

# Burnout Blockers Discussion Questions

## Video #1: Building Your Confidence as a New Teacher

1. Recall: What happens throughout the Dunning-Kruger effect? Have you ever experienced it in areas of your life besides teaching? Explain.
2. Has a movie about an educator ever inspired you? If so, describe how. What do you think is realistic and unrealistic about how the characters and school are portrayed?
3. What are some teaching tips you've seen online or heard about that seem valuable but difficult to execute? What do you think you'd have to learn or have to make it happen?
4. What worries you most about teaching? In which areas do you feel confident? Explain.
5. Many teachers, overwhelmed by how much they have to learn and do, experience symptoms associated with anxiety and depression, which can eventually lead to feeling burnt out.
  - a. In an ideal world, what would you change about the ways schools are run to help prevent teachers from experiencing burnout?
  - b. If it's not realistic for school leadership to fully execute those changes right now, what are some ideas for things teachers can do for themselves in the meantime to ward off burnout?

### A Note About Mentoring

Having an experienced educator as a mentor can help acclimate you to the culture of a new school, give you pointers and materials for teaching your subject, and prevent feelings of isolation. So when you interview for teaching jobs, ask about the school's mentoring program. It's not a sign of weakness to demonstrate concern for your professional development. Your principal should make you feel confident that you'll be assigned a mentor who will be willing to support you throughout the year. When you meet your mentor, don't wait until you're overwhelmed to ask for help. Here are some questions you can ask to be proactive:

- Can you show me what you typically do and say in class throughout the first week of school?
- What are your classroom rules and procedures? How did you develop them?
- What are the procedures for making a disciplinary referral to the principal?
- Can you give me a tour of the building?
- Can you introduce me to the principals, secretaries, instructional aides, special education teachers, janitors, etc.?
- Can you give me a walk-through of the grade management system, staff portal of the district website, etc.?
- Do teachers of the same subject matter share instructional materials with one another? How can I access them and contribute?
- Will I be expected to follow a particular grading policy? If not, what advice do you have for grading assignments and participation?
- What should I know about special education accommodations?
- Where do teachers eat lunch?
- What was your first year of teaching like? What do you know now that you wish you knew back then?

Your mentor may not have the answers to all of these questions, and you also may not feel comfortable following his or her exact approach. However, at the beginning of the school year, it often creates the smoothest transition to go along with how things are typically done in your new school. Soon you'll figure out where you have the time and license to make tweaks that feel more aligned with your teaching style.

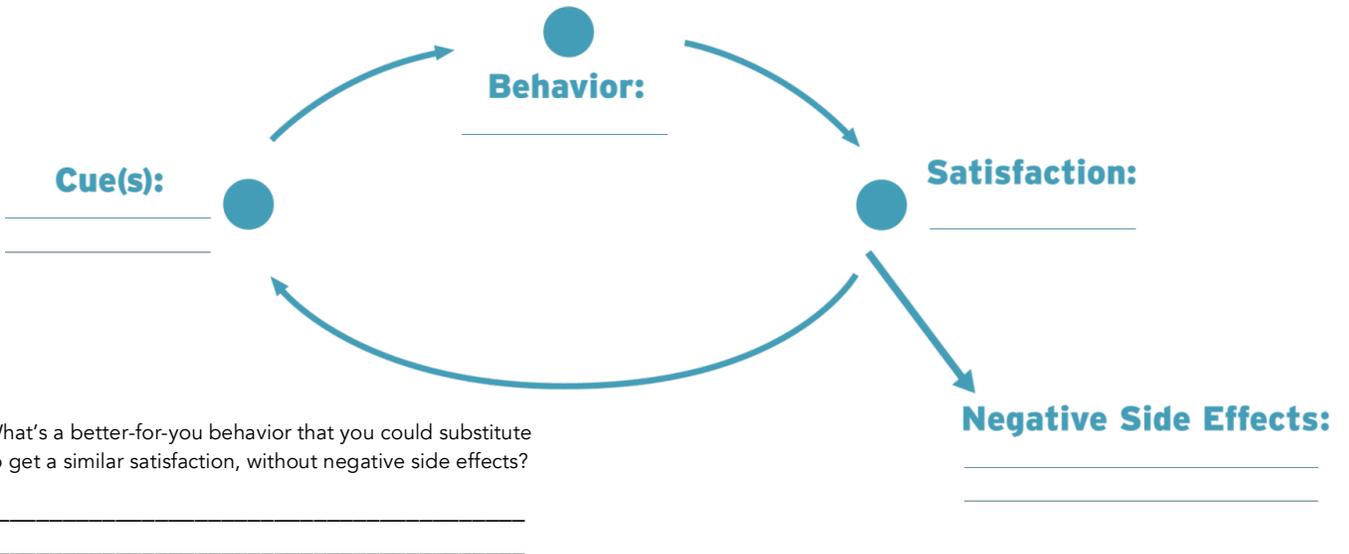
## Video #2: A Mindset to Prevent Burnout

1. For each of these common activities in life, what percentage do you think is typically left up to chance and what depends on a person's skill?
  - a. Passing a math test
  - b. Convincing someone to go on a date with you
  - c. Driving to work without getting into an accident
  
2. Examples of how teachers can use their skills to prevent mishaps in the classroom include planning activities that will fill the full period, communicating clearly with problem students, and designing tests that match the material taught in a unit. However, the occasional chance event will disrupt the order, and it's up to the teacher to use his or her skills to smooth over the situation. In the following table, identify some ways a teacher can have a positive impact on a problem event caused by chance and also actions that would make the situation worse.

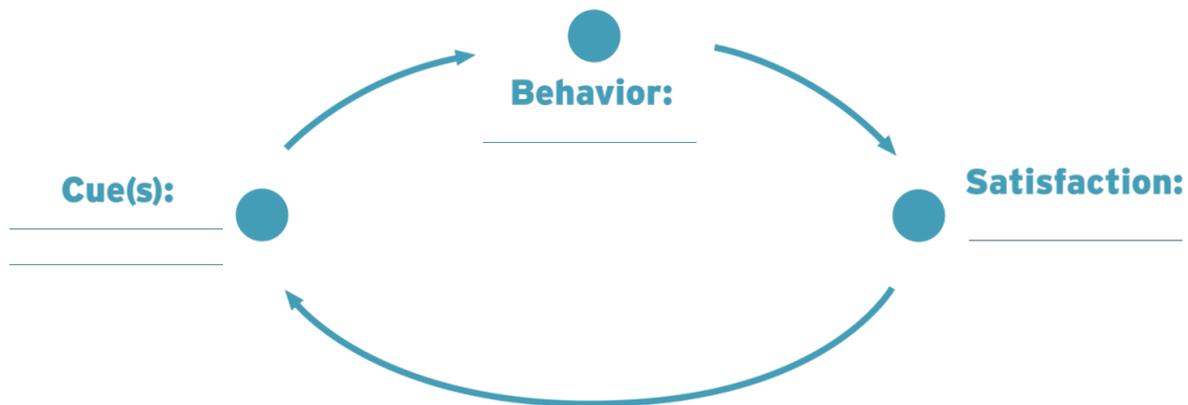
Chance event	How could the teacher have a positive impact on the problem?	Which actions from the teacher would make the problem worse?
A student faints while giving a presentation in front of the class.		
The 8-minute video clip meant to hook students' interest in the lesson topic won't load.		
A student discovers that she is missing the answer booklet for a standardized test.		
Students start screaming and jumping up on their desks when they see a mouse scurry through the classroom.		
On a test day, nearly half of the students in Period 1 are missing because their buses are stuck behind a serious car accident.		

## Video #3: Hack Your Habit Loops to Reduce Stress

1. Recall: How does a habit loop operate?
2. Complete the habit loop diagram to identify a stress-induced habit you've developed which has negative side effects.



3. Complete the habit loop diagram to identify a completely new habit you'd like to create to help you combat stress.



4. Have you ever tried mindful breathing or meditation? What do you think of it? Do you think putting it into your routine could help you be a better teacher? Explain why or why not.
5. What are some other times in life when we tend to engage in black-and-white thinking? Describe how it can be harmful and what we can do as alternatives.

## Video #4: Is Student Misbehavior Normal in Your Classroom?

1. Recall: What causes us to experience the availability effect?
2. Identify instances when the media created an availability effect for you and/or others you know.
3. If you already have teaching experience, identify a time when you expected a situation at school to happen more often than was realistic and/or you interpreted it to be more significant than it actually was.

## Video #5: Plan Lessons Better with Premortems

1. Recall: What is a premortem and how can it help teachers?
2. Describe some situations from your personal or professional life in which you wished you would have thought through the question "What really could go wrong here?"

## Video #6: How to Prioritize Your Work as a Teacher

1. How do you currently keep track of what you have to get done every day?
2. If you already have teaching experience, have you been able to get most of the things on your to-do list done within the week? If not, what tends to get in the way?
3. What do you think you spend the most of your time on now? Approximately how many hours a week does it require? If you think it's too much time, what do you think you could do to reduce it?
4. A prioritization sheet can seem like just another step to take when you're busy. But how can it save time in the long run?

## Video #7: Recap

1. Which ideas from *Teacher Burnout Busters* do you think will be most useful to you? Explain.