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# GUIDE TO BURNOUT

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Being a teacher is fulfilling. As a teacher, you have the ability to inspire and educate others. However, this job is also exhausting both mentally and physically. Statistics show that:

**8 out  
of 10**

teachers report  
some signs of  
burn-out

**40 %**

of teachers  
report signs and  
symptoms of  
high, long lasting  
stress that lead  
to burnout

**1 in 6**

teachers report  
moderate or  
severe  
depression

**50 %**

of teachers  
report their  
jobs as a  
source of long-  
term stress

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Several factors may contribute to burnout that can either directly or indirectly affect teaching as well as your students in terms of lower academic achievement and motivation. Low self-efficacy and high job demands are of high importance for burnout. It is therefore necessary to be aware of our levels of stress. Our stress tolerance may vary significantly. However, what we do need is an understanding of the signs and proactive measures to reduce feelings of stress that may lead to burnout.

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## WATCH OUT FOR THESE SYMPTOMS OF BURNOUT

### Feeling exhausted

Exhaustion can be both physical and emotional. Have you been dealing with symptoms of increased irritability, mood swings, impaired concentration, impaired motivation, chronic fatigue or insomnia for a prolonged period of time?

### Not feeling like yourself

Not feeling like yourself for a prolonged period of time can be a sign of burnout. Have you been pessimistic and cynical towards teaching, students, your work colleagues or the school community itself? Have you started to isolate yourself from others or lost enjoyment in activities that once brought you pleasure?

### Reduced performance

Look out for reduced performance. Have you been experiencing feelings of hopelessness, apathy, low confidence or increased irritability? Have you been spending more time completing tasks?

If you find yourself experiencing these symptoms for a prolonged period of time, it is especially important to take action and engage in strategies to prevent burnout.

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## TIPS FOR REDUCING EXCESSIVE STRESS

### Reduce the source of stress

Reducing excessive stress is vital for sustainable management. Think about what exactly is causing you stress. Are these, for example, political discussions? Or the fear of missing out on something? Try to stop for a moment and look at the causes of your stress from several different angles. Focusing on the causes of stress can help you come up with strategies to help you fight stress effectively.

### Breathe through

When you are overwhelmed, it is not self-indulgent to take time to focus on you. If you feel comfortable, close your eyes and inhale slowly, counting to five. Take a short break and then exhale, counting to six. Just repeat this series of inhales and exhales a few times and your nervous system will slowly calm. This is because deep breathing activates the parasympathetic nervous system. Practicing relaxation techniques regularly can help you to face stress inducing situations with more resilience. Taking a five minute relaxation break between your classes where you take deep breaths, stretch, and relax your shoulders can reduce tension. A few minutes is enough to make a difference.

### Indulge and enjoy

Playing music in the background, either when you commute to school, from school, or in the office, is an effective way to reduce stress. When listening to relaxing music, your pulse usually begins to drop to match the slower rate of the music. When you have time, take a nice book or just sit back and at least 5 minutes consciously feel what's happening around you - what you see, what you hear, what you feel. Spend time with the people you love, family or friends, and be present where you are. For example, talk about how you spent your day. Sharing is an effective way to reduce stress.

### Focus on the perception of stress

Try changing your perception of any stressful event. For example, setting unrealistic expectations can lead to frustration and exhaustion. Setting realistic goals, recognizing your own limits and accepting what cannot be changed is the first step to relieving stress. Examine your priorities and set time frames to meet them. Be kind and compassionate to yourself when you are stressed.

### Live a healthy lifestyle

Healthy diet, regular exercise, mental activities and adequate rest can help you combat stress. The food that we eat doesn't only influence our physical health, it also affects how we feel. Eating food that is rich in nutrients can help us feel less stressed. Exercise is an essential component of living a healthy lifestyle. Research shows that teachers who exercise are likely to be less stressed compared to those who do not engage in any physical exercise. Physical exercise may also include going for a short walk. Similar to physical exercise, mental activities can also improve your well-being such as meditation, gardening or making crafts. Both physical exercise and mental activities can increase your confidence and increase your level of energy.

**These steps can help reduce the chance of burnout, and self-care habits are an important aspect of burnout prevention. However, if none of the above helps you and the symptoms persist, there is no shame in seeking professional support.**

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