

Quality Education News

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Dear Supporter of Quality Education

Did you see the recent rugby match between the Springboks and the All Blacks? It was a cliff-hanger with the high drama in the 78th minute. With two minutes to full time, the All Blacks were leading by a single point. Then came that match-changing decision from the referee.



Pat Lambie gets a kick out of stress

South Africa was awarded a penalty. It was to be taken 52 yards from the All Blacks' try line. If the ball was kicked between the posts, South Africa would win by two points; miss and the Boks would lose by a single point. Pat Lambie stepped up to take the kick. The 63,000 supporters at Ellis Park held their breath; millions watching around the world held their breath too. In such a stressful situation, Lambie held his nerve. He kicked the ball high, long and accurately between the posts. South African fans rejoiced. Their much respected but old rugby foe had been defeated 27-25.

Pat Lambie had been put under incredible stress but he used that very same stress to 'up his performance'. That hugely stressful situation helped him scale new heights of kicking excellence. Stress can be a most positive experience. This type of stress is positive and referred to as 'eustress'.

Teachers experience stress on a daily basis but often it's not of the 'eustress' kind. There's too much stress and it's unrelenting. Seldom is there a chance to catch one's breath or even switch off. Such stress is emotionally, mentally and physically harmful. This negative stress is called 'distress'.

Towards the end of every school year, levels of negative stress can soar. If you're on the staff of a school or have been, you know the reasons. A small number of causes of stress (known as 'stressors') are:

- Setting exam papers and marking them in very tight time frames,
- Compiling events calendars for the next year and teaching timetables,
- Taking part in planning and promotion meetings,
- Organising Farewell, Prize-Giving, Thank You events and Valedictions,

- Make arrangements caused by staff being appointed to other schools or resignations and retirements.

In the midst of all this hectic and stressful activity at one school, a teacher exclaimed with wry humour:

'Give me a break ... before I break down!'

We are aware of the critical shortage of Quality teachers in South African education. Every effort should be made to keep them in the profession. In this issue of QEN there'll be a look at practical ways to help keep negative stress to a minimum.

When the December holidays arrive, may you be able to relax and de-stress! Should it be a time of religious celebration, may it be a time of Blessing and Peace.

Sincerely

Richard Hayward

Baie dankie! Many thanks! Ke lebohile haholo! Ndo livhuwa ngama nda!

QEN is a Social Responsibility Initiative of SAQI. Paul Harding, the Managing Director, is wonderfully supportive of this publication and personally spreads the Quality Education message nationally and internationally. Behind the scenes at SAQI is Vanessa du Toit, who does much administrative work in a most professional and friendly manner.

Ever-helpful Damian Kelly at Virtual Marketing ensures that every issue of QEN is put on the Woolworths MySchool website.

The editor doesn't have graphic design skills but Aubrey Jansen certainly does! Aubrey is gifted at graphics and he transforms every issue of QEN into a beautiful eye-catching one.

Many readers kindly download QEN and print copies for those who don't have computer facilities. Thank you to those principals who forward the newsletter on to all their staff members. Teacher union leader such as Mike Myburgh of NAPTOSA (Gauteng) distribute the newsletter to members in the province. How grateful we are for all that practical support.

To everyone who is helping to spread the Quality Education message, please take a bow to appreciative applause!



This newsletter is edited by SAQI and distributed to those schools benefiting from their participation in the MySchool programme. MySchool acts as a conduit which raises and delivers essential funding for education and social development on a sustainable basis. This enables members of the community to participate in the future development of our nation.



MySchool MyVillage MyPlanet
EVERY SWIPE COUNTS

What are the stress symptoms?

Robert Burns, in his book *Coping with stress*, identifies six areas of stress. His checklist helps a person get a sense of whether or not they're really stressed. Everyone experiences stress. Yet it's the duration and intensity which decide whether or not it's harmful. Too much stress leads to burnout which might result in the person's emotional, mental and physical collapse. Burns's six stress symptoms are:

1 Physical or what happens to your body

Increased heart rate (pounding); elevated blood pressure; tightness in the chest; tightness in neck or back muscles; susceptibility to minor illnesses such as colds; fatigue; trembling; slumped posture; sleep disturbance.

2 Emotional or how you feel

Irritability; lowered self-esteem; depression, diminished initiative; tendency to cry; reduction of personal involvement with others; critical of oneself and others; lacking in confidence.

3 Intellectual or how you think

Forgetfulness; difficulty in making decisions; lack of concentration; mental confusion; lack of attention to detail; orientation to past; over-sensitivity to criticism.

4 Behavioural or how you act

Increased smoking; aggressive driving; having accidents; clumsiness; nervous laughter; increased alcohol or drug use; eating too much; panic; fast (even incoherent) speech; carelessness.

5 Your health

Asthma; coronary heart disease; dizziness; headaches/migraines; skin complaints; cancer; nightmares; ulcers; indigestion.

6 Your work

Increased absenteeism; less job satisfaction; poor relationship with fellow workers; lower productivity; less commitment to the job; less creativity.



The female factor and stressors

In the past, women were expected to stay at home with the kids which is hard enough on its own. Now, as well as running a household and taking care of the family, we have careers too ... we place too much pressure on ourselves and we feel we need to be supermom, super career woman, super wife and super model. It's exhausting!

Jacqui O'Bree

Women teachers are the overwhelming majority in most staffrooms. The quote above highlights the additional stressors that many women teachers could be confronted with at school. Pam Gillingham is the director of The Family Life Centre in Johannesburg. She makes the point that women with the classic 'Type A' personality are more prone to burnout. Her reasoning is because of, 'the intensity with which they face challenges and life in general.'

O'Bree gives sound stress management tips for women but which apply equally to men. Set technology boundaries for the family by switching off cellphones during supper time. Emails should be checked only during work hours. Aim to have at least one technology-free day every week to spend more time with the family.

Burns, R 1988. *Coping with stress*. Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman.

Gillingham, P & O' Bree, J 2014. Quoted in 'Are you burning out?' (Author unknown). *Your Family*, August, page 24.

Getting negative stress under control

'Always available, 24/7' seems to be a mantra for managers and leaders of our digital age. Research has shown that the average cellphone user will access it about 150 times a day. The addict will check their device about 900 times a day and also launch 60 apps a day. Then there are those folk who sit at the computer the whole day receiving and responding to emails. A new form symptom of stress that's been identified in the 21st century is digital burnout.

In an attempt to deal with this relentless overload of information and personal availability, there are companies that are dealing with this new stressor. Staff are requested to open emails and deal with them within a few designated hours per day. Outside of those times, the email writer needs to wait until the next day for a reply. In Germany it's already illegal for staff to be contacted while they're on holiday. (As an aside, Germany has a work-week average of about 40 hours and still maintains an excellent productivity level.) Volkswagen has a company rule that emails have to be switched off at the end of every work day.

How many schools in 2014 give staff cellphone numbers to parents? How many schools expect teachers to respond straight away to cellphone calls, emails and SMS messages received outside the long and usually exhausting school day?



The ABCs of managing teacher stress

A simple stress management model for teachers has been designed by Nagel and Brown (cited by Mrozek). It states:

A Acknowledgement of the stress: To acknowledge that one is stressed is not a weakness. It shows a willingness to deal with a reality of the teaching profession. Healing can start when there's acceptance of the situation.

B Behaviour modification: To deal with the stress there is a need to change behaviour in areas such as diet, exercise, conflict resolution skills, ways of thinking and work-life balance.

C Communication with learners and other staff: To communicate one's expectations of classroom behaviour to learners is important. A Code of Conduct as well as policies and procedures should be in place. Also, other staff members need to understand the teacher's expectations within the work environment.

Included in that communication might be the need to get outside help if the stress does not reduce. Support could come from family and friends; professional help could also be given by a medical doctor or psychologist.

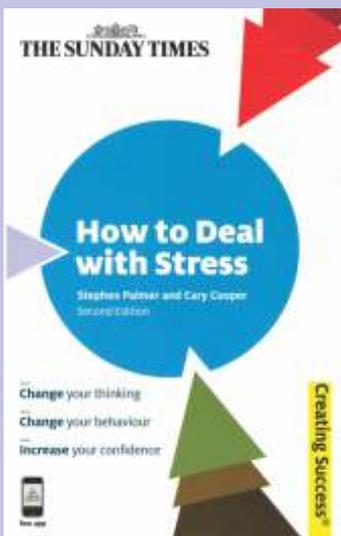
A somewhat dry-wit but sensible list to help teachers get control of their work environment was drawn up by Russell Joseph.

Controlling the work environment

1. Thou shalt not be perfect or even try to be.
2. Thou shalt not try to be ALL things to ALL people.
3. Thou shalt leave things undone that ought to be undone.
4. Thou shalt not spread thyself too thinly.
5. Thou shalt learn to say 'No'.
6. Thou shalt schedule time for thyself and support network.
7. Thou shalt switch off and do nothing – regularly.
8. Thou shalt be boring, inelegant, untidy and unattractive at times.
9. Thou shalt not feel guilty.
10. Thou shalt not be thine own worst enemy but be thine own best friend.

Joseph, R 2000. *Stress free teaching. A practical guide to tackling stress in teaching, lecturing and tutoring*. London: Kogan Page.

Mrozek, K undated. *Teacher stress*. (Unpublished manuscript).cedu.niu.ed.



Publisher: Kogan Page
Price: R91
ISBN 978-0-7494-5619-1

It's seldom that a stress management book is reprinted seven times by the publisher. That's the case with this book. Stephen Palmer and Cary Cooper are world authorities on the topic of stress. They've been able to put academic research into the language of the layman. Their book is brimful of common sense advice on beating negative stress.

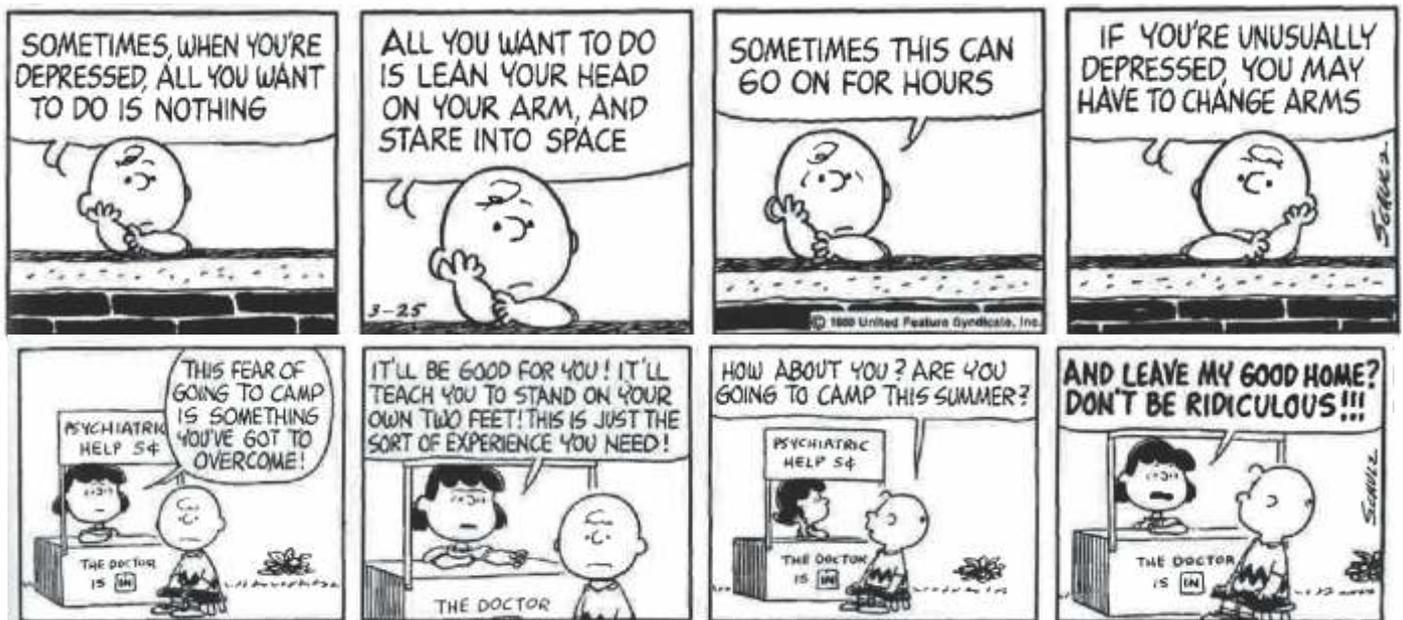
One way of dealing with stress is to see it in psychological terms. There's a need to change our stress-inducing attitudes, rules and beliefs. One chapter of the book is titled, 'Changing your thinking'. How often do we have faulty thinking which increase our stress levels? A single example from the book is Fortune Telling. This is when we predict the worst-case scenario even though we have insufficient evidence. Fortune Telling thinking would make a statement such as, "We won't

reach the deadline. I can see it all going wrong."

The authors give guidelines on how to grow in personal confidence, self-esteem and self-acceptance. There are questionnaires to help a person pinpoint what their real stressors are as well as action plans to reduce them.

Every workplace has stress. A model is given of work stress which identifies six potential hazards, namely: demands, control, lack of manager and/or peer support, relationships, role and change. Practical ways of reducing them are given.

We all experience stress. It's to be found in every staffroom and school. If you want to get a grip on stress, this splendid easy-to-read book shows you the way.



Acknowledgement: C Schulz 2000. *Peanuts Anniversary Treasury*. West Sussex: Ravette Publishing.

“Should I stay in teaching? I'm losing my motivation to teach.”

When the stress of teaching gets too much, teachers often think of quitting. Some do. As a country we cannot afford to lose a single quality teacher. Then, of course, there are those who stay in the profession but become demotivated and apathetic.

Yet thousands of teachers stay highly motivated and love teaching. How do they do it? In the SACE-endorsed presentation, “Should I stay in teaching? I'm losing my motivation ...” their motivation strategies are shared. The presenter, Richard Hayward, does the workshop under the aegis of SAQI. It earns 5 Professional Development points. For more details of this and five other SACE-endorsed programmes, please contact him on 011 888 3262 or rpdhayward@yahoo.com Otherwise, go to www.saqi.co.za and click on 'Quality Education' for the details.



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