

Preparing for the Unexpected

Introduction

Athletics are dynamic and unpredictable.

Athletic Administrators must be ready to respond quickly and effectively.

Goal: Minimize disruption and ensure safety.

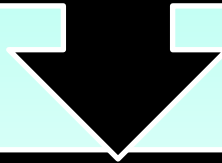
“Failing to prepare is preparing to fail.” – John Wooden

The Growing Risk Landscape

Pose	Gun	Crowd	Resource
While most middle school and smaller high school games pose minimal threats, marquee events like football and basketball draw large, emotionally charged crowds.	Gun violence and assaults: K-12 School Shooting Database171 shootings at school sporting events over the past decade, with 2021 and 2022 marking record highs.	Crowd psychology: Large gatherings amplify emotions and create anonymity, making aggressive behavior more likely.	Resource gaps: Schools often under-staff events due to budget constraints, leaving blind spots in parking lots, restrooms, and concession areas.

The Growing Risk Landscape

Community tensions: Rivalries, gang presence, and substance use elevate risks well beyond the field.



Key Pillars of Event Security

STAFFING

PLANNING

PREPAREDNESS

Preparing for the Unexpected

Focus on Resilience

- Emphasizes building mental and physical resilience to handle unexpected challenges effectively.

Proactive Readiness

- Highlights the importance of being proactive and prepared before unforeseen events occur.

Adaptability in Challenges

- Focuses on adapting quickly and effectively to changing circumstances in athletics and leadership.

Why Preparation Matters

Importance of Preparation

- Preparation is essential for success and maintaining stability during uncertain times.

Adaptability in Various Fields

- Adaptability allows individuals to respond effectively in athletics, education, and leadership.

Real-Life Examples

- Injuries, weather delays, and crises show the necessity of being prepared to reduce negative impacts.



Common Unexpected Situations

Personal Unexpected Events

- Personal events such as injuries, illnesses, and family emergencies disrupt individual routines and performance. WHO REPLACES YOU!

Team-Related Challenges

- Sudden roster changes or coaching transitions affect team dynamics and strategic planning.
- Injuries or medical emergencies.
- Transportation issues (e.g., bus breakdowns).
- Facility problems (e.g., power outages).
- Behavioral incidents (e.g., fights, confrontations).

Environmental Disruptions

- Weather-related cancellations (e.g., lightning, heat index).

Societal Impacts

- Pandemics, natural disasters, and social unrest have broad impacts on organizations and society.
- Media or social media crises.

Core Principles of Crisis Management

Anticipation of Risks

- Identify potential risks early and consider their possible impacts to stay prepared.

Strategic Planning

- Develop contingency plans that can be implemented swiftly when necessary.
- Follow established protocols.

Effective Communication

- Ensure all stakeholders understand plans and their specific roles clearly.
- Train staff and coaches.
- Communicate clearly and quickly.
- **Internal:** Coaches, staff, students.
- **External:** Parents, media, community.
- **Tools:** Text alerts, social media, email, PA system.
- **Tone:** Clear, calm, factual.

Practice and Reflection

- Use drills and simulations for readiness, then learn from experiences to improve.
- Practice drills and simulations.
- Review and revise regularly.

Document everything.

Case Study or Real-Life Example



DESCRIBE A REAL OR
HYPOTHETICAL
UNEXPECTED EVENT.



EXPLAIN THE
RESPONSE AND
OUTCOME.



HIGHLIGHT LESSONS
LEARNED.

Your Role

Calm and Decisive Leadership

Effective leaders stay calm and make decisions that provide stability during crises.
Lead by example



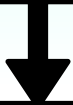
Visibility and Support

Visible leaders support their teams to maintain morale and make members feel valued.
Be visible and accessible



Delegation and Empowerment

Delegating tasks efficiently empowers team members to contribute and manage workloads.
Empower your team



Empathy and Clear Communication

Leading with empathy and clarity builds trust and encourages open team communication.

Role of Leadership

Adequate Staffing and Supervision

Prioritize law enforcement presence

- Off-duty officers, SROs, or gang-unit specialists familiar with your student population add value beyond uniformed deference.

Strategic deployment

- Assign visible coverage at ticket gates, entrances, parking lots, restrooms, and concession stands.

Invest in training

- Staff should focus on crowd monitoring, de-escalation, and emergency protocols, not just watching the game. Two-way radios and clear identifiers (vests, badges) are essential.

Role of Leadership

Advanced Security Planning



Move beyond last-minute fixes

Planning security on Thursday for Friday's game is a recipe for risk. Build and rehearse protocols well in advance.



Clear bag policies

Many schools are adopting clear bags or no bags, which streamline inspections, deter contraband, and align with national sports standards.



Ticketing and access control

Limit in-and-out privileges, cut off ticket sales after halftime, and separate entrances for teams and spectators to reduce flashpoints.



Segregated spaces

Home and visiting crowds should have distinct seating and concessions. Locker rooms and bus routes should also remain separate.

Role of Leadership

Thoughtful Emergency Preparedness



Written, tested guidelines

Emergency protocols should be drilled, and coordinated across administrators, law enforcement, and medical personnel.



On-site medical readiness

Ambulances at major games, AED accessibility, and designated medical staff ensure quick response.



Evaluation procedures

Communicate exit routes at the start of events and rehearse staff assignments for crowd management.



Post-crisis recovery

Have a plan for communication with parents, media, and the community if an incident occurs.

Risk Management and Legal Accountability



Increasingly, courts and insurers expect schools to demonstrate reasonable foreseeability when violence occurs.



Spectator control

Schools have a legal duty to manage spectator behavior. Failure to anticipate and control foreseeable risks could result in liability.

Actionable Takeaways for Athletic Directors

Audit	Law Enforcement	Bag Policy	Train	Review	Communicate
Evaluate past incidents, rivalry intensity, and physical plant vulnerabilities.	Seasonal planning with police/community officers' sets expectations and resources.	Implement clear bag or no policies and Communicate rules widely and enforce consistently to normalize security culture.	Equip them to spot risks, intervene early, and communicate effectively.	Work with carriers to ensure your risk management efforts align with expectations.	Parents, staff, players, and the community should know safety is a priority. Visible efforts build trust and deter misconduct.

Tools & Resources

Emergency Action Plans

- EAPs provide structured responses to critical incidents to ensure organized and effective action.

Crisis Communication Protocols & Guides

- Protocols ensure timely and accurate information dissemination during emergencies.

Mental Health Support

- Mental health resources provide support to individuals facing stressful situations.

Scenario-Based Training

- Training allows practice of responses in controlled environments to improve preparedness.

Local Emergency Contacts

- Instant access to those numbers

Incident Reports Templates

- Do you have them

Final Thoughts

Preparation + Leadership = Resilience.

Stay proactive, stay connected, stay calm.

Who is you when you're not you?

“You can’t control the unexpected, but you can control your response.”

HOW THIS ALL AFFECTS US

What is Stress and Burnout?

- Stress occurs when the demands of the job or a given situation exceed perceived capabilities and resources for an individual to be successful (Hjälrm et al., 2007).
- Extreme stress, or repeated exposure to stressors, can lead to psychological, physical, and sociological concerns that in turn lead toward burnout.



Questions to Consider

- Using one word, what causes the most stress in your job?
- What stressors are you dealing with today?
- When you experience stress, how does it affect you?
- What time of year do you experience the most stress and why?

The Problem

We experience a stressor



If stressor > than
coping mechanism



stress



stress



burnout



Me no want to
_____ anymore

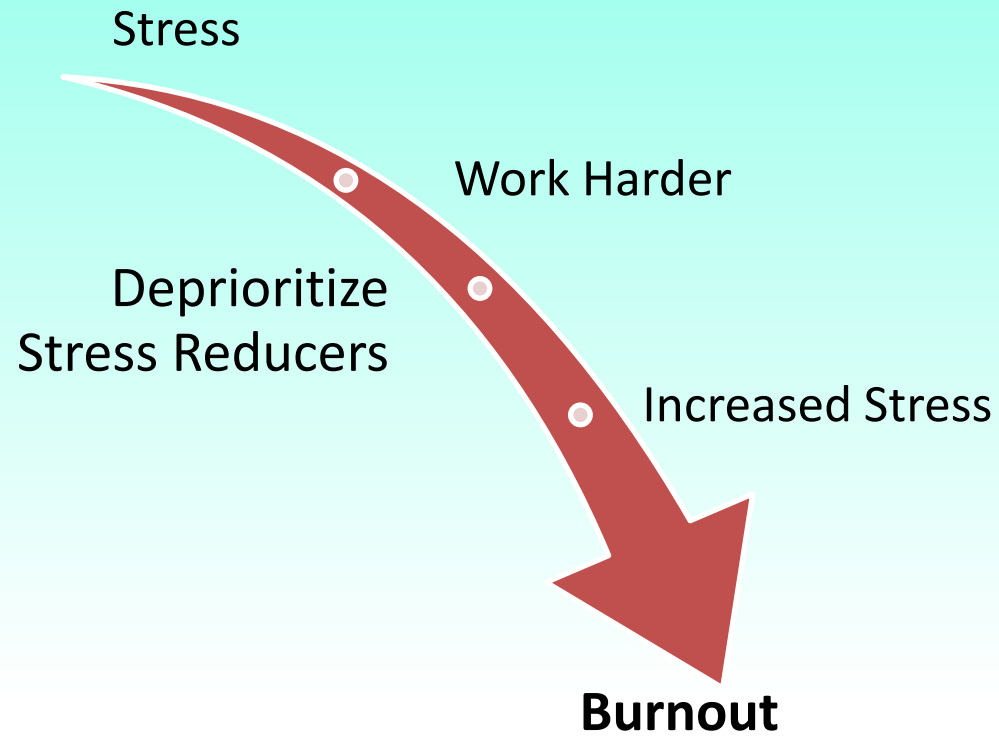
Stress and Burnout Are Real!

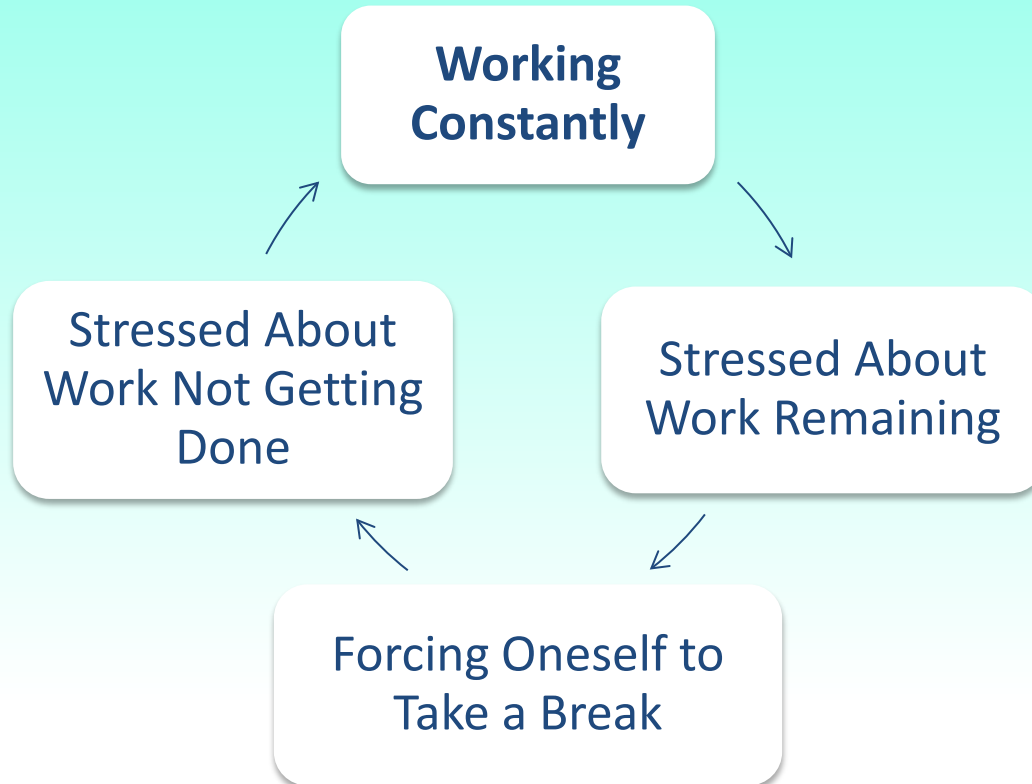
Use over time for: stress

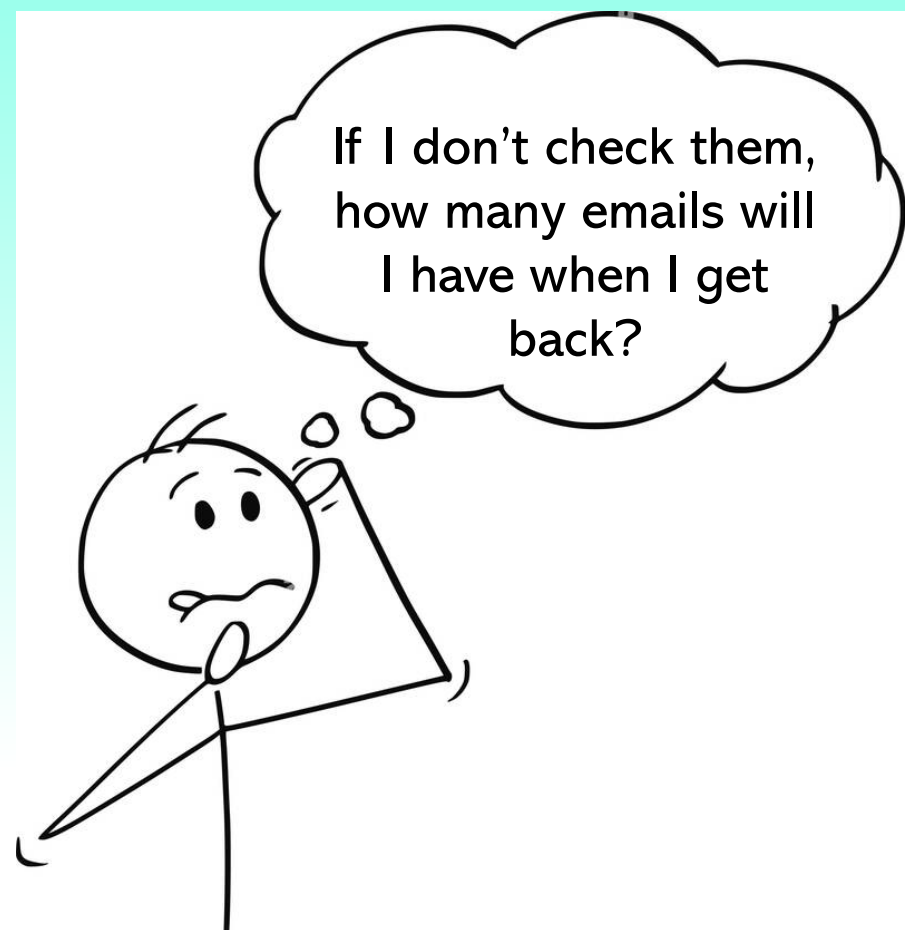


Use over time for: burnout







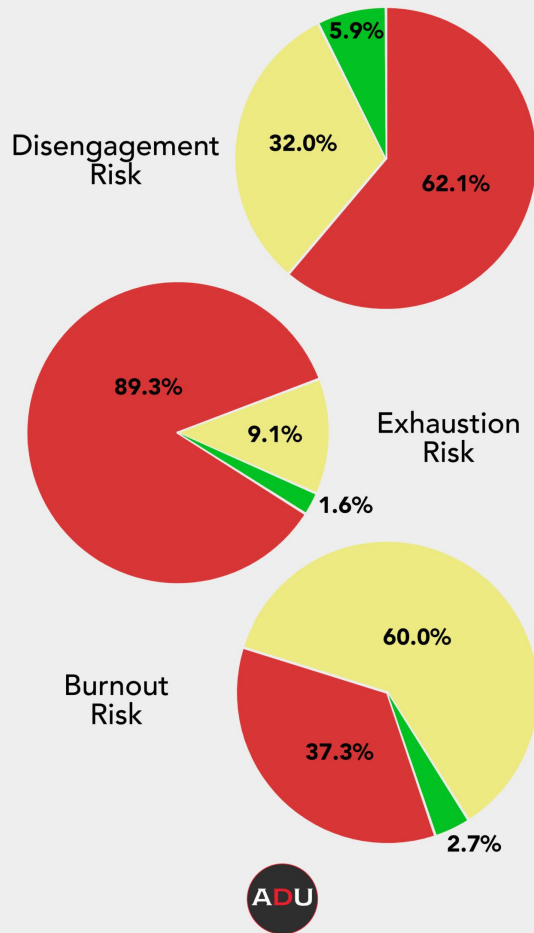


Brownout or “Quiet Quitting”

- Usually the successful individual
- Tired of doing the 80%
- I’m going to do what’s required of me
- Someone else can do it
- Not my problem anymore
- I’ve served my time

Administrator Burnout

High Risk Medium Risk Low Risk



Burnout By Gender

Female



Male

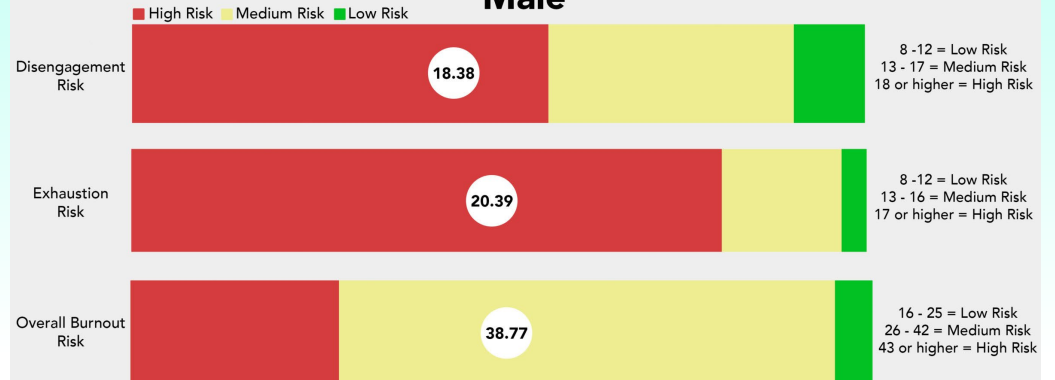


Table 1*Coach and Athletic Director Turnover in Florida High Schools, 2021–2024*

Position	2021	2022	Turnover Rate (%)	2023	Turnover Rate (%)	2024	Turnover Rate (%)
Athletic Director	807	166	21	303	38	393	49
Football	611	171	28	276	45	343	56
Basketball	1450	371	26	605	42	782	54
Soccer	1230	308	25	480	39	622	51
Volleyball	714	165	23	299	42	374	52
Baseball	634	126	20	237	37	317	50
Track and <u>Field</u>	1234	280	23	514	42	646	52
Wrestling	495	111	22	189	38	241	49
Total	7175	1698	24	2903	40	3718	52

Note. The turnover rate represents the percentage of coaching positions vacated or replaced each year, relative to the total number of positions in the previous year.

Table 2*Assistant Coach and Athletic Director Turnover in Florida High Schools, 2021–2024*

Position	2021	2022	Turnover Rate (%)	2023	Turnover Rate (%)	2024	Turnover Rate (%)
Athletic Director	210	49	23	88	42	113	54
Football	56	18	32	29	52	37	66
Basketball	37	7	19	16	43	22	59
Total	303	74	24	133	44	172	57

Note. The turnover rate represents the percentage of coaching positions vacated or replaced each year, relative to the total number of positions in the previous year.

What Makes Us Different?

- Visible member of community
- Job performance demands are different
- Sometimes more than one job
- Must be an exemplary leader
- Working with a young population who also experience high levels of stress



We Experience Stress Across

- Psychological
- Physical
- Societal/Personal
- Work-Related



WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT?

12 Ways to Reduce Stress

- Exercise
- Relaxation, Meditation, & Religion
- Connect with a Mentor and Consultant
- Connect with Family
- Prioritize and Set Limits
- Say No
- Renewal and Rest
- Delegate & Don't Double Down
- Enjoy a Hobby
- Continue Your Education
- Communicate (Send & Receive) More Effectively
- Unexpected Ways

Final Thoughts

- Stress is real and burnout is a result of stress becoming greater than the mediators we have in place
- As administrators, we must find ways to reduce the stressors and/or finding ways to moderate the stress
- Don't double down

In Sum

**INSERT CATCHY/
QUOTABLE QUOTE
HERE THAT
MOTIVATES AND
INSPIRES**



**PICTURE OF
FAMOUS PERSON
FOR CREDIBILITY**

“If you don’t take
care of you, you
can’t take care of
your athletes.”



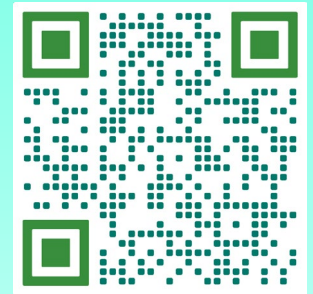
Thank You For Listening!



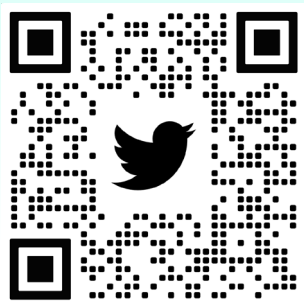
Master's
Program



tbaghurst@fsu.edu



Books



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Dan Talbot



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