Burnout in Teachers: Shattered Dreams of Impeccable Professional Performance

▼

Isaac A. Friedman

The Henrietta Szold Institute
The National Institute for Research in the Behavioral Sciences

Burnout usually is conceptualized as a work-related syndrome stemming from the individual's perception of a significant gap between expectations of successful professional performance and an observed, far less satisfying reality. The article examines this perception as a discrepancy between expected and observed levels of the individual's professional self-efficacy. The teaching profession and its service providers—teachers—serve as a model to illustrate and support this examination. Self-reports of novice teachers' experiences in their first year of teaching are given, reflecting a world of shattered dreams of idealistic performance. Finally, a number of suggestions for programs and activities that have proven helpful in alleviating stress and burnout among teachers are described. © 2000 John Wiley & Sons, Inc. J Clin Psychol/In Session 56: 595–606, 2000.

Keywords: burnout; work-related stress; stress and burnout amelioration

Burnout is a work-related syndrome that most often occurs in those working face to face with service recipients in need of assistance, and is typically marked by emotional exhaustion, withdrawal from and cynicism toward clients, and a sense of unaccomplishment (Farber, 1991). Burnout commonly is conceptualized as a three-dimensional phenomenon consisting of exhaustion, depersonalization, and unaccomplishment. Exhaustion has been identified as the most salient reaction to the stress of job demands and sense of unaccomplishment at work. When people feel cynical, they assume a cold, distant, depersonalized attitude toward their work and the people they encounter through work. They tend to minimize their involvement at work, and even relinquish their ideals. Feelings of ineffectiveness or unaccomplishment are accompanied by a growing sense of inadequacy. The world seems to conspire against efforts to make progress. They lose confidence in their ability to make a difference professionally.

Correspondence and requests for reprints should be sent to Dr. Isaac A Friedman, The Henrietta Szold Institute, 9, Columbia St. Kiryat Menachem, Jerusalem 96583, ISRAEL; e-mail: szold@szold.org.il.

In clinical workshops for teachers reporting high levels of stress at work that I conducted several years ago, participants described their feelings of burnout as follows (Friedman & Lotan, 1993):

FIRST GRADE TEACHER (*female, 17 years teaching experience*): "Burnout is when teachers are 'finished'. A burnt-out teacher is someone who is completely washed out—physically and mentally. I, myself, am not the same person I was ten years ago. Now I react totally differently to what happens in my classroom and school."

TEACHER (*male, 10 years teaching experience*): "Burned-out teachers are those teachers who are absent too often, claiming to be unwell. They show signs of depression and lack of will to work."

HOME-ROOM TEACHER (*female, 20 years of experience*): "'Burned out' means being tired. I would like to do more, but I don't have the physical or mental strength any more, and I want help."

TEACHER (*female, 7 years of experience*): "Several years ago, I used to teach a large number of classes. I used to be haunted by a feeling of dissatisfaction. I believed that I could 'give' more of myself, but I could not find the time to do so. Even now that I teach fewer classes, I still have a deep sense of frustration. I don't feel I am a 'good' teacher, because I don't give my students all that I can. I feel I don't reach out, and this is not the kind of educator I think I could be. I have a sense of failure: this is not what I expected."

SCHOOL COUNSELOR (*female, 25 years of experience*): "I taught kindergarten for many years. Today I am a teacher and counselor. Looking back I can see I was working like a robot, automatically. Over time, I realized that my students had become nothing more than 'numbers' to me; they no longer counted as individuals. Teachers can't educate children because of the large numbers of students squeezed into one class. I don't feel I make a difference, and in fact, I am not interested in making a difference. I feel like an engineer whose job is to work with machines, not human beings."

Burnout is a process that undergoes several stages from onset to a recognized climax. Models of burnout progression described in the literature are mostly unidirectional models of progression, comprising three distinguishable phases: the emergence of stress, the emergence of stress-induced experiences, and finally, the emergence of reactions to the stress-induced experiences. Friedman (1996) suggested that burnout progression consists of two distinct tracks leading from the emergence of stressors to the reactions to stress-induced experiences. The tracks are: (a) a cognitive pathway, involving a sense of personal and professional unaccomplishment, and (b) an emotional pathway that evolves into an initial sense of overload, followed by a sense of emotional exhaustion. The tracks may intersect, allowing other merging paths to be identified.

Human-service professionals affected by stress may follow the cognitive or emotional track, or both. In the cognitive scenario, high expectations for self-fulfillment give way to (a) a sense of personal unaccomplishment, followed by (b) a sense of professional unaccomplishment, as a result of which the individual feels a deep sense of inconsequentiality. Consequently, he or she may resort to various functional and dysfunctional responses. Functional (coping mechanisms) as well as dysfunctional responses (e.g., cynicism, apathy, and rigidity) may be used to mediate the stress.

In the emotional scenario, a sense of overload appears first (the consequence of various stressful events), and leads the individual to feel that his or her job is excessively burdensome. Consequently, the individual feels emotionally exhausted, disappointed, at

the end of his or her tether, etc. As with the cognitive scenario, the individual responds to such feelings by resorting to a combination of functional and dysfunctional reactions.

The combined cognitive-emotional scenario may begin with a sense of personal unaccomplishment and overload. Stressful events, combined with high, unfulfilled expectations for self-fulfillment, produce such primary stress-inducing experiences as a sense of personal unaccomplishment and sense of overload. A sense of personal unaccomplishment combined with a feeling of overload gives rise to secondary stress-induced experiences such as a deep sense of inconsequentiality. Individual differences in personality, prior experiences, and social and family support may play important roles in deciding which of the tracks and responses will be taken. For example, the "feeling" type of individual most likely will choose the emotional track, whereas the "thinking" types may follow the cognitive track to burnout.

Some general stress theories exist, which can help in interpreting empirical findings related to the causes of burnout in both the general population and educational settings. One of the most widely cited theories of stress is the Person–Environment Fit Model of Stress (French, Caplan, & Van Harrison, 1982). According to this model, stress is the result of a lack of fit between environmental demands and personal abilities, and a lack of fit between environmental demand and/or by a dearth of environmental supply.

The Person–Environment Fit theory spawned several models, of which Hobfoll's (1988) and Csikszentmihalyi (1990) are noteworthy. Hobfall named his theory the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory of stress. According to the COR theory, psychological stress occurs under one of three conditions: (1) when resources (i.e., valued objectives that the individual strives to attain and maintain) are threatened, (2) when resources are diminished or lost, and (3) when the individual invests resources and fails to reap the anticipated level of return. COR theory postulates that greater salience of loss is accentuated during periods of physical or psychological over-arousal. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) argued that the two theoretically most important dimensions of experience—challenges and skills—may explain anxiety and stress in a person. A discrepancy between existing (or perceived) professional skills and high job challenge may produce a clear, strong sense of professional inefficacy, which may be highly stressful.

These theories have one thing in common: They focus on the discrepancy between the "expected" and the "observed," as far as skills, resources, demands, and outcomes are concerned. In the following pages, we shall use the teaching profession to demonstrate that discrepancies between professional expectations and reality are major factors in the etiology of burnout.

The Professional Efficacy Discrepancy Approach to Understanding Burnout

The discrepancy between expected and observed levels of professional self-efficacy (in short, professional self-efficacy discrepancy) is defined as the individual's perception of a significant gap between expectations of successful professional performance and actual, less satisfying reality. Based on stress theories, professional self-efficacy discrepancy may serve as a powerful and helpful approach to understanding burnout, and may point to some key factors in its amelioration. Professional self-efficacy discrepancy assumes that common work pressures gradually erode professionals' belief in their ability to organize and implement the actions required to produce a given set of attainments. Beliefs in their own efficacy have diverse effects that influence the course of action they choose to pursue, how much effort they are willing to invest, how long they will persevere in the face of obstacles and defeat, their resilience, how much stress they can endure, and the level of accomplishment they realize (Bandura, 1997). This process of erosion in profes-

sionals' belief in their ability will be demonstrated in the following pages, indicating how dreams of impeccable performance may shatter.

Trainee teachers usually complete their schooling after several years of intensive education, during which they acquire both theoretical and practical tools for classroom work. The transition from schooling to the work arena often is a harsh one, even for those graduates who receive support and guidance from veteran teachers, school principals, or supervisors. What these novice teachers experience in their day-to-day school and class-room reality during this transitional period, in many instances, may be termed a "reality shock." This is due to the marked contrast between what was envisioned during prepa-ration for teaching and the facts of professional life (Jesus & Paixao, 1996). This reality shock in teaching has been described as one of the major factors contributing to the dropout of some 30% of teachers who abandon the profession after their first year in school (Rozenholtz, 1989). The reality-shock phenomenon is followed by complaints from teachers that their training failed to provide them with the knowledge base needed for teaching, and particularly that it failed to offer the badly needed know-how for han-dling student discipline problems and classroom-behavior disturbances. Other reasons for this reality shock are attributed to the specific quality of the teaching profession, school situational factors, and, of course, unrealistic expectations regarding the teaching profession (Weinstein, 1988).

The sharp discrepancy between the "observed" and the "expected" in teaching is the result of a rude awakening from an idealistic dream and the shattering of anticipations of an enjoyable and satisfying professional career of service. My claim here is that tracing the reality-shock process experienced by novice teachers may be an important factor in understanding the phenomenon of burnout and burnout progression. In a recent, unpub-lished study conducted by Gavish and the author, eight novice first-year teachers, four regular and four special-education teachers, were interviewed individually. During the interview, teachers were asked to describe their first few months in teaching, detailing how they felt, and their professional confrontations. The results of this study indicated that experiences during the first year of teaching may be divided into the following three stages.

Stage A: The Slump

Six out of the eight teachers used words such as: "shock," "nightmare," "catastrophe," "collapse," "suffering," "despair," "crisis," and "pressure" to describe their first few weeks in teaching. Here are some examples.

DAFNA: "The beginning was a crisis and a lot of crying went on."

KATHY: "I felt I had to do everything by myself, I was all alone! It was just a shock, particularly when everything all came at once. I was all confused, I didn't know what to do."

MEIRAV: "I had no idea what to do. I had no idea what I had let myself into. Where should I start? How could I get them to be quiet, I didn't know what to do. It was an extreme shock; a nightmare; it was very difficult, a shock, really tough, a catastrophe. I found myself waking each day to a nightmare, and asking myself what form the day's nightmare would take—would it be better or worse than the day before. It was real suffering just to go to work."

LIAT: "I felt frustrated, I was in total despair . . . I cried for the whole of the first month."

The initial crisis seems to diminish within a few weeks. After this, teachers tried to adapt to the system, although a strong feeling of dissatisfaction with work, and with the

"system" in general, was still apparent. The word "despair" prevailed, even with those teachers who had not experienced a strong sense of shock.

Stage B: Fatigue and Exhaustion

Fatigue and exhaustion may characterize the second stage in the professional life of the novice teacher. Two out of the eight teachers interviewed reported that it was at this stage that they felt "burned out." Apart from one, all said that they loved children and teaching, but felt that the strain produced by the enormous difficulties blocking their way forced them to consider relinquishing their job.

The participants ascribed their evident disillusionment with teaching at this stage to six different factors:

1. *Difficulties with students.* The difficulties involved in dealing with students with special needs, mainly those with behavioral problems, is a primary source of teacher frustration. The teachers' overall feeling is one of helplessness—they feel incapable of acting or reacting effectively.

   MEIRAV: "I did not know that being a teacher meant being a policeman . . . I thought a teacher's job was to teach . . . I have reached the point where I really don't know what to do."

2. *Overload.* All teachers described their first steps in teaching as overly demanding, requiring many hours of hard toil, including classroom teaching. Teachers reported that their "free" time was spent preparing for classes, reading relevant material, staff meetings, etc. The feeling is that the novice teacher is answerable to too many elements within the system: administrators, administrative assistants, supervisors, and parents. The impression at this stage is that teaching demands total submission—that it is a job without an end.

3. *Criticism.* The demands imposed on novice teachers were accompanied by some strong criticism.

   DAPHNA: "You are constantly subjected to criticism. A class of forty children means a class of forty really critical and aggressive parents."
   ZIPPORA: "The school counselor comes to see me every so often. . . . That really annoys me. One day the counselor got stuck into my class, telling me this and that wasn't all right, and asking me why I wasn't doing this or that—all sorts of complaints."

4. *Lack of recognition and reward.* The tremendous investment by the novice teacher does not yield commensurate rewards (even when the salary is sufficiently high). Teachers sense that they must rely on themselves to obtain professional rewards. This can be achieved through a sense of satisfaction with their students' achievements, and from the joy of teaching. In the absence of these rewards, very little remains for the teacher.

   DAPHNA: "The most hurtful part of all is the lack of appreciation. I expect a kind word in return for all my effort, but I never hear one . . . I feel that teaching isn't so important anymore. Who becomes a teacher? Only people who haven't got an alternative."

5. *Isolation*. Four out of the eight teachers reported a feeling of isolation. They claimed that they were hesitant about seeking advice from more experienced teachers.

> RAVIT: "I would finish a long week at work without having had a real conversation with a single adult person. Even now that I am a little more experienced, I still have no friends at the school. I thought I was the worst teacher, but then I discovered that everyone feels the same, only no one really admits it."

6. *Blaming initial training*. Teachers reported the feeling that they were expected to deal with problem situations without being equipped with adequate professional "tools" for coping successfully. They also indicated that they, the school administration, failed to provide adequate support.

In general, teachers reported a preference for "practical" studies as opposed to "theory." Teachers repeatedly used the words "tools," "practice," "solutions," in describing their needs.

> MICHAL: "They cared more about 'theory' . . . they did not teach us about the real thing."
> KATHY: "The theoretical material was not really relevant to actual schoolwork. It was high-level academic material. If I were head of a teacher-training college, I would change things dramatically. I'd only cover the practical aspects, tools and so on, only the areas you need for working in the field. I would get rid of all the theory. I think you should only learn what you can use."

Stage C: Adjustment

At the third stage, teachers tried to adapt and adjust. In other words, to survive. As far as the teacher is concerned, survival involves learning teaching techniques, and particularly finding a compromise between "quality" teaching (as dreamed of by the teacher prior to actual teaching) and the quality of teaching dictated by reality. Teachers used the words: "intuition," "trial and error," "shooting ideas and solutions from the hip."

Teachers also emphasized the need to adapt and compromise regarding (a) the treatment of students with special needs ("Nothing can help this student"; "He'll never go to college"); (b) class planning and preparation ("So I will use less audio-visual aids, so what if the class is less interesting or challenging"); and (c) what constitutes "good teaching," and prior expectations which led them to choose teaching as a career. Teachers indicated little satisfaction with such a compromise, but they learned to come to terms with reality.

> MEIRAV: "When I was in teacher-training college, I was optimistic. I told myself that teaching would put me under pressure, but that I wouldn't skimp on my labor or efforts. It's not like that anymore. There is tremendous time and resource pressure."
> DAFNA: "You work in a mediocre way. That's why I say that any teacher who manages to do everything perfectly, must either be single and with no children, and therefore has all the time in the world to work, or else a superwoman. I'm not sure, but I think I'm not getting the most out of myself. In college, I used to plan each lesson properly: I had time to prepare. But now there isn't enough time. Things can go wrong and that really hurts, but you learn to accept and bend with the situation."

All eight teachers indicated that they seriously considered leaving teaching at the end of the first year, or shortly after. Three teachers said they intended to quit within a few
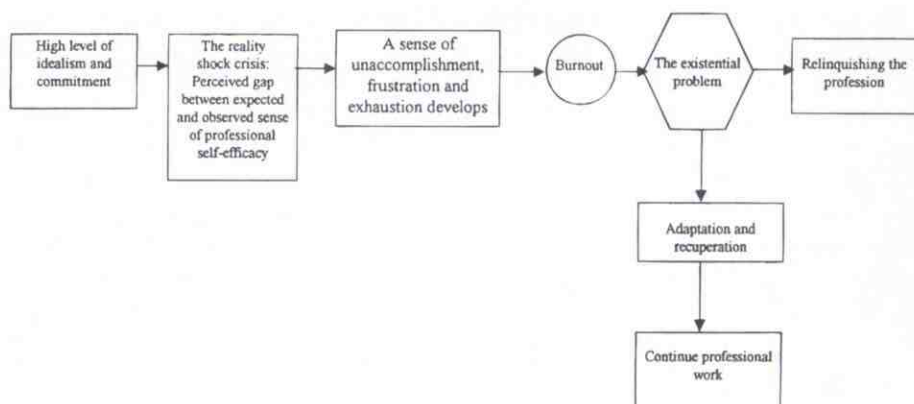
Figure 1. An illustration of the professional efficacy discrepancy approach to understanding burnout.

years, three were unsure about the direction of their teaching, and one said she would leave as soon as she could.

The burnout process described and illustrated above can be understood within the context of the Professional Efficacy Discrepancy approach that is described schematically in Figure 1. As can be seen in Figure 1, this approach to understanding burnout in teaching depicts the mesh between teacher and school as an afflictive engagement between people with high expectations and the harsh reality of occupational life. Thus, without having been adequately equipped to adapt to reality in the classroom, the novice teacher enters a highly complex world, which demands rapid and simultaneous responses to many varied and often conflicting demands. At some point, teachers learn that they cannot possibly live up to their own performance expectations with regard to their various tasks. Teachers encounter difficulties in the following four domains in particular: (a) tasks pertaining to students—attaining educational and social objectives, flexible, effective and "interesting" teaching, cultivating good social relationships among students, and making a noticeable change in their students' lives; (b) relations with students—the informal aspect of teacher–student relationships, e.g., maintaining clear boundaries, effective control over classroom interruptions, and handling of disciplinary problems; (c) tasks pertaining to the school as an organization—influencing school-level goal attainment, and participating in decision making; and (d) relations with administration and colleagues—the ability to influence the informal aspect of school life, e.g., open communications with the school's administrators and colleagues, knowing your way around the organization, and social involvement.

Thus, teachers are forced to consider lowering their expectations; efforts become highly focused and geared primarily towards goals, which appear important to the school, namely achieving good academic results, based on the official curriculum. Quality teaching and a proper response to special needs are marginalized. Teachers become frustrated, exhausted; they feel unaccomplished, in other words—burned out. Some consider abandoning teaching, others soldier on and learn to bear the heavy burden imposed on them by their work.

Ameliorating Burnout: What Works?

It may be assumed that human-service professionals working in organizational settings—such as teachers—are those who direct the activities of others in need and undertake to

achieve certain objectives through these efforts. Successful professional functioning within an organization appears to rest on three basic skills: *technical, human, and conceptual* (Katz, 1975). *Technical skills* imply an understanding of, and proficiency in, methods, processes, procedures, or techniques. These skills comprise the professional's *task* assignments. *Human skills*, or *interpersonal relations skills*, refer to the professional's ability to work effectively with people, to treat them with respect as individuals, and to help them develop their informal, social, and personal potential. A person with highly developed interpersonal skills will be aware of his or her own attitudes, assumptions, and beliefs concerning other individuals and groups; he or she is able to see the usefulness and limitations of these feelings and can communicate them to others. Such a person works to create an atmosphere of approval and security, is sensitive to the needs and motivations of others, and willing to consider them. *Conceptual skills* or *organizational skills*, involve the ability to see the enterprise as a whole. It includes recognizing how the various functions of the organization depend on one another, and how changes in any one part affect all others. It also extends to visualizing the relationship of the individual organizations to the community, the political, social, and economic forces. Thus, the professional should be able to act in a way that advances the overall welfare of the organization, by taking part in principle decision making, and influencing the organization's external relations.

The professional efficacy discrepancy approach to understanding burnout argues that known environmental stressors are key contributing factors to burning out, *due to their potential capacity to threaten one or more of the professional's sense of self-efficacy components (tasks, relations, and organizational)*. The threat to any one of these components stems from a perceived discrepancy between expected professional self-efficacy and perceived performance and results attained.

The professional efficacy discrepancy approach points to a single basic conception: professionals should have a well-established sense of professional self-efficacy in order to perform successfully under adverse, challenging circumstances. In other words, training should shape the kind of abilities that will ensure that professional–occupational dreams persist over time. This conception will guide us in our survey of some of the research findings and practices that have been found helpful in the amelioration of burnout. In the following pages, several examples of optional treatment possibilities that have been tried out and proven successful in reducing stress and burnout will be described.

The Task Domain

Improved functioning in the task domain of the professional self-efficacy conceptualization may prove essential in reducing stress and burnout. Improved training both before and during one's career may enhance endurance against work-related stressors, and gain resilience. In the teaching profession (and most likely in other professions as well), incumbents do not feel that they have had sufficient training to carry out their role. Better preparation for professional realities therefore is warranted highly. Teachers, for example, express concern over the fact that they are required to be experts both in their own particular subject area or areas and in modern teaching techniques. Given the rapid changes related to modern technologies, teachers often feel out of touch with developments in the field. Some examples for amending these inadequacies will be presented here in some detail.

Workshops to Improve Professional Teaching Skills. In-service training for all kinds of professionals has proved to be a potent means of reducing stress and burnout. In the case of teachers, dealing with classroom discipline problems and enhancing the teachers'

class control has proved pivotal to reducing stress. The outline of a powerful workshop aimed at improving teachers' classroom control will be described here. The underlying assumption of the class-discipline workshop is that while there is no precise "recipe" or any other set of specific instructions for teachers to help them tackle common discipline problems, there are certain "tools" or guidelines that may be of help. The workshop provides teachers with coping techniques in the diagnostic stage and the treatment stage.

In the diagnostic stage, teachers analyze the problems underlying a student's specific behavior, defined by them as a discipline problem. In-depth diagnosis will provide a solid basis for effective solutions. The diagnostic process involves asking the following questions: (1) Why, and whom does the student's behavior bother?; (2) What are the consequences of such behavior?; and (3) What are the reasons or causes of such behavior, or behaviors?

The treatment stage aims to train participants in providing optimal solutions for the problem. The workshop participants discuss 12 video clips, each showing a typical classroom misconduct situation. Participants simulate "real-life" events and situations, discussing possible solutions under the instruction and supervision of a trained mentor.

Classroom Organization Workshop. This workshop is designed to provide teachers with action-principles for organizing their classes to prevent stress and burnout stemming from overload, disorganization, and disorder. The workshop emphasizes eight action-principles: (1) Creating an effective technical-physical classroom environment; (2) General planning of learning and regulations; (3) Clarifying expectations, responsibility, and commitment; (4) Gaining and maintaining student good behavior; (5) Planning and organizing teaching and learning; (6) Facilitating teaching and student involvement; (7) Getting a "good start"; and (8) Working with students with special needs.

Peer-Professional Help Groups. Peer-professional help groups are another powerful category of activity for helping professionals cope with professional problems and stressful situations. In such groups, participants (a) aid one another in gathering information and overcoming professional hurdles; (b) trust one another with their capabilities and expertise rather than turning to "outside experts" for help; (c) share similar problems and experiences. The basic assumption underlying these groups is that technical matters in task performance can be dealt with best by providing relevant know-how by peers, thus alleviating the sense of isolation and lowering anxiety levels. The peer-professional help groups usually deal with either specific professional matters of concern to the participants, or with general stressful situations pertaining to the majority of the group. The common pattern of work in these groups is more or less as follows: (1) Participants raise issues, problems, and some possible solutions to current issues; (2) A specific issue or problem is chosen for detailed elaboration and discussion; (3) One of the participants, usually the participant who raised the specific issue or problem, describes his or her way of dealing with it; (4) Participants suggest and examine other different solutions; (5) The "problem raiser" picks up one or two suggested solutions to be tried out at his or her workplace. The "problem raiser" also selects a member of the group with whom he or she shares obstacles and progress in solving the problem; and (6) This procedure is repeated again and again either for the same problem or for different ones shared by the participants.

The Relations Domain

In a recent study, I found that maintaining good relations with students, colleagues, parents, and other members of the school and community was helpful in reducing teachers' work-related stress. The study found strong evidence that amicable, caring relations between

teachers and students was highly significant in predicting lower levels of teacher-perceived burnout. Thus, four types of teacher behaviors were found salient in this domain. These were: (a) supportive and considerate teaching style; (b) coequality: humor and amiability; (c) alienating teaching style; and (d) derogation of students' behavior. The implication of this study is that for classroom conditions to be as low-stress as possible, teachers should adopt certain positive patterns of behavior in each of these four domains, of which they should enhance the first two and avoid the second two.

Supportive and Considerate Teaching. This means trying to solve students' personal and learning problems; grading sympathetically and fairly (as an expression of encouragement and support); showing consideration for students' difficulties; and seeking to enrich students' horizons beyond the confines of the official curriculum.

Coequality: Humor And Amiability. This means using humor in teaching, joking with students as you would with friends.

Alienating Teaching. Teaching subjects that are irrelevant to students; " 'condensed' teaching," i.e., squeezing too many subjects into a limited schedule; and ignoring students in class, thus preventing full involvement in class activities of entire student body.

Derogating Students. Deprecating or insulting students, or embarrassing them by highlighting their personal or performance weaknesses in front of the class.

Generally speaking, the more confident and self-possessed the individual, the more self-acceptance, realism, objectivity, and clarity he or she has about personal abilities and limitations, the more effectively he or she can respond professionally to others' problems. Even in particularly difficult circumstances, such effective professionals are equipped better to remain calm and resourceful, and are far less likely to punish him themselves with feelings of helplessness, frustrated rage, guilt, or humiliating failure. Professionals, therefore, would be well advised to examine the profile of a "good professional" ("good teacher" in teaching profession terms), and mark the points that apply most to themselves, in other words, to evaluate personal strengths and weaknesses. Listing these attributes, both positive and negative, may prove instrumental in a self-improvement "work-plan." In this context, it is worth noting the following points raised by Fontana (1985) that apply to the teaching profession. Analogies to other professions easily may be made. The points are presented in the paragraphs that follow:

> Teachers experience some measure of anxiety when faced with a new class or one that they consider problematic. Such situations make teachers nervous and uncertain, which may lead to mistakes that would not otherwise occur. There is no simple answer to the question of what can be done about this fear. However, it may be helpful for teachers to consider several suggestions. First, it is reassuring to acknowledge that fear is a common and natural response to threatening situations, and therefore nothing to be ashamed of. Secondly, it helps to analyze fear, and identify its symptoms and their etiology. Thirdly, having analyzed symptoms and etiology, to practice non-identification with them. Identify, instead, with some non-stressful activities and reactions. Fourthly, rather than expect rapid results, the teacher should give him/herself reasonable time to adjust to coping with the (new) situation. Fifth, when in a relaxed frame of mind, practice visualizing and reliving situations that usually arouse anger (primary reaction to threat). Observe them calmly and analyze them.

Three more practical suggestions can be made here. The first is a suggestion not to dwell on failures and mistakes. These should be regarded as useful learning opportunities. Analyze what went wrong and why, determine ways of avoiding such eventualities

in the future, then put the whole subject out of mind. The second is a suggestion to cultivate a sense of humor. It is good practice to chuckle over errors when they happen and when they are reviewed. Sometimes humor means the ability to recognize the gap between expected and observed levels of performance. The third is to keep expectations realistic, both in terms of service recipients and in professional terms.

Stress Management. Stress management techniques also may be useful in alleviating burnout. Reviews of the literature on stress management techniques indicate that four major practices universally have been found helpful in various professions:

1. Exercise. We may perhaps regard this as the post-modern version of the "fight or flight" response to stressful situations. Significant tranquilizing effects can be produced by moderate rhythmic exercise of 5 to 30 minutes' duration, with routine vigorous exercise producing a reduction in anxiety and depression.
2. Relaxation training. This involves a number of methods that professionals can apply at home and at work: breathing exercises, muscle relaxation, meditation, and mental relaxation strategies. The benefits appear to be reduced levels of anxiety, alcohol consumption and perceived stress—all problems experienced by human-service professionals.
3. Biofeedback. This involves the voluntary control of physiological mechanisms: brain waves, heart rate, muscle tension, stomach acidity, and blood pressure. Its benefits include reduced anxiety and tension, fewer incidences of migraine, headaches, and stress-related hypertension.
4. Cognitive-behavioral techniques. The purpose of cognitive techniques is to allow and encourage individuals to reappraise or restructure stressful situations so that they are no longer stressful—reevaluating expectations and standards by removing cognitive distortions such as overgeneralizing, magnifying and personalization, and by introducing assertiveness training. Cognitive-behavioral techniques can be useful in helping individuals control their stress reactions.

The Organization Domain

The "Organization" domain of the professional self-efficacy approach is pertinent especially to those working in organized settings. Obviously, the head or heads of the organization should be highly instrumental in enhancing organizational sense of self-efficacy among "rank-and-file" employees. Several key measures may be adopted by schools to assist teachers: (1) School principals may want to adopt supportive, encouraging, and participative managerial styles; (2) Organizational goals, expectations, and role-assignments,should be clearly stated and sufficiently flexible; (3) Communications within the school and among all members of the school community should be facilitated (teachers–principal, teachers–teachers, teachers–students); (4) Good collegial and social support should be encouraged; and (5) Professional development (including stress-alleviation workshops and workshops on coping with discipline problems) should be available.

Conclusion

The professional self-efficacy approach to understanding burnout suggests that an efficient reduction in stress may be gained by defining more realistic, achievable goals in teaching and schoolwork. It also may be important to formulate an acceptable, agreed-upon definition of the formal and informal boundaries between students and teachers

(and between service providers and service recipients in other professions), and to establish clear and acceptable boundaries within relationships between teachers, principals, and colleagues.

Raising the professional's awareness of the issue of stress and burnout, either prior to entering the teaching profession or during the first year in teaching, seems an important measure in combating burnout. It was learned in the workshops reported in this article that teachers benefited greatly from listening to colleagues describing their stress experiences. The feeling of not being alone in the stress arena is a source of support and comfort and might open for the individual avenues for a better understanding of the burnout phenomenon, its causes, and directions in coping. One of the most important conclusions to emerge from the workshops was that by the time teachers had completed the workshop, they were able to pinpoint their own idiosyncratic sources of stress, and some could even suggest general behavior modification to assist in coping.

Finally, one of the major changes that teachers encounter that has taken place in recent decades is the decline in support from parents. Teachers believe that far from supporting them in their roles as educators, parents blame them for any problems that occur both in the classroom and out of it. It may be suggested that it would improve the situation to bring in parents actually to supervise children between classes and undertake some of the educational tasks required of a teacher. In so doing, teaching would be looked at differently.

Select References/Recommended Readings

Bandura, A. (1997). The exercise of control. New York: W.H. Freeman and Co.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). Flow, the psychology of optimal experience. New York: Harper Perennial.

Farber, B.A. (1991). Crisis in education. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Fontana, D. (1985). Classroom control. London: The British Psychological Society and Methuen.

Friedman, I.A. (1996). Multiple pathways to burnout: Cognitive and emotional scenarios in teacher burnout. Anxiety, Stress, and Coping, 9, 245–259.

Friedman, I.A., & Lotan, I. (1993). Teacher stress and burnout [in Hebrew]. Jerusalem: The Henrietta Szold Institute.

French, J.R.P., Caplan, R.D., & Van Harrison, R. (1982). The mechanisms of job stress and strain. Chichester, England: Wiley.

Hobfoll, S.E. (1988). The ecology of stress. New York: Hemisphere.

Jesus, S.N., & Paixao, M.P. (1996, September). The "Reality Shock" of the beginning teachers. Paper presented at the International Conference of FEDORA, Coimbra, Portugal.

Katz, R.L. (1975). Skills of an effective administrator. In Harvard business review: On management. New York: Harper & Row, 19–38.

Lazarus, R.S. (1993). From psychological stress to the emotions. Annual Review of Psychology, 44, 1–6.

Maslach, C. & Leiter, M. (1997). The truth about burnout. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Maslach, C., & Schaufeli, W.B. (1993). Historical and conceptual development of human burnout. In W.B. Schaufeli, C. Maslach, & T. Marek (Eds.), Professional burnout (pp. 1–18). Washington, DC: Taylor & Francis.

Rozenholtz, S.J. (1989). Workplace conditions that affect teacher quality and commitment implications for teacher induction. The Elementary School Journal, 4, 421–438.

Weinstein, C.S. (1988). Preservice teachers expectations about first year of teaching. Teaching and Teacher Education, 4(1), 31–40.