# Reducing Faculty Stress and Preventing Burnout: Science and Strategies

Faculty well-being is a serious concern. A happy teacher is a better teacher. Unfortunately, faculty members are under ever-increasing stress, as are students. This stress acts on the brain in ways that reduce performance. If unaddressed and prolonged, this can lead to burnout. Burnout then leads to impaired academic performance, absenteeism, procrastination, and faculty attrition, as well as mental and physical health issues. If your instructors have been exposed to natural disaster or school violence, they could be experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder, a more serious condition. The good news is that burnout is a process that can be interrupted before it leads to severe and chronic health and mental issues and before it affects performance in the classroom. This presentation provides faculty with simple, effective, and science-based strategies for reducing stress.

This presentation is important for all faculty and staff for many reasons:

* Faculty stress is contagious to students which impairs their academic performance and even affects test performance.
* Stress acts on the higher-order thinking mechanisms in the brain and leads to more emotional reactions and impaired judgment, memory, and attention.
* Untreated stress can lead to burnout, a condition that can lead to faculty attrition.
  + 8% of teachers leave every year
  + 40% leave within 5 years
  + A teacher is almost 2 times as likely to drop out as a student
* Burnout progresses in stages. The process could be interrupted before it causes chronic mental and physical health issues.
  + Stage 1: stress arousal
    - Affects students
    - Absenteeism due to the physical effects of stress
  + Stage 2: energy conservation
    - The person begins withdrawing and avoiding activities and engagement
    - This can be manifested in lateness, procrastination, absenteeism, and physical symptoms
  + Stage 3: exhaustion
    - Chronic health issues
    - Mental health issues

The good news is that extensive research has been done on non-pharmacological interventions for stress. These practices can be done individually or in groups and can only take a few minutes. Lifestyle changes and practices can be implemented that act as a preventative and improve resilience. Several of these practices are easily done in the classroom with students, reducing their anxiety and stress as well.

But before changes can be made, faculty must see the need for these practices. This workshop provides them with the science and strategies for increased resilience and reduced stress.