

# Staying Healthy

Remember how stressed you got during finals? Most educators would say that stress was just practice for your career. Stress itself isn't the problem. In fact, a little stress can be good for you, motivating you to organize and do your best. But too much stress is debilitating.

Your challenge as a teacher is to make good decisions about how you deal with the countless demands on you. People who don't make good decisions about stress become ill. Migraines, ulcers, backaches, constipation, sore throat, weight gain or loss and heart attacks can be physical manifestations of stress.

Many experienced teachers have found ways to keep their optimistic outlook and avoid getting burned out. Try these techniques to help you form good habits that will keep you happily teaching for a long and productive career:

**Exercise:** Shake off the day. A brisk walk or workout clears the mind and heals a tired body.

**Eat right:** A balanced diet gives your body all it needs. When stressed, the body calls on nutrients for energy. Eat wholesome foods and watch your vitamin and mineral supplements.

**Work hardest when strongest:** You probably know if you are a morning person or an evening person. Decide if it makes more sense for you to arrive early, work late or take work home. Try not to do all three.

**Talk:** Find a friend, spouse, clergy member or counselor who is a trusted listener. The problems may not go away, but talking them out can relieve tension. Talk in private where you can't be overheard and misunderstood.

**Accept your limits:** Most of us set unreasonable goals for ourselves. Since we can never be perfect, our inadequacy may cause us to feel worse. Reevaluate your goals based on the ruthless reality of your school, classroom, resources and preparation.

**Stop procrastinating:** Make a to do list. Prioritize activities on the list and then do them. Having something hanging over your head can create more tension than the activity is worth.

**Be good to yourself:** A bubble bath or creative date with your spouse or a friend or child can perk you up. Put notes of appreciation in a box or file and read them when you've had a bad day. Find hobbies that you enjoy to help you escape.

**Plan, plan, plan:** Disorganization breeds stress. Develop your style of getting things done in a calm, orderly way. The time required to plan will result in more available time.

**Learn to say no:** You don't have to volunteer to do everything, no matter what strengths you have. You don't have to work with every committee, club or group you are asked to join.

**Sleep:** If you are tired, go to bed early. Take naps. Don't rush out of bed on the weekends. You need more sleep when you are stressed.

**Quit worrying:** A study shows that only two percent of things people worry about actually deserve worry and 40 percent of things people worry about never even happen. So, quit worrying about how you should have handled Joshua in class.

**Play:** Have an art party at your house and invite friends to color or paint. Promise not to talk about anything related to school. Join a book club. Try new things and give yourself permission to make mistakes.

## Call on TEA's Member Assistance Program

When you need special support beyond what family and friends can provide, call the TEA Member Assistance Program. The program is free to members, completely confidential and available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Call 386.0048 (Nashville area) or 800.707.8882 toll free.