



By: Amy Wilson

In a study published in 2000 in the *International Journal of Stress Management*, 67 percent of teachers surveyed described their jobs as "extremely stressful," and stressed teachers could hinder your child's education. Researchers at Optum, a health research center in Minnesota, decided to test programs aimed at reducing stress and improving employee health.

The yearlong study gave teachers at a local school three different stress-relief interventions: stress and depression management seminars; relaxation and breathing exercise workshops; and a kit containing health and stress relief information. The teachers rated their personal stress levels before and after the study and reported significantly lower levels at the end of the year than teachers at nearby schools who did not participate in the program.

Though all three interventions alleviated teacher stress, Mark Attridge, Ph.D., director of research and analysis at Optum and the study's lead researcher, notes that they worked partially because the school's administrative staff acknowledged and addressed the issue. Opening the lines of communication made stress relief an organizational problem, so teachers felt more comfortable suggesting solutions. "The teachers and staff were able to form more of a support system that boosted morale and opened up the discussion of problem-solving," Attridge says.

<http://psychologytoday.com/articles/pto-20000701-000017.html>

About.com :

http://712educators.about.com/cs/testingstress/a/stress_2.htm

Dealing With End of the Year Stress

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(Continued from Page 1)

Strategies for Educators

Don't Let it Get to You

You know that you are not crazy, that there are too many demands of you as a teacher. You might even wonder why the heck you got into this profession. In fact, studies show that as many as 50 percent of teachers leave the profession by the 5th year of teaching. Surely job stress must play a part in this. For those of us who stick it out (even if only to the end of this year) there are things we can do to make our lives a little easier.

1. Have a positive attitude. Remember that even though you might be dealing with an unmovable bureaucracy, an unsupportive parent, or a belligerent student, they cannot affect your feelings or make you angry unless you allow them to. You are in control of your own emotions. Here are some suggestions for turning negative thoughts into positive ones.
2. Do not try to accomplish too many tasks in one day. Part of the problem of job stress is that it is often a cycle. You have so many things to accomplish in one day that the quality of your work declines which means that not only do you have a lot to do but you are bothered at your results. So instead, prioritize and fill up only half the day with things you want to get done. The fact is, you will probably work all day to complete that which you think you can do in half of a day.
3. Relax through stretching and exercise. Exercise releases endorphins that help give you a feeling of peacefulness. Further, it gives you time to clear your mind of all worries. You will be doing something for yourself, and no one else.
4. Get plenty of sleep. Take a test to see if you getting enough. Being well-rested helps problems seem less important. If you having trouble sleeping, you can find some resources here.
5. Leave your teaching at school as often as possible. Obviously, this seems impossible to do but find ways to gain valuable personal time. Try to get your schoolwork done at school. Remember that nothing is more important than your mental well-being.

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Published: October 6, 2010

November 5, 2010

Teaching Secrets: Managing October Exhaustion

By Elena Aguilar



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The exhaustion that typically hits teachers in October assaulted me in mid-September this year. While I will share some strategies

that I've developed to manage this annual sense of being overwhelmed, I want to preface them with this: The problem is not that teachers and administrators don't have adequate coping skills to manage our work; the problem is that the demands on us are absurd.

"Fatigue makes cowards of us all," said the legendary football coach Vince Lombardi. So how do we alleviate fatigue so we can resume the good fight. My advice is to establish a "Pause Period" of several weeks to rejuvenate, reflect, and reconnect. Here are some of the components:

• **Take some time off:** Take a day off, now! Do laundry, eat lunch, take a nap, do something fun. I know that one day off is a drop in the bucket, but it's something—especially if you're a typical teacher working six days a week. And you probably know that if you keep pushing, wearing yourself down, you'll get sick and end up staying home anyway. So take a "personal day," or two, and enjoy it. The kids will survive.

• **Refresh your surroundings:** Find another day's worth of time to clean and organize your classroom. Coordinating the logistics can be tricky. Some teachers can get into school on weekends, while others might need to seek out creative solutions to be alone in their room or stay late after school. But by mid-October, there are bound to be piles of paper, work for bulletin boards, and other cleaning tasks to do. The mess is demoralizing and draining. Think of how much time is spent looking for that one important paper that you need to turn in right away! I know this extra work seems contradictory, but a day spent doing these tasks and setting up organizing systems can save a lot of time in the long term and be very satisfying.

• **Re-ground yourself in the "why":** "Why am I doing this?" is what blasts through my head when work has worn me down. The "Pause Period" is a reflective time to reconnect with what brought you into teaching. Think about it, talk about it, write about it. Don't evaluate whether you are accomplishing what you'd set out to do—just reconnect with those positive feelings. (For stories and inspiration on this topic, see this [blog post](#) I wrote at *Edutopia*.)

• **Celebrate the successes:** Sometimes the exhaustion comes when all we can see is how far we are from fulfilling our goals. In October, the growth in our teaching practice or in our students' learning can be obscure, but we need to train ourselves to find every indicator of progress and we need to celebrate these. Recall the moments so far this year when you've felt alive, engaged, and excited in your work. What have you most enjoyed? When did you notice joy in your classroom? Think about students

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