Managing Job-Related Stress

Some degree of job-related stress may be beneficial as it can enhance job performance and the development of new skills. If not managed, excessive stress can contribute to job-related burn-out. Job-related burn-out is a sustained response to ongoing emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). Job-related burn-out is often described as feelings of:

- **emotional exhaustion** (feeling worn out and depleted of emotional coping resources), and
- **reduced personal accomplishment** (feeling ineffective in completing job tasks).

Most adults experience job-related stress at some point in their lives.

Recognizing when stress is becoming unhealthy is critical for job satisfaction.

Teaching and Stress

The teaching profession is widely recognized as a stressful occupation (Lambert & McCarthy, 2006).

Teaching requires substantial emotional commitment and labour that can be emotionally and physically draining.

Teacher Turnover

Up to 10% of teachers transfer schools each year and up to 40% of teachers leave the profession within their first 5-years (NCES, 2004; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).

These rates are even higher in urban elementary schools.

Turnover is often related to job-related stressors such as student misbehaviour, low social support, and job dissatisfaction and workload (Ingersoll, 2001).

Identifying Signs of Burnout

Physical:
- Feeling tired and drained most of the time.
- Frequent headaches and muscle aches.
- Changes in appetite or sleep patterns.

Emotional:
- Sense of failure and self-doubt.
- Feeling helpless at work.
- Loss of motivation in work.
- Decreased satisfaction with work.

Behavioural:
- Withdrawing from responsibilities.
- Skipping work.
- Isolating self from others.
- Procrastinating on tasks.
- Taking out frustrations on others.
The amount of stress that can be managed and the effects of stress vary from person to person.

It is important to recognize the level of stress that you can effectively manage.

How You Can Help Yourself: Prevention & Management

**Prevention**

**Start the Day With a Relaxing Ritual** ➔ Spend at least 15 minutes doing something relaxing in the morning, such as meditating, writing in your journal, stretching, or reading a novel.

**Set Boundaries** ➔ Try not to over extend yourself. Learn how to say ‘no’ when your plate is full. If you find this difficult, remember that saying ‘no’ will allow you to focus your resources and energy on current tasks.

**Nourish Your Creative Side** ➔ Try something new, start a fun project, or resume a favorite hobby. Make sure that you allow yourself to have activities that are ‘just for you’ and unrelated to work.

**Tell Someone About Your Day** ➔ Make a habit of telling a friend or loved one about your day, every day. Try to focus on the positive aspects as well.

**Prioritize Your Health** ➔ Take the time to prepare healthy meals, exercise regularly, and get 7-8 hours of sleep nightly. When you eat right, engage in physical activity, and allow your body to rest you are better able to deal with job-related stress.

**Try Not to Go to Bed Stressed** ➔ Allow yourself a few minutes at the end of every day to do something that you find calming and relaxing, like reading a novel.

**Management**

**Identify Sources of Stress** ➔ In order to deal with stress you need to first recognize what is creating the stress.

**If Possible, Eliminate a Source of Stress** ➔ Once the sources of stress have been identified, ask yourself whether any of these sources of stress can be eliminated. If yes, try to remove them from your life.

**Talk About It** ➔ Simply talking about why you are stressed out can relieve some of the burden. Co-workers are particularly good people to talk to, as they can likely relate to your situation and can share some strategies that have worked for them.

**Take a Break** ➔ If you are feeling like you are at the end of your rope, if may be necessary to take a break. If you can, take a day to relax and replenish your energy. This may help you effectively deal with difficult tasks upon returning to work and avoid becoming burned-out.

**Ask for Help** ➔ Asking someone to help you with your load is a way to lessen the pressure on yourself.

**Learn and Practice Stress Management** ➔ Techniques such as deep breathing take a few minutes, can be done in the classroom during recess or prep times, and allow you to effectively deal with everyday stressors before they lead to burnout.

---

**Resources**

**Canadian Mental Health Association:** Coping with Stress

[http://www.cmha.ca/data/1/rec_docs/403_CMHA_coping_with_stress_EN.pdf](http://www.cmha.ca/data/1/rec_docs/403_CMHA_coping_with_stress_EN.pdf)

**LD Online:** Classroom Management Strategies for High-Needs Children

[http://www.ldonline.org/indepth/classroom](http://www.ldonline.org/indepth/classroom)