

OECTA advisor

Real life situations and solutions

By Joe Pece

Teaching is one of the most rewarding professions, but it is also one of the most demanding. Research shows that more and more teachers are dealing with stress as a result of their job, and it is contributing to an increasing number of teachers leaving the profession.

As a teacher, managing the stress you experience, and the triggers that cause your stress, is critical to creating a healthy and productive work environment and maintaining your overall health and well being.

Interactions with co-workers, administration, students and parents can create a stressful workplace, even under the best of circumstances. Some of the more common workplace stressors for teachers include:

- Major change
- Teacher Performance Appraisal
- Lack of peer support
- Reporting to parents
- Limited affirmation of work
- Heavy workload, long working hours, large class sizes
- Conflict with other teachers and professionals
- Little opportunity to participate in decision making
- Lack of administrative supports
- Unreasonable expectations

Everyone's triggers and reactions to stress are different. Managing your stress starts with identifying sources of stress in your personal and work life.

The Counselling and Member Services Department developed the booklet *Managing Stress and Promoting Wellness: A guide for teachers on managing stress in the workplace and beyond*, which was recently provided to all OECTA members and is available on the OECTA website, www.oecta.on.ca, in the Contracts and Rights section. This resource presents a summary of concepts, ideas and suggestions to help teachers deal with frustration, stress, burnout and other mental health related issues that can result from unprecedented pressures imposed on classroom teachers today.

The Managing Stress booklet is intended to help you assess your circumstances, become aware of your responses to

stress and establish a healthy approach to challenges you face as a teacher. The booklet contains a number of practical suggestions that you can adopt to create a healthier work environment as well as reduce the impact of stress in your life.

Additionally, every school board has some form of Employee Assistance Program (EAP) that offers access to services and professionals who provide external and confidential support. Most programs offer some free services and/or counselling in the areas of family, marriage/divorce, depression, grief, addiction, finances, anger and stress management.

OECTA can help you obtain support through your EAP and will be able to answer questions regarding access to sick leave, short-term disability (SSP) and/or long-term disability (LTD) and workplace accommodations, if needed.

By recognizing and addressing problems early, you can prevent more serious issues from developing and can create a healthier and more productive work environment for you and your students.

Advice is always available through your local OECTA unit or the provincial Counselling and Member Services Department.

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