

# SUPPORTING AND PREVENTING TEACHER BURNOUT: THE ADMINISTRATOR'S ROLE IN CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

@tiny\_learning\_town\_



# naeyc<sup>®</sup> annual conference

**In October 2025, NAEYC released the revised Code of Ethics for Early Childhood Educators, which outlines our profession's essential, ethical responsibilities to children, families, colleagues, community and society.**

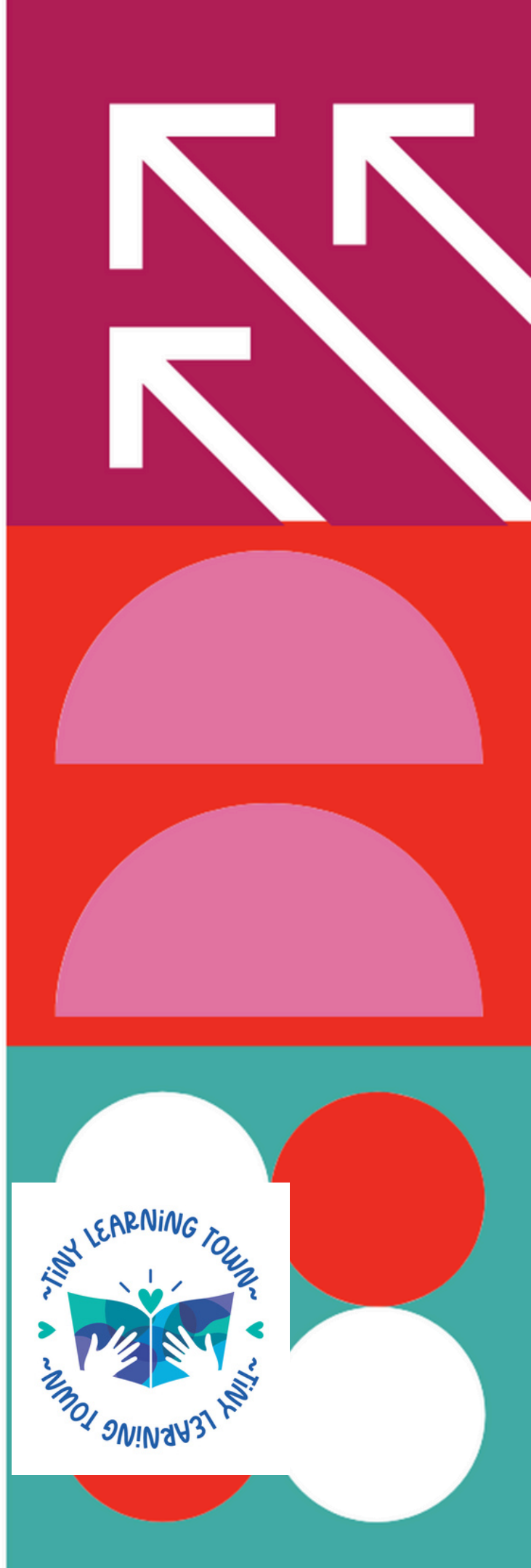
**At Annual Conference, we all commit to upholding professional responsibilities to:**

- create and maintain inclusive environments and respectful relationships
- recognize and honor the perspectives, strengths, and contributions of colleagues

**This means we will:**

- refrain from photography, audio, and video recording in session rooms
- obtain speaker consent before posting session content online or on social media
- support and respect the diverse identities and experiences of all participants
- actively contribute to creating an atmosphere where everyone feels valued and safe

**Learn more about how you can use the Code of Ethics and NAEYC's other foundational position statements at Annual Conference and beyond by visiting [naeyc.org](https://naeyc.org)**





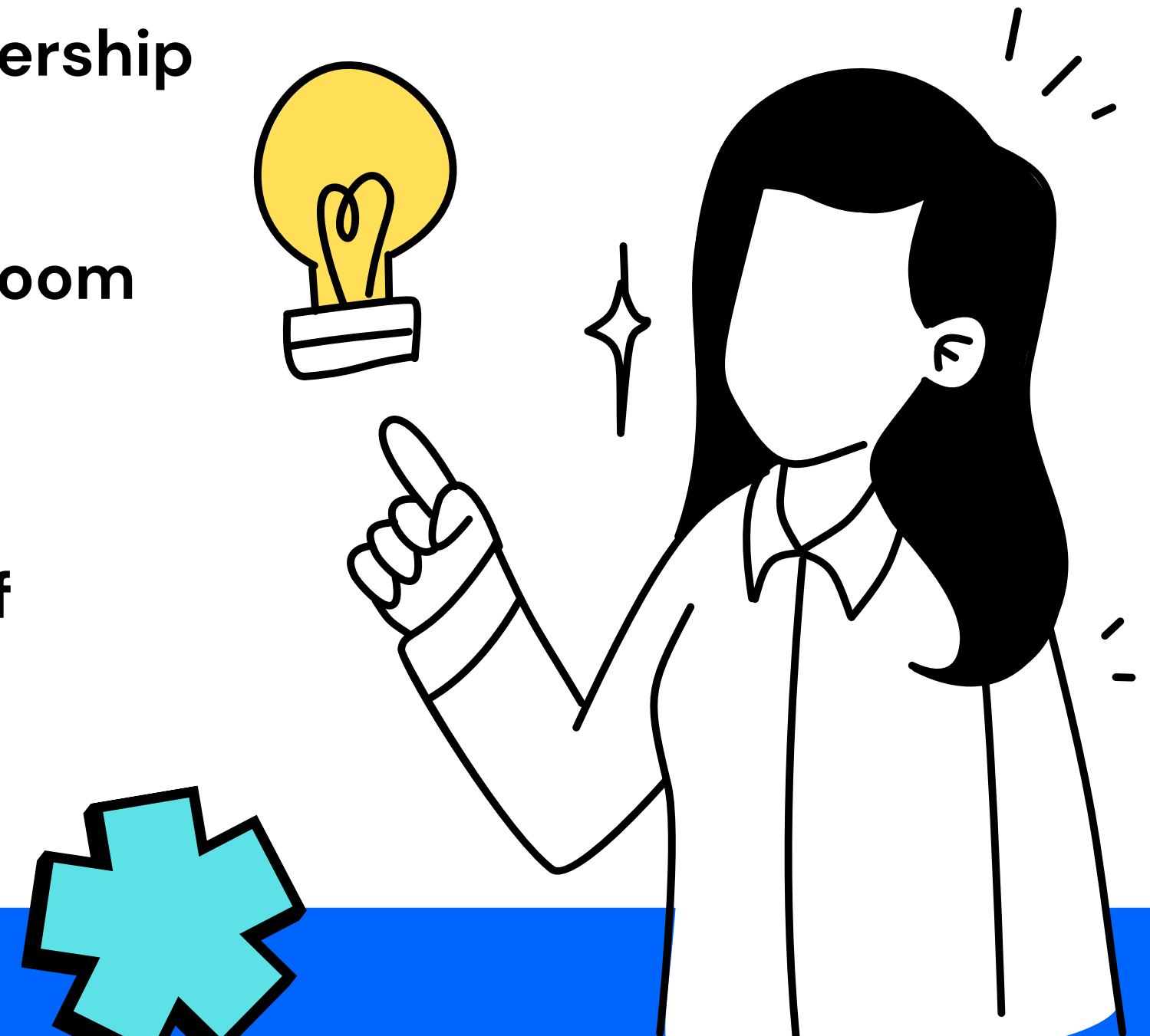
# BRYANNE ADLER



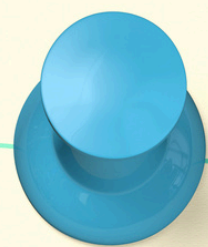
- ✦ Founder of Tiny Learning Town
- ✦ A leadership/ educator, coach & mentor
- ✦ A published children's author
- ✦ Professional development coach
- ✦ EdD candidate in Early Childhood Education at Johns Hopkins University.

## SESSION OBJECTIVES:

- Understand burnout as a systemic leadership issue
- Connect leadership decisions to classroom management outcomes
- Explore 3 actionable strategies that administrators can use to support staff







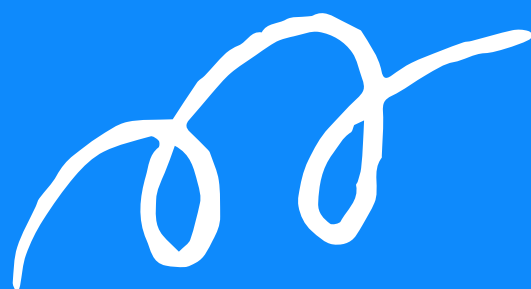
All Session Resources in One Place

- ✓ Today's slides
  - ✓ Burnout + leadership tools
  - ✓ Reflection board photo
  - ✓ ECE handouts + freebies
  - ✓ Giveaway entry link
- (Self-Reflection & Self-Care Journal)
- ✓ Ways to stay connected





EVERYONE BELONGS HERE.  
LEADERSHIP IS NOT A TITLE.  
YOUR VOICE AND EXPERIENCE MATTER.  
LET'S LEARN AND GROW TOGETHER.



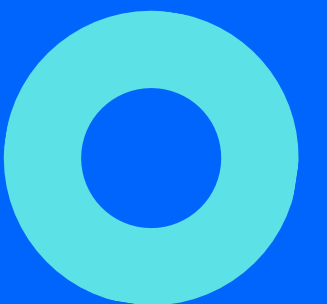
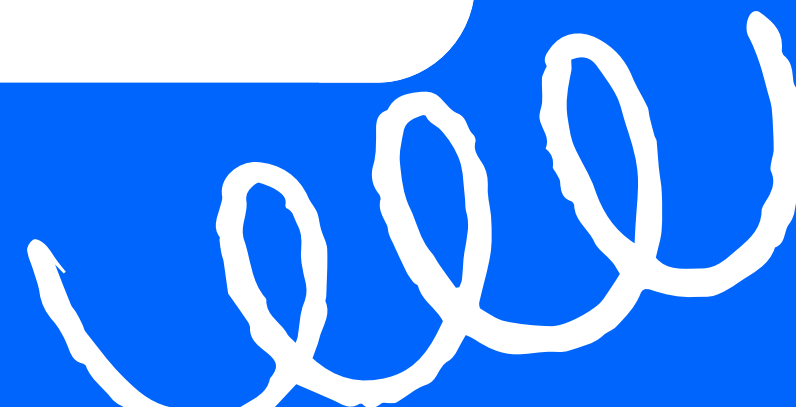


# ICEBREAKER: THE ONE I ACTUALLY LIKE

## **"I DON'T LIKE ICEBREAKERS."**



- This session is here to support you
- To help you learn
- To make you feel less stressed
- And to offer a safe space to reflect and be heard.
- No judgment. Just growth.



# ICEBREAKER: THE ONE I ACTUALLY LIKE

- 1** Raise your hand if you've ever felt like you were the one burning out faster than your staff.
- 2** Take a piece of paper, no names, and answer this:  
**HOW DID THAT MOMENT MAKE YOU FEEL? WHAT CAUSED IT?**
- 3** Fold the paper and place it in the cup in the center of your table.





# BURNOUT DEFINED & QUANTIFIED

## Definition:

Burnout is a work-related phenomenon resulting from chronic workplace stress not successfully managed.



➤ Nearly 45% of early childhood educators reported high levels of stress and burnout in a national survey of ~2,300 ECE teachers. (Teaching Strategies, 2022)

➤ In a review of early childhood educators, about one-third of qualified educators intended to leave the profession within four years due to burnout risk. (Ng et al., 2023)

➤ One study reported that approximately 50% of preschool educators showed signs of burnout syndrome. (Hozo, Svajger, & Maurer, 2015)



# MASLACH MODEL OF BURNOUT

Emotional  
Exhaustion



1

2

3

Reduced  
Efficacy

Depersonalization



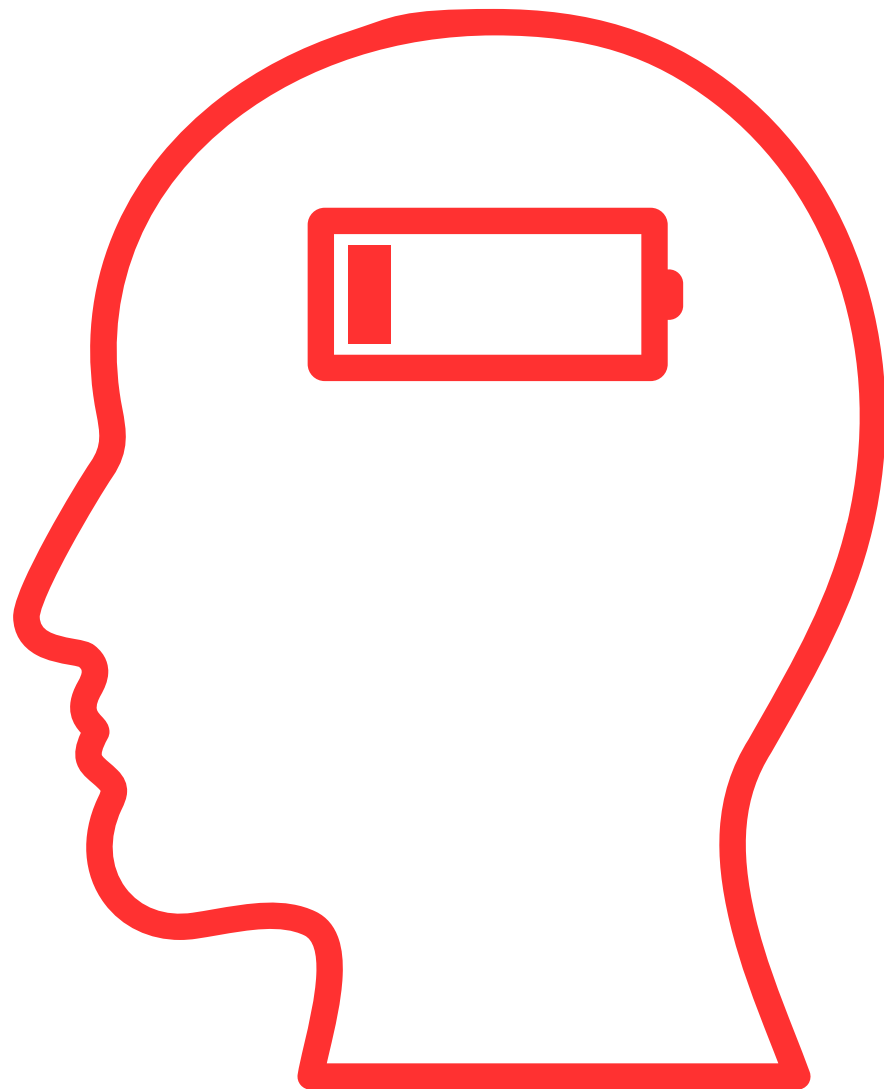


# EMOTIONAL EXHAUSTION:



Feeling physically and emotionally drained from constant demands and caregiving.

*"I'm drained and I have nothing left to give."*



- > This is the hallmark of burnout.
- > In ECE, this might show up as crying after work, dreading Mondays, or mentally checking out even when physically present.
- > Often caused by high emotional demands, frequent behavioral challenges, or lack of breaks or support

# DEPERSONALIZATION:



**Becoming detached, distant, or cynical toward children, families, or coworkers.**

*"I just need to get through the day."*

- This refers to emotional detachment from the people around you like the kids, families, or your coworkers.
- It often looks like cynical remarks, loss of empathy, or teachers saying things like, "They don't pay me enough to care."
- In ECE, this is dangerous because it impacts the quality of relationships, a key ingredient for child development.





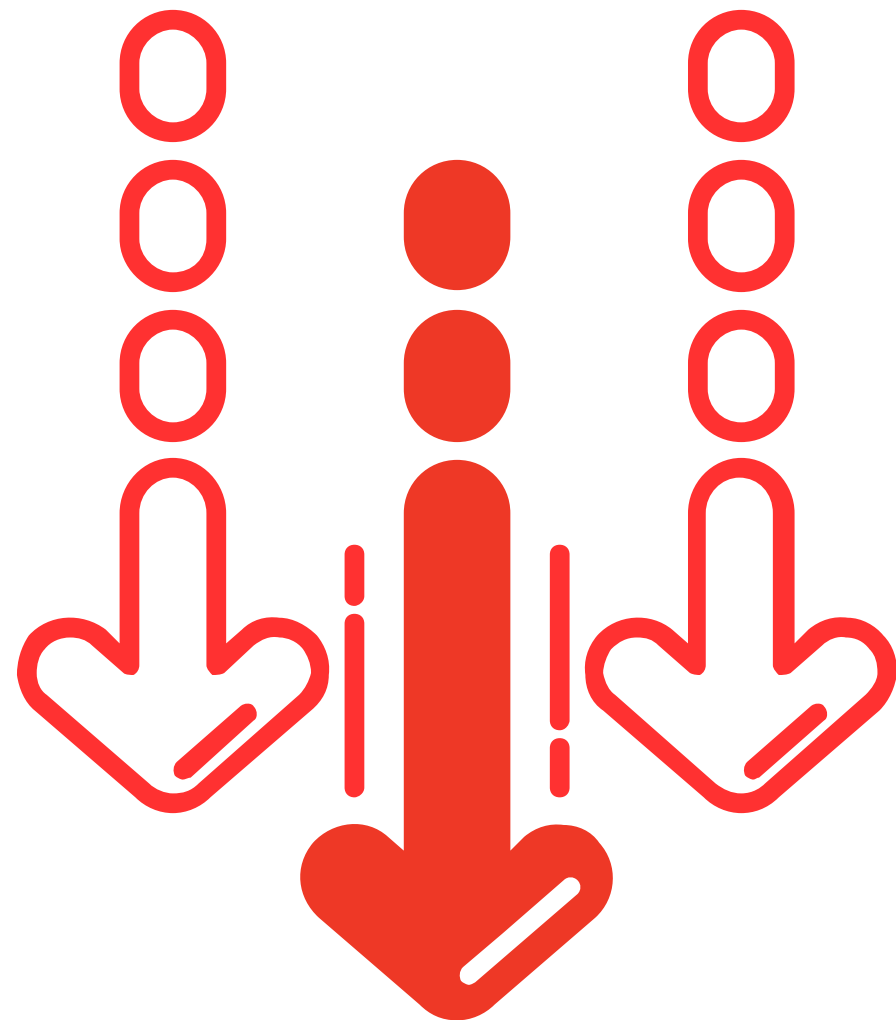
# REDUCED PERSONAL ACCOMPLISHMENT (OR INEFFECTACY)



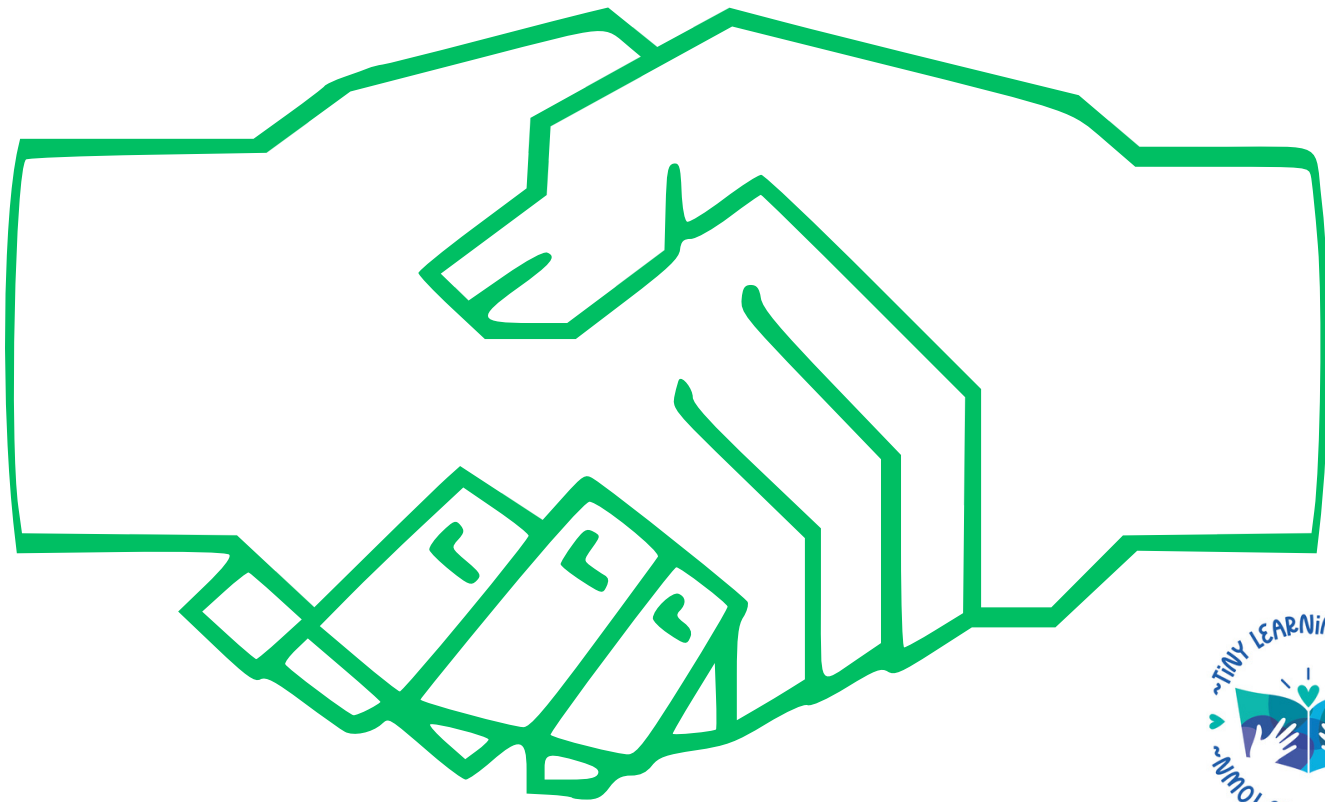
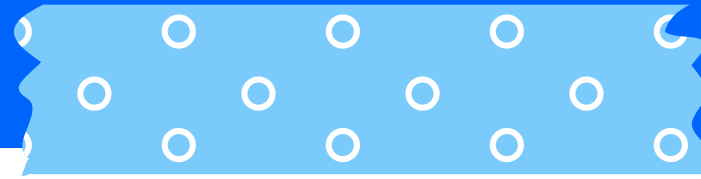
Feeling ineffective or doubting one's ability to make a difference.

*"Does what I do even matter? "Am I even making a difference?"*

- Burned-out educators may start doubting their impact or competence.
- Even small challenges can feel like proof they're "not cut out for this."
- In ECE, this is fueled by unclear expectations, poor feedback, or environments that don't celebrate teacher growth.



## WHY IT MATTERS IN ECE



**Maslach's research showed that burnout isn't just an individual problem it's systemic, especially in helping professions.**

**It's preventable when schools focus on culture, collaboration, workload balance, and leadership support.**

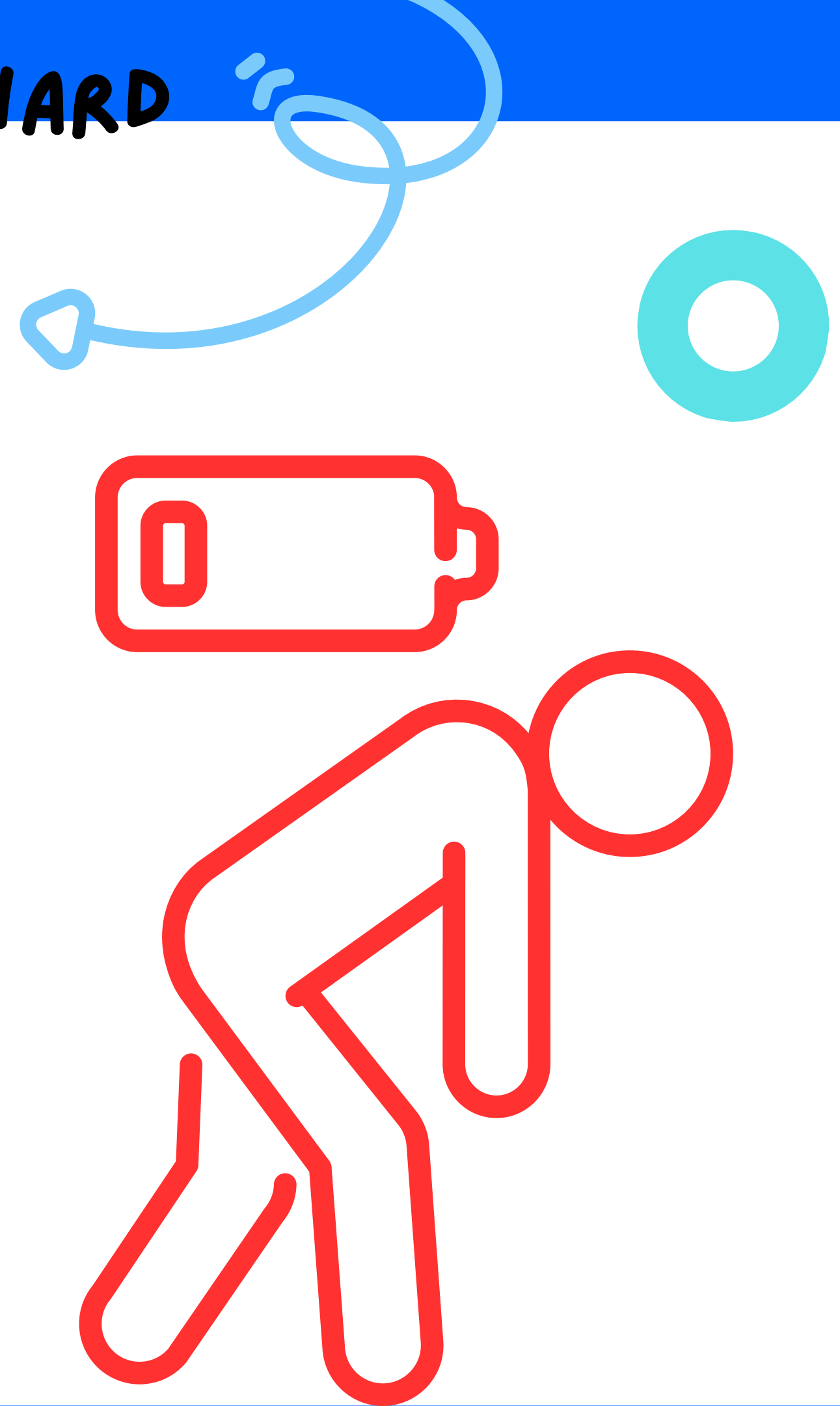
Maslach, C., & Leiter, M. P. (2016). Understanding the burnout experience: Recent research and its implications for psychiatry. *World Psychiatry*, 15(2), 103–111. <https://doi.org/10.1002/wps.20311>

# WHY BURNOUT HITS ECE SO HARD

## ECE-Specific Challenges:

These daily realities make ECE professionals more vulnerable to burnout than most other fields.

- + Low Pay & Limited Benefits**  
Many educators work full-time yet still struggle to make ends meet.
- + Emotional Labor**  
Constant caregiving, nurturing, and managing behaviors takes deep emotional energy.
- + High Ratios & Large Workloads**  
Teachers juggle multiple responsibilities with little support.
- + Lack of Breaks**  
Few opportunities to rest, recharge, or even eat lunch without interruption.



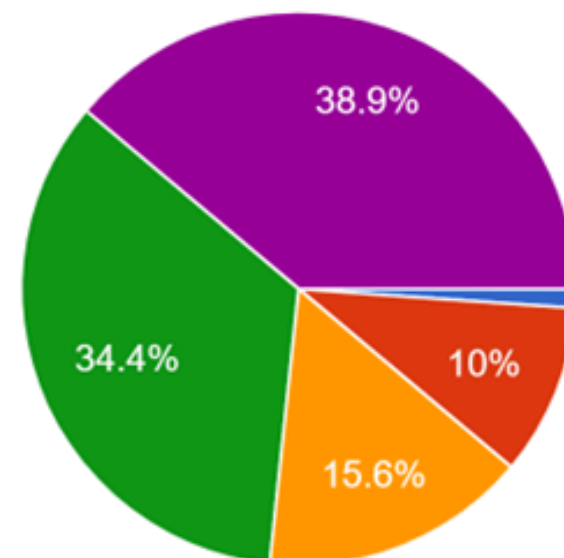


# HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN IN THE ECE FIELD?



How long have you worked in early childhood education?

90 responses

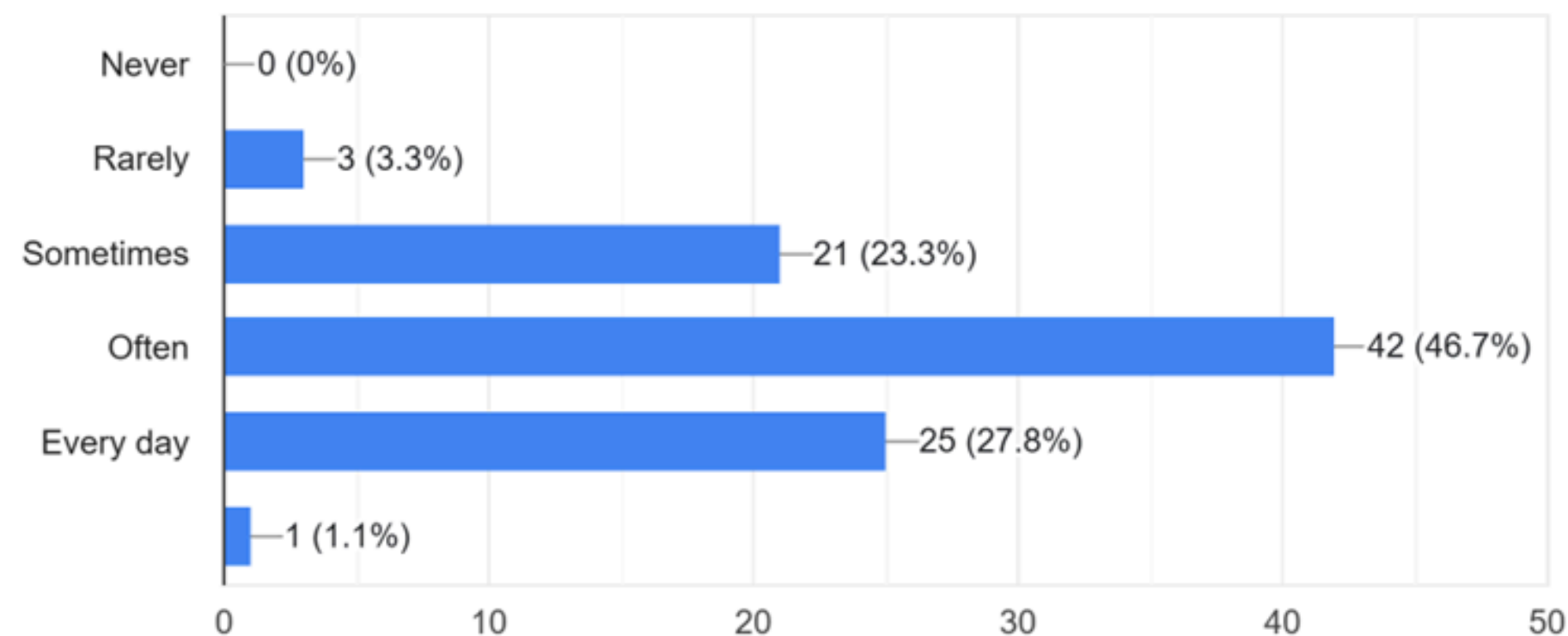


- Less than 1 year
- 1-3 years
- 4-7 years
- 8-15 years
- 15+ years

# IN THE PAST MONTH, HOW OFTEN HAVE YOU FELT EMOTIONALLY DRAINED AT WORK?

In the past month, how often have you felt emotionally drained at work?

90 responses

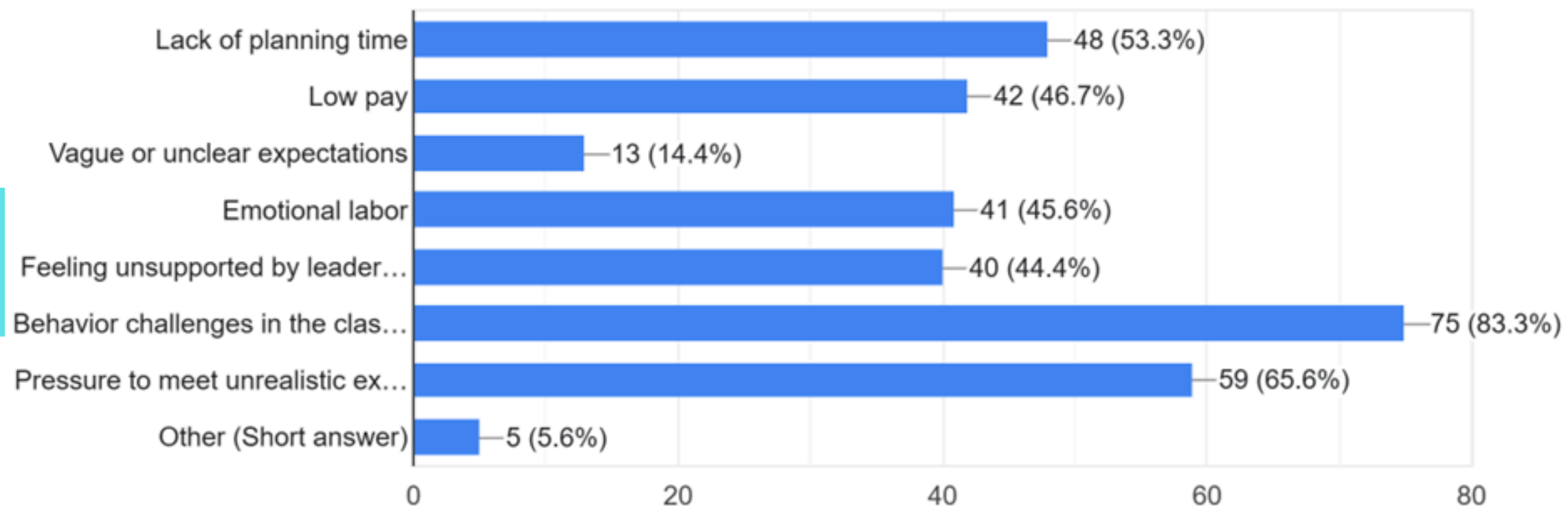


# WHICH STRESSORS DO YOU EXPERIENCE MOST OFTEN?



Which of the following stressors do you experience most often at your current job? (Select all that apply)

90 responses



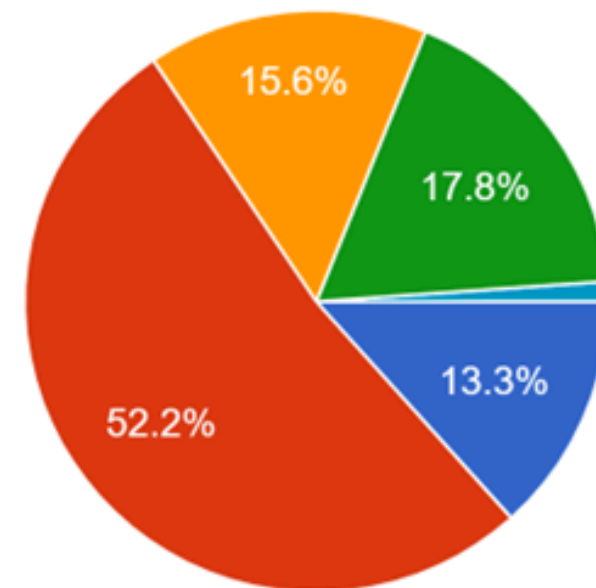


# WHAT BURNOUT LOOKS LIKE IN A CENTER



Do you feel that your leadership team supports your emotional and professional wellbeing?

90 responses



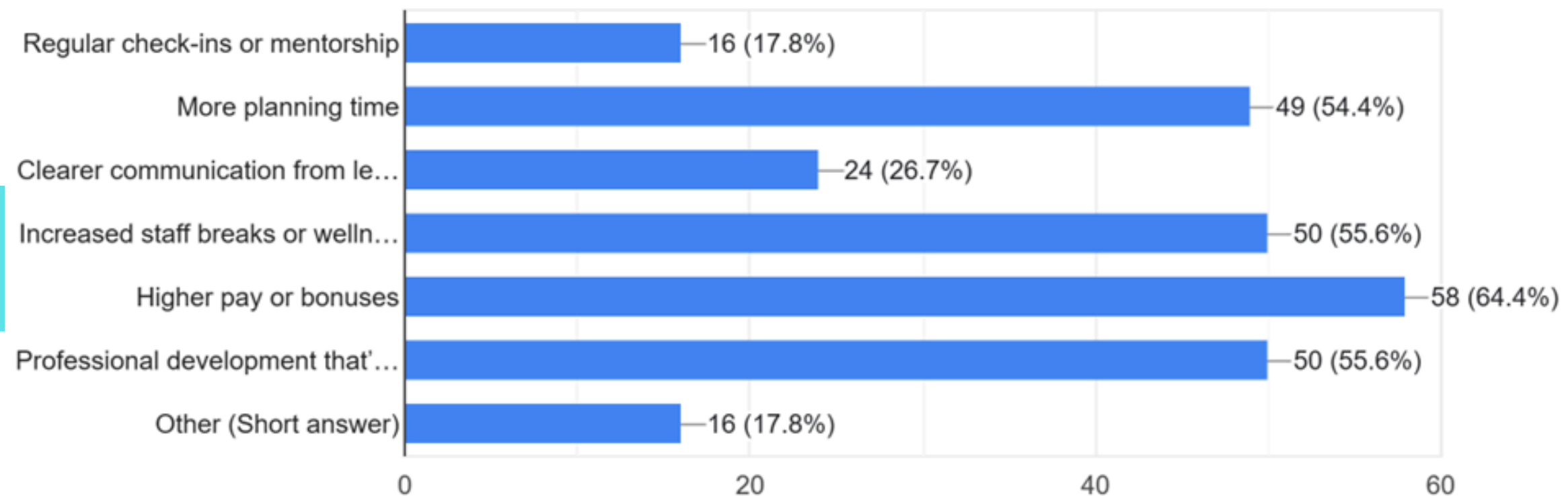
- Yes, consistently
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- No
- I'm not sure
- This is the first year I have a principal that does this. It's so refreshing.

# SUPPORT



What type of support would help you feel less burnt out?

90 responses



# WHAT DO YOU WISH YOUR ADMIN TEAM UNDERSTOOD ABOUT BURNOUT?

## WHAT TEACHERS WISH WE UNDERSTOOD



- It depends on the year how I feel. Last year I had a challenging kiddo and from day one i was tired. This year my kids aren't as intense so it is more relaxed. More support from administration would definitely help and clearer communication.
- The kids are coming in more deficient and with more emotional and educational needs than ever. Expectations for students and teachers alike are too high. Classrooms are overcrowded and underfunded.
- My team no, however, the government should allow early retirement without penalties for teachers with more than 20 years
- Teachers need a break during the day. Having lunch with 15 four-year-olds was not a lunch break
- Higher demand for safe classrooms where everyone can learn and not be in danger.
- That it is real and takes a toll.

# WHAT DO YOU WISH YOUR ADMIN TEAM UNDERSTOOD ABOUT BURNOUT?

## WHAT TEACHERS WISH WE UNDERSTOOD



- I'm in a public school and we need common planning time scheduled during the school day.
- **A big problem is the lack of accountability for parents, In my opinion. The parents are never wrong and there's no consequences for things that are happening in real time with their children... administration is generally just afraid of getting sued. The behavior challenges have gotten worse, which makes everything else more difficult.**
- **Communication is a MUST! Please don't tell me about staff shortages ....do something about it! Decrease class sizes! Don't expect staff to perform at full speed when the car has no gass!!**
- Just communicate so the teachers know what is happening!
- **I wish they would understand that us teachers are human as well and have tough days. It would be extremely beneficial if admin came into the classrooms every so often to just watch how things go and use it to try and help come up with ways for less burnout.**
- Focusing on the needs of staff



# WHAT DO YOU WISH YOUR ADMIN TEAM UNDERSTOOD ABOUT BURNOUT?

## WHAT TEACHERS WISH WE UNDERSTOOD



- My burnout is primarily from students being placed in the wrong setting (I.e in ICT when they should be 12:1:1).
- If admin held students and parents accountable, teachers would be able to teach rather than managing behaviors all day
- **A simple "I see you" gesture goes a long way**
- **Clear expectation**
- More support is needed to deal with student behaviors.

# WHAT DO YOU WISH YOUR ADMIN TEAM UNDERSTOOD ABOUT BURNOUT?

## WHAT TEACHERS WISH WE UNDERSTOOD



I'm the Assistant Director at the daycare, but due to short staffing, I OFTEN act as a floater. Often. It's tiring. One of my responsibilities is scheduling, I literally put myself in a different room nearly everyday. When a child has a behavioral challenge, my team calls me in (almost daily), I remain professional to extremely rude parents often and help facilitate differences between staff, staff vs. parents, students etc. It's a lot. When I get home to my family...they don't get all of me. I'm drained. I love what I do, but the pay sucks, there are no benefits and things haven't been the same since before COVID. More and more kids are having behavioral challenges, and it's exhausting for the staff, myself and the director. It's a process to get parents to be on the "same page" as us to get their child the help they need and deserve.

# WHAT DO YOU WISH YOUR ADMIN TEAM UNDERSTOOD ABOUT BURNOUT?

## WHAT TEACHERS WISH WE UNDERSTOOD



- **Class size and behaviors from other students affects academic success**
- I don't think it's their fault there are these expectations, it's just that the system is flawed
- It's a real thing!
- **Piling more initiatives on our plates, without removing others, adds to burnout. We do not receive the professional development other grade levels have access to. Expecting teachers to follow curriculum with fidelity leads to burnout because of additional behaviors to manage when curriculum topics are boring to children.**
- I wish they would stop with the surprise observations and just trust us to teach. And the micro managing is unbearable (nyc teacher)
- **How important it is to support your teachers as an administrator, as well as nipping those behaviors in the butt and following policy! Teachers are underpaid enough as it is, and admin needs to have their staffs back instead of cowering down to parents! As a teacher now admin, this is something I'm huge on and I see such a change in my staff!**



# REMEBER



Burnout doesn't always start with a resignation letter. Sometimes it starts with short replies, missed meetings, avoiding eye contact, or just not decorating their classroom anymore. As leaders, we need to see those signs before they become turnover.



# WHAT TEACHERS NEED FOR EFFECTIVE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT:

Just like our little learners teachers also need:

- Predictable, consistent routines
- Realistic transitions
- Adequate planning time
- Support during behaviors
- Clear expectations
- Admin presence in classrooms



## LEADERSHIP MOVES THAT IMPROVE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT:

- Cover a classroom for 10 minutes so the teacher can plan
- Provide a visual schedule for every room
- Help reset the room during transitions
- Step in during escalated behaviors
- Use a consistent walkthrough checklist
- Offer quick daily “How’s it going?” check-ins





## WHEN BEHAVIOR CHALLENGES ARE HIGH:

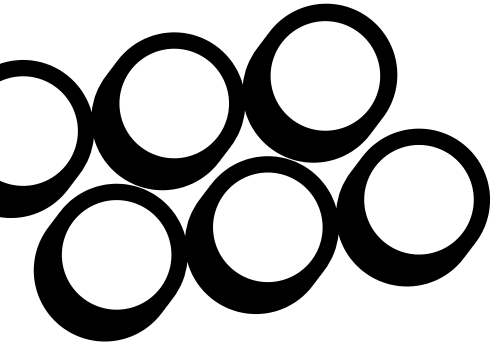
- Use a Behavior Support Plan template
- Provide consistent language for all staff
- Review schedules, are transitions too long?
- Identify “hot spots” (arrival, cleanup, circle time)
- Offer coaching & modeling, not just advice
- Hold quick 5-minute debriefs after incidents



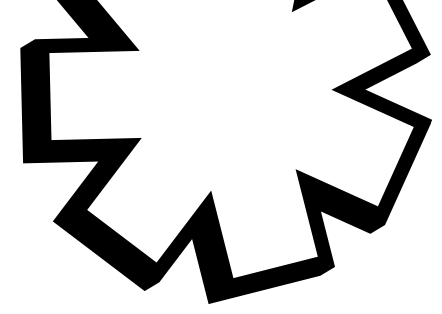
# 10 QUICK WINS FOR CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

- Reduce transitions
- Shorten circle time
- Build predictable routines
- Set clear expectations
- Use visual cues
- Offer choice
- Model calm
- Prep materials ahead
- Chunk instructions
- Celebrate the small wins





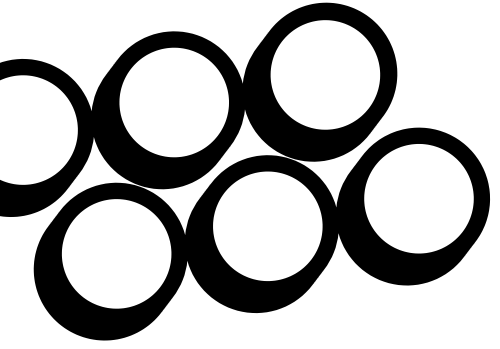
# **BURNOUT BAIT:** **THE HIDDEN TRAPS IN OUR SYSTEMS**



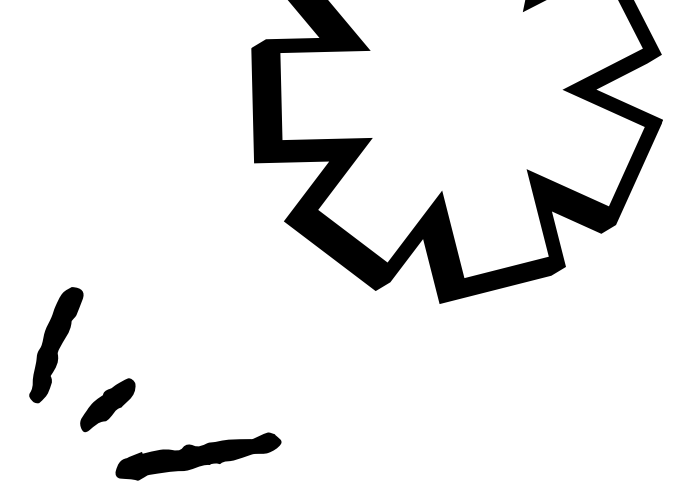
- Vague roles or overlapping job descriptions
- “Toxic positivity” pressure to be cheerful even when overwhelmed
- PD with no follow-up support
- “We’re a family” language that erases boundaries
- Rewarding burnout (“You’re such a trooper!”)







## OTHER EXAMPLES OF BURNOUT BAIT: THE HIDDEN TRAPS IN OUR SYSTEMS



- The “But We’ve Always Done It This Way” Trap
- *The “Fix It Yourself” Trap*
- *The “Only Some Rooms Matter” Trap*
- *The “But You’re Fine, Right?” Trap*
- *The “Invisible Work” Trap*
- *The “Constant Firefighting” Trap*
- *The “Misaligned Expectations” Trap*
- *The “Favoritism Feedback” Trap*



You don't have to answer out loud or write it down unless you want to.  
Which of these 'bait' traps do you see at your center or have seen at your center?  
Does anyone want to share?

# THE RIPPLE EFFECT OF LEADERSHIP



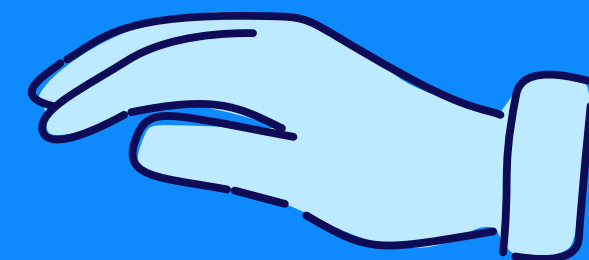
Everything we do as leaders  
Directly affects how teachers show up for children.



And in turn...  
How children behave, learn, and regulate themselves in  
the classroom.



If a teacher feels  
unsupported, disrespected, or constantly overwhelmed, that  
energy shows up in the classroom



# A TALE OF TWO TEACHERS

## TEACHER A (UNSUPPORTED)

Little to no planning time

Vague expectations

No coaching or follow-up

Constant interruptions

Admin only checks in when something goes wrong



## TEACHER B (SUPPORTED)

Scheduled planning + check-ins

Clear expectations + tools

Ongoing feedback and encouragement

Professional development with follow-through

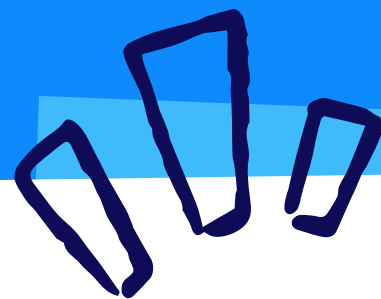
Admin is visible and present daily



TEACHERS DON'T BURN OUT  
BECAUSE THEY DON'T KNOW WHAT  
TO DO, THEY BURN OUT BECAUSE  
THEY'RE UNSUPPORTED WHILE DOING  
IT.







# CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT STARTS WITH LEADERSHIP



- ✱ Classroom management is a leadership issue too



# 5 LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES TO PREVENT BURNOUT




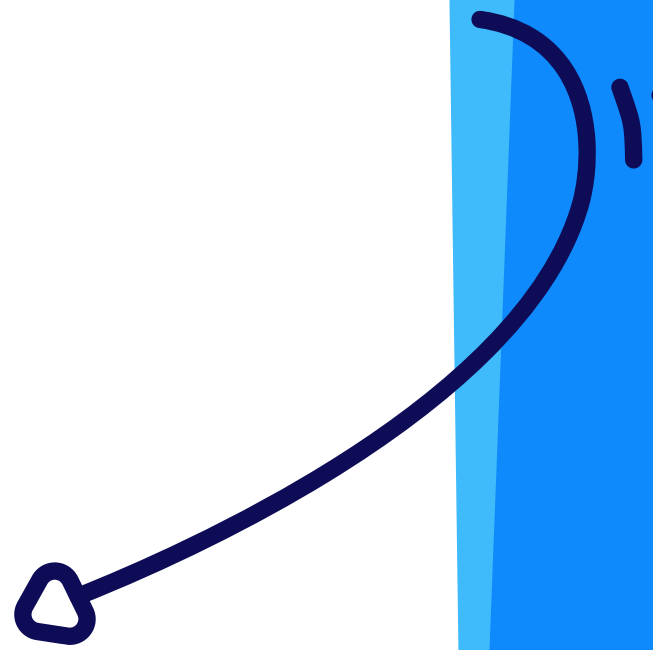

Structure Over Scramble  
Support Before It's a Crisis  
Sustain Through PD & Coaching  
Empower Educator Voice & Choice  
Build Community & Connection



# CORE STRATEGIES TO PREVENT BURNOUT



## Strategy 1: Structure Over Scramble

- 
- Set expectations,
  - Systems
  - Visual routines
  - Provide prep time and resources
  - Visual schedules
  - Burnout Prevention Pyramid
- 
- 



# CORE STRATEGIES TO PREVENT BURNOUT



## Strategy 2: Support Before It's a Crisis

- Weekly check-ins
- Coaching
- Emotional safety and trust-building
- Admin self-regulation = model for staff



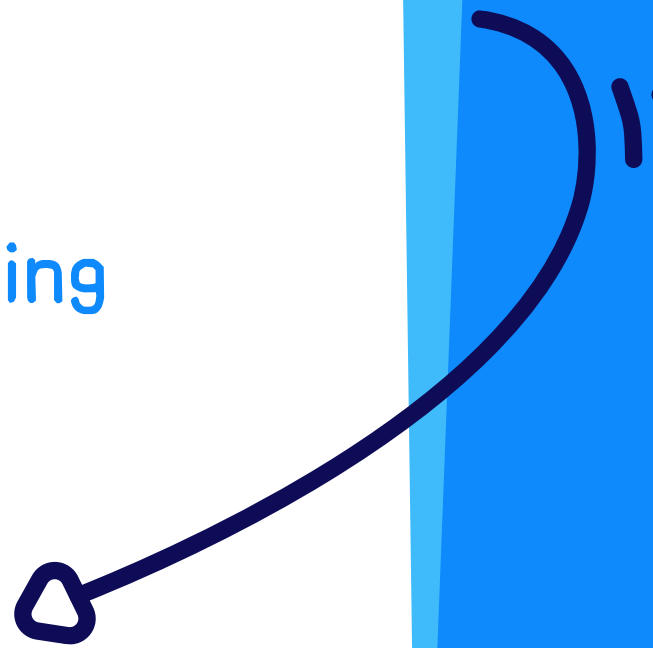




# CORE STRATEGIES TO PREVENT BURNOUT



## Strategy 3: Sustain Through PD & Coaching

- Provide ongoing PD focused on classroom management
  - Ensure PD is practical, not theoretical
  - Coaching should be proactive, not just reactive
  - Use consistent language, visuals, and expectations center-wide
  - Build educator confidence through modeling & feedback
  - Normalize reflective practice across the program
- 

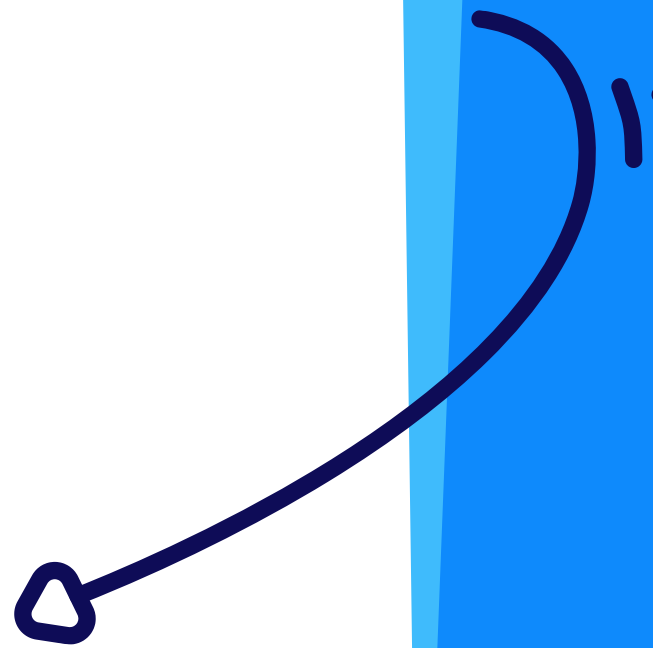




# EDUCATOR VOICE & CHOICE



## Strategy 4: Educator Voice & Choice

- Invite teachers into decisions that affect their day
  - Offer options when possible
  - Co-create routines, systems, and solutions
- 





# COMMUNITY-BUILDING



## Strategy 5: Community Building

- Foster a culture where teachers feel connected, not isolated
- Create spaces for staff to share ideas, challenges, and wins
- Celebrate small successes publicly and often
- Encourage peer support and collaborative problem-solving
- Build traditions, rituals, and moments that strengthen team identity





# 3 BIG TAKEAWAYS FOR PREVENTING BURNOUT

- 1 Burnout is systemic, not personal.  
It's not about teacher weakness it's about the environments we create.
- 2 Leadership is daily practice, not a position.  
How we show up matters more than what our title says.
- 3 Small, intentional shifts change everything  
Structure, support, and shared voice build cultures that refill instead of drain.



# YOUR CALL TO ACTION

Choose ONE change you will make in the next 7 days to support your teachers or coworkers in feeling valued and supported.

Small shifts. Big impact. Start the ripple.





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  - ✓ ECE handouts + freebies
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