WHAT MAKES TEACHING STRESSFUL?

by

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Stress is defined as a state of mental tension and worry caused by problems in your life and work. “It is also a reaction of the body in order to adapt to a difficult or dangerous situation. Stress does not exist by itself but it is produced by humans according to the way they interpret their circumstances”, according to Dr. Peter G. Hanson, author of the book “The Pleasure of Stress”.

When stress is maintained at a low intensity level, it does not affect the body. On the contrary, it helps the person to be active. We need a certain amount of stress. But when the stress becomes excessive and occurs for an extensive period of time, problem arises. In this case, it consumes a person’s vital energy and this is what wears away one’s life and stability.

You may be wondering what the factors that cause stress to educators are. The following are what cause stress to the teachers. Pressure on professional skills (e.g. introduction of new teaching methods, changes in curriculum and courses). This usually happens to newly-employed teachers or beginners because they do not have enough knowledge and experience with regards to teaching. This also happens to teachers teaching for many years as some are afraid that they cannot cope up with the new curriculum.

Another cause of teacher stress is the student. Teachers are bothered with increased class size, students’ lack of motivation, attention and interest, teaching targets or student attainment levels. Teachers feel that they lack self-worth if they cannot control the students’ behavior or even catch their attention especially if they are not listening.
The third source of teacher stress is difficult parent/teacher relations (perhaps from new demands regarding roles of the teacher or decreased parent participation). Sometimes no matter how the teacher-adviser insists to the parents to attend the PTCA meeting, still parents do not comply. This makes the teacher worry and angry because they feel that parents more than anybody else can influence their children to be a better person. Being absent from the meeting would mean that parents do not like to cooperate with the teacher.

Poor planning and programming like constant restructuring, frequent reforms in the educational system, working alone and the transition to team work, lack of personnel and poor allocation, strong administrative hierarchy with a lack of support, insufficient financial resources are other source of worry.

Social and personal pressures such as concerns about the quality of education, lack of coherence between personal goals and professional obligations, no recognition or acknowledgement, lack of public esteem bother teachers. These can also make teachers less productive.

The school as a stressful workplace like if the teacher has excessive workload and hours of work, lack of time, lack of control and autonomy, environmental noise, poor ventilation, lack of solidarity and morale, excessive paperwork and administrative duties make teachers exhausted and economic pressures like inadequate salary, job insecurity adds more trouble and worry.

Identifying those things that teachers can control and those that they cannot could help to prevent daily hassles from becoming major problems but they can’t do it on their own. Similarly, stress management tends to treat the symptoms of stress rather than identifying and tackling its causes. Teachers can alleviate stress by what are called 'daily uplifts', those little treats they give themselves at points during the day, everything from a five-minute sit-down with a cup of tea to a 10-minute walk at lunchtime and buying...
little things that can satisfy them. What teachers really need is to understand that successfully tackling stress isn't just about individuals, it's about the whole school, the principal, the co-teachers, co-workers, and the students.

References:
