.

In some schools the administrators overburden some teachers who readily accept responsibilities. Because of this attitude of theirs, the administration gives them more that that what they can handle. This renders them ineffective and

inefficient –Jack of all trades and master of none. This situation results in stress in teachers.

### Preventive Measures

Before one experiences high levels of stress, it is always important to adopt some preventive measures. Knowing well that it is eminent to experience stress, the individuals should adopt the following measures:

- Have or develop skills, or have a consultant with skills adequate to the task .Talk over ideas and problems .get some suggestion. This is an important step to defeat burnout. Always seek advice if you feel that you cannot handle the situation alone.
- Learn or practice skills for gaining support from your administration when the system seems unresponsive to your needs. As someone rightly said, “Bring your political sophistication to bear on it”. Negotiate, trade off what you have that the system needs for what the system has that you need. It is important to let you administrators know what you can do and what you cannot do, and how much you can do. Make sure that the negotiation is fair to both the parties’ .After all job satisfaction is what we all look forward to.
- Examine your own personal needs and plan ahead for how you will satisfy them. For example time to sleep, time to wake up, time to eat, time for friends, time for family and time for fulfill spiritual needs. It is always advisable to take care of yourself .after all; work suffers when an individual is incapacitated .The whole idea is to make sure that you do not neglect your personal needs at the expense of work.

### Symptoms of High Levels of Stress

The symptoms of high levels of stress are many. The individual has to match the symptoms with the reality and see if they are really burnout symptoms or something else. They include the followings:

- **Fatigue:** a state where an individual gets tired easily .The individual has less energy in him to the extent that he cannot do much in terms of physical work.
- **Irritability:** A stressed person gets irritated quite easily with the least provocation and act wild at times.
- **Anxiety:** This is another symptom of highly stressed .It is vague fear. A stressed person feels that something is going to happen to him at anytime. This makes him to apply a lot of defense mechanisms.
- **Headache:** A stressed teacher experience frequent headaches and this may lead to loss of appetite and sleep disturbance. This aggravates the already worsened condition of the teacher.
- **Loss of confidence:** This also leads to loss of feelings of self-worth, loss of goals or optimism.
- **Other symptoms include a feeling of boredom, and anger.** This can result in tearfulness. Accompanying these are other symptoms like difficulty in concentrating, impulsivity, physical illness, loss of sexual desires and finally deciding the quite the job or doing something to get fired.

### Treatment for Stress Relief

Prevention is always better than cure. However, when stress is experienced by a person, he can do much to treat it and enjoy his work .some of the treatments are enumerated as follows:

- Arrange to take a mental health day in conjunction with the weekend for at least the next weeks; sick leave should be taken for this. It is legitimate use of sick leave. This way be the time for reflections and introspection. It also helps the individual to review his energy in order to be able to work efficiently.
- Ask a colleague to take some of your duties, classes or coverage responsibility in exchange for your doing the same when he needs it. One should be able to share his concerns with others. There is always a physical and a mental relief when we share our burdens with others.
- The temptation for stressed people is to take tranquilizers. Never do that .Avoid taking tranquilizers, alcohol, caffeine and sugar. Anything that will artificially elate you will cloud your thinking and will hinder you from making a good judgment.
- Ask your administrator to help you change your schedule if possible, so that you do not have two difficult classes back-to back.
- Practice stress- management tools such as deep breathing, exercise which may consist of following.
  - Sit in a comfortable chair with your feet on the floor
  - Close your eye and keep them closed.
  - Smile gently to yourself and pull your shoulders back.
  - Take two deep breaths, counting to four as you inhale and four as you exhale .On the second breath, as you exhale ,let your lips part , let your shoulders relax, and feel a wave of relaxation , go through your whole body from your head down to your toes.
  - Do a body scan, becoming aware from each part of the body starting at the top of your head and proceeding to your feet, pay attention to such stress reacting areas as forehead, teeth and jaw, back to neck shoulders, abdominal muscles. Wherever you find tension, relax it.
  - Take several minutes to enjoy the feeling of relaxation you are experiencing .Do all these for at least , some many times a day as you think of it ; at least before meals and just before going to bed.
- Talk with our support group about what is happening to you. This can be shared with fellow colleagues who are closer to you or with your family members. You need the support of people you can trust at this time.
- Drop temporarily or permanently any non-essential boring and stress producing activities (such as committees that are taking more time and energy but your presence does not make much of an impact.
- If you are beginning to feel better after two weeks, you can gradually begin to resume your normal schedule. Plan some time limited strictly for fun activities that you can do in the next few days and look forward to in the near future.
- Re evaluates your prevention plan and makes any adjustments indicated. This includes looking at your goals.
- Plan a restful vacation in which you will be doing things you enjoy but not wearing yourself out. This vacation

can be taken with friends and whom you have fun apart from your immediate family members.

## CONCLUSIONS

The teaching profession puts a lot strain on teachers. Apart from teaching the core subject, a teacher is also involved in many co curricular activities. As if this is not enough, a teacher is again affected by the hidden curriculum which includes the way he present himself, and his relationship with students, colleagues and administrators. This puts a lot of pressure on a teacher.

To make matters worse , there are some institutions which overload teachers due to lack of teachers, the economic standing of the school or due to large enrolment .Where ever this happens ,some teachers who cannot bear the pressure of the work experience high levels of stress. As already discussed it is always important to take precautions so that one does not experience burnout. The largely depends on how one deals with his work and the milieu.

However, whenever a teacher experiences burnout, he should not decide to quit the job. It is important to note that every profession has its own pressures – that is, workers in other professions are also experiencing overtly or covertly, strain and stress. A teacher who is experiencing stress must note that he needs the assistance of others. The more he covers the situation, the worse the situation becomes. He needs to contact others who can help him out. A stressed situation calls for an external help which can be given by colleagues, immediate family members or the administration of the school.

The bottom-line is that the present scenario, when everything is moving fast, the life with all its technologies is becoming complex and expensive, experiencing high levels of stress is common. Hence every teacher should learn how to handle stress whenever it occurs. A proper devices and strategy to handle high levels of stress will keep an individual fit for the teaching profession amidst the strain and stress.

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