



NORTH WEST UNIVERSITY



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**STRESS MANAGEMENT IN SCHOOLS IN THE MAFIKENG AREA**

**BY**

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# DECLARATION

I, Johnson Gyabaah Nimako, declare that this mini dissertation for the degree of Masters in Business Administration in the North West University has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other university, that is my own work and that the materials contained here have been fully acknowledged.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

  
J.G. Nimako

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**GOD BLESS YOU ALL**

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# ABSTRACT

## STRESS MANAGEMENT IN SCHOOLS IN THE MAFIKENG AREA

The purpose of this study was to investigate management of stress among educators in schools in Mafikeng area.

It was hoped that a broader understanding of the distinctive factors that account for identification of stressors and how educators try to cope with or manage them and highlight the effects of these stressful experience on the physical domain, emotional health, mental functions, behavioural efficiency, interpersonal relationships and personal productivity on educators, and to provide some guidelines to ways of controlling, managing and combating stress among educators.

A multi-faced instrument technique, comprising a questionnaire and document reviews were employed to gather data. The research paradigm that was used to underpin this study was the survey method where both qualitative and quantitative data were obtained from questionnaire.

The study revealed that educators were stressed up due to numerous factors such as, salary not commensurate with their qualification and experience, ill discipline among learners and work overload etc.

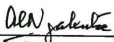
There are suggested methods in how to manage or cope with stress among educators in our schools.

The research had some limitations, which include; the subjects might not at the time of research be able to identify their stressors, hence the results of the study might not be reliable and generalisation of results not possible because only ten schools were selected.

# CERTIFICATE OF ACCEPTANCE

This mini dissertation entitled "Stress management in schools in the Mafikeng Area" written by Johnson Gyabaah Nimako of the Department of Commerce and Administration in the faculty of Graduate school of Business and Government leadership for the programme of Masters in Business Administration is hereby recommended for acceptance for examination.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### 1.1. INTRODUCTION

Stress is becoming an increasingly important factor in our working lives (Rodger, 1999). However certain occupations produce higher stress levels than others and individual employees react to the situation in different ways. What is making stress an important factor is that it does not only affect employees but has a negative effect upon the organization, its management and its effectiveness as measured by its productivity. ✓

With stress becoming such an important phenomenon, one is bound to ask what it is. Stress is used to describe feelings we get when we have difficulty meeting all the physical and emotional demands life makes on us. At work it could be because a task is either too great or not challenging enough. However, little stress can be useful in making us extra alert. Too much stress can affect our ability to do everyday things and can lead to such symptoms as headaches, insomnia, depression, anxiety and irritability. ✓

There are situations or events that can cause people at home or work to be stressed (Roger et al, 1999). In a working situation the following can cause stress:-

- Pressure to perform and maintain quality.
- Recession and fear of redundancy.
  - Change, fear of change.
  - Increased workload due to reduction in staff.
  - Excessive hours.
  - Other personal problems, e.g. Relationships, childcare, finance.
  - Lack of power or influence over one's working life.
  - Not knowing what is expected of you.
  - Bullying and other forms of harassment.
  - Working anti – social hours.

In a home situation the following can cause stress:-

- Bereavement.
- Family illness.
- Separation from a partner / divorce.

- Relocation.
- Children's behaviors or educational performance.

Having looked at the cause of stress both at work and home, it becomes evident that different individuals do experience some of the events mentioned above but the question that remains to be answered is why do some individuals get stressed while other others don't. The answer to this question is that different individuals react to the same situation in different ways (Roger et al, 1999). An example to quote is where you see cars stationary in a traffic jam, one driver might just be calm, listening to his/her radio while the other driver in the next car might be fanning, hooting, coming out to check what could be happening at the front. You will realize that both drivers are exposed to the same event, but how they react in the situation or event is different. One is stressed while the other one is relaxed. This is because stress is caused by the view that we take of a situation rather than the event itself. This therefore implies that some people are more prone to stress than others. E.g. people with type A personality (they are more stress prone, and include the perfections and workaholics). These people are typically impatient; they do more than one thing at a time, drive themselves very hard both at work and play, are very ambitious and find it difficult to relax.

As indicated earlier, stress doesn't only affect the individual but also production. This is because of the effects it has at work. Stress is acknowledged to be one of the main causes of absence from work, due to illness.

### **1.1. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The problem of stress management among educators at school is a growing concern lately. The question being asked in this study is what are the perceived causes and effects of stress that the educators in schools in the Mafikeng area face in their day – to – day endeavours. The management of stress and its effects these schools is concern, and therefore this study focused on an analysis of this issue in the North West Province.

### **1.3 OBJECTIVES OF STUDY**

#### **Primary Objective:**

To investigate management to stress amongst educators in schools in the Mafikeng area

### **1.6. SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

The scope of study was stress management among educators in the Mafikeng area in the North West Province.



### **Secondary Objectives:**

- Identify stressors and how educators try to cope with or manage them.
- Highlight the effects of these stressful experiences on the physical domain, emotional health, mental functions, behavioural efficiency, interpersonal relationships and personal productivity on educator.
- Provide some guidelines to ways of controlling, managing and combating stress among educators

## **1.4. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The study will provide important data on stress management, in schools in the Mafikeng area. It will also help educators identify their stress levels as well as different stressors and how they influence their behaviour, and enable them to identify how it affects their productivity not clearly articulated.

## **1.5. RESEARCH METHODS**

### **DATA COLLECTION AND SAMPLING**

The sample consisted of 40 educators aged between 25 and 50, and the population consisted of both males and females. The educators were obtained from high / primary schools. A selection of educators was heterogeneous in terms of sex, socio – economic status, age, level of education and teaching experience. All participants were provided with questionnaires in English. Survey research methods were adopted; where between qualitative and quantitative data were obtained from questionnaires.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1. INTRODUCTION

Considering this wide and intense interest and the catalogued research on human stress it is surprising that to date no adequate, generally accepted definition of stress exists even though these definitions range from single words such as “anxiety” or “tension” through to detailed physiological and psychological explanations.

Hans Selye, a pioneer in the study of stress, calls it “the rate of wear and tear within the body”- a series of bodily changes. Factors that cause stress, words which are similar to it but still: “The concept remains vague and ambiguous and any definition must of necessity reflect the interests, mythologies and subject –matter of the disciplines which attempt to study it. It may be helpful to regard it as a situation – specific word, that is, a word which assumes various meanings according to the particular situation or context in which it is used” (Dobson 1990: 2-3).

#### 2.2 What is stress?

People, like other animals, have an inborn reaction to stressful situations called the “fight or flight” response. Just as when our ancestors had to decide whether to battle or flee from a rampaging carnivore, we still have the same physiologic reactions to stress: blood pressure rises, heart rate soars, breathing speeds and muscles get ready for action. That’s wear and tear. These days, we’re more likely to respond to stressors by changing behavior than by gripping with a tiger. Unless we learn how to deal with stress, we risk illnesses, such as heart attack or stroke, from chronic fight or flight responses (Selye, 1998).

Some stress arises from problems in the school system. Some comes from our personal lives-our homes, families and friends. Wherever its origins, stress negatively affects our ability to function daily. So stresses created by planning lessons, managing a classroom, typing reports, meeting deadlines and completing

paperwork can become overwhelming. If we add to this, the stress related to our personal lives, running households and taking care of finances, the result might be an overload of our functioning capacities.

No matter what you do, you will be under some amount of stress. The trick is to manage it through techniques including taking more over your school, exercise, relaxation, diet, and coping with drugs and alcohol. This study is filled with tips for doing these things. ✓

We usually think of stress as a negative force since it can have a draining effect on us physically, mentally, and emotionally. Yet, not all stress is bad. Think of planning and taking a vacation. While that creates stress, it's stress with a positive payoff (Christiane 2000: 34).

## 2.3 STRESSES IN JOBS

Absolutely, apart from the obvious tensions of working on often-dilapidated buildings, in high crime areas and with a bureaucracy that can be unforgiving and unhelpful, some educators face the danger of drugs, weapons, and vandalism. On any given day, stress may come from paperwork disruptive youngsters, difficult with a supervisor or violence in school. Worse, many educators feel that they have no control over their professional lives.

However, there are more subtle forces at work. You must find your maximum attention on top of your students. This can mean that so much energy goes to dealing with their physical, mental and social ills that little time or energy remains with for yourself. Brown University found more stress related illness among people whose jobs involve significant responsibility for the well-being of others.

All educators experience some sort of stress and tension unique to their assignments, but they also share many stressors. No one is immune.

First figure out what is really causing your stress. If it's a person, make sure you know his or her nature. Ideally, you should talk out a conflict with the person who is causing it, but this isn't always possible. So try

talking to a colleague, writing a letter that you don't intend to mail, or (as a last resort of you're alone in your room), talk to an empty chair. Whatever you do, something to release the tension.

Relaxation means doing anything that will let you take your mind off your problems. At the beginning of a prep period or during lunch you might want to listen to music, walk around the block, stretch or read a book. There are tapes you can play that are designed to help you relax. You can utilize commuting time to give yourself a break. Together, you and your colleagues have the power to bring substantial changes to your situation in school. Much can be done just by increasing communication with your colleagues, particularly with the administration. (Emerson 1997: 108).

#### 2.4. Causes of Stress

In his book, *Theory and Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy* (1996), Gerald Corey lists the following as the causes of stress.

Rather than having a single cause, stress results from a combination of factors. It is best understood by considering the individual, interpersonal, and organizational factors that contribute to the condition. Recognizing the causes of stress can itself be a step in dealing with it. A few of them are:

- Doing the same type of work with little variation, especially if this work seems meaningless;
- Giving a great deal personally and not getting back much in the way of appreciation or other positive responses;
- Lacking a sense of accomplishment and meaning in work;
- Being under constant and strong pressure to produce, perform, and meet deadlines, many of which may be unrealistic;
- Working with a difficult population, such as those who are highly resistant, who are involuntary clients, or who show very little progress;
- Conflict and tension among staff; absence of support from colleagues and an abundance of criticism;

- Lack of trust between supervisor and mental-health workers, leading to conditions in which they are working against each other instead of towards commonly valued goals;
- Not having opportunities for personal expression or for taking initiative in trying new approaches, a situation in which experimentation, change, and innovation are not only unrewarded but also actively discouraged;
- Facing unrealistic demands on your time and energy;
- Having a job that is both personally and professionally taxing without much opportunity for supervision, continuing education, or other forms of in-service training;
- Unresolved personal conflicts beyond the job situation, such as marital tensions, chronic health problems, financial problems, and so on. (Gerald Corey: 1996)

Job stress is “a consequence of the perceived disparity between the demands of the job and the resources (both material and emotional) that an employee has available to him or her. When demands in the workplace are unusually high, it becomes increasingly impossible to cope with the stress associated with these working conditions” (Sarantakos, 1998).

Its roots are found in the daily transactions stemming from the debilitating physical and emotional overload that arises from stress on the job.

Job burnout is both an occupational hazard and a phenomenon induced by stress. It is generally characterized by: (1) some degree of physical and emotional exhaustion; (2) socially dysfunctional behavior, particularly a distancing and insulation from individuals with whom one is working; (3) psychological impairment—especially strong, negative feelings toward the self; and (4) organizational inefficiency through decreased output and poor morale (Burns, 1997).

In *Job stress in Public Education: Symptoms, Causes, and Survival Skills* (1982), Anthony Cedoline offers the following analysis of seven causes of job stress that have received the most attention in research findings:

#### *2.4.1 Lack of Control over One's Destiny*

As organizations become large and impersonal, employees are frequently less involved in decision-making. Even simple tasks can be delayed due to legal dictates, administrative policy, or lack of funds. Employees' participation in decision making promotes more positive job attitudes and greater motivation for affective performance.

#### *2.4.2 Lack of Occupational Feedback and communication*

Like other workers, educators want to know the expectations of the organization, the behaviors that will be successful or unsuccessful in satisfying job requirements, any physical and psychological dangers that might exist, and the security of the job. Education employees need feedback to develop job values, aspirations, objectives, and accomplishments. Lack of clear, consistent information can result in distress. If evaluation only happens once or twice a year without regular, periodic feedback, the possibility of stress increases the longer the employee works in a vacuum. Regarding communication, organizational structures that foster open, honest, cathartic expression in a positive and constructive way reap large dividends from employees. When management reacts to open communication on a crisis basis only, it reinforces negative communications.

#### *2.4.3 Work Overload or Under Load*

Researchers have found high levels of stress among individuals who have excessive workloads. Long or unpredictable hours, too many responsibilities, work at a too-rapid pace, too many phone calls, dealing directly with difficult people without sufficient relief, dealing with constant crises, and supervising too many people (e.g., large class sizes and overcrowding) or having broad multifaceted job descriptions are characteristics of a work overload. In addition, boring tedious jobs without variety are equally distressful.

#### *2.4.4 Role Conflicts/Ambiguity*

Although role conflict and ambiguity can occur independently, they both refer to the uncertainty about what one is expected to do at work. Role conflict may be defined as the simultaneous occurrence of two or more opposing pressures such that a response to one makes compliance with the other impossible (e.g., mass education versus individualized instruction). The most frequent role conflicts are (1) those between the individual's values and those of the superior or the organization; (2) the conflict between worker abilities and organizational expectations. In numerous studies, role conflict has been associated with low job satisfaction, frustration, decreased trust and respect, low confidence in the organization, morale problems, and high degrees of stress. Role ambiguity may be defined as a lack of clarity about the job, that is, a discrepancy between the information available to the employee and that is required for successful job performance. In comparison to role conflict, role ambiguity has the highest correlation to job dissatisfaction. Role ambiguity is especially common amongst school administrators.

#### *2.4.5 Individual Factors*

Personal factors such as financial stability, marital satisfaction, as well as personality factors such as neuroticism, excessive shyness, inflexibility, and poor stress management skills all contribute to how one is affected by stress on the job. The mutual interaction and accumulation of both personal and occupational stressors can certainly contribute to job burnout.

#### *2.4.6 Training Deficits*

Several different areas of job training are necessary to prevent occupational distress. The most obvious area is adequate initial preparation. Training and competencies are necessary to bolster confidence, as well as to allow the worker to get through each day without unnecessary dependence upon others or upon reference materials. On-the-job training is also necessary as technology advances. New professionals are most susceptible to some forms of distress. Secondly, training in communications skills is necessary in order to facilitate the ability of the employee to relate successfully with supervisors, fellow workers, and recipients of services or products. According to one survey, jobs are most frequently lost because of poor communication than because of any other

factors. Finally, one needs to be taught how to deal with stress. Everyone needs to learn methods of coping with the variety of stressors faced each day.

#### *2.4.7 Other Factors and Considerations*

There are other secondary factors that can exacerbate stress such as poor working conditions, lack of security, lifestyle changes, and rapidly changing society that force individuals to make unexpected adjustments in their way of life and work. Administrators, teachers, and staff all face specific stressors that are unique to their position or role; however, most of these stressors fall within the general framework outlined above.

Work-related stress is the main health and safety concern in South African schools. If unnoticed, stress can lead progressively to a decrease in performance, health injury, and long-term absence from work.

Typical health injuries include anxiety, depression, heart disease, back pain, gastrointestinal disturbances, and various minor illnesses.

“Teachers need to be encouraged to get support early rather than wait until things go wrong. People deny their own crisis really,” (Norfolk, UK, primary school head-teacher)✓

2.5. Although it is sad to record that many teachers capitulate and give in under stress, resorting to alcohol and drugs, many are clearly aware that the human body can mobilize to respond to challenges and adjust to tensions in such a way that teaching tasks and responsibilities can be productively completed. The good news is that teachers can find answers to their stress related problems and even emerge from their anxiety, tension, worry and confusion seeking new challenges, and exciting experiences. One hopes that a commitment to one or more of the following stress management strategies will help teachers to become ‘together’ people.

In recent international review of teacher stress Kyriacou shared with us the main strategies employed by teachers when attempting to manage stress in their lives. His lucid summary makes it clear that there are two major areas, which require further research and which are central to any consideration of stress management



strategies for educators. The first area focuses on the individual teacher's efforts to manage stress while the second concentrates on the managerial, organizational and administrative practices used within a particular school or academic institution – these practices may be school or departmentally initiated.

Writing on the first area of stress management, namely the role of the individual, Kyriacou highlights the two main individualized teacher managed strategies:

- (i) Direct action – or dealing positively and directly with the source of stress.
- (ii) Palliative techniques – these include a mental approach (e.g. seeing the humorous side of a situation, placing things in proper perspective, being phlegmatic, etc.) And a physical approach (e.g. relaxation exercises, alcohol, playing sport, etc).

At a more specific and practical level Kyriacou (referring to the valuable work of Fletcher and Payne (1982) and Dunham (1990) lists some stress management innovations found within schools as follows:

“Giving teachers more preparation time during each school day, reducing the size of classes, better organization and communication within the school, an improved climate of social support, more effective programmes of staff induction and professional development, more recognition of teachers' efforts and a clearer description of job tasks and expectations.” (Kyriacou, 1987).

The approach taken in this chapter will be to suggest stress management techniques for teachers which fall firstly, into the area of individual teacher response and secondly, into the area of how the school organization could alleviate stress. Before continuing any further it must be made clear that there is no one simple, easy answer or magical formula to this worrying problem of teacher stress. Most of the reputable academics publishing in this field agree that any management programmer must accept that stress is holistic in nature i.e. stress is caused by many situations and thus needs to be managed at various levels. One very thorough academic study on stress management expresses this principle as follows:

“... stress is holistic... that is, stress is environmental and social, it is mental as well as physical, it involves perceptions, thoughts, and anticipation; it is action and the thwarting of action. Stress is caused by many situations – thus, stress cannot be managed, controlled, or reduced via any one

technique. Intervention must be holistic – in this context that means you must formulate a programmer which attacks the problem on several levels.” (Girdano and Everly, 1989).

This same thought, is put clearly and succinctly by Truch as follows:

“There is no one answer to the problem of teacher stress. Knowledge from a number of fields and a holistic, integrated application of that knowledge in a wide variety of contexts is needed at different times.” (Truch, 1990).

Greenberg also adds support to this sentiment by stating:

“The holistic approach to stress management considers a person’s psychological, biological, social and environmental functioning. It considers the whole person. In planning a stress management programmer, an educator should take a holistic approach because stress in one aspect of a person’s life will generally have an impact on the other aspects.” (Greenberg, 1992).

## 2.6. THE INDIVIDUAL RESPONSE TO STRESS

In his considered commentary on how individuals can best manage their stress Strumper lists firstly some of the more negative or ‘regressive’ coping behaviors such as frequently seeking reassurance, hypochondriac complaining, escapist drinking or drug abuse, opting out altogether, intense feelings of inadequacy and way out mystical, pseudo-philosophical life styles as proposed by some oriental cults (Strumpfer 1982:20).

He then continues by mentioning four attributes or “happy combinations of characteristics” (Strumpfer 1982:26) which enable these individuals to both face the demands of life and cope effectively with intensely stressful situations. These characteristics are:

### 2.6.1. COMPETENCE

A psychological theory of competence motivation by the Harvard psychological White, who believes that individuals have an inherent motive to be competent in all their interactions with the world around them

(White 1989). Put simply the gaining of personal competence leads to a minimizing of stress. Put simply the gaining of personal competence leads to a minimizing of stress.

## 2.6.2. SENSE OF COHERENCE

The attitude, that views life with a strong sense of coherence, a general orientation that sees life as meaningful, predictable and manageable (Antonovsky 1979). In essence, the principle is shared that if a person has a strong sense of coherence they will far more easily be able to cope with stress. This principle is explained as:

“a global orientation that expresses the extent to which one has a pervasive, enduring though dynamic feeling of confidence that one’s internal and external environment are predictable and that there is a high probability that things will work out as well as can reasonably expected.” (Antonovsky, 1999).

## 2.6.3. THE HARDY PERSONALITY

The research work by Kobasa (1982) clearly showed that people with the following three sets of characteristics in their lives, namely commitment (as opposed of alienation) control (as opposed to powerlessness) and challenge (as opposed to threat) were able to interact more successfully with their environment and thereby become stress resistant. “The concept of hardiness emphasizes strenuous, industrious involvement and perseverance, not only as a way of coping with stress but as a way of eustressfully working with joy.” (Strumpfer, 1995)

## 2.6.1. SELF-DIRECTION

The concept of self-direction has been highlighted by the American sociologist Kohn, 1997, who concluded that certain individuals could be stress resistant if they were able to use independent initiative, thought and judgment and thereby enjoy freedom of action which enables them to feel in control of their fate. (Kohn 1997,)

In concluding his review of individual coping characteristics, Strumpfer highlights the value of transformational coping as opposed to regressive coping which has the following hallmarks of life is basically optimistic, stressful events are confronted head on and transformed into productive, growth promoting experiences, demands are handled constructively, one's activities are organized, prioritized and

proper time management skills are employed, appropriate behavior is decided upon pro-actively, commitments are made and honored, and clear decisions are concluded about the really important values in one's life.

In his careful analysis of how individual teachers should manage stress to enhance their effectiveness in the classroom, with colleagues and at home, Truch (1990) introduced the R.E.A.D. programmer that contains the essential ingredients for a personalized stress free management approach.

R – Relaxation

E – Exercise

A – Attitude and awareness

D – Diet

### 2.6.2. Relaxation

Largely as a result of our hectic modern life style and the consequent increase in personal stressors, people have turned to relaxation as an affective and safe means of unwinding. Many authors remain convinced that appropriately selected relaxation techniques (such as progressive relaxation, diaphragmatic breathing, biofeedback, transcendental meditation, antigenic training and visualization, self-hypnosis, message, warm bath, music, hobbies, short vacations, times with friends, etc) can helpfully balance the cycles of rest and activity, reduce anxiety and help with a variety of psychosomatic illnesses. Speaking of the research done with school teachers using transcendental meditation did help to give teachers a healthier self-concept, less anxiety and more of a sense of self-actualization." (Truch, 1990)

In a more recent exposition in support of relaxation reference is made to Carnegie (1997) who recognized in his now classical work 'How to stop worrying and start living', that relaxation combats nervous fatigue and therefore "Educators should learn to relax doing their work." (Greenberg, 1998)

Excellent work on the role of relaxation and relaxation techniques as a means to combat stress has been done by Wool folk (1999).

### 2.6.3. Exercise

Following on relaxation regular exercise has been proven very effective for stress reduction on condition that the essentials of any exercise programmer such as intensity, frequency, duration, type, etc. are carefully structured for one's particular age and condition.

Speaking about the numerous benefits of regular exercise Truch (1990) has this to say:

"The main effect of a regular exercise programmer seems to be protection against heart disease and hypertension. If a physically active person does have a heart attack, the chances of survival are three or four times better than their inactive counterparts. Physical exercise also reduces the incidence of other diseases and diminishes the severity of pre-existing diseases. Finally, sustained regular exercise improves self-esteem, alertness and zest for living – precious commodities (much more valuable than even the escalating price of an ounce of gold) in any time or place."

(Truch, 1990)

Many scientific research studies and anecdotal personalized reports have revealed that regular exercise dramatically reduces the stresses and strains of everyday living and apart from maintaining fitness and efficiency it helps to prevent illness and diseases associated with stress, tension and anxiety.

### 2.6.4. Attitude and Awareness

It is conceded that both these terms are very broad but it can be argued that they are essential ingredients for any stress management programmer because:

"... we cannot change many of our behaviors without first changing our attitude, and our attitudes will not change unless there is some general awareness that what we are currently doing needs improving. In relation to a low stress life style, attitudes are important in terms of how we react to

stressors, while awareness will tune us into our own bodies and our environment. In this way we can satisfy our own needs and those of others in the best interests for all concerned.” (Truch, 1990)

Including points on stress inoculation, mental reprogramming and imaging under this heading the most helpful advice comes in the form of the suggestion that one adopts as many of the Type B behavior characteristics as possible. Speaking of an individual example, Gray (1988) suggests the following characteristics expressed as follows

‘is phlegmatic and ‘laid back’; is not highly ambitious; is relaxed and easy going; tends to be laissez-faire; may even be serene; is sometimes, at least, carefree; is not easily troubled; does not live for his work.” (Gray and Freeman 1988:55)

Advantages of using this approach include managing time more affectively, enjoying a more balanced life style, polyphasic thinking dissipates, one listens and concentrates better and

“... Taking one thing at a time, taking it easy and taking it as it comes allows us to become more creative, more productive, more skilled at dealing with stressors, more appreciative of our environment, and a whole lot happier. In other words, mental calmness is an important ingredient in coping with stressors.” (Truth, 1990)

It has become clear that central to the entire issue of stress management is the teachers’ attitude and outlook. Miller (2001) has explained that, “... we are now aware that one can consciously control stress. We can cause the human body not to react to pressures. We do so by controlling the mind.” (Miller, 2001:20) Doctors have been baffled for some time now as to why some terminally ill patients recover whilst others die and they are reaching agreement that the patients’ psychological outlook is the central key.

“When the individual begins to exercise volitional control over the progress of disease he can often have a positive effect on his recovery. One’s attitude can play a considerable part in the onset and the duration of illness. Sometimes, one’s attitude can mean the difference between life and death.” (Miller, 2001:19)

“In order to prevent malaise in the schools, teachers must learn how to cope with stress and its often deleterious affects. They must become aware of, learn, and even more important, utilize effective coping /controlling mechanisms.” (D’Arienzo, 1999:33)

What really adds punch to the work of D’Arienzo is that after each named coping technique he cites the specific research with publication date, which then serves as an invaluable research bibliography. Amongst some of the more helpful approaches that he mentions are the following:

- Get involved with a hobby.
- Take short breaks away from your teaching.
- Link up with people who are interested and avoid people who are depressing.
- Physical exercise.
- Good sleeping and eating habits.
- Apply relaxation techniques.
- Say no to unfair teaching and extra-mural activities.
- Attend in-service stress reduction courses.
- Join stress support groups.
- Develop good time management skills.
- Establish priorities by setting realistic goals.
- Separate home and school problems. (D’Arienzo, 1999:33-35)

In a very helpful overview of individualized stress management responses, Shaw (2000) draws from a model developed by the Department of Health Promotion, St Louis University Medical Centre, which could hold considerable benefits for teachers. The model incorporates:

#### 2.6.5. Mental Strategies

- Cognitive reprogramming – this strategy assists individuals by helping them to readjust their perspective beliefs or constructs in order to engage in beneficial solutions to particular problems.
- Changing states of consciousness – by using internal mental resources, a person can alter these states of consciousness and so better manage a particular situation (Shaw, 2000).

- Visualization – the ability to visualize situations, experiences, and feelings has demonstrated to have therapeutic value with adults and children both in personal and professional situations.

#### 2.6.6. Physical Strategies

- Integration and/or balance exercises.
- Posture and movement techniques.

#### 2.6.7. Emotional Strategies

- Breathing and centering.
- Relaxation and self-suggestion.

#### 2.6.8. Relational Strategies

- Be positive about yourself and your profession, e.g. allow a ‘moment of glory’, look for the ‘silver lining’, and remember the children you serve make work develop positive relationships with others.
- Meet your personal needs, e.g. take a ‘mental health day’, seek out personal learning experiences, recognize and learn from your mistakes, be prepared for accountability, and create a worry time.

#### 2.6.9. Structural Strategies

- Organize your time.
- Set realistic and flexible professional goals and objectives.
- Establish priorities.
- Leave your work at school.
- Pace yourself.
- Allow transition time.
- Enjoy your time outside of school.



#### 2.6.10. Clarifying Roles and Responsibilities

- Establish reasonable expectations
- Learn to say no
- Ask for staff support
- Use available human resources
- Organize your classroom

#### 2.6.11. Be open to Change, Innovation and new Opportunities

- Change your environment
- Keep yourself motivated
- Consider career options. (Shaw, 2000:21-29)

In an excellent publication entitled 'Life after Stress', (Shaffer, 2001) concentrated not merely on coping and surviving with stress but rather he accentuates the positive components and lists the following challenging stress-resistant characteristics which all stress laden educators should strive towards: decide to live; create your reasons for being and develop a will to live; formulate how to live; develop and practice an optimistic attitude view yourself as master of your fate, you control your own destiny; practice an open learning mode, think divergently and creatively; view stress and changes as challenges and opportunities to learn and to grow; practice the solution-finding dialogue daily; become an active participant in your destiny, make a balanced commitment to family, work and play; live responsibility, accept and seek all types of feedback, strive to improve yourself and appreciate your strengths. (Shaffer, 2001:255-256)

#### 2.7. Religion

Religion as a factor that assists people to cope more adequately with stress cannot be discounted and for many teachers this has been the perfect antidote for stressful experiences. When considering fear and anxiety as probably two of the most important issues people struggle with on a daily basis a three-prong Christian approach as a solution has been suggested. Firstly, the stress or anxiety must be acknowledged and specifically named. Secondly, the anxiety should be openly discussed with a fellow believer in the faith and thirdly, one should pray as in conversation with the Lord for a solution. The contention is that if we take the

Bible seriously and really believe that we must cast all our anxieties on the Lord and not be afraid, then fears are reduced, anxieties released and stress removed.

Empirical research studies in America and Israel have shown that:

- a) Regular worshippers have lower blood pressure and less chance of a stroke or other physical complications (400 residents of Evans County, Georgia);
- b) Regular synagogue worshippers experience a heart disease rate of 37 per 1000 as compared to erratic worshippers who were found to have a heart disease rate of 58 per 1000. The most orthodox Jewish worshippers had a heart disease rate of 29 per 1000 (10 000 municipal workers in Israel);
- c) People who worshipped regularly had good physical and spiritual health (Bethany United Methodist Church). (Greenberg, 1998; 158)

"Regular church attendance has been found to be related to lower blood pressure (Graham, Kaplan, Cornoni-Huntley, James, Becker, Hames, & Heyden, 1999); to lower rates of heart disease (Kaplan, 2000); and to good general physical and mental health (Comstock & Partridge, 1998)." (Greenberg 1998:158)

The work done by Greenberg in attempting to assist teachers with stress is most valuable and, apart from his including family, couple relationships and change in his study, he names the major factors such as diet, nutrition, exercise and relaxation which have already been discussed. He reminds all teachers that an individual stress management programmer is not difficult but it does require personal planning, commitment, initiative, will power, knowledge, and common sense.

"Every person is an individual with his or her unique personality, physical make-up and other characteristics. As such, no single stress management plan will be right for every person. Information gained from friends, books, and other sources provides valuable sources of knowledge from which a personal plan may be developed. The choice of technique will be based on the individual's needs, commitment and personal make-up." (Greenberg, 1998:101)

Truch (1990) concludes by highlighting some basic stress management principles:

- There is no one answer to the problem of teacher stress;
- Stress is inevitable but there is every opportunity to manage it in a productive way;
- Becoming aware of stress in your personal and teaching life is the first step managing it;
- Activity rest and planning are needed in a balanced fashion; anything in excess is never healthy.
- We can change, we can unlearn bad habits and develop healthier, more effective methods of thinking, coping and actualizing. (Truch, 1990:71)

Selye (1998) regarded as the father of stress research, summed up the realities of personal stress management by saying:

"It must be clearly understood that there is no ready made success formula which would suit everybody. We are all different. The only thing we have in common is our obedience to certain fundamental biological laws that govern all men. I think the best the professional investigator of stress can do is to explain the mechanism of stress as far as he can understand it; then, to outline the way he thinks this knowledge could be applied to problems or daily life; and, finally as a kind of laboratory demonstration to describe the way he himself applied it successfully to his own problem."  
(Selye, 1998:45-)

Before finally leaving this component of individual stress management, we share the caution and sound advice given by Morris (1988) who while speaking of the stressful existence in the late twentieth century which include problems of poverty, alienation and environmental pollution, urges that a more unified theory of stress management and remediation be employed. He specifically suggests a blending of a Western style approach, which is largely problem-focused, specific, and manipulative (such as are found in Eastern style approach that is inner-based, integrative and freeing (such as meditation, yoga and service to others). Whereas Eastern thought views stress as a valuable experience to be understood and embraced, Western psychology often interprets it as undesirable, to be reduced or removed. Researchers and psychologists working in the field of stress management should look to a combining of these two approaches and this would clearly be a valuable area for future research. (Morris, 1988:1)

## 2.8. THE ORGANIZATIONAL RESPONSE

At the very outset of this consideration of how schools as organizations might respond to stress it was thought necessary to indicate what the major sources of organizational stress are the work of Cooper (1996) which embraced comparisons between organizations in the United States and the United Kingdom is most helpful in that it included managers and administrators from school systems as well as from various other kinds of organizations. Cooper found some remarkable similarities amongst the selections.

"One of the surprising features of these data to me, has been the similarity of selections regardless of organizational type, I had expected that the major source of stress in a school system would be different from those in a government research department. They are very much the same!" (Cooper, 1996:62)

The most potent recommendation made by Cooper to help resolve these sources of stress is not to ask individuals to effect changes in norms, nor to declare organizational mandates but rather to request that:

"All the members of a work group need to be involved in bringing stressor norms into common awareness and in making commitments to each other to make desirable changes in behavior."  
(Cooper, 1996:65)

Recent writings and research on educational stress make strong recommendations for further empirical investigation into the managerial and organizational practices adopted in certain schools in order to highlight more accurately how such practices can affect the type of teacher stress experienced in the particular school under study. It seems clear therefore that any study of stress management in education must include some mention of how the school as an organization can promote lower and less demanding levels of teacher stress. What follows are some guidelines for organizational, managerial and administrative school practice. In his writings on 'Organizational Analysis of Stress', Bacharach (1997) attempts an academic conceptualization of stress as follows:

"In order to understand fully the implication of stress at work, it is critical to consider the notion of stress as emerging from the interaction of two factors: stress stimuli and stress resistance. Stress

stimuli are the organizational characteristics of work characteristics that initiate a stress reaction in a given setting. Stress resistance refers to those characteristics of the individual that determine the point at which stress stimuli will engender a negative response in that individual. Stress may be operationalized as that point at which the magnitude of the stress stimuli exceeds the individual's capacity to resist. In this context, stress resistance is an individual attribute, a personality trait, whereas stress stimuli are characteristics of the organization and the work process. Stress is a

function, then, of the interplay between personal and organizational characteristics. Clear examples of this conception of stress may be seen in the literature dealing with the personality – environment fit. (McGrath, 1997, Brief 1990).” (Bacharach, 1997:8)

Moving towards a more focused definition of organizational stressors, which include conditions in the workplace, characteristics of the job and/or the professional relationships of teachers with other colleagues, supervisors and students, Eskridge (1996) refers us to the four identified organizational stressors as proposed by Gupta (1998), namely:

1. Role ambiguity – lack of clarity about what to do, why it should be done and by what criteria one will be judged.
2. Role overload – too much work to accomplish in the time available.
3. Role insufficiency – inadequate materials, information, and/or equipment to do the job properly.
4. Responsibility for others – when one has the broad responsibility for shaping the social, emotional, and intellectual growth of students. (Eskridge, 1996:388)

One of the most thorough and helpful recent academic publications in the field of organizationally based stress and its management is that presented by Milstein (1996). By using the seven-source categorization framework Milstein sets out to show:

- How the environment is a potent and constant factor in organizational stress and
- That management strategy can be applied to these listed stressors.

The framework entitled the Person-Environment (P.E) Fit Framework Applied to Stress among teachers and administrators includes: (Milstein, 1996)

Relationships at work. This includes all interactions with superiors, peers, colleagues, and subordinates.

“The extent and form of adult relationships at work is directly related to felt levels of stress... teacher-teacher opportunities for interactions are severely limited because most working hours are spent in classrooms...limited encounters may be stress inducing, often they tend to focus on the negative aspects of work life... no one with whom they can confide and have an open and trusting relationship.” (Milstein, 1996:17)

#### 2.8.1. Management strategy

- School management and teachers should purposefully seek co-operative relationships.
- Prevent teacher isolation as much as possible by initiating teacher support groups that provide security, confidence, and a sense of belonging.
- Give teachers wider involvement in the running of their schools. This encourages commitment and a sense of belonging.
- Initial teacher education should provide curricula that will allow teachers to contribute fully on school management committees.

### *2.9. Organizational Structure and Climate*

“Stress-related issues in this category include the extent of participation in decision making; whether members have a sense of belonging; whether supervision is supportive and effective; whether there are clear and sufficient communications; and the extent to which limitations are placed on the behavior of organizational members. Stress emanating from organizational structure and climate varies greatly, depending upon such factors as school size, location level and administrators’ competence and leadership styles.” (Milstein, 1996:18)

A major grievance here is the feeling that teachers are externally and bureaucratically controlled with little credence being given to teacher professionalism. Teachers often complain that daily activities outside their classrooms are very restrictive, for example, they are required to report their movements to the office, get permission to use the office telephone. Seek special approval before organizing field trips, or buying special teaching materials, etc.

"This dichotomy between freedom of action in the classroom and serve restrictions on behavior outside the classroom can be quite frustrating and, inevitably, leads to friction between administrators and teachers." (Milstein, 1996:18)

## 2.9.1 Management Strategy

- Honest attempts should be made to modify school management structures so that they mesh with the wishes and preferences of the present cadre of teachers.
- Review should regularly be made of authority, reward, and control structures as well as of behavioral norms and group relationships.
- The aim should be to have people fulfilling their various roles in a supportive environment.
- Educational management experts warn that these modifications are not easily effected  
"... it takes a significant amount of time... from innovation to institutionalization, the process may well take three or more years ... it also requires much skill, commitment, energy and a willingness to take risks." (Miles, 1998:72-95)

## 2.10 Factors intrinsic to the Job

The major factors of consequence here include the amount of work, the detailed time needed to be spent on aspects of that work, the numerous time pressures and regular deadlines, the physical working conditions, such as space, lighting, noise levels, private space, etc, changes in the working situation to combat the many regularized and repetitive activities and the requirement to cope with increasingly rapid technological changes. It has further been pointed out by Lortie (1997) that teachers working conditions remain static over time.

"Novice and senior teachers have fairly equal rights, work loads, hours and physical surroundings. There is precious little in the form of improved working conditions over time to reward teachers for achievement, or even for seniority." (Lortie, 1997:14)

#### 2.10.1 Management Strategy

- Select more relevant instructional and curricula teaching material.
- Review educational policies regarding decisions-making initiatives, quantity and quality of work, constraints on when work must be done and the limitations on uses of equipment and materials.
- Redistribute workloads between overburdened and under burdened staff members.

#### 2.10.2 Role in the Organization

As was pointed out earlier by Eskridge (1996) there are several role-related factors which can be stress inducing, amongst these are role ambiguity, role conflict, roles which demand responsibility. Minimal sense of authority and responsibility in one's organizational role.

"Being responsible for people as are teachers for students and administrators for things (e.g. equipment or budgets) ... in fact studies (Cooper and Marshall, 2000:878-888) indicate that professionals who are responsible for the well being of others are particularly susceptible to stress related ailments such as coronary diseases." (Milstein, 1996:16).

Included in this category is the issue of teacher salary increases, which continue to lag behind the increments, obtained by similarly qualified personnel in non-educational organizations.

"There is also evidence that this gap will increase: teachers' salaries are increasing at a slower rate than are salaries of other sectors of the economy. This is a concern because it affects teachers' abilities to provide for family needs and because it is a negative indicator of individual worth." (Milstein, 1996:16).



### Management Strategy

- Continue factual and well-planned salary negotiations.
- School management, administrators, teachers, parents and community members could be involved in negotiating clear cut teacher role expectations and attempts should be made to gain greater clarity and reduce disparate expectations.
- Explore job re-design possibilities when dealing with issues of minimal sense of authority and responsibility for people.

“Job re-design strategies which bring teachers into more frequent contact as they conduct the work to be done could mitigate these difficulties. In this regard it might be profitable to explore variable delivery systems, such as large and small group instruction; differentiate staffing along a master teacher-teacher aide continuum; involvement of highly respected teachers in the evaluation of teacher performance; and assignment of senior teachers as mentors for novice teachers.” (Milstein, 1985:16-17)

### 2.11. Career Development

Factors worthy of mention here include career progression, status congruity, opportunities for advancement, job security and perceptions of low probability of reward – all these factors can be very stress inducing.

#### 2.11.1 Management Strategy

It is conceded that there are clear limitations for response here because many of these issues are embedded in deep-rooted and sometimes emotional societal values, economic forces, and demographic realities. However, while extrinsic rewards may be limited and confined intrinsic rewards can act as positive career motivators.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. INTRODUCTION

The population sample was selected from ten schools. Four participants were selected from each school located in Mafikeng are giving forty participants. Stratified Random sampling was used. Schools were divided according to the districts. In each district, names of schools were also written down on pieces of paper and they were selected using the lottery method. Letters were then written to the managers of the selected schools informing them of the researcher's intentions. With the help of the researcher, the manager of the selected schools used educator's personal numbers to randomly select the participants. The personal numbers were printed on pieces of paper, again using the lottery method, they were placed in a container and those whose numbers were selected were asked to participate. The participants were informed that anonymity and confidentiality would be observed and thus identifying information was not included in the questionnaire.

The participants were of the ages between 29 and 60 and the mean age was 45 years. The tables below describe the characteristics of the sample.

#### Demographic data of participants

TABLE 1: AGE OF ALL PARTICIPANTS

YEARS	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
UP TO 29	2	5%
30 – 39	25	62,5%
40 – 49	10	25%
50 – 59	3	7,5%
60 AND OLDER	0	0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100%</b>

Out of 40 respondents, 92,5% were 49 years and below while 7,5% were over 49 years

**ABLE 2: MARITAL STATUS**

YEARS	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
SINGLE	12	30%
MARRIED	26	65%
DIVORCED	1	2.5%
WIDOWED	1	2.5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100%</b>

30% of the respondents were single male / female. 65% married and 2.5% each for divorced and widowed.

**TABLE 3: SEX**

SEX	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
MALE	22	55%
FEMALE	18	45%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100%</b>

55% of the respondents were male educators and 45% were female

**TABLE 4: QUALIFICATION ACCORDING TO CATEGORY**

CATEGORY	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
C	13	32.5%
D	15	37.5%
E	8	20%
F	3	7.5%
G	1	2.5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100%</b>

Category C i.e. (m + 3; matriculation + 3 years training as an educator) was 32.5%. D was 37.5%, E 20%, F 7.5% and G 2.5%

**TABLE 5: GRADE OR POST HELD AT PERCENT**

GRADE / POST	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
CLASS TEACHER	35	87.5%
HEAD OF DEPT	3	7.5%
DEPUTY PRINCIPAL	2	5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100%</b>

Class registered educators were 87.5%, head of departments were 7.5% and deputy principals only 5%

**TABLE 6: GRADE OR POST HELD AT PERCENT**

EXPERIENCE	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
5 YRS	4	10%
6 – 10 YRS	17	42.5%
11 – 20 YRS	16	40%
MORE THAN 20 YRS	3	7.5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100%</b>

Experienced educators 10% i.e. below 5 yrs, while 6-10 years were 42.5% else 11-20 years 40% and more than 20 years were 7.5%

**TABLE 7: SIZE OF SCHOOL**

SIZE	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
250 LEARNERS & LESS	2	5%
250 – 599 LEARNERS	4	10%
600 – 1000 LEARNERS	33	82.5%
ABOVE 1000 LEARNERS	1	2.5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100%</b>

Size of school of 600 – 1000 was 82.5%, 250 – 259 was 10%, 250 and less learners was 5% while above 1000 was 2.5%

**TABLE 8: SCHOOL'S MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION**

MEDIUM	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
ENGLISH	38	95%
AFRIKAANS	-	0%
ENGLISH & AFRIKAANS	2	5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100%</b>

English dominated the medium of instruction category, which was 95%, English, and Afrikaans only 5%

**TABLE 9: AVERAGE SIZE OF CLASSES TAUGHT BY THE SELECTED EDUCATOR**

SIZE OF CLASSES	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
LESS THAN 15 LEARNERS	-	0%
15 – 29 LEARNERS	1	2.5%
30 – 45 LEARNERS	13	32.5%
ABOVE 45 LEARNERS	26	65%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100%</b>

Class sizes were too big as indicated at 65% for 45 and above learners, 30 – 45 was 32.5% and 15 – 29 was 2.5%

According to the distribution, some of the categories used had too much representation while others had less, however this is due to the selection through persal number system.

### **3.3. INSTRUMENT**

The questionnaire consisted of close-ended questions and each question was related one-four i.e. 1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = often, 4 = always. Respondents were asked to circle one rating according to how they feel about the statement loosed.

In analyzing the data, item analysis was used. The questionnaires were categorized into causes and management of stress. Two tasks were drawn, one for causation and another for management.

### **3.4. PROCEDURE**

Four participants were selected from each school. The questionnaires were handed to them individually to avoid bias. Each participant was requested to complete the questionnaire and return it to the researcher. The participants were informed that anonymity and confidentiality would be observed and thus no identifying information was included in the questionnaire. The biographical data included: age, marital status, sex, qualifications according to category, grade held presently, teaching experience, size of school, schools medium of instruction as well as average size of classes taught by the participant.

### **3.5. DATA ANALYSIS**

After all the empirical research data had been gathered, the use to Descriptive, Statistics was employed. Data was analyzed by using percentages according to the causes and management of stress. The information was presented in tables, one for causation, and the other for management of stress.

## CHAPTER 4

### 4. RESULTS OF THE EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

In order to present the results of this empirical investigation in as logical a fashion as possible it necessary firstly, to refer to the biographical details, secondly to share the findings of the objective-questions and responses and finally to consider the inter-correlation results. Box figures have been use most instances for clarity, ease of understanding and interpretation.

#### 4.1 BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS

TABLE 4.1.1 AGE

		Age			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	U to 29	2	5.0	5.0	5.0
	30 - 39	25	62.5	62.5	67.5
	40 - 49	11	27.5	27.5	95.0
	50 - 59	2	5.0	5.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

It should immediately be noted that the majority of respondents fall into the age categories 30-39 (62,5 Only 2 (5%) respondents fall under 29 years and 50-59 years respectively, while 11 (27,5%) fall within 49.

TABLE 4.2.2 MARITAL STATUS

Marital status					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Single	12	30.	30	30.
	Married	25	62.5	62.	92.
	Divorced	2	5.0	5.0	97.
	Widowed	1	2.5	2.5	100.0
	Total	40	100	100	

Clearly, the majority of respondents fall into the married category ie. 62.5% respondents. A significant point to note here is that the added responsibilities which life demands including the rearing of children, can be a vivid factor in the onset of stress.

TABLE 4.2.3 QUALIFICATION CATEGORY

Qualification category					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Category c	13	32.5	32.5	32.5
	Category d	15	37.5	37.5	70.0
	Category e	8	20.0	20.0	90.0
	Category f	3	7.5	7.5	97.5
	Category g	1	2.5	2.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

The qualification category refer to years of teacher training undertaken by the respondents e.g. Category C is 3 years, category D is 4 years, category E is 5 years and category F is 6 years and category G is 6+ years). Obviously, 90% indicated that they have between 3 to 5 years post-matriculation teacher training qualification which 10% have six or more years of tertiary teacher training behind them.



TABLE 4.2.4 GRADE OR POST LEVEL HELD AT PRESENT

## Grade or post level held at present

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Class teacher	34	85.0	85.0	85.0
Head of department	4	10.0	10.0	95.0
Deputy	2	5.0	5.0	100.0
Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Clearly, 34 (85%) class educators responded to this questionnaire and only 4 (10%) heads of department and deputy principals responded. There can be no doubt that the level of responsibility carried by these important personnel within the school structure have an effect on the stress experienced by the educators and will reflect accordingly in the questionnaire responses.

TABLE 4.2.5 SIZE OF SCHOOL

## Size of the school where you work

	Frequency	Percent	Valid	Cumulative Percent
Valid 250 pupils or less	3	7.5	7.5	7.5
251 - 599	4	10.0	10.0	17.5
600 - 1000	32	80.0	80.0	97.5
Above 1000	1	2.5	2.5	100.0
Total	40	100.0	100.0	

An additional and significant factor which will add to the stress experienced is the fact that the majority of respondents are teaching at large secondary schools (80% between 600-1000) which by nature of numbers alone tend to be more demanding and less personal educational environments.

TABLE 4.2.6 MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION

## School's medium of instruction

	Frequency	Percent	Valid	Cumulative Percent
Valid English	36	90.0	90.0	90.0
English and Afrikaans	4	10.0	10.0	100.0
Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Although this medium of instruction breakdown appears conclusive, one cannot deduce that the large majority of 36 (90%) of the target group is all English-speaking teachers. Many of these educators may be Afrikaans speaking but presently teaching in English medium schools. It must be noted however that the purposeful intention of this investigation was to reach educators at Secondary Schools who are experiencing stress.

TABLE 4.2.7

Do you have any health problem, which you feel are results of brought about by work as a teacher?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	20	50.0	50.0	50.0
	No	20	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

20 (50%) respondents have said they do have health problem, which they feel are a results of stress brought about by work as an educator. The same number and percentage of educators responded no, they don't have any health problem, which they feel as results of stress brought about by work as an educator.

TABLE 4.2.8

You are often stressed by your teaching responsibilities

		Frequency	Percent	Valid	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	27	67.5	67.5	67.5
	Rarely	4	10.0	10.0	77.5
	Often	3	7.5	7.5	85.0
	Always	6	15.0	15.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Out of 40(100%) respondents who responded to whether they are stressed by their teaching responsibilities, 27 (67.5%) said they are never stressed by their teaching responsibilities, 4 (10%) said they rarely become stressed up and 3 (7.5%) indicated they often become stressed by their job responsibilities while 6 (15%) emphasized they are always stressed up by their job demands.

TABLE 4.2.9

Efforts are made at your school to help the staff cope with  
related problems

		Frequency	Percent	Valid	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	32	80.0	80.0	80.0
	Rarely	7	17.5	17.5	97.5
	Often	1	2.5	2.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Those educators who indicated efforts are never made in their schools to help the staff cope with stress related problems are 32 (80%), efforts are rarely made are 7 (17.5%) and often efforts are made to help educators cope with stress related problems is 1 (2.5%).

TABLE 4.2.10

You join teachers support groups to assist in solving stress-  
problems

		Frequency	Percent	Valid	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	23	57.5	57.5	57.5
	Rarely	4	10.0	10.0	67.5
	Often	6	15.0	15.0	82.5
	Always	7	17.5	17.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

23 (57.5%) responded they never join teacher support groups to assist in solving stress-related problems, while 4 (10%) indicated they rarely join teacher support groups to assist in solving stress-related problems. Those who often join teachers support groups to assist in solving stress-related problems are 6 (15%) and those who always do are 7 (17.5%).

TABLE 4.2.11

Your teacher-training course has helped you to cope with stress

		Frequency	Percent	Valid	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	5	12.5	12.5	12.5
	Rarely	12	30.0	30.0	42.5
	Often	11	27.5	27.5	70.0
	Always	12	30.0	30.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

The respondents who indicated that their teacher-training course has always helped them to cope with stress are 12 (30%), meanwhile 11 (27.5%) said it often helped them to cope with stress, while 12 (30%) said it rarely does and 5 (12.5%) responded it never helped them to cope with stress.

TABLE 4.2.12

You regularly attempted to identify and recognize the source of your stress

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	11	27.5	27.5	27.5
	Rarely	6	15.0	15.0	42.5
	Often	15	37.5	37.5	80.0
	Always	8	20.0	20.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

The educators who regularly attempt to identify and recognize the source of their stress always are 8 (20%), but those who often does that are 15 (37.5%), while 6 (15%) rarely identify and recognize the source of their stress and 11 (27.5%) indicated they never attempted to identify and recognize the source of their stress.

TABLE 4.2.13

You apply stress management techniques

		Frequency	Percent	Valid	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	5	12.5	12.5	12.5
	Rarely	7	17.5	17.5	30.0
	Often	20	50.0	50.0	80.0
	Always	8	20.0	20.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Educators who never apply stress management techniques are 5 (15.5%), those who rarely apply are 7 (17.5%), but those who often apply are 20 (50%) while 8 (20%) always apply stress management techniques.

TABLE 4.2.14

Managing pupils behavior which may be disruptive

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not a source of stress	6	15.0	15.0	15.0
	A minor source of stress	12	30.0	30.0	45.0
	An important source of stress	13	32.5	32.5	77.5
	A very important source of stress	9	22.5	22.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Out of the 40 (100%) respondents those who indicated that managing pupils behavior which may be disruptive is not a source of stress are 6 (15%), but those who said is a minor source of stress are 12 (30%) and 13 (32.5%) thought is an important source of stress while 9 (22.5%) said is a very important source of stress.

TABLE 4.2.15

Having pupils in your class who talk constantly

		Frequency	Percent	Valid	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not a source of stress	4	10.0	10.0	10.0
	A minor source of stress	12	30.0	30.0	40.0
	An important source of stress	14	35.0	35.0	75.0
	A very important source of stress	10	25.0	25.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Having pupils in my class who talk constantly is not a source of stress are 4 (10%), but those who said is a minor source of stress are 12 (30%). Those who indicated is an important source of stress are 14 (35%) while 10 (25%) responded is a very important source of stress.

Having pupils in my class who talk constantly is not a source of stress are 4 (10%), but those who said is a minor source of stress are 12 (30%). Those who indicated is an important source of stress are 14 (35%) while 10 (25%) responded is a very important source of stress.

TABLE 4.2.16

Teaching pupils who are apathetic

	Frequency	Percent	Valid	Cumulative Percent
Valid Not a source of stress	4	10.0	10.0	10.0
A minor source of stress	13	32.5	32.5	42.5
An important source of stress	7	17.5	17.5	60.0
A very important source of stress	16	40.0	40.0	100.0
Total	40	100.0	100.0	

The educators who feel teaching pupils who are apathetic is not a source of stress are 4 (10%) and a minor source of stress are 13(32.5%), while 7 (17.5% indicated is an important source of stress and a very important source of stress are 16 (40%).

TABLE 4.2.17

Planning and organizing learning activities for pupils of varying abilities

	Frequency	Percent	Valid	Cumulative Percent
Valid Not a source of stress	16	40.0	40.0	40.0
A minor source of stress	9	22.5	22.5	62.5
An important source of stress	9	22.5	22.5	85.0
A very important source of stress	6	15.0	15.0	100.0
Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Planning and organizing learning activities for pupils of varying abilities is not a source of stress was indicated by 16 (40%) educators. Those who said is a minor source of stress are 9 (22.5%) and 9 (22.5%) indicated is an important source of stress while 6 (15%) emphasized is a very important source of stress.

TABLE 4.2.18

## Lack of administrative/ clerical support in your school

	Frequency	Percent	Valid	Cumulative Percent
Valid No stress	9	22.5	22.5	22.5
Minor stress	11	27.5	27.5	50.0
Reasonable stress	9	22.5	22.5	72.5
Major stress	11	27.5	27.5	100.0
Total	40	100.0	100.0	

9 (22, 5%) educators said lack of administrative/clerical support in my school is no stress. 11 (27.5%) indicated is a minor stress and 9 (22.5%) said is a reasonable stress while 11(22.5%) responded is a major stress.

TABLE 4.2.19

## The numerous non-teaching administrative duties

	Frequency	Percent	Valid	Cumulative Percent
Valid No stress	14	35.0	35.0	35.0
Minor stress	12	30.0	30.0	65.0
Reasonable stress	7	17.5	17.5	82.5
Major stress	7	17.5	17.5	100.0
Total	40	100.0	100.0	

The numerous non-teaching administrative duties are no stress was indicated by 14 (35%) while 12 (30%) said are a minor stress but 7 (17.5%) responded are a reasonable stress and 7 (17.5%) indicated are a major stress.

TABLE 4.2.20

## Being responsible for collecting money

	Frequency	Percent	Valid	Cumulative Percent
Valid No stress	9	22.5	22.5	22.5
Minor stress	6	15.0	15.0	37.5
Reasonable stress	10	25.0	25.0	62.5
Major stress	15	37.5	37.5	100.0
Total	40	100.0	100.0	

9 (22.5%) educators indicated being responsible for collecting money is no stress. 6 (15%) said is a minor stress and 10 (25%) responded is reasonable stress while 15 (37.5%) said is a major stress.

TABLE 4.2.21

**Having personal responsibility for expensive equipment**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No stress	12	30.0	30.0	30.0
	Minor stress	13	32.5	32.5	62.5
	Reasonable stress	8	20.0	20.0	82.5
	Major stress	7	17.5	17.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

12 (30%) of the respondents indicate that having personal responsibility for expensive equipment is not a source of stress. However, 13 (32.5%) indicated that it is a minor source of stress. 8 (20%) indicated reasonable stress, and 7 (7.5%) responded that it is a major source of stress.

TABLE 4.2.22

**Being subjected to inspections**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No stress	9	22.5	22.5	22.5
	Minor stress	18	45.0	45.0	67.5
	Reasonable stress	7	17.5	17.5	85.0
	Major stress	6	15.0	15.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Being subjected to inspection is not a source of stress to 9 (22.5%) of the respondents. A major percentage, 18 (45%), indicated that being subjected to inspection is a minor source of stress. 7 (17.5%) indicated reasonable stress and 6 (15%) feels it's a major stress.



TABLE 4.2.23

## The responsibility of preparing exam paper

	Frequency	Percent	Valid	Cumulative Percent
Valid No stress	6	15.0	15.0	15.0
Minor stress	6	15.0	15.0	30.0
Reasonable stress	10	25.0	25.0	55.0
Major stress	18	45.0	45.0	100.0
Total	40	100.0	100.0	

6(15%) of the respondents feel that the responsibility of preparing an exam paper is not a source of stress. Another 6(15%) indicated that the responsibility of preparing an exam paper is a major source of stress. 10 (25%) indicated reasonable stress. The remaining 18 (45%) indicated the responsibility of preparing an exam paper is a major source of stress.

TABLE 4.2.24

## My salary is not commensurate with my teaching responsibilities

	Frequency	Percent	Valid	Cumulative Percent
Valid No stress	6	15.0	15.0	15.0
Minor stress	8	20.0	20.0	35.0
Reasonable stress	13	32.5	32.5	67.5
Major stress	13	32.5	32.5	100.0
Total	40	100.0	100.0	

The table above indicates that 6(15%) of the respondents indicated had their salary is not a source of stress. 8(20%) feels that their salaries are a minor source of stress. 13(32.5%) indicated reasonable stress and another 13(32.5%) indicated major stress.

TABLE 4.2.25

My teaching and general attitude are negatively affected by the size of my salary

		Frequency	Percent	Valid	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No stress	5	12.5	12.5	12.5
	Minor stress	10	25.0	25.0	37.5
	Reasonable stress	10	25.0	25.0	62.5
	Major stress	15	37.5	37.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

5 (12.5%) of the respondents indicated that the above variable is not a source of stress. 10(25%) indicated minor stress and reasonable stress respectively. 15(37.5%) indicated a major source of stress.

TABLE 4.2.26

My preparation, teaching and marking loads are very time consuming.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No stress	6	15.0	15.0	15.0
	Minor stress	5	12.5	12.5	27.5
	Reasonable stress	11	27.5	27.5	55.0
	Major stress	18	45.0	45.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Preparation, teaching and marking loads being time consuming is not a source of stress to 6 (15%) of the respondents. 5 (12.5%) indicated minor stress, 11 (27.5%) of respondents feels it is reasonable stress while 18 (45.0%) indicated major stress.

TABLE 4.2.27

I have to do school work at home to keep up with what is expected of me.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No stress	10	25.0	25.0	25.0
	Minor stress	11	27.5	27.5	52.5
	Reasonable stress	9	22.5	22.5	75.0
	Major stress	10	25.0	25.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Having to do school work at to keep up with what is expected is not stress to 10 (25%) of the respondents. Another 11 (27%) indicated minor stress. 9 (22.5%) indicated reasonable stress and the remaining 10 (25%) indicated major stress.

TABLE 4.2.28

I regularly experience role ambiguity (uncertainty about what I should be doing)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid	Cumulative Percent
Valid No stress	9	22.5	22.5	22.5
Minor stress	11	27.5	27.5	50.0
Reasonable stress	10	25.0	25.0	75.0
Major stress	10	25.0	25.0	100.0
Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Role ambiguity is no stress to 9 (22.5%) of the respondents. It is a minor stress to 11 (27.5%). Reasonable stress is 10 (25%) and the last 10 (25%) feel it is a major stress.

TABLE 4.2.29

The demands of school activities put pressure on me

	Frequency	Percent	Valid	Cumulative Percent
Valid No stress	8	20.0	20.0	20.0
Minor stress	10	25.0	25.0	45.0
Reasonable stress	7	17.5	17.5	62.5
Major stress	15	37.5	37.5	100.0
Total	40	100.0	100.0	

8 (20%) of the respondents indicated that the demands of school activities, is no source of stress. 10 (25%) feels the demands of school activities are minor source of stress. 7 (17.5%) indicated reasonable stress and 15 (37.5%) feels they are a major source of stress.

TABLE 4.2.30

I experience increase pressure at the beginning and end of the school

		Frequency	Percent	Valid	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No stress	7	17.5	17.5	17.5
	Minor stress	3	7.5	7.5	25.0
	Reasonable stress	6	15.0	15.0	40.0
	Major stress	24	60.0	60.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

The above table shows that 7 (17.5%) of respondents feel that the pressure at the beginning and end of year is not a source of stress. Only 3 (7.5%) feels it is a minor source of stress. 6 (15%) indicated reasonable stress. The largest percentage, 24 (60%), indicated it is a major source of stress.

TABLE 4.2.31

Teaching offers limited promotion opportunities

		Frequency	Percent	Valid	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No stress	8	20.0	20.0	20.0
	Minor stress	12	30.0	30.0	50.0
	Reasonable stress	1	2.5	2.5	52.5
	Major stress	19	47.5	47.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Limited promotion opportunities offered by teaching, is not a source of stress to 8 (20%) of the respondents. 12 (30%) indicated that it is a minor source of stress. 1 (2.5%) feels it is a reasonable source while 19 (47.5%) indicated that it is a major source of stress.

TABLE 4.2.32

I experience low status in the community as a result of being a teacher

		Frequency	Percent	Valid	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No stress	10	25.0	25.0	25.0
	Minor stress	10	25.0	25.0	50.0
	Reasonable stress	10	25.0	25.0	75.0
	Major stress	10	25.0	25.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Low status in the community as a result of being a teacher is no stress to 10 (25%) of the respondent, minor source to another 10 (25%), reasonable and major source of stress is indicated by 10(25%).

TABLE 4.2.33

Teacher/ principal communication in my school is unsatisfactory

		Frequency	Percent	Valid	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No stress	12	30.0	30.0	30.0
	Minor stress	11	27.5	27.5	57.5
	Reasonable stress	7	17.5	17.5	75.0
	Major stress	10	25.0	25.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

From the table above, 12 (30%) of the respondents indicated that unsatisfactory teacher/principle communication in their schools is no source of stress. 11(27.5%) indicated minor stress, 7 (17.5%) reasonable stress and the remaining 10 (25%), major stress.

TABLE 4.2.34

Teacher/ teacher communication in my school in unsatisfactory

		Frequency	Percent	Valid	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No stress	12	30.0	30.0	30.0
	Minor stress	13	32.5	32.5	62.5
	Reasonable stress	8	20.0	20.0	82.5
	Major stress	7	17.5	17.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

12 (30%) of the respondents indicated that teacher/teachers communication in their schools is no source of stress. 13 (32.5%) indicated minor stress. 8 (20%) feels it is reasonable stress and 7 (17.5%) indicated major stress.

TABLE 4.2.35

Teacher/ parent communication in my school in unsatisfactory

	Frequency	Percent	Valid	Cumulative Percent
Valid No stress	12	30.0	30.0	30.0
Minor stress	13	32.5	32.5	62.5
Reasonable stress	8	20.0	20.0	82.5
Major stress	7	17.5	17.5	100.0
Total	40	100.0	100.0	

12 (30,0%) of respondents feel that unsatisfactory teacher/parent communication is not a source of stress. 13 (32,5%) indicated minor stress and 8 (20%) indicated reasonable stress. 7 (17,5%) indicated major stress.

TABLE 4.2.36

I am not able implement meaningful policy matters.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid No stress	6	15.0	15.0	5.0
Minor stress	11	27.5	27.5	42.5
Reasonable stress	12	30.0	30.0	72.5
Major stress	11	27.5	27.5	100.0
Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Inability to implement meaningful policy matters is no source of stress to 6 (15%) of respondents minor stress 11 (27,5%) indicated a minor source, 12 (30.0%) feel it is a reasonable source of stress and 11 (27,5%) indicated a major source of stress.

TABLE 4.2.37

I am not encouraged to participate in decision concerning the running of my school

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No stress	10	25.0	25.0	25.0
	Minor stress	13	32.5	32.5	57.5
	Reasonable stress	8	20.0	20.0	77.5
	Major stress	9	22.5	22.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

10 (25%) of respondents feel that not being to participate in decisions concerning the running of the schools is no source of stress. 13 (32,5%) indicated minor stress. 8 (20,0%) feel it is reasonable stress and 9 (22.5%) say it is major stress.

TABLE 4.2.38

The school principal and educational authorities are not aware of my stress

		Frequency	Percent	Valid	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No stress	8	20.0	20.0	20.0
	Minor stress	8	20.0	20.0	40.0
	Reasonable stress	15	37.5	37.5	77.5
	Major stress	9	22.5	22.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

8 (20,0%) of the respondents feel that not being encouraged to be creative and innovative in teaching is no source of stress. 8 (20,0%) indicated a minor source of stress, 15(37,5%) indicated reasonable stress and 9 (22,5%) indicate a major source of stress.

TABLE 4.2.39

My communication with head office authorities is not satisfactory

		Frequency	Percent	Valid	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No stress	17	42.5	42.5	42.5
	Minor stress	5	12.5	12.5	55.0
	Reasonable stress	13	32.5	32.5	87.5
	Major stress	5	12.5	12.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

17 (42,5%) of respondents feel that not being encouraged to participate in decisions concerning the running of the schools is no source of stress. 5 (12,5%) indicated minor stress, 13 (32,5%) % feel it is a reasonable source of stress and 5 (12,5%) a major source of stress.

TABLE 4.2.40

I am not encouraged to be creative and innovative in my teaching

		Frequency	Percent	Valid	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No stress	13	32.5	32.5	32.5
	Minor stress	11	27.5	27.5	60.0
	Reasonable stress	6	15.0	15.0	75.0
	Major stress	10	25.0	25.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

13 (32,5%) of the respondents feel that not being encouraged to be creative and innovative in teaching is no source of stress. 11 (27,5%) indicated a minor source of stress. 6 (15%) reasonable stress as 10 (25%) indicated a major source of stress.



## CHAPTER 5

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1. INTRODUCTION

Meeting the daily learning and behavioral needs of students makes teaching a stressful job. Although not all stress associated with teaching is negative, stress that reduces a teacher's motivation can have deleterious effects such as alienation from the workplace, absenteeism, and attrition. In fact, when teachers are highly stressed by the unmanageability of their workload, they are more likely to leave the classroom (Miller, Brownell, & Smith, 1995). The ability to successfully manage stresses related to teaching is critical if teachers are to survive and thrive in the classroom.

#### 5.2. COPING IN BUREAUCRACHES

Despite the current trend toward school-based decision-making, many schools remain bureaucratic organizations where teachers have little control over major decisions in their environments and frequently work in isolation (Skrtic, 1991). Further, with increasing demands to be accountable, teacher's work is becoming more intense, leaving many teachers feeling emotionally exhausted (Hargreaves, 1994). Thus, in school bureaucracies, teachers may become stressed by role overload and lack of autonomy.

Additionally, since the focus of teacher's efforts is to help students, many teachers enter education because of their desire to help children and youth. While the desire to help others can lead to strong student-teacher relationships and can provide teachers with commitment to education, this same desire can also make it difficult for teachers to leave their work at the schoolhouse door. In fact, professional those are empathic, sympathetic, dedicated, idealistic, and people-oriented are vulnerable to experiencing excessive stress, particularly when they face the multitude of problems that students present. Although teachers have many reasons to feel stressed, they can more effectively deal with stress by using specific strategies. As such, the following suggestions are provided to help teachers manage stress levels. (Hargreaves, 1994)

### 5.3. SET REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

As a teacher, you can alleviate some of the stress caused by the role overload by setting realistic expectations for yourself (Greer & Greer, 1992). As part of their pre-service education, teachers are taught to identify the individual needs of students and develop individualized programs for these students. Thus teachers may develop the expectation that being a successful teacher translates into the ability to solve all students' problems (Guskey, 1996). Although this expectation is commendable, it is not always possible particularly for beginning teachers. To competently manage the challenging, diverse needs of students with disabilities, professionals need to perform at a high level in areas of curriculum, behavior management, instructional management, collaboration, and paperwork completion. Attempting perfection in each of these areas, especially early in your career, may be unrealistic. Instead, consider targeting one area for improvement over the course of the year and learn as much you can through reading, either completing course work, or sharing with colleagues. You can also develop more realistic expectations of what you can accomplish. It is impossible to complete all aspects of an overwhelming job with perfection, so setting priorities is a must. List the jobs you must accomplish on a daily basis and determine those that are a priority to you personally and to your administration, and deal with those jobs in order of importance. (Guskey, 1996)

Develop more realistic expectations about what you can accomplish with student. Reduce the scope and intensity of the emotional relationship you have with students by learning to see them in more objective light. When working with students, teachers can find themselves frustrated by the slow progress students make in learning and in managing their own behavior. In this case, teachers need to remind themselves of the severity of their students' challenges and realize that lack of student progress does not necessarily indicate shortcomings on the teacher's part. Also, realize that although you care for your students, you can only accomplish so much in a school day. If you are working hard each day for your students, pat yourself on the back and recognize that you cannot do it all (Greer & Greer, 1992)

#### **5.4. MAKE DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN YOUR JOB AND YOUR PERSONAL LIFE**

Today, a host of sociological factors, such as poverty, child abuse, and single parent families, affect many school-age children. Consequently, teachers are faced with educating students who present a complex array of problems. Being able to show empathy for students and their problems without allowing those problems to consume you is critical. "Teachers who become closely involved and preoccupied with the personal and family problems of their students may increase their vulnerability to stress" (Greer & Greer, 1992, p. 170). When you leave the classroom, do the mental work necessary to leave thoughts of your students in the work environment. If you need to share feelings or vent frustrations, set aside a time once or twice a week to discuss them with another educator, friend, or significant other. When you discuss frustrations, try to find solutions to the stressful situation. Repeated discussion about your frustrations without any solution only heightens them.

#### **5.5. EXERCISE PROFESSIONAL DISCRETION AND INCREASE YOUR AUTONOMY**

In bureaucracies, authority is "commonly expressed in rules, job descriptions, and work schedules" (Pines & Aronson, 2000, p. 109). Often the environment seems inflexible at first glance, but in reality, the rules are frequently general and open to interpretation. Thus, evaluate each aspect of your job and determine changes to improve your environment that you can reasonably make. Focus your energy on those changes, and leave behind changes that are not within your control. Focusing on "the possible" increases your sense of power and control.

#### **5.6. DON'T EXPECT PRAISE FROM THE BOSS**

Relying on the principal or department of education official to provide recognition for your hard work is most likely unrealistic. Look for alternative sources of reinforcement, such as students, colleagues, friends, or parents. Also, increase the probability of obtaining reinforcement by informing supervisors and parents of your successes. For example, keep records of student progress that you can share with others.

## **5.7. INCREASE YOUR EFFICACY**

Educators who have a heightened sense of efficacy, that is, confidence in their ability to teach and manage students, may be less vulnerable to stress because they perceive themselves as having the tools to do their jobs (Bandura, 1993). By keeping records of student progress, you can receive direct feedback on your efforts. Being able to observe student progress is essential, as it is likely to increase your sense of efficacy (Guskey, 1996) and thus reduce the stress you experience. Additionally, implementing best practices in your classroom can increase your sense of efficacy. When you implement best practices and see the resulting student progress, your sense of efficacy typically increases (Englert & Tarrant, 1995).

## **5.8. DEVELOP PERSONAL COPING STRATEGIES**

Educators would be well advised to develop strategies to cope with stress in their teaching positions and personal lives. Researches on stress suggest that people have two basic approaches to coping with stress: active and inactive coping strategies. People who use active coping strategies are attempting to change the source of stress themselves. In contrast, persons who use inactive coping strategies avoid or deny the source of stress. Active coping strategies are considerably more effective in managing stress.

### **Direct active strategies**

When teachers use direct active coping strategies, they directly intervene with the source of the stress in a way that minimizes the stressful situation. (Pines and Aronson, 1999) have identified three direct active strategies that employees can use to more effectively manage stress.

First, you change the source of stress. You can reduce by changing the nature of the stressful situation. For instance, if you perceive that general education teachers in your building are not supportive of your efforts to include students, you may be able to work with your principal and a general education teacher who is an ally to provide staff development sessions focusing on effective instruction or behavior management for students. These staff development sessions could be conducted at faculty meeting or during teacher workdays. By selecting adaptations that are concrete and easy to implement, providing opportunities for ongoing dialogue about the implementation, and supporting teachers in their efforts to learn selected

techniques, you can begin to change the practices of your colleagues can see change in students, they should be more confident in their ability to teach students (Guskey, 1996).

Second, you can confront the source of your stress. You can directly deal with stress by discussing problems you are having with a colleague or student. For instance, you may find that you are encountering difficulties working with your paraprofessional that there appear to be some notable tensions when you work together. By airing these difficulties, you may be able to resolve your problems.

Third, you can adopt a positive attitude. When you focus on the positive aspects of your work situation, you can change how you perceive stress and cope with stressful events more affectively (Pines & Aronson, 1999). Try keeping a cheerful, upbeat attitude and remind yourself continually about the aspects of your job that you enjoy. Also, focus on giving others in your environment positive outlook, others may seek your company, and in turn, you might receive the recognition and support you need.

#### **Indirect active strategies**

When teachers use indirect active coping strategies, they attempt to reduce their stress by releasing it or engaging in activities known to reduce stress. They do not, however, attempt to change the source of the stress. The following are a list of indirect active strategies that have been cited in the literature as effective (Greer & Greer, 1992;).

First, you can talk about the source of your stress. As mentioned earlier, seeking the support of others to discuss your stress may be helpful. Talking stressful situations over with a trusted colleague or friend may help you to resolve problems you are encountering. Often, people find that after discussing issues that are disturbing them they are less stressed, particularly when they can generate solutions for the stressful situation. Carefully select the person with whom you want to share your troubles. A person who can keep confidences and help you see the situation more objectively is often the best source of support. (Pine & Aronson, 1998)

Second, you can change the way you perceive the source of your stress. When people change the way they view the stress, they are taking steps towards reducing their stress. As mentioned earlier, developing more realistic expectations about your students goes a long way towards relieving guilt, worry, and

subsequent stress. Also, examine the personality and strengths other professionals in your environment. Determine what you can realistically expect from these professionals will assist you in identifying those persons from whom you can solicit support.

Third, you can get involved in other activities that take your mind off school issues. Finding hobbies, exercising, and seeking social outlets outside of school will help you mentally distance yourself from work. Exercising is documented to be particularly effectively in reducing stress (Long, 1988) and the physical symptoms associated with stress. Also, having time for yourself, whether you are exercising or engaging in another enjoyable activity, is paramount to gathering your thoughts and rejuvenating yourself. Finally, you can change your diet to reduce stress. Certain foods, such as coffee, chocolate, and soft drinks, are loaded with caffeine, a stimulant known to increase anxiety. If you are experiencing extreme stress, try cutting caffeine products of your diet. In addition, teachers' diets often overemphasize refined carbohydrates and fatty foods with an inadequate emphasis on fiber (Bradfield & Fones, 1994). Decreasing your fat, sugar, and caffeine intake while increasing your intake of fruits and vegetables may help better physical and mentally.

Researchers have established that effective coping strategies reduce workplace related stress. District and school administrators, however, are ultimately responsible for reducing stress in the school environment (see Aronson & Pines, 1998). Expecting teachers to better manage their stress in an unsupportive environment where clear role expectations do not exist is an unproductive approach to resolving teacher stress problems efforts to create more productive, caring, clearly defined work situation and improve teacher's skills are the best prevention against teacher stress.

## **Organizational Strategies**

While it is easy to give staff tips about how to handle stress, it is the organization's responsibility and in everyone's best interest for the institution to do everything it can to establish conditions that minimize stress.

There is little mystery about what organizations should do.

With specific respects to schools, Corcoran, Walker, and White (1998) synthesized the following from the research literature. Good working conditions at a school include:

- Strong, supportive principal leadership
- Good physical working conditions
- High levels of staff collegiality
- High level of teacher influence on school decisions
- High levels to teacher control over curriculum and instruction (Corcoran, R, Walker, L.J. & White, J.L. (1998))
- Overhaul your job. Make a list of routine or tedious tasks you do as part of your job and come up with creative ways to tackle them. Even tasks that seem fun-resistant can become satisfying if you give free reign to your imagination.
- Try new instructional strategies. Rather than relying on safe and predictable methods you've always used, try something different. If you've tired of writing student evaluation, consider switching to portfolio assessment. (To navigate through these new waters, you may find it rewarding to team up with a colleague and share the experience.)
- Challenge yourself to keep learning. Even if you're a veteran, there's always more to learn about, and seek out professional development opportunities. Take a class, attend a conference, or organize a workshop.
- Collaborate with colleagues. If you resent or disregard suggestions from colleagues on how to enhance you teaching, you may be cutting yourself off from a valuable idea-sharing and support network. The more isolated you are, the greater the risk that you'll become unsure about what you're doing, suspicious of your coworkers, or short on new ideas. Colleagues can provide helpful feedback and reassurance.



- Try changing grade levels. If you've been teaching grade ten for a while, why not consider trying your hand at grade 11 or 12 kindergarten? Sometimes teaching an older or younger group of students will better fit your training, skills, and interests.
- Give yourself permission to be less than perfect. Too many teachers believe that none of their successes counts if they have one failure. Accept that teaching is difficult and challenging. Pain and failure will always be part of the profession, just as joy and success will be. Keep in mind that you can only thrive if you give yourself room to make mistakes and learn from them.
- In addition, if you overdo, overachieve, or push yourself or your students too hard, your self-imposed pressures and demands will only stunt your growth because you'll push yourself to exhaustion.
- Try not to wrap up your identity with your job. Remember that you are not just a teacher-you are a person who has chosen to be in the teaching profession. Cultivate outside interests and hobbies.
- Realize that you can help students but you can't save them from society's ills. As difficult as it may be to accept, you can't solve all of your student's problems---you can't keep them from feeling the pain of divorce, economic hardship, and so on. Teachers can, and should, give students room to feel, think, and bear consequences, but they can't rescue students or fight their battle for them.
- Learn to care for yourself. As caretaker professionals, teachers often over care for others and under care for themselves. Nurturing your students is important, but you must first nurture yourself. Self-preservation is an essential, healthy habit, so pay more attention to your own needs and well-being. Conserve and replenish your emotional and physiological resources----they're limited!
- Practice techniques for stress reduction. If you're feeling the strains of teaching, practice strategies for relieving tension. Remember to carve out time to relax, pursue your hobbies, and



- Spend time with family and friends. If you feel like you can't cope, consider seeing a trained counselor.
- Examine other areas of education as natural extensions of teaching. Perhaps taking more college courses would enable you to become a reading specialist, school psychologist, diagnostician, staff development trainer, consultant, guidance counselor or other staff support person. Teaching experience is often the best avenue to these specialties.
- Think through your career goals. Is teaching still right for you? Most teachers can probably think of a colleague who should have changed careers a long time ago. Don't wait until you're completely disenchanted to assess where you are going and whether it's time for a change in professions. (Lombardi, 1990)

### ***Supporting Professionals-at-Risk: Evaluating Interventions to Reduce Stress and Improve Retention of Educators***

Two interventions were designed to equip participants with specific problem solving and coping strategies for dealing more effectively with the stressors they encounter on the job. The interventions targeted self-prevention skill for educators – those skills and strategies most likely to help and individual remain relatively “sane”, even in relatively “insane” places. On first glance, one might construe our approach to be a quick fix, because its duration was only 10 weeks at 2 hr/week. Moreover, naturally, given the complexity and scope of the systemic issues that contribute to teacher's stress and attrition, a 10-week program might seem inadequate. Nevertheless, even as more large-scale organizational or political interventions are developed and implemented toward redress of the larger problems, we believe it would be worth while to assist practicing professional in managing the immediate situations before them – that is, to do the best they can with what they've got. Specifically, the program consisted of two interventions.

#### **Intervention 1: Stress Management**

As mentioned, many of the stressful aspects of the teaching profession are either inherent to the situation or difficult to change. Moreover, stressful working conditions can itself exacerbate difficulties because of its accompanying negative, self-defeating coping behaviors.

Coping takes many forms. Approaches to handling stress may be either direct (e.g., changing the source of stress) or indirect (e.g., changing the way one thinks or physically responds to the stress to reduce its impacts). In addition, coping strategies may be active (e.g., taking some action to change oneself or the situation) or inactive (e.g., avoiding or denying the source of stress). In general, active strategies are more effective than inactive ones, while both direct and indirect strategies can be constructive (Pines and Aronson, 1988).

The program consisted of five weekly 2-hr workshops that were informal and supportive, and that followed a format of interactive presentation, small/large-group discussion, applications during sessions, and practice between sessions. The contact for these sessions targeted three types of coping skills.

### **Intervention 2: The Peer Collaboration Program**

Because of the apparent value of collegial support in preventing or alleviating job stress, researchers have advocated creating more regular opportunities for peer support for teachers in stressful job roles.

Due to its emphasis on supportive, constructive dialogue between professional peers, this intervention seems to have potential for addressing issues of collegial isolation and lack of administration support among educators.

The Peer Collaboration Program, as originally developed, consisted of training pairs of teachers to use a four-step collegial dialogue to assist each other in identifying and solving student related problems. For this study, it was modified to apply other work-related problems as well. Via this process, each member of the pair takes a turn as – “initiator” (the one presenting a problem) and a “facilitator” (the one providing assistance in problem-solving). The four steps were as follows:

**1. Clarifying.** The initiating teacher brings a brief, written description of the problem and responds to clarifying questions asked by the facilitator. This step is the longest of the four designed to assist the initiating teacher to think of the problem in different or expected ways. This step continues until the initiating teacher feels that all of the relevant issues have been covered and is ready to move on to summarizing.

1. **Summarizing.** The initiating teacher brings a brief, written description of the problem and responds to clarifying questions asked by the facilitator. This step is the longest of the four designed to assist the initiating teacher to think of the problem in different or expected ways. This step continues until the initiating teacher feels that all of the relevant issues have been covered and is ready to move on to summarizing.

**3. Interventions and Prediction.** The educators together generate three possible action plans, and the initiator predicts possible positive and negative outcomes for each one. The initiator then chooses one of the solutions for implementation.

**4. Evaluation.** The initiator develops a two-part plan to evaluate the solution's effectiveness. The first consists of a plan to answer the question "Did I do it?" (i.e., implementation of the solution), and the second part consists of ways to answer the question "Did it work?" (i.e. impact on targeted outcomes).

Participants attended one 3-hr training sessions in which the process was described, modeled, and practices with feedback from other participants and from the instructors (E. Cooley & P. Yovanoff, 1996).

## SCHOOL-BASED MUTUAL SUPPORT GROUPS: AN OVERVIEW

One the experience of being in a mutual group:

There is the exhilarating feeling that one is no longer alone that are in the same boat, whether they can row it or not.

### Mutual Support Groups

Essentially, mutual support groups are "composed of members who share a common condition, situation, heritage, symptom, or experience. They are largely self-governing and self-regulating. They emphasize self-reliance and generally offer a face-to-face or phone fellowship network, available and accessible without charge. They tend to be self-supporting rather dependent on external funding" (Lieberman)

Mutual support groups assume various forms, from the highly structured daily meeting format of the 12-Step programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous to the more informal gatherings of friends and co-workers. Among other variable, mutual support groups differ according to size, longevity, structure, technology, level of development, purported goals, public image, and relationships with other mutual support groups and community service systems (Borkman, 1990). The form of mutual support groups is limited only by the needs and ingenuity of their members.

#### 1. Skills for changing the situation itself: Situational coping skills.

Drawing on management and problem-solving literature, these sessions offered tow framework for looking at and changing stressful situations by first identifying the changeable aspects and then using a problem-solving approach to develop and carry out an action plan for creating solutions. Participants were also provided specific assertive communication tools for enlisting the cooperation of others in seeking and implementing positive change, and for setting and keeping appropriate limits.

## **2. Skills for changing one's physical response to the situation:**

### **Physiological coping skills.**

Stress is fundamentally a form of wear and tear on the body. Thus, we drew on a variety of literature on physiological stress-coping strategies for these sessions. Participants learned both long (30-min) and very short (30-s) forms of muscle relaxation that can be used for self-renewal in everyday work situations (Woolfolk & Lehrer, 1994). As well, we touched on other physiological approaches for coping with stress (e.g., nutrition and stretching).

## **3. Skills for changing how one thinks about the situation: Cognitive coping skills.**

Simply put, much stress happens "between the ears" as a result of our thoughts and beliefs, or cognitions. These sessions drew on cognitive therapy literature and targeted ways to replace self-defeating, self-defeating, self-limiting beliefs with beliefs that are more constructive, realistic, and empowering. Participants learned first to recognize distorted or self-defeating beliefs and then to coach themselves and one another to think differently about themselves or about the situation. Specifically, they coached one another in ways to let go of unrealistic, even tyrannical expectations they held of themselves given the limitations and realities of the situations they faced and to give themselves permission to view their best efforts as good enough.

All sessions followed a format of interactive lecture, small-group discussions, and role-plays, with homework assignments that provide participants the opportunity to try out the skills and new behaviors in their work environments. Each session began with small-and large-group discussion of the experiences gained via the homework assignments, and assignments were turned in for the instructors' review and feedback.

## **Benefits of Mutual Support.**

Summarizing the benefits of mutual support, authors of the training manual for group starters produced by the California Self-Help Center (CS-HC) state that "group of people with common concerns start with a potential for mutual understanding and empathy which helps build trust, openness and a feeling of belonging, which in turn, enhances coping, problem solving and self-empowerment."

For the socially isolated, mutual support, groups reduce the sense of aloneness, offering a new community of peers that can be supportive both during and between group meetings. In addition to receiving emotional members, acquire practical advice and information from individuals in similar predicaments or life circumstances. Mutual support groups also provide the opportunity for optimistic peer comparisons, as problems are working toward their resolution. Finally, members of mutual support groups benefit from what Reissman (1995) has called the helper-therapy principle. According to Reissman, helpers often benefit more than the helped. Helping others purportedly (a) increases feelings of independence, social usefulness, interpersonal competence, and equality with others, (b) begets social approval, and (c) results in personalized learning and self-reinforcement (Gartner & Reissman, 1997).

Given all this, it is not surprising how many staff find themselves in situations where they chronically feel over-controlled and less than competent. They also come to believe they have little control over long-range outcomes, and this affects their hopes for the future. And, all too common is a sense of alienation from other staff, students, families, and the surrounding neighborhood. Thus, not only don't they experience feelings of competence, self-determination, and positive connection with others, such feelings tend to be undermined.

### **What Needs to Change**

As with so many problems, it is easiest to view stress as a personal condition. And, as in many other instances, this would be the least effective way to understand what must be done over the long run to address the matter. The problem is multifaceted and complex. While stress-reduction activities often are prescribed, they are unlikely to be a sufficient remedy for the widespread draining of motivation. Reducing environmental stressors and enhancing job supports are more to the point, but again, alone these are insufficient strategies. The solution requires re-culturing schools in ways that minimize the undermining and maximize the enhancement of intrinsic motivation. This involves policies and practices that ensure a daily focus on (1) promoting staff and student well being and (2) addressing barriers to teaching and learning. (Kashami, 1999).

## Promoting Well-Being

From an intrinsic motivational perspective, a school that wants to prevent stress needs to be experienced by staff and students as a caring, learning environment in which there is a strong collegial and social support structure and meaningful ways to participate in decision making. Two key elements here are well-designed and implemented programs for:

- Transforming in-serving training into personalized staff development and support from first inducing into a school through ongoing capacity building
- Restructuring school governance to enable shared decision-making.

*Welcoming and social support.* From a psychological perspective, learning and teaching at school are experienced most positively when the learner wants to learn and the teacher enjoys facilitating student learning. Each day goes best when all participants care about each other. To these ends, staff must establish a school-wide and classroom atmosphere that is welcoming, encourages mutual support and caring, and contributes to a sense of community. A caring school develops and institutionalizes welcoming and ongoing social support programs for new staff, students, and families. Such efforts can play a key role in reducing staff stress and can benefit students in significant ways. (Meyers, 1993)

*Opening the classroom door.* New staffs need a considerable amount of support and on-the job training. All staff needs to learn more about mobilizing and enabling learning in the classroom. Opening the classroom door is essential for enhancing the learning of teachers, other staff, and students.

The crux of the matter is to ensure that effective mentoring, support, teaming, and other collegial approaches are used. This includes having specialist personnel (e.g. school psychologists, counselors, special education resource teachers) mentor and demonstrate rather than play traditional consultant roles. Instead of telling educators how to address, student learning, behavior, and emotional problems, specialists need to be trained to go into classrooms to model and guide educators in the use of practices for engaging and re-engaging students in learning.

In addition, teachers can do their jobs better when they integrate community resources. Anyone in the community who wants to help might take a contribution. In general, the array of people who can end the isolation of teachers in classrooms includes: (a) aides and volunteers, (b) other regular/specialists teachers, (c) family members, (d) students, (e) student support staff, (f) school administrators, (g) classified staff, (h) teachers- and other professionals-in-training, (i) school and community librarians, and more. (Sarantakos, 1998)

*Personalized staff development and support.* As with any learner, staff need instruction and support that is a good match for both their motivation and capabilities. This includes:

- In-service programs that account for interests, strengths, weaknesses, and limitations
- Approaches that overcome avoidance motivation
- Structure designed to enhance and expand intrinsic motivation for learning and problem solving.

Some staff also requires additional, specialized support, guidance, and accommodations.

Personalizes staff development and support may encompass programs for cooperative learning, mentoring, advocacy, counseling and mediation, human relations, and conflict resolution. Regular mentoring is essential. However, learning from colleagues is not just a talking game. It involves mentors in modeling and guiding change (e.g., demonstrating and discussing new approaches; guiding initial practice and implementation; and following-up to improve and refine). Depending on practicalities, such modeling could take place in a teacher's own classrooms. Some of it may take the form of team teaching. Personalized contacts increase opportunities for providing support and guidance, enhancing competence, ensuring involvement in meaningful decision-making and attaining positive social status. All of this can productively counter alienation and stress.

*Shared governance.* In any organization, who is empowered to make decisions can be a contentious issue. Putting aside the politics of this for the moment, we stress the motivational impact of not feeling empowered. There is a potent and negative impact on motivation when staffs (and students and all other



stakeholders) are not involved in making major decisions that affect the quality of their lives. This argues for ensuring that staffs are provided with a variety of meaningful opportunities to shape such decisions. Participants on planning committees and teams that end up having little or no impact can contribute to stress. Alternatively, feeling of self-determination that help counter stress are more likely when governance structures share power across stakeholders and make room for their representatives around the decision-making table. (Peiffer, 1997)

### **Addressing Barriers to Teaching and Learning**

At some time or another, most students bring problems with them to school that affect their learning and perhaps interface with the teacher's efforts to teach. In some geographic areas, many youngsters bring a wide range of problems stemming from restricted opportunities associated with poverty and low income, difficult and diverse family circumstances, high rates of mobility, lack of English language skills, violent neighborhoods, problems related to substance abuse, inadequate health care, and lack of enrichment opportunities. Teachers must learn many ways to enable the learning of such students. Schools must develop school-wide approaches that enable teacher effectiveness.

Too many teachers know too little about how best to support and guide students who manifest commonplace behavioral, learning, and emotional problems. In saying this, we are not teacher bashing. We have the highest respect and empathy for anyone who pursues the call to work with young people. The problem is that teachers and student support staff are not being taught the fundamentals of how to help those youngsters who do not come to school each day motivationally ready and able to learn. Undoubtedly, this contributes in major ways to stress.

*High stake expectations, low-powered staff development.* In taking with prevailing demands for higher standards and achievement test scores, the focus of school reform and pre-service teacher training is mainly on curriculum content and instruction. Analyses indicate that implicit in most instructional reforms is a presumption that students are motivationally ready and able to absorb the lesson being taught. Recognition that the teacher must deal with some misbehavior and learning problems generally is treated as a separate matter calling for classroom management and some extra instruction. (Burns, 1997)

## **STRESS BUSTERS**

### ***Thoughts to Reduce Your Work Stress!***

Stress and worry on the job can be harmful! They cause physical and emotional problems that may damage both your health and your performance. Furthermore, stress grows! Excessive worry is a major element in the vicious cycle of tension: the physical sensations of stress-tense muscles, headaches, insomnia and so forth-lead to catastrophic stress-building thoughts, which in turn aggravate unpleasant physical feelings, and so on up the tension cycle. Soon, just the thought of preparing an assignment or meeting a deadline triggers all the symptoms of stress, along with an overwhelming wish to avoid tasks.

But you can learn to avoid your "stress-building" thoughts and replace them with alternative "stress-busting" thoughts!

When you are under stress, what messages are you sending yourself? Are they alarming or reassuring? You can decrease your stress by learning to talk to yourself in a reassuring way. This is what "stress-busting" is about---getting your thoughts back on a reassuring track.

Stress-busting thoughts come from what we call the "Rational You." The Rational Youth thinks its way through life's events, evaluating the degree of safety versus danger involved. What happens to the Rational You in a stressful situation? It gets pushed aside by stress building thoughts that disrupt concentration and productivity at work.

Become aware of how stress-building beliefs affect your behavior. Replace them with more realistic and less stressful thoughts. (Rooth, 1995)

### **Helpful Techniques**

Keep a record of stressful situations and rate the actual level of stress from (most relaxed) to 10 (most stressed). Start to monitor your stress on the "Practice Journal" worksheet before, during and after stressful events or situations. As you begin to observe your levels of stress, you will notice that these

levels are not constant. You will find that stress levels increase when you are concentrating on your most alarming thoughts and bodily reactions, but stress levels fall when your attention turns away from these areas. This will show you that one way to reduce the level of stress in your life is to actively turn away from negative "stress building" thoughts and to concentrate on positive stress busting of thinking.

Combating negative thoughts and replacing them with positive ones takes practice, but the results are worth it. Review the facts. What is your evidence? Is there another way to view the situation? If not, what is the worst thing that could happen? You may have been concentrating on the worst possible, but by no means the most likely, outcome.

## **Stress Builders and Stress Busters**

Stress Builder: "I'll never get this project in on time."

Stress Buster: "If I stay focused and take it one step at a time, I'll make steady progress."

Stress Builder: "My supervisor didn't say good morning. He's probably displeased with

My work, and I'll get a bad evaluation."

Stress Buster: "I'm jumping to conclusions. My supervisor may have been in a bad mood.

So far all my evaluations have been positive, so unless I get some negative

Feedback, I'll assume my supervisor is pleased with my work."

Stress Builder: "I can't get my mistake on page 53 out of my mind. The paper is ruined.

I have disappointed everyone.

Stress Buster: "No one is perfect. I did my best. I'm overreacting to one mistake when the

Overall report is fine."

Add stress Busters to your work life. Your ability to handle difficult challenges in the workplace will improve and the benefits will transfer over into other areas of your life as well. -Shirley Babior, LCSW, and Carol Goldman, LICSW. (Portions of this article are taken from Babior & Goldman, 1996). *Overcoming Panic, Anxiety, and Phobias*. Whole Person Press.)

## Person Coping Techniques

A variety of psychological techniques has been advocated for helping individuals cope with stress. The limitations of such a person-coping model should be evident from any comprehensive discussion of the causes of stress. At the same time, every mental health professional will want to have some familiarity with specific coping techniques. The following list is from a chapter by John McManus entitled "Understanding and Managing Stress" Crisis Intervention from the book *Strategies for School-Based Helpers* (1986).

- **Assertiveness** – becoming aware of personal needs, desires, feelings and rights and expressing them interpersonally in a considerable caring manner
- **Attention Training** – learning to focus better on performing a stressful task by using verbal reminders and reinforcements
- **Behavior Modification** – altering behavior through a variety of overt techniques, including behavioral assessment, positive reinforcement, shaping, extinction, and punishment
- **Behavior Rehearsal** – practicing a stressful behavior many times before carrying it out in a real life situation.
- **Cognitive Awareness (Life Style Assessment)** – increasing self awareness of personal stress by cognitively looking at all dimensions of one's life, then altering aspects of the environment and habitual behaviors which create stress
- **Cognitive Restructuring** – learning to recognize faulty, irrational, and self-defeating thinking patterns and self statements and replacing them with rational thoughts, self statements, statements and behaviors (employed in rational emotive therapy approach)
- **Conflict Resolution** – reducing interpersonal stress in conflict situations through communication and problem-solving skills.

- **Coping Reappraisal** – cognitively assessing potential coping responses and resources other than those currently being employed ineffectively
- **Coping Skills Training** – learning to manage stress from a comprehensive perspective, emphasizing the relationship among cognitions, physiological responses and behaviors and developing coping strategies in each area
- **Covert Modeling** – imagining other persons and yourself successfully overcoming obstacles in performing desired behaviors and practicing those behaviors in the mind
- **Covert Reinforcement** – pairing desired behaviors with positive reinforcement in the imagination in order to reduce associated stress
- **Performance Feedback** – receiving evaluative feedback from others regarding performance in stressful situations
- **Problem Solving** – action systematically rather than impulsively to solve personal problems through a logical reasoning, step-by-step process
- **Re-labeling (Reframing)** – verbally calling a problem something other than a problem, such as challenge, opportunity for personal growth, amusing episode, etc.
- **Role Reversal** – acting in the role of another person involved in a stressful situation. Observing, how a model plays your role
- **Selective Ignoring (Selective Awareness)** – ignoring the bad parts of a stressful situation and focusing instead on the positive aspects

- **Self Controlled Relation (Cue Controlled Relaxation)** – learning to increase conscious awareness of the stressor's on one's life and having them serve as cues for immediate coping responses and cognitions
- **Self Talk** – changing negative perceptions of the self through repetitive positive self statements
- **Surrender** – acknowledging to the self that some stressful situations are aided beyond personal control and accepting them as they are
- **Systematic Desensitization** – reducing anxiety associated with stressful situations through imagination and body relaxation
- **Think Aloud** – using verbal mediation skills to reduce stress in problem-solving situations, talking self through the problem I a step-by-step manner
- **Though Stopping** – consciously interrupting persistent trains of stressful thoughts, such as those involved in obsessions and phobias, in order to gain control over thought patterns

#### **A Few Strategies for Stress Prevention and Recovery**

1. **STOP DENYING.** Listen to the wisdom of your body. Begin to freely admit the stresses and pressures that have manifested physically, mentally, or emotionally.
2. **AVOID ISOLATION.** Don't do everything alone! Develop or renew intimacies with friends and love ones. Closeness not only brings insight, but also is anathema to agitation and depression.
3. **CHANGE YOUR CIRCUMSTANCES.** If your relationship, a situation, or a person is dragging you under, try to alter your circumstances, or if necessary leave
4. **DIMINISH INTENSITY IN YOUR LIFE.** Pinpoint those areas or aspects, which summon up the most concentrated intensity and work toward alleviating that pressure.
5. **STOP OVERTURNING.** If you routinely take on other people's problems and responsibilities, learn to gracefully disengage. Try to get some nurturing for yourself

6. **LEARN TO SAY. "NO".** You'll help diminish intensity by speaking up for yourself. This means refusing additional request or demands on you or time or emotions
7. **BEGIN TO BACK OFF AND DETACH.** Learn to delegate, not only at work, but also at home and with friends. In this case, detachment means rescuing yourself for yourself.
8. **REASSESS YOUR VALUES.** Try to sort out the meaningful values from the temporary and fleeting, the essential from the nonessential. You'll conserve energy and time, and begin to feel more centered.
9. **LEARN TO PACE YOURSELF.** Try to take life in moderation. You only have so much energy available. Ascertain what is wanted and needed in your life, then begin to balance work with love, pleasure, and relaxation.
10. **TAKE CARE OF YOUR BODY.** Don't skip meals, abuse yourself with rigid diets, disregard your need for sleep, or break the doctor appointments. Take care of yourself nutritionally.
11. **DIMINISH WORRY AND ANXIETY.** Try to keep superstitious worrying to a minimum – it changes nothing. You'll have a better grip on your situation if you spend less time worrying and more time taking care of your real needs.
12. **KEEP YOUR SENSE OF HUMOR.** Begin to bring job and happy moments into your life. Very few people suffer stress when they're having fun.

### Avoiding Stress & Staying Healthy

Understanding that the only people without stress are in the cemetery! It is not so much the stress in our lives that hurts us but how we respond to it. You will find that teaching can be very stressful – sometimes almost unbearable. But many have survived it and you can, too. Here are some useful techniques and "prevention medicine" to keep you from becoming a drop-out:

- **Exercise.** After a day of teaching, you owe it to your body to shake off the dust. It will revive you. The best cardiovascular activities include walking, swimming, and jogging.
- **Leaving your teaching at school.** If you must lug home schoolwork, get it done early in the evening. Better yet, do it at school and leave it there.



- **Don't schedule all of your leisure time.** You live by a schedule all day long. Leave yourself some "open space."
- **Get plenty of sleep.** If you are well rested, problems do not always seem so large.
- **Pursue a project or hobby.** Find something that requires so much concentration that you forget about school for a while.
- **Find a friend. Enlist a trusted listener.** Talking a problem out won't make it go away, but it will relieve some of the tension than the project is worth.
- **Don't procrastinate.** Having something "hanging over you" can cause more tension than the project is worth.
- **Don't feel that you must do everything.** You can't and you won't. So why worry about it?
- **Keep a "thing to do" list.** Review it daily and do at least one or two things. As the list gets smaller, you will feel a sense of accomplishment.
- **Recognize and accept your limitations.** Most of set unreasonable and perfectionist goals for ourselves. But, we can never be perfect, so we can come to feel a sense of failure or inadequacy no matter how well we perform.
- **Learn to tolerate and forgive.** Intolerance and judging others lead to frustration and anger. Try to really understand the other person's concerns and fears.
- **Learn to plan. Disorganization breeds stress.** Having too many projects going at the same, time leads to confusing, forgetfulness, and a sense of uncompleted tasks. Plan ahead. Develop your own method of getting things done in an orderly manner.

- **Be a positive person. Avoid criticizing others.** Try to focus on the good qualities of those around you. Excessive criticism of others inevitably reflects on you.
- **Learn to play.** You need to escape from the pressures of life and have fun regularly. Find pastimes or hobbies regardless of your level of ability.
- **Rid yourself of worry.** A study has shown that 40 percent of the items people worry about never happen; 35 percent can be changed; 15 percent turn out better than expected; 8 percent involve needless concern; and only 2 percent really deserve attention. (Rodger, 1999).

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**APPENDIX I:****12. DEFINITIONS OF CONCEPTS**

- **STRESS**

Pressure of worry resulting from mental or physical distress, difficult circumstances.

- **MANAGEMENT**

In this study, refers to skills in dealing with stress.

- **ADVERSITIES**

Unfavourable conditions

- **COUNTERMEASURE**

Course of action taken to remove, prevent or protect against something undesirable or dangerous.

- **INSTITUTION**

For this purpose of study it refers to schools.

- **EAP – EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME**

**APPENDIX II:**

DEAR MANAGER/DEPUTY PRINCIPAL/HEAD OF DEPARTMENT/EDUCATOR, THE INFORMATION REQUESTED IN THE QUESTIONNAIRE FORMS PART OF THE RESEARCH TO INVESTIGATE THE CAUSES AND MANAGEMENT OF STRESS IN EDUCATION IN THE MAFIKENG AREA.

1. The aim of this investigation is to establish the major causes of stress as experienced by educators and to uncover successful stress management techniques.
2. All respondents will remain anonymous and all the information will be treated in the strictest confidentiality.
3. GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

For the purpose of this response please regard stress as a negative, unpleasant feeling (e.g. conflict, threat, anxiety) or disagreeable emotion (e.g. tension, frustration, anger and depression) which you experience as a result of the teaching demands made upon you.

Please respond to every item.

- Answer the questions by circling/crossing the appropriate code. Circle your first impression and do not spend a lot of time on any one item.

**APPENDIX III****QUESTIONNAIRE****1. AGE**

Up to 29	
30-39	
40-49	
50-59	
60 and older	

**2. MARITAL STATUS**

Single	
Married	
Divorced	
Widowed	

**3. SEX**

Male	
Female	

**4. QUALIFICATION CATEGORY**

Category C	
Category D	
Category E	
Category F	
Category G	



## 5. GRADE OR POST LEVEL HELD AT PRESENT

Class Teacher	
Head of Department	
Deputy Principal	
Senior Deputy Principal	

## 6. TEACHING EXPERIENCE

5 years or less	
6-10 years	
11-20 years	
More than 20 years	

## 7. SIZE OF SCHOOL WHERE YOU WORK

250 pupils or less	
250-599 pupils	
600-1000 pupils	
Above 1000 pupils	

## 8. SCHOOL'S MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION

English	
Afrikaans	
English & Afrikaans	

## 9. AVERAGE SIZE OF CLASSES THAT YOU TEACH

Less than 15 pupils	
15 - 30 pupils	
30 - 45 pupils	
Above 45 pupils	

**STRESS MANAGEMENT**

10. Do you have any health problems which you feel are a result of stress brought about by your work as a teacher?

Yes	No
1	2

**STRESS SUPPORT**

For the following five questions please circle the corresponding response on your answer sheet:

1= Never

2= Ready

3= Often

4= Always

Example

You are often stressed by your teaching responsibilities      1      2      3      4

11. Efforts are made at your school to help the staff  
cope with stress-related problems.      1      2      3      4

12. You join teacher stress support groups to assist  
in solving stress-related problems      1      2      3      4

13. Your teacher training course has helped you to cope  
with teacher stress      1      2      3      4

14. You regularly attempted to identify and recognize the  
source of your stress.      1      2      3      4

15. You apply stress management techniques.      1      2      3      4

## AREAS OF STRESS

Please respond to the question below by circling the appropriate number in accordance with the following scale:

1. Not a source of stress
2. A minor source of stress
3. An important source of stress
4. A very important source of stress

Example

Constant classroom interruptions	1	2	3	4
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## PUPIL BEHAVIOUR

How stressful do you find the following:

- |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 16. Managing pupil behaviour which may be Disruptive                                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 17. Having pupils in my class who talk constantly   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 18. Teaching pupils who are apathetic   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 19. Teaching pupils who are slow in grasping work   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 20. Planning and organizing learning activities for pupils<br>pupils of varying abilities | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

## ADMINISTRATION

- 1 = No stress
- 2 = Minor stress
- 3 = Reasonable stress
- 4 = Major stress

How stressful do you find the following:

- |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 21. Lack of administrative /electrical support in my school   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 22. The numerous non-teaching administrative duties           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 23. Being responsible for collecting money                    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 24. Lack of essential teaching equipment                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 25. Having personal responsibility for expensive<br>Equipment | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 26. Being subjected to inspections                            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 27. The responsibility of preparing exam papers               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

**SALARIES**

- 1 = No Stress  
 2 = Minor Stress  
 3 = Reasonable Stress  
 4 = Major Stress

How stressful do you find the following:

28. My salary is not commensurate with my

Teaching responsibilities

1      2      3      4

29. My teaching and general attitude is negativity  
 affected by the size of my salary.

1      2      3      4

**TIME AND OTHER PRESSURES**

- 1 = No Stress  
 2 = Minor Stress  
 3 = Reasonable Stress  
 4 = Major Stress

How stressful do you find the following:

30. My preparation, teaching and marking loads are  
 very time-consuming.

1      2      3      4

31. I have to do school work at home to keep up with  
 what is expected of me?

1      2      3      4

32. I regularly experience role conflict  
 (having to do different jobs within the school).

1      2      3      4

33. I regularly experience role ambiguity  
 (uncertainty about what I should be doing).

1      2      3      4

34. The demands of school activities put pressure  
 and end of the school year.

1      2      3      4

35. I experience increased pressure at the  
 beginning and end of the school year.

1      2      3      4

36. Teaching offers limited promotion opportunities

37. I experience low status in the community as  
 a result of being a teacher.

1      2      3      4

**COMMUNICATION**

- 1 = No stress  
 2 = Minor stress  
 3 = Reasonable stress  
 4 = Major stress

How stressful do you find the following:

- |  |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| 38. Teacher / Principal communication in my school is unsatisfactory                         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 39. Teacher / Principal communication in my school is unsatisfactory                         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 40. Teacher / Principal communication in my school is unsatisfactory                         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 41. The school principal and educational authorities are aware of my stress.                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 42. My communication with Head Office authorities is not satisfactory                        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 43. I am not encouraged to be creative and innovative in my teaching                         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 44. I am encouraged to participate in decisions concerning the running of my school          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 45. I am not able to implement meaningful change with respect to educational policy matters. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

**THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE**

