Focus:

The focus of “Stress Management for Teachers” is a comprehensive presentation of the impact of teachers’ stress on students and on teachers themselves. There are many indicators that teachers’ stress is not adequately addressed in our schools.

This workshop is to enhance the understanding of negative effects of stress in the classroom. Furthermore, the workshop’s focus will be to understand the nature of stress and to address specific sources of stress that undermine effective teaching and learning in the classroom.

Intended Audience: Teachers, Educational Assistance, CYWs, and Social Workers

Rationale:

A teaching job is a delicate job that requires specific behaviour in the classroom. Teachers need psychological, physical and spiritual balance. Our society expects teachers to be well rounded educationally and emotionally. However, teachers experience a number of different pressures and stressors such as: taking work home, difficult students, difficult classes, lack of administrative support, pressure from parents, teachers’ evaluation, ongoing learning, social isolation, job uncertainty, integration of intelligence and technology, students’ and parents’ bullying……..

For all of these reasons teachers need to learn how to recognize stress and stressors.

Goals of Workshop:

- To learn the nature of stress
- To recognize the sources of stress
- To assess stress
- To learn stress reduction strategies
- To create a relaxing environment conducive to peer development

Time: 2 hours
Presentation Format:

The workshop consists of 8 parts:

- Introduction
- Discussion
- Group work
- Stress presentation
- Stress test
- Tips for reducing stress and relaxation techniques
- Introduction to yoga and meditation
- Option: Alternative workshop in lieu of Tips and Yoga
- Closure

Materials and Resources:
Pens, pencils, papers, handouts; food: water, fresh fruit, yoghurt

Handouts:
- Stress test
- Tips for reducing stress
- Relaxation techniques
- Meditation
- 101 Ways to Cope with Stress

Presentation:

Part I: Introduction (10 minutes)

1. Introduction of self and workshop

Part II: Discussion (15 minutes)

1. Ask audience to volunteer some stressful experiences or incidents
2. Let audience explain how they feel and work under stress and pressure
3. Acknowledge their experience and facilitate empathy

Part III: Group Work (20 minutes)

1. Divide the audience into groups of 5
2. Ask them to work on 5 different scenarios of different stressors
3. Ask groups to present their group work
Part IV: Stress Presentation (25 minutes)

- Definition: Stress, Fear, and Anxiety
- Mind-Body Dichotomy
- Identification of Stress Indicators
- School as a Source of Stress
- Self-Stress Assessment
- Prevention and Control

Discussion Points:

Stress

Now, the most commonly accepted definition of stress (mainly attributed to Richard S. Lazarus) is that stress is a condition or feeling experienced when a person perceives that demands exceed the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilize.

People feel little stress when they have the time, experience and resources to manage a situation. They feel great stress when they think they can't handle the demands put upon them. Stress is therefore a negative experience. And it is not an inevitable consequence of an event: It depends a lot on people's perceptions of a situation and their real ability to cope with it.

“Fight-or-Flight”

Some of the early work on stress (conducted by Walter Cannon in 1932) established the existence of the well-known fight-or-flight response. His work showed that when an animal experiences a shock or perceives a threat, it quickly releases hormones that help it to survive.

These hormones help us to run faster and fight harder. They increase heart rate and blood pressure, delivering more oxygen and blood sugar to power important muscles. They increase sweating in an effort to cool these muscles, and help them stay efficient. They divert blood away from the skin to the core of our bodies, reducing blood loss if we are damaged. And as well as this, these hormones focus our attention on the threat, to the exclusion of everything else. All of this significantly improves our ability to survive life-threatening events.

Power, but little control...

Unfortunately, this mobilization of the body for survival also has negative consequences. In this state, we are excitable, anxious, jumpy and irritable. This reduces our ability to work effectively with other people.

With trembling and a pounding heart, we can find it difficult to execute precise, controlled skills. And the intensity of our focus on survival interferes with our ability to make fine
judgments based on drawing information from many sources. We find ourselves more accident-prone and less able to make good decisions.

**Understanding Causes of Stress in Your Life**

This section introduces you to some useful tools that help you to understand the sources of stress in your life. This section also helps you understand the way you react to stress, so that you change the way you handle it.

**The tools in this section help you to:**

- Understand the long-term stress in your life;
- Understand the most serious sources of short-term stress;
- Make best use of all of the resources available to you;
- Find stress management techniques that will be helpful; and
- Plan to manage stress.

**Understand where you are now...**

This section helps you understand the stresses in your life and plan to manage them, so that you can concentrate fully on the job in hand, and truly enjoy the work you do.

The first part of managing stress is to understand the short term stresses you experience so that you can anticipate stressful situations and learn to use the stress management techniques that are most appropriate for each situation.

**Recognize longer-term stresses as well as short-term stress**

What you may not have thought about are the deeper, longer-term stresses in your life. For example, the transition from college to a new job involves radical changes in lifestyle, location and personal status that can be deeply stressful.

As another example, anyone changing jobs or roles will experience a formidable array of new challenges and difficulties – all of these can be intensely stressful. Similarly, the joys and upsets of relationships and families also have their stresses. Remember, all of these will have an impact on your ability to cope.

The first technique we will look at is the “Schedule of Recent Experience”. This helps you to understand the longer-term stresses in your life. It sets the broad context of your approach to stress management, and helps you to understand how to bring the long-term stress in your life within manageable bounds.

**Stress Diary**

Next, we look at keeping and analyzing a Stress Diary. Stress Diaries help you to understand the day-to-day stresses in your life so that you work out how to manage them.
Job Stress Management from Mind Tools

Introduction:

Demands that seem unreasonable can be a tremendous source of stress.

These often arise when innocent situations come together and reinforce one another to create stressful, extreme, and unfeasible demands on you.

In other situations, requirements can be misunderstood when transmitted from person-to-person, the importance of deadlines can be overstated, and requests can be made in ignorance of key pieces of information.

Obviously, real emergencies can also occur. Resolving these can often require extreme and unpleasant levels of activity from all involved.

In all of these cases, and in many others, reasonable people can make unreasonable demands with or without knowing it. If you add into this the concept of “stretch goals”, the fact that people making requests may not have correctly appreciated the situation, and the fact that that people may be playing normal commercial games, you can see how problems arise.

This tool helps you to work through apparently unreasonable demands to understand what lies behind them, and develop appropriate solutions to them. It helps you to work effectively with the person making the demand to find a satisfactory solution, rather than just assuming that the other person is “difficult and unreasonable”. This helps you to reduce the stress that these situations can cause.

Part V: Stress Test (10 minutes)

Audience will answer given questions and read the test results

Handout:

Test Your Stress Level

Answer yes or no to the following questions:

1. Do you worry about the future?
2. Do you sometimes have trouble falling asleep?
3. Do you often reach for a cigarette, a drink, or a tranquilizer in order to reduce tension?
4. Do you become irritated over basically insignificant matters?
5. Do you have less energy than you seem to need or would like to have?
6. Do you have too many things to do and not enough time to do them?
7. Do you have headaches or stomach problems?
8. Do you feel pressure to accomplish or get things done?
9. Are you very concerned about being either well liked or successful?
10. Do you perform well enough in life to satisfy yourself?
11. Do you get satisfaction from the small joys or simple pleasures of life?
12. Are you able to really relax and have fun?

**Scoring:** Give yourself one point for each question 1 — 9 with a yes response and one point for each question 10-12 with a no response. If your score is four or more, then you may be under significant stress.

**Part VI: Tips for reducing stress and relaxation techniques (20 minutes)**

- Learn to plan
- Recognize and accept limits
- Talk out your problems
- Avoid unnecessary teachers’ competition
- Learn to play a sport
- Decide to be positive
- Learn drug-free methods of relaxation
- Love yourself more than anybody else
- Exercise
- Limit caffeine and alcohol intake
- Change your surroundings

**Part VII: Introduction to Yoga and Meditation (10 minutes)**

**Handout & Try This:**
**YOGA AT WORK - Breathe, Relax & Re-Focus**

“As we go through our busy routines juggling tasks we like and maybe putting off ones we don’t, we put tremendous strain on our mental and physical systems. The following exercise can be done at anytime and takes no more than 2 minutes. In fact the more you do this, the more the benefits will manifest in your day-to-day life.

1. Sit upright with the crown of the head uppermost. Close your eyes or keep them open. Relax your jaw. *(You may also practise this exercise in any position, depending on the circumstance.*)
2. Become aware of your breathing and inhale gently through your nose. Try and do this as slowly, smoothly and deeply as you possibly can, without straining.

3. Breathe out, exhaling through your nose and count mentally the number one. (Make the outbreath gentle, slow and complete. Your focus should be on your abdomen, near your navel.)

4. Inhale again, and this time as you breathe out count mentally to the number two. Repeat this cycle until you have reached the number four. If you lose your count, start again, if you go beyond 4, start again. You should aim to repeat the exercise 3 times.

You can if you wish say mentally the word 'and' as you breathe in. Try and let the numbers fit in with your breathing, you may find your breathing and heart rate starts to slow down quite quickly.

Three rounds of this exercise take no more than two minutes

**Benefits:** The benefits of this exercise are to increase concentration, improve mental balance for better decision-making and relax the nervous system. Following your breathing in this way will very quickly slow down your heart rate and make you feel calmer.

Most importantly this exercise gives you important feedback to how focused and centred you are for whatever tasks are ahead of you. You may wish to practice this before entering a situation that requires a specific decision or could be stressful.

Basically if you cannot do one round of this exercise without losing count, or if your mind drifts elsewhere, you are not ready to effectively tackle what is ahead of you.

2. **Boosting the Creative Highway**

The following exercise works on relieving tension in the neck. The neck is the super highway of the nervous system; tension in this area can cause headaches, stiff shoulders and blocked creativity.

Either following an interruption or at a point where you feel your thoughts are stagnating, stop your present activity and be aware of your posture, sit with the crown of your head uppermost and become aware of your breathing. Your feet should be flat on the floor with the palms of your hands on your thighs.

1. Keeping your eyes open, drop your right ear down towards your right shoulder on an outbreath. Breathe in as you bring your head back to centre and repeat on the other side.

**Tip:** Try if you can to let your breathe guide the movement, so be aware of the beginning and end of each outbreath as your ear moves towards the shoulder and aware of the beginning and end of each in breath as your head moved back to centre. This will help integrate your mind and body and bring space between your thoughts.
Aim to do 3 / 5 repetitions on each side, although if time is short once each side will help.

2. Next drop your chin down towards your chest on an out breathe, with your eyes open, breathe in and follow your gaze across the floor (or whatever is in front of you) until you’re looking towards the ceiling. Breathing out from here, gently bring your gaze back down until your chin again rests against your chest.

**Tip:** keeping your eyes and following your gaze in this way stops you straining your neck, and is a good exercise for the eyes.

3. With your chin still against your chest, breathe in as you slide your chin up towards your right shoulder, breathe out as you move your chin back down and then in as your slide your chin up towards your left shoulder. Breathe out again as your chin slides back down, and then finally gently lift your head and chin back to centre as you breathe in.

4. (optional) Sometimes if the tension in the neck and shoulders is tight we need to awaken the blood vessels beneath the skin with some gentle physical activity. This again can be done at your desk and takes no more than a couple of minutes although the freedom that you will feel in this area will last for a lot longer.

Sitting upright begin tapping your chest with your fingertips, the pressure should be enough for you to feel but not enough to bruise yourselves! Move your fingers across the back of your shoulders, the sides and back of the neck of the and back to your chest.

Then simply massage the large muscles across the shoulders and neck with both hands, firmly clenching and letting go as you do.

Finally repeat steps 1 - 3 and return refreshed and re-vitalised to the task at hand.”

**Source:** [http://www.yogaatwork.co.uk/business.htm](http://www.yogaatwork.co.uk/business.htm)

**Alternative to Parts VI & VII: (30 minutes)**

Participants who would prefer not to participate in the ‘Tips and Yoga’ session would be given an alternative.

At onset of the activity, participants would be able to sign up for either mind activities (yoga) or physical activities. Supplies for clay sculpting and cooking would be available in school where facilities exist.

**Choices:**

- Clay molding
- Weight Training
- Volleyball
- Badminton
- Cooking
- Pilates for beginners
- Nature Hike (get to know the surrounding area of the school)

Instructions/directions would be given to participants at the start of their activity.

Participants would receive a handout outlining the tips for reducing stress and relaxation techniques (without having a discussion about it).

**Part VIII: Closure (10 minutes)**

- Water, juices, fresh fruit: serve/have available
- Wrap-up/summary/where to find more information

**Additional Resources:**

**Online Resources**

1. The Nature of Stress
   A. [http://jade.ccccd.edu/ladams/stress/nature.htm](http://jade.ccccd.edu/ladams/stress/nature.htm)

2. An operational definition of stress:
   a. [http://jade.ccccd.edu/ladams/stress/nature.htm](http://jade.ccccd.edu/ladams/stress/nature.htm) **Cross Reference**

   a. [http://mentalhelp.net/psyhelp/chap5/chap5c.htm](http://mentalhelp.net/psyhelp/chap5/chap5c.htm)

4. Stress, Survival Instincts And Brain development:

5. Psychosomatic Theory Of Stress:

6. Eustress And Distress:
   a. [http://www.yorku.ca/cdc/lsp/stress/sld001.htm](http://www.yorku.ca/cdc/lsp/stress/sld001.htm)

2. Sources of Stress (Stressors)
   B. [http://www.gre.ac.uk/~eduweb/interest/h&s/stress2a.htm](http://www.gre.ac.uk/~eduweb/interest/h&s/stress2a.htm)

1. Mind-Body Dichotomy:
   a. [http://www.holisticmed.8k.com/concept.html](http://www.holisticmed.8k.com/concept.html)
2. Psycho-Cybernetics And Stress:

3. Illness And Stress:

4. The Temporal Relationship Between Cognition And Emotion:

5. Fight - Flight Revisited:


1. Typical Blocks To Learning - Fear; Threat; Anxiety:

2. The Neurochemical System Of Memory:

3. The Casual Relationship Between Fear And Anxiety:

4. Carl Rogers Explanation Of Perception And Learning:

5. Presentation: Review Of Research Findings On Stress And Learning:

6. Learning In An Age Of Terrorism:
   a. http://7-12educators.about.com/blterrorismhandout.htm

4. Stress And Teaching A. http://www.gre.ac.uk/~eduweb/interest/h&s/stress2a.htm *
   Cross-Reference
   B. http://www.dmu.ac.uk/News/Releases/0111012.html
1. The Gordon Method: Who Owns The Problem?

2. Evaluation, Critical Judgment And Stress:

3. Acceptance And Stress:
4. Action As A Function Of Choice:

5. Meditation, Relaxation And Stress Reduction:

6. Creativity And Stress:
   a. http://www.state.de.us/dhss/dph/creative.htm

7. Teaching In An Age Of Terrorism:

APPENDIX:
101 WAYS TO COPE WITH STRESS

- Get up 15 minutes earlier
- Prepare for the morning the night before
- Avoid tight fitting clothes
- Avoid relying on chemical aids
- Set appointments ahead
- Don’t rely on your memory...write it down
- Practice preventive maintenance
- Make duplicate keys
- Say no more often
- Set priorities in your life
- Avoid negative people
- Use time wisely
- Simplify meal times
- Always make copies of important papers
- Anticipate your needs
- Repair anything that doesn’t work properly
- Ask for help with the jobs you dislike
- Break large tasks into bite size portions
- Look at problems as challenges
- Look at challenges differently
- Unclutter your life
- Smile
- Be prepared for rain
- Tickle a baby
- Pet friendly dog/cat
- Don’t know all the answers
- Look for the silver lining
- Say something nice to someone
- Teach a kid to fly a kite
- Walk in the rain
- Schedule play time into every day
- Take a bubble bath
- Be aware of the decisions you make
- Believe in yourself
- Stop saying negative things to yourself
- Visualize yourself winning
- Develop your sense of humour
- Stop thinking tomorrow will be a better today
- Have goals for yourself
- Dance a jig
- Say hello to a stranger
- Ask a friend for a hug
- Look up at the stars
- Practice breathing slowly
- Learn to whistle a tune
- Read a poem
- Listen to a symphony
- Watch a ballet
- Read a story curled up in bed
- Do a brand new thing
- Stop a bad habit
- Buy yourself a flower
- Take time to smell the flowers
- Find support from others
- Ask someone to be your “venting-partner”
- Do it today
- Work at being cheerful and optimistic
- Put safety first
- Do everything in moderation
- Pay attention to your appearance
- Strive for excellence NOT perfection
- Stretch your limits a little each day
- Look at a work of art
- Hum a jingle
- Maintain your weight
- Plant a tree
- Feed the birds
- Practice grace under pressure
- Stand up and stretch
- Always have a plan “B”
- Learn a new doodle
- Memorize a joke
- Be responsible for your feelings
- Learn to meet your own needs
- Become a better listener
- Know your limitations and let others know them too
- Tell someone to have a good day in pig latin
- Throw a paper airplane
- Exercise every day
- Learn the words to a new song
- Get to work early
- Clean out one closet
- Play patty cake with a toddler
- Go on a picnic
- Take a different route to work
- Leave work early (with permission)
- Put air freshener in your car
- Watch a movie and eat popcorn
- Write a note to a far away friend
- Go to a ball game and scream
- Cook a meal and eat it by candlelight
- Recognize the importance of unconditional love
- Remember that stress is an attitude
- Keep a journal
- Practice a monster smile
- Remember you always have options
- Have a support network of people, places and things
- Quit trying to “fix” other people
- Get enough sleep
- Talk less and listen more
- Freely praise other people
- P.S. Relax, take each day at a time... you have the rest of your life to live