

# THE STRESS OF BEING AN EDUCATOR, PARENT, SPOUSE AND MORE...

Laura was aware of her growing fatigue and frustration that had begun to affect her mood. Without provocation, she found herself being verbally short with her students. That was not like her. She loved teaching. At home she found she had the same tendencies to be abrupt with her family and even sound angry at times. “What’s going on with me,” she wondered? There were even times when she even found herself being tearful for no apparent reason.

She had her good days and her bad days, still uncertain what was going on with her. She was trying to adjust—to pull it together—when one day her husband complained that the house was a mess. That was it! That was the proverbial straw that breaks the camel’s back and she went off on him! “Who do you think I am?” She screamed! “I’m not the maid and I’m not the only one who lives here! If you don’t like the way the house looks, why don’t you clean it up! What do you expect from me?” And with that, it all came out. Months, maybe years of frustration and trying to be the best wife possible, mother of the year, and an outstanding teacher at school. Everywhere she turned she felt like someone was saying, “You’re not doing enough” or “You’re not good enough!”

Although her husband sat there with the look of someone who had just witnessed the explosion of the atomic bomb, she felt the pressure inside had finally been released. As she thought about it, it had almost been released on the assistant principal at school a few days prior when he notified her of a new responsibility she was being given. He apologized for asking it of her, but he needed her help. She wanted to scream then, but knew she couldn’t. It was all a part of the job. Returning to the living room where her husband was now suffering from PTSD, she sat down beside him and wept. He consoled her and tried to fix the problem like men do, but she knew what she had to do. She had to accept she had limits and make some changes.

Although the story of Laura was a fictional story created to make a point, no doubt someone reading this has experienced something similar. Excessive demands at work and home. The pressure to be everything others think you should be in your role as an educator, spouse, parent, and similar roles. People in general seem to be concerned about what educators do or do not do, but who is concerned about the educator? It’s a question that needs to be asked more often. In spite of what some may think, you and I both know that after a day in the classroom it’s not easy to simply change hats on the way home and energetically attack a whole new set of challenges.

Studies have been done to verify and explain the source of the stress educators feel and the toll it can take on them. In a longitudinal study that examined the causes and consequences of psychological burnout among teachers and school administrators, there were several factors that consistently stood out. “Antecedents included red tape, disruptive students and lack of supervisor support. Consequences of burnout included heart symptoms and depressive mood.”

In another study “two types of triggers” were found to have a significant impact. The first was “excessive demands” and the other was “a concern with self-image.” No matter how rewarding educators ultimately view their work, the demands still take their toll. Stress, anxiety, worry, pressure, and more can easily drain even the most enthusiastic of educators of their energy and leave them feeling burnout. Couple this with the demands at home, at church, or socially and burnout is just around the corner.

Some may not always realize “burnout” is the issue, but when there is a feeling of overwhelming exhaustion, constant frustration, anger, a cynical attitude, or feeling ineffective or like a failure, it may just have arrived. Too often people in this predicament feel bad about themselves, or feel guilty for reasons they can’t fully explain, or just want to escape--but they don’t always see any way to make it better.

In spite of this talk of stress, there is good news! Emotional support or just someone to listen to your feelings can often be found in a variety of ways such as: your local minister or pastor, a professional counselor, a close friend, or support groups specializing in specific concerns in your life. Additionally, just taking and making the time during your week to do something enjoyable such as going to a movie, a concert or event, exercising, reading your favorite kind of book, outdoor activities, and other things you would find to be enjoyable or even fun!

Perhaps there is something that can be changed at work. Maybe there is nothing you can do to change your workload. You can still find ways to empower yourself and achieve a more equitable balance in your life.

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#### **References**

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