UNVEILING INNER BATTLES OF THE TEACHER IN THE CHALLENGING PROFESSION

by:
Alexis V. Dela Cruz
Teacher III, Antonio G. Llanas Elementary School

Teaching may be one of the most rewarding job. Satisfaction could be easily felt from the everyday accomplishment on the objectives of the subject matter to the intense realization of one’s former student dream of becoming. There could also be the rewarding praises from the colleagues and superiors as well as the gratitude coming from the pleased parents of the teacher.

On the other hand, teaching could also be the most stressful job compared to other occupation (Adams, 2001). Based on researches, there are five common reasons of teachers’ stress. Almost 52% are because of having too much paper works, 51% comes from the high cost of living; 46% is due to the insufficient salary and other money concerns; 43% originates from the oversized classes handled; and 32% derives from being too busy on simultaneous activities such as parenting, community service and the like.

Studies also points out three distinct stages of stress. The first is the alarm stage, followed by the resistance stage and finally the exhaustion stage, all of which becomes more progressively difficult to handle stage by stage.

Alarm stage is signaled by its awareness and is specified by the feelings of tension and uneasiness. It is when the body already identified stress and as a response to these tends to release hormones to help defend against the stressor. It is also associated with psychological or physical ailments such as sudden nervousness, irritability, or frequent headaches. While on the other hand, in the resistance stage, the body continuously resists the stressors. The teacher follows some coping strategies like
fleeing the situation by simply avoiding the issue, or simply ignoring the problem at all. It could also be the other way around or the passive coping strategies like tolerating the situation by putting things off indefinitely, identifying the problem but do nothing about it. Since the root cause of the stress is ignored, there could be the danger of more extreme coping measures such as alcohol or drug abuse. Moreover, exhaustion stage is the final yet most severe stage for it is known as the burnout or breakdown stage. The body and mind can no longer regulate to battle the stressor and so it has led to physical and or mental exhaustion. Typical illnesses like ulcers, migraine headaches, and varying degrees of depression are prominent since the teacher has no strength to fight it either physically or psychologically. (Fimian, 1982).

Stress in any stage, however, can reduce the ability of the teachers to perform at the highest levels (Chan, 1998). It can be concluded then that negative effects of stress can impact negatively on performance and quality of life. The effects of stress could be unmistakably many. There’s the report of teachers who end up quitting their job or those who end up having mental breakdowns. In the aftermath, the worst reaction to stress is depression. It could also be the primary cause of the seemed to be disturbing news about teachers committing suicides. Ending their lives raises concerns among the field and earned sentiments from the DepEd community.

In response to these, though there is no magic wand to take all the stress away, there are still practical techniques we can do to lessen and help you handle it.

- Starting to prioritize. = Teachers should only focus on one thing at a time. Avoid and forget about multi-tasking. Try to complete one task before moving on to the next one.

- React and say No! = You should learn to say "No" to projects, committees and social activities you don't have time, energy or interest in doing.
• Exercise and get moving. = Having an active lifestyle like engaging in physical activities like some exercises and sports, doing more chores that entails active body movement, and performing breathing exercises and relaxation. Other stress relieving activities which includes dancing, music and art could also be a must try.

• Socialize and get support = Surrounding yourself with friends who you feel you can talk to. Having the sympathetic ear from a co-teacher or a friend can help ease your frustrations.

• Simply pause and treat yourself! = Do something that doesn’t include teaching or work, like watching your favorite TV show, listening to music, reading a book for fun, taking a facial care or a massage treatment etc.

Stress could probably never be out of our lives. The strength to continue fighting the battle with the inner self against stress could really be tough, so positive coping strategies could be a lot of help. Collaborative efforts from people around could also be the key.

References:

