A plan for reducing stress in teachers of the trainable mentally handicapped and their students through vigorous exercise

Randy A. Lester

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd-project

Part of the Special Education and Teaching Commons

Recommended Citation
https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd-project/278

This Project is brought to you for free and open access by the John M. Pfau Library at CSUSB ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses Digitization Project by an authorized administrator of CSUSB ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@csusb.edu.
A PLAN FOR REDUCING STRESS IN TEACHERS
OF THE TRAINABLE MENTALLY HANDICAPPED
AND THEIR STUDENTS THROUGH VIGOROUS EXERCISE

A Project Submitted to
The Faculty of the School of Education
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Degree of
Master of Arts
in
Education: Special Education Option

By
Randy A. Lester, M.A.
San Bernardino, California
1984

APPROVED BY:

[Scanned signature]  
Advisor

[Scanned signature]  
Committee Member

Calif. State University, San Bernardino Library
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincerest appreciation is offered to the Faculty of the School of Education at California State College, San Bernardino, for they helped prepare me for the task of writing this Master's Project. Especially noteworthy are Dr. Francesca Bero—my project advisor—who assisted me professionally and personally; and Dr. Renate Nummela—my committee member—who inspired me to write about stress management on account of her example. For their consideration, helpfulness, and smiles I extend my hand and heart to Eileen Griffith, Karla Hallum, and Kathy Castanon. All of these people gave me "hope to carry on."

To my family: Mom, Dad, Vicky, Paul, Leigh Ann, and Howard I owe more than words can say. I am most grateful and indebted to you for the love you've shown me, kind words you gave me, and selfless support you brought me.

Special recognition as well as gratitude are given to Irv Howard, Sharon Lester, Julie Ree, and Prindle Vaux for accepting me, believing in me, and respecting me when I didn't accept myself, believe in myself, or respect myself. You are each written in my heart in a precious way.

In addition, I wish to thank Mr. Robert D. Mc Kee—principal, Lois Roberts—lead teacher, friend, and out-
standing video taper—of Virginia Primrose School. My special education aide Margaret Garcia is to be congratulated for keeping my stress level down these past two years. To my very Special students—in Area 122—I dedicate myself with all the love, understanding, and sensitivity I have. Where would I be without you?

To my Grandma Ruby and late Grandpa Verne I honor you in spirit and in truth because of who you are. God truly blessed me with you two.

Lastly, I dedicate this Master's Project in Education—Special Education Option—to Tina who caused me more grief, joy, frustration, laughter, and untold distress than she will ever know. I will never be the same—she has niched a soft spot in my innermost being that no one can replace and it is because of her that this paper's topic means so much.
HEAVEN'S SPECIAL CHILD

A meeting was held quite far from Earth
"It's time again for another birth,"
Said the angels of the Lord above.
"This special child will need much love,
Her progress may seem very slow;
Accomplishments she may not show,
And she'll require much extra care
From all the folks she meets down there.
She may not laugh or run or play;
Her thoughts may seem quite far away,
In many ways she won't adapt,
And she'll be known as 'handicapped'."

So, let's be careful where she's sent,
We want her life to be content.
Please, Lord, find the parents who
Will do this special job for you.
They will not realize right away
The leading role they're asked to play,
But with the child from far above,
Comes stronger faith and richer love.
And soon they'll know the privilege given
In caring for this gift from Heaven --
Their precious child so meek and mild
Is "Heaven's Very Special Child."

--Author Unknown
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. DESIGN OF THE PROJECT</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. LIMITATIONS</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. REFERENCES</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX A: VIDEO TAPE OUTLINE AND CONSIDERATIONS</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX B: LETTER TO PARENTS</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX C: NUMBER RECOGNITION ACTIVITY</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX D: SUGGESTED BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

The terms "stress" and "burnout" are rapidly becoming cliché in many areas of employment. A survey by Hunter (cited in Holland, 1982) reported that teachers, air traffic controllers, and surgeons are considered to hold the most potentially stressful occupations in the world. Therefore, it is apparent that the field of education is far less than immune from the negativity associated with high levels of stress—which when left undetected or untouched—may result in teacher burnout. This holds true for those professionals working with the severely handicapped. Hence, a need currently exists to not only address the issues of stress and burnout (definitions and descriptions, sources and symptoms), but to simultaneously provide special educators with a valid and reliable technique which has proven itself to be effective in the reduction and/or likelihood of burnout for teachers of the trainable mentally handicapped (used interchangeably heretofore with the abbreviation T.M.H.) and the students with whom these teachers work.

Dr. Hans Selye, "Father of Stress' and founder of Montreal's Institute on Stress, defines stress as the "nonspecific response of the body to any demand upon it" (Selye, 1974, p. 11). This definition by the foremost respected authority on stress fails to confirm the popular belief that all stress
is harmful. To put it more simply Selye reminds us, "complete
freedom from stress is death" (Selye, 1974, p. 32).

Selye describes the "fight or flight" or "general adap-
tation syndrome" which defines a stress reaction. He describes
it "as a coordinated chemical mobilization of the entire body
to meet the requirements of life-and-death struggle or of
rapid escape from the situation" (Albrecht, 1979, p. 55).
When under stress, "the body responds with a surge of hor-
mones, including adrenalin. Your heart beats faster, your
respiration quickens, blood pressure and blood sugar rise,
and there are many other reactions in your hormonal, ner-
vous and digestive systems" (Avery, 1981, p. 2).

It is vital for purposes of clarity and reference, that
an important distinction be made at this point between the
various physiological reactions to stress. A positive phys-
iological reaction to stress, i.e., the stress of achieve-
ment, triumph, and exhilaration is referred to as eustress
(Albrecht, 1979, p. 61). Stress experts agree that continued
feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, and desperation--on
the other hand--turn stress into distress. Donald B. Ardell
reports that research has irrevocably proven that distress
leads to "migraine headaches, peptic ulcers, heart attacks,
hypertension, mental illness, and suicide" (Ardell, 1977,
p. 134). Thus the term stress used throughout this project
--unless otherwise noted--refers to the potentially harmful
effects of distress on individuals over time.
Another term in need of explanation and description is burnout. Burnout is defined by Stan F. Shaw, et al., "as the end result of unsuccessful attempts to cope with a variety of negative stress conditions" (Shaw, et al., 1980, pp. 21-23). Maslach, in her article entitled, "Job Burnout: How People Cope," adds that "burnout is emotional exhaustion resulting from stress of interpersonal contact" (Maslach, 1978, p. 56). To take this a step further, Foster (1980) is very specific in his description of the burned out teacher:

...as individuals at an emotional low. The fun, enthusiasm, curiosity, and imagination have gone out of teaching. They are discouraged and feel trapped. Their optimism has turned to cynicism. They blame the children, their families, lack of materials, or the school system. New problems become a burden instead of a challenge. Burned out teachers have not just lost their energy and sense of humor, they feel like victims, and they feel helpless. (p. 26)

Hence, the negative aspects of distress—which in turn can create burned out individuals—are of concern not only to educators, but students, administrators, parents, and the community as a whole. This tragedy is heightened as one considers the vitality, care, and selflessness needed in the appropriate and effective education of the severely handicapped. Unfortunately, as Sullivan reports: "it is ironic that those who are most sensitive and dedicated—those most needed to work with severely handicapped children—may have the highest risk" (Sullivan, 1979, pp. 112-117), [of burnout].

As a teacher of the trainable mentally handicapped, the
author has witnessed countless incidences of stress in both special educators and students. The T.M.H. population functions at the moderately retarded level with a range of I.Q. from 36-51 (Grossman, 1973). Cromwell (1963) has noted that the low intellectual functioning of trainable mentally handicapped students has been associated with their high expectancy for failure (Payne and Patton, 1981, p. 124). This high expectancy for failure results in lowered self-esteem and the stress this causes leads to self-nonacceptance. Such a correlation (between low self-esteem and stress) has been supported by Hodge and Marker, 1978; and Swick and Hanley, 1980. Yamamoto has identified the succeeding symptoms of psychic stress: (1) accident proneness, (2) cruelty, (3) depression/apathy, (4) excessive emotionality, (5) nailbiting, (6) social withdrawal, (7) underachievement, (8) worry and numerous other manifestations (1972, p. 138). Similarly, Weiskopf (1980) has postulated that there is a difference in special children in regards to their tolerance and frustration and as a result emotional outbursts are at best unpredictable and frequent (1980, p. 20). Disruptive behavior including: damage to property, rowdyism, actual violence, threats of violence, sexual misbehavior, and theft (Dunham, 1981, p. 205), are all observed in the T.M.H. behavioral repertoire. Additionally, student stress leads to teacher stress. Behavior alone of the T.M.H. pupils is only one of the many stressors (stress-
produced phenomenon) for special educators. Shaw, et al., (1980) cite: "job related work after hours, writing IEPs, due process, paperwork, working with parents, pupil load, diagnosis, and dealing with other teachers" (p. 21). De Shong (1981) and Weiskopf (1980) succinctly and accurately state: "special educators teach in environments that make them highly susceptible to burnout" (pp. 18-23). The seemingly bleak picture of stress and burnout painted above in respects to the field of special education is, nonetheless, not without hope or intervention. Numerous stress management techniques (involving the physical, mental, emotional venting of tension, as well as increasing an individual's awareness of physiological reactions to stress) have proven effective in dealing appropriately with distress and thereby alleviating its harmful effects. Sources generally recognized are: (1) attitude, (2) relaxation exercises, (3) nutrition, and (4) vigorous exercise.

As a part-time vigorous exercise (Dancercise) instructor, the author has been able to experience firsthand how such participation can facilitate the reduction and release of physical, mental, and emotional stresses which inadvertently accompany the professionalism and humanitarianism associated with educating the trainable mentally handicapped. Teachers, then, as well as their T.M.H. students need stress reduction. The author proposes a rationally sound and thought-out approach to be initiated with special educators. The
vigorous exercise program called "Dancercise" will involve both the special educator and special student in this adapted form of strenuous exercise. The need for such intervention is highlighted by Weiskopf's following conviction; "teachers are ultimately responsible for their effectiveness in the classroom; they need to initiate solutions to cope with emotional stress" (1980, p. 21).
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

There currently exists an ever-increasing influx of literary works related to stress, burnout, and teaching. Though on the rise, sources dealing directly with these topics and special education have been—at best—scarce.

As has been previously mentioned, Dr. Hans Selye defined stress as the "nonspecific response of the body to any demand upon it" (1974, p. 11). The daily wear-and-tear stress has on the body has accounted for many stress-related diseases. It is not too surprising that stress-related diseases—heart attacks, hardening of the arteries, strokes, cancer, kidney failure, and cirrhosis of the liver—have become the primary causes of death in the United States during the late twentieth century (Albrecht, 1979, pp. 28–29). A statistic as staggering as this should alert special educators particularly because retardation appears to aggravate stress-related diseases such as heart defects, lung abnormalities, and leukemia. When compared to their nonretarded age-mates, the severely retarded had a significantly higher incidence of these diseases (Payne and Patton, 1981, p. 137).

The causes of stress in the helping professions—which ultimately lead to burnout are countless. For purposes of this paper, factors which create both stress and burnout will
be addressed concurrently.

General sources of stress include; (1) a change in your life, (2) physical irritants or damage, (3) a perceived threat, (4) an overload, (5) your own negative feelings, and (6) pressure to conform (Avery, 1981, pp. 1-2). Styles and Cavanagh (1977) maintain that there are nine forms stress takes in the life of the typical teacher:

A. in the form of expectations  
B. in terms of self-fulfillment  
C. in the world of ego needs  
D. in the realm of student-teacher relations  
E. in the area of personal competence  
F. in the arena of one's self-relationship  
G. in the domain of conflicting values  
H. in the pursuit of social approval  
I. in the labyrinth of professional constraints. (pp. 76-78)

When one considers student-teacher relations it is easy to see why special educators are not only stressed but burned out. This is supported by several findings. Firstly, Jackson (1968) in a study of student-teacher interaction found that "teachers interact with students more than 1000 times during an average day". Correspondingly, Weiskopf (1980) reports that "[special education] teachers are expected to provide emotional support to students for 5 to 6 continuous hours each day" (p. 20). On top of this, Foster (1980) reminds those in special education that "autistic and other severely handicapped children are, to say the least, difficult to teach. They do not provide obvious satisfactions to teachers--affection, rapid learning, and good behavior--that make the job immediately rewarding" (p. 25).
Stressors peculiar to special education involve such factors as: "the lack of administrative support, mislabeling of students, resistant parents, threats of impending lawsuits, confused co-workers, excessive paperwork, and ill-trained aides" (Weiskopf, 1980, p. 21). If stress becomes distress chances are that the special educator will fall into what Foster (1980) refers to as 'burnout traps.' He has delineated them as follows:

1. Confusing the easy way with efficiency
2. Unimaginative use of time
3. Repetition of curriculum
4. Insulation from outside ideas
5. Inability to ask for help
6. Trying harder rather than trying more intelligently
7. Measuring oneself solely by the accomplishments of the children (Foster, 1980, p. 27).

Predictably, "the ultimate effect of this stress is that teachers withdraw from the profession. They are victims of 'teacher burnout' and can no longer cope with the stress caused by teaching" (Weiskopf, 1980, p. 22). It's no surprise then that an NEA Teacher Opinion Poll (McGuire, 1979) revealed that one third of those "teaching would not enter the field if they could start over while only 60 percent reported that they had planned to remain in the profession until retirement" (p. 5). How unfortunate for special education students that those professionals most qualified and capable of effectively meeting their needs are entering other positions.

It is important to examine the symptoms, manifestations, and effects both stress and burnout have on teachers of the severely handicapped and the students themselves.
In 1963, Beck and Garguilo conducted a study whereby teachers were asked to disclose physical symptoms associated with stress. The following were mentioned: (1) sleeplessness, (2) headaches, (3) fatigue, (4) constant irritability, (5) muscle spasms, (6) nervousness, (7) gastro-intestinal disorders, (8) backaches, (9) excessive drinking, (10) overeating, (11) frequent colds, (12) fingernail biting, and (13) facial tics (p. 172). Dunham (1981) adds to this already lengthy list with these responses to stress situations: (1) depression, (2) displaced aggression, (3) apathy, (4) high rate of staff turn-over, (5) feelings of exhaustion, (6) withdrawal from staff activities, (7) anger followed by guilt, (8) anxiety, and (9) loss of weight (pp. 209-210). Holland (1982) identifies several levels of burnout: "the first degree produces mild, short lived periods of fatigue, worry, and frustration. Second degree burnout is typified by moderate discomfort lasting two or three weeks. Third degree burnout is accompanied by stress-related physical problems such as chronic back pain, migraines, and ulcers" (p. 59).

Stressed and burned out teachers play an integral role in the distress of severely handicapped students as well. Weiskopf (1980) again sheds light on this interplay when she remarks:

"Ultimately, burnout affects the children. Burned out teachers think only of their personal survival in the classroom. They are not caring for or listening to their students. At best, a burned out
teacher neither prevents progress nor furthers it. At worst, since exceptional children usually lack the ego strength of regular children, a cynical, negative teacher could seriously impair their progress academically and socially" (p. 22).

Orem (1969) continues along this line of reasoning when he reports:

"The usual emotional stresses experienced by the normal person may be intensified for the slow-learning individual due to the restrictions his limited intellectual ability places on him. A fundamental problem in educating the slow-learning child for an independent and satisfying life is thus said to center around the effectiveness of his social adjustment" (p. 100).

A reasonable conclusion to draw from the above-mentioned information is that both special educators and severely handicapped students experience distress professionally, individually, academically, and socially. Fortunately, though, teachers of these special pupils can learn to prevent burnout by any of a number of methods.

Weiskopf (1980) proposes the subsequent as ways in which special education teachers can help protect themselves from burnout:

(1.) Special educators need to know in advance the type of emotional stress their particular job entails. (2.) Teachers need to set realistic goals for themselves and their students. (3.) Special educators need to delegate tasks in order to relieve some pressure and reduce the work load. (4.) Special educators should avoid isolation from other staff. (5.) While on the job, teachers need to break up the amount of continuous, direct contact they have with the children. (6.) Staying mentally alert is significant when away from the job to prevent burnout. (7.) Physical exercise is recommended to relieve stress
and tension that has built up during the day. (8.) Alleviate boredom, teachers need to be more creative on the job. (9.) Teachers may participate in active or passive hobbies and special interests not relating to the job. (pp. 21-22)

Incorporating the foregoing suggestions will indeed decrease the likelihood of burnout for teachers of the severely handicapped. Physical exercise in particular will be the stress management technique recommended as a program for the trainable mentally handicapped student and his teacher.

Vigorous exercise; for example running and/or jogging, swimming, bicycling, attending Jazzercise or Dancercise classes has become more than a passing fad—it has become a life-style for many concerned about their well-being. The available research has proven beyond a shadow of a doubt that participation in vigorous exercise programs has abundant advantages. Physiologically speaking, active involvement—three to five times per week— aids in an increased heart and lung capacity to carry more oxygen to the body as well as increase the red blood cell count. Similarly, another response of the body to strenuous exercise is that it produces endorphins—brain chemicals known as the brain's own morphine (Pert, 1981, p. 100). As such, Vogue magazine reports that endorphins are "our body's own natural opiates...killing pain and producing feelings of euphoria" (1982, p. 410). Pert (1981) further explains that "endorphins slow respira-
tion, lower blood pressure, and calm motor activity throughout the body" (p. 100). Hence, Vogue (1982) states: "the more you can do [vigorous exercise], the greater your secretion of pleasure hormones" (p. 410). Exercise of this nature is physically beneficial as it enhances gross and fine motor development and maintenance. In terms of emotional advantages, individuals can have the enjoyment of not only working-out but also of "releasing" pent-up physical, mental, and emotional stresses and tensions. An additional factor is the social interaction that occurs while taking part in said programs.

Active participation in vigorous exercise is necessary for the overall professional efficiency educator's espouse to uphold. This is even more valuable for those working with the severely handicapped, i.e., the trainable mentally handicapped. Holland (1982) supports this when he remarks: "a special educator's ability to cope with sources of stress determines the effect stress has on the individual's job performance and health" (p. 60).

The foregoing discussion has more or less been directed as the special education teacher, it seems advantageous at this point to broaden the focus of vigorous exercise as a stress management technique to that of the special educator and special student.

The problems stress creates for the moderately retarded
person is indeed a complex one. The inability of these individuals to verbalize feelings of tension, insecurity, frustration, fear, and confusion compounds the situation—only to heighten already existing high levels of anxiety. As a result, they may exhibit any of the following reactions: (1) pouting and/or crying; (2) withdrawal; (3) self-abuse; (4) tantrums; (5) aggression towards people and/or objects. With these behaviors in mind the teacher of the trainable mentally handicapped wonders what—if anything—can be done to reduce their own stress as well as that of their T.M.H. pupils.

As of late, increased awareness and interest has been sparked as attention has been on dance/rhythmic movement/exercise. It has become evident that the trainable mentally handicapped can actively and effectively participate in an adaptive form of vigorous exercise—particularly aerobics and Dancercise.

Goals of dance and related activities involve: "stretching and bending, twisting and turning various body parts, locomotor movements of walking, running, toe-tipping, skipping, galloping, hopping, and jumping" (Lloyd, 1978, p. 52). Hackett (1970) furthermore recognizes that such programs "offer the participants positive experiences in such areas as body image, spatial awareness, self-confidence, hand-eye coordination, visual focusing, and balance" (pp. 8-10). Additionally, Leventhal (1980) adds "gratification delay, focusing
and the building of a positive self-concept" (p. 33), as positive aspects of using dance with the severely handicapped. Dance exercise can have any of the following as part of each activity: "warm-up, release, theme, centering, and closure" (Leventhal, 1980, p. 34). It is significant in importance that certain understandings and cautions be observed while involving the trainable mentally handicapped in such movement experiences. Payne and Patton (1981) alert special educators to the fact that the more severely retarded have a higher incidence of heart defects, lung abnormalities, and leukemia than their nonretarded agemates (p. 137). A similar conclusion by Crain (1982) states: "mentally retarded people usually function at a lower motor development level than their nonretarded peers" (p. 71). Therefore, she offers these suggestions: (1) try to teach dances that fit the chronological age; (2) analyze the dance activity and break it down into parts; (3) use concrete examples, with pictures, words, and shapes, as much as possible; and (4) practice, practice, and practice will be required (Crain, 1982, p. 72).

Techniques that have been useful in teaching dance exercises are guiding (physical, gestural, manual, and/or verbal prompts) and mirroring (requiring the T.M.H. student to imitate body movements of instructor). When used appropriately, participation in programs of this nature becomes a
positive event for both the special educator and student because vigorous exercise releases and deters the unhealthy effects of stress on the body, soul, and spirit.

The review of literature has comprised a thorough examination of stress, burnout, and vigorous exercise as a stress management technique. Existing information was presented in an effort to substantiate the need for developing a plan for reducing distress in teachers of the trainable mentally handicapped and T.M.H. students.
STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this project is to provide special education teachers with an effective teaching tool for reducing personal stress and that of trainable mentally handicapped students. In so doing, the author recognizes the hesitation, fear, and uncomfortableness some special educators may experience as they endeavor to initiate a Dancercise program as depicted herein. Therefore, it is presumed that the experience may prove frustrating, embarrassing, and thereby stress-producing for these individuals. In hopes of relieving any such negative aspects of the proposed vigorous exercise plan, this author provides the following as reflective of student benefits seen by others working with the severely handicapped in similar programs:

(1) much needed physical activity was provided, (2) there was noticeable increase in attention span, (3) increased socialization was observed among the students, (4) students seemed much more relaxed and calm after dance classes, (5) dance provided unique opportunities for the students to express themselves in socially acceptable ways. The teachers and aides who participated in the dance activities stated that they felt better after the period of exercise. (Lloyd, 1978, p. 53)

Should involvement prove to be distressful for the special educator it is suggested that he discontinue participation as the emotional stress is neither productive for him nor for his students.
The stated objective can only be achieved if instructors remain open-minded, enthusiastic, and willing to risk caring about the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of their pupils.

The proposed project will demonstrate Dancercise used with a sampling of trainable mentally handicapped students in the Vocational Education Department at Virginia Primrose School. As such, the dance portion of the program will be adapted to meet the physical and mental ability levels of these special people. This adapted form of vigorous exercise is necessary because of the forementioned heart and lung abnormalities in the moderately retarded and will not include a strict cardio-vascular segment (which places additional stress on the heart and lungs due to the strenuous nature of the work-out). Nonetheless, the video tape will accentuate these important parts of an appropriate educational plan for T.M.H. individuals: (1) directionality (right/left); (2) opposites (up/down, front/back, over/under, straight/round); (3) body parts (i.e., head, arm, waist, knees, etc.); and (4) sequencing (close supervision of acceptable succession of movements).
DESIGN OF THE PROJECT

The previously stated objective to provide special educators with an effective teaching tool in order to reduce personal stress as well as that of their T.M.H. students will appear on video tape. The use of such media enables the viewer a unique opportunity to see a visual depiction of: (1) stressful facets of educating the trainable mentally handicapped at Virginia Primrose School and (2) Dancercise as a stress management technique to be incorporated as part and parcel of the education program. An outline in Appendix A delineates: (1) the philosophy and programs offered to the severely/profoundly and trainable mentally handicapped students at the school; (2) sampling of the student population attending Virginia Primrose School--as they arrive from Fontana, Rialto, Bloomington, and Redlands (where they come from natural homes, group homes, and foster care residences); (3) the various Traditional Academics classes taught by the author to the T.M.H. youngsters and young adults in the Vocational Dept. with examples of teacher and student stress; and (4) an actual adaptive Dancercise segment showing the capabilities of the moderately retarded warming-up, stretching, and cooling-down. This will be followed by lunch with the students and day's conclusion. In addition to the
above-mentioned appendix, a statement of limitations, letter granting permission to video tape students as well as participate in the adaptive form of vigorous exercise, the number recognition activity used with the Down's Syndrome pupil, and a suggested bibliography will ensue.

This particular format has been chosen as it will enable special educators to envision firsthand severely handicapped, T.M.H. individuals in stressful environmental conditions followed by a representational plan of relieving and/or releasing pent-up teacher and student physical, mental, and emotional tension.
LIMITATIONS

Though relatively few in number, a statement of the project's limitations is absolutely essential. Firstly, as cited in the review of the literature and statement of objectives the trainable mentally handicapped have a high incidence of heart defects and lung abnormalities. Therefore, prior to involving any students in a vigorous exercise program it will be necessary for special educators to obtain consent forms from parents/foster parents/guardians. Too, it is vital for purposes of legal protection that teachers secure written permission to video tape and/or photograph T.M.H. pupils involved in Dancercise should this be a desired manner in which to record progress, achievement, and the like. These two precautions cannot be over-emphasized! Secondly, it is advisable not to participate in vigorous exercise until at least two (2) hours after eating as the digestive processes must be relaxed in order to function adequately. Thirdly, time constraints do not allow for a longitudinal look at stress-reduction as a result of participation in a regular vigorous exercise program as shown herein. Nonetheless, research deliberated in preceding portions of this project unconditionally substantiate the positive stress-releasing benefits provided by
said involvement even though literature relating stress management to the trainable mentally handicapped was—to say the least—scanty.
CONCLUSION

The purpose of this media project was to provide teachers of the trainable mentally handicapped with a plan for reducing their own stress and that of their students through the use of an adapted form of vigorous exercise. It was first necessary to establish a need for such intervention by defining and describing stress and burnout. Also of importance was the identification of specific stressors for those working with the severely handicapped; i.e., work overload, continuous emotional support needed for students, inappropriate behaviors of pupils, and lack of staff encouragement due to confusion and misunderstanding. Once this was discussed it became apparent that special education teachers and special students do indeed suffer distress and needed an effective manner in which pent-up physical, mental, and emotional tensions could be released. Hence, the author provided T.M.H. educators, through the use of video tape, with a demonstration of an adapted form of Dancercise as a means of reducing stress while exhibiting stressful occupational situations.

In order for qualified, caring, hard-working professionals in special education to remain in the field of education --or at least stay longer than stress and burnout studies
indicate— it is of upmost importance that they are aware of, alerted to, and moved to action by job-related stress or ultimately burnout if left undetected. Therefore, the author recommends a close examination of this project by teachers of the trainable mentally handicapped as an enjoyable means (vigorous exercise) to a healthful end.
REFERENCES


Shaw, Stan F., Bensky, Jeffrey M., Dixon, Benjamin, and Bonneau, Rob. "Strategies For Dealing With Burnout Among Special Educators." _Education Unlimited_, 2 (September-October, 1980) 21-23.


APPENDIX A

MEDIA PROJECT OUTLINE (VIDEO)

I. Segment I: Introduction
   A. Statement of confidentiality
   B. Philosophy of programs
   C. Students arrival

II. Segment II: Rotation
   A. Intermediate and accelerated reading - stress with high functioning T.M.H. pupils
   B. Number recognition and concepts
      1. Stress and pre-class behaviors
      2. Stress and in-class behaviors (response to praise)

III. Segment III: Dancercise
   A. Preparation
      1. Set-up
      2. Assessing body tension
   B. Warm-up ("Tonight I Celebrate My Love")
      1. Inhale (through the nose) and exhale (through the mouth)
      2. Mirroring (imitate movements of instructor)
      3. Directionality (right/left)
      4. Body parts (head, arms, waist, knees, and head)
      5. Opposites (up/down, straight/round)
      7. "Release" of tension verbally
   C. Stretching (True")
      1. Modifying as needed (difficulty of students to cross midline)
      2. Guiding (manual prompts)
      3. Body parts (arms, waist, back, legs)
      4. Opposites (straight/curved, up/down)
5. Socialization
6. Sequencing

D. Beginning cardio-vascular ("Get on the Floor")
   1. Mirroring
   2. Body parts identification (head, shoulders, ribs, pelvis, hips, knees, and "happy feet")
   3. Reverse sequencing

E. Cool-down ("Chariots of Fire")
   1. Guiding of body positions
   2. Counting out movements
   3. Opposites (front/back, single/double)
   4. "Releasing" of tension

F. Reassessing body tension following exercise
G. Conclusion

IV. Segment IV: Relaxation

A. Lunch
   1. Student removed from group for unacceptable behavior
   2. Food as a motivating factor in the increase of on-task behavior for T.M.H. students

V. Segment V: On-going instruction

A. Classroom
   1. Modeling appropriate behavior while stressed — student stressed as evidenced by self-stimming and self-abuse.
   2. Walking to the bus
   3. Stress reduced and released for the day

CAUTIONS, CONSIDERATIONS, AND CLUES TO MAKING THE ADAPTED FORM OF DANCECISE WORK FOR YOU:

* do not eat less than 2 (two) hours prior to working-out

* obtain written permission to involve T.M.H. pupils; i.e., considering physical limitations

* ideal if used 3-5 times per week for half an hour/modify time as needed depending on fitness and ability levels
* enlist help of adaptive p.e. teacher if uncertainties arise

* don't use more than 4 (four) grossly different body movements per routine

* be consistent in demonstrations; i.e., guiding and mirroring

* use vigorous exercise for: (1) identification of body parts less familiar to this severely handicapped population (thighs, calves, and ankles); (2) sequencing (close supervision of acceptable succession of movements); (3) directionality (right/left); (4) opposites (up/down, forward/backward, over/under, straight/round); (5) counting; (6) appropriate socialization (space awareness of others, touching, peer relations); and (7) benefits of exercise (heart and lung efficiency, "releasing" physical, mental, and emotional tension; fun, and fitness is 'good for you."

* observe local vigorous exercise programs; i.e., Aerobics, Jazzercise, Dancercise, Trimnastics for input, ideas, suggestions, etc.

* invite guest instructors for variety and freshness

* be innovative, creative, but BE CAREFUL--encourage the T.M.H. to learn to 'listen' to their bodies for pain, overuse, pulled muscles

* learn what you can about proper exercise programming; i.e., warm-up, stretching, beginning cardio-vascular, and cool-down

* inhale (via the nose) and exhale (via the mouth)

* don't expect too much too soon of yourself as a special educator or of your special students

* be sure you are giving your all but most of all HAVE FUN, GET UNSTRESSED, ENJOY YOUR SPECIAL PUPILS--YOU'LL LIVE EASIER FOR IT (POSSIBLY LONGER TOO!)
APPENDIX B
Dear Parents/Foster Parents/Guardians/Care Providers:

I am in the process of completing a Master of Arts degree in Special Education at California State University, San Bernardino. At this time, I am working on my Master's Project which includes a media (video tape) portion as part of my research on stress management and teachers of the trainable mentally handicapped.

The purpose of contacting you is threefold: (1) to ask permission to photograph your son/daughter with the assurance that names will not be used; (2) to assure you that if permission to photograph is denied, your son/daughter will not appear on the video tape; and (3) to request permission to have your son/daughter participate in an adapted form of "Dancercise" (dance-exercise) provided he/she does not have heart or lung abnormalities, or other physical, mental, or emotional conditions which would prevent him/her from such involvement.

I would greatly appreciate it if you could return this letter to Virginia Primrose School by Tuesday, May 15, 1984 with the appropriate statements circled and/or checked, signed, and dated.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation. Should you have any questions or comments please call the school at (714) 829-6331 and leave a message.

Sincerely,

Randy A. Lester
Sp. Educ. Teacher

____ My son/daughter ___ (Child's Name) does/not have permission to be photographed on the video tape. I understand that ___ (Child's Name) will not have his/her name used should permission be granted.

____ My son/daughter ___ (Child's Name) does/not permission to participate in the adapted form of "Dancercise." ___ (Child's Name) does not have heart/lung abnormalities, or other physical, mental, or emotional, conditions which would be aggravated by such involvement.

__________________________ ____________________
Signature Date Signed
Match each set with the correct numeral.
APPENDIX D

SUGGESTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books


Periodicals
