

Child Care Resource and Training Kit

Child Care Resource Training Kit - Stress and Burnout - Overheads

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Stress and Burnout:

What they are and how to avoid them!



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Today we are going to talk about stress and burnout. Too much stress and what happens? You burnout. We're going to talk about the problems with that.

But let's start with an activity. In your handouts is a paper with a little guy saying "What Is Stress?" Let's work on that. What is stress for you?

Solicit answers and write them on flip-chart paper.

Stress



- Any event that places a demand on your body, either mentally or physically.

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Let's look at the definitions of stress. Read slide and discuss. Stress can be positive or negative, good things or bad things. Talk about good stressful situations and bad stressful situations.

Positive and Negative Stress



- However, regardless of whether the stress is positive or negative, your initial physiological reaction is much the same.

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Read the slide and discuss how the body physiologically reacts to stress. Insert non-electronic overhead with the Body's response to stressful situation.

Stress Reduction Strategy



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- Your stress reduction strategy should be to minimize your negative stress factors and maximize the positive ones.

Read slide. Jumping over a rainbow could do that for you. Discuss possible ways to do that. Write ideas on flip chart paper.

Let's look at Stress and Performance. Insert non-electronic overhead of stress and performance. Discuss the diagram and how it works.

Let's talk now about some myths of stress.

Myths of Stress



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- Stress is harmful.
- Stress should be avoided.
- The more responsibility, the greater the stress.
- Stress is male-dominated.
- There is only one right way to cope with stress.

Read and discuss each point, showing them how it is erroneous.

Sources of Stress



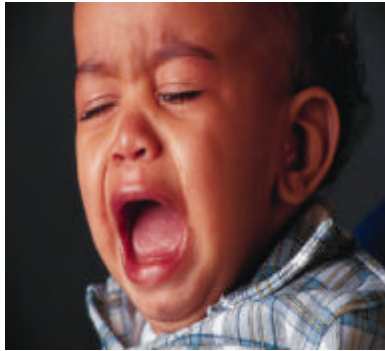
- Personal Stressors

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Let's look at the sources of stress. What might some personal stressors be?
(Write list on flip chart paper.)

Sources of Stress



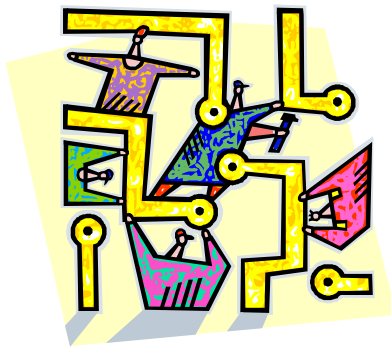
- Interpersonal Stressors

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What might be some interpersonal stressors you might face?

Sources of Stress



- Work Stressors

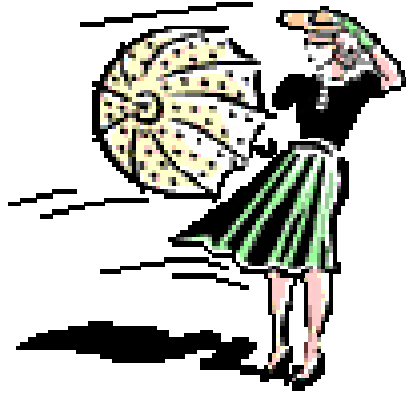
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I think this category has a lot of potential for causing stress, particularly in your field of child care. Generate list. Be sure it includes:

- Work overload
- Under work (quiet day in the infant room and everyone keeps coming in to get you to help with their work)
- Job ambiguity (are you the lead or not)
- Organizational structure
- Role conflict
- Managing people
- Parents

Sources of Stress



- Environmental Stressors

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What are some environmental stressors in the child care area?

- Work that is hard on the back and body
- Small chairs

Sources of Stress



- Private Life Stressors

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What might some of these be? (Generate list) So you see, some of these can be short term, like having a bad morning getting the children off to school, and some can be long term, like not having enough money for food and tennis shoes in the same month.

It's the private life stressors, those that you can't walk away from, that make you feel that you are carrying the world on your shoulders.

Let's take a few minutes now and do another activity. In your handout packet is "Assessing Stressors". Put one point on either the agree or disagree line for each item. Do the subtotal. We'll look at your level of stress and do the final scores when you complete. This is a good tool for assessing your stressors.

Job Burnout and Early Childhood Education

- The Burnout Profile
- Harmful Effects of Burnout
- Program Consequences



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The burnout profile is emotional and physical exhaustion. It is disillusionment with your job and with your life. It is filled with self-doubt and blame.

The effects of burnout are many. Physically, you can get:

- Ulcers
- High blood pressure
- Chronic illness (headaches, muscle tension)
- Insomnia
- Poor nutrition
- Excessive eating that leads to weight problems
- Increased use of alcohol or drugs or smoking
- Deterioration of your body condition (losing muscle mass)

Psychologically and socially you may see:

- Depression
- Boredom
- Apathy, passivity
- Loss of self-esteem and an increase in isolation
- A feeling of being out-of-control
- Spiritual needs are out of balance
- Irritability and increased anxiety leading to tense and toxic interpersonal relationships
- An increase in resistance to change
- An increase in escape activities, like shopping sprees and daydreaming

And with job performance you will see:

- Ineffective time management
- Irresponsibility
- Malingering
- A feeling of failure
- Low morale
- Low productivity
- Program quality disruption and deterioration of services
- A talent drain.

Pretty scary isn't it? Let's take a minute and look at where you all are on the burnout scale. In your packet is "Are You a Candidate for Burnout?" Take a few minutes to complete this. Then we'll talk about conquering burnout.

Steps to Success



- Selection
- Causes
- Solutions
- Plan of Action
- Implementation

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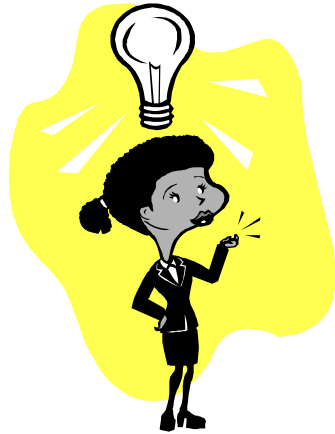
Step one in conquering burnout is to decide what you are going to work on. We've all had those new year's resolutions where we were going to lose weight, exercise more, read 2 hours every day, keep our house spotless, and on and on and on. And we were all successful for what, 1 hour?

If you are going to conquer your burnout and stop the process, start with one thing. Your key is to choose what is the most stressful for you. Start there.

Discuss how they can decide what is the most stressful for them.

Then look at what causes this stress in your life. If you can see what the cause is, then you can begin to look at what the solution might be. If you are stressed because you are always late for work in the morning and your boss yells at you, but you are late because your daughter is slow to get going in the morning, maybe the solution is to get up a little earlier, and therefore, to go to bed a little earlier. Then your plan of action would be to talk to your daughter about the plan, set it up and begin implementation. You need to give it some time to work. And evaluate whether or not it is successful. But if you have made an honest assessment and set up a plan that can be successful, a plan that doesn't set you up to fail, then you are well on your way!

Stress Survivor



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- Ask Questions.
- Find Creative Solutions.

If you take a look around at people who are living with high levels of stress, and using it to their best interest, you will find creative ways that they do this. One way is to ask questions. Look at your situation and ask questions about what is going on and what you could be doing differently, or the same. And then, look creatively at the problems, and find creative solutions.

Stress Survivor



- Find some humor
- Find a relaxing hobby
- Plan ahead
- Schedule
- Set priorities

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It's always important to be able to laugh, at the situation, at yourself, at whatever is going on. Just laugh, and the stress will decrease, or you will feel more in control of that stress.

By finding something that you like to do, that is relaxing for you, like gardening, playing a sport, taking a walk, doing a craft, ...by doing something that is relaxing for you, you are removing yourself from the stressful activity and putting yourself into a place where your mind and body can relax. Discuss why TV doesn't work for this.

Planning ahead for stressful times is helpful because it puts you in control of the stress rather than stress-producing situations controlling you.

Look at your schedule. Do you need to increase or decrease the number of activities? Is the sheer volume of what you are doing so much as to be stressful? Or are there several stressful activities that are back-to-back? Try to weave in stressful with not-so-stressful. You will be more productive that way.

And set priorities. Make a list. Ask yourself the following questions:

- What things do I need to do now?
- What things can wait?
- What things can others do?
- What things can be left undone?

This will help you with setting those priorities, and leaving behind those things that don't really need your attention right now.

Stress Survivor



- Engage in physical exercise.
- Avoid caffeine.
- Avoid alcohol and drugs.

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Take a walk, go swimming, take a bicycle ride, go bowling. Do something. Move your body in a rhythmic manner. (Discuss how exercise decreases stress.)

Avoid caffeine in coffee, tea, chocolate and soda-pop. The caffeine will increase your anxiety. And you'll be jittery on top of being stressed out.

Discuss the impact of alcohol and drugs on stress: Increases stress by making them less able to cope with issues.

Stress Survivor



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- Relax and put the crisis in perspective.
- Assess life expectations.
- Examine significant life areas.

Sometimes we get so wrapped up in the problem that we can't see reality.

Take a breath. Step back. And look at the problem. In the grand scheme of things, how important is this anyway?

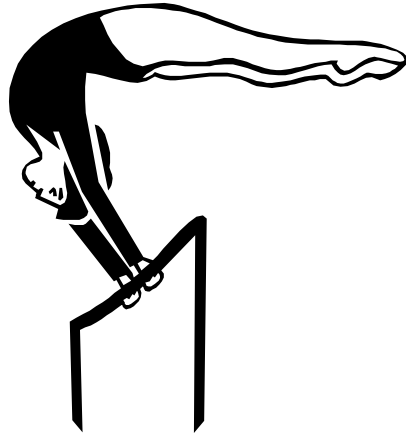
And look at your life expectations. Are you being realistic with what you expect of yourself?

And are you dividing your time between the significant areas of your life the way you would like to? You have five significant areas of your life:

1. Family
2. Work
3. Spiritual
4. Health
5. Social

Is each area getting the time it needs? And how much time would you like to spend in each area in 6 months, or one year, or five years from now? And what are you going to have to do to get there?

Stress Survivor



- Stay flexible.
- Practice relaxation exercises.
- Have some quiet, reflective time each day.

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When things get stressful, it is very easy to get very rigid. At those times, it is very important to stay flexible. Go with the flow. Be willing to change your mind.

Practice relaxation exercises, prayer, biofeedback, transcendental meditation, yoga: whatever you do to have some quiet, reflective time each day. This keeps your mind clear and keeps you moving.

Stress Survivor



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- See the crisis as a challenge.
- Do not give up.

Sometimes instead of seeing the crisis as a huge problem to surmount, see it as a challenge, as something you want to win and attain. The change in perspective will decrease the stress you internalize. It won't decrease the work you have to do, but it will change how you view the work.

And don't give up. Change occurs very gradually. But you will get there. You will reach the mountain top.

Stress Survivor



- Assess your resources and social support.
- Find someone to talk to.

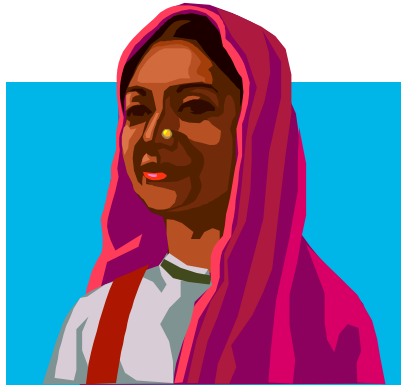
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Assess your resources and social supports in coping with the situation. Ask yourself: Do I have support from family? Friends? Neighbors? Colleagues? It's important that you find someone you can trust and can talk to about your conflicts and your ideas for possible alternatives.

And if the pressure becomes too much and you feel unable to cope, get help from your physician, your minister, or a mental health professional.

Attitude



- Attitude is more important than facts.

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Read Charles Swindoll's piece on Attitude.