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**EXPERIMENT OF USING BODY-ORIENTED PSYCHOTHERAPY  
TO OVERCOME TEACHERS' EMOTIONAL BURNOUT**

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***Abstract***

The article is concerned with the study of the influence of body-oriented psychotherapy techniques on the manifestations of emotional burnout in the teachers of special (correctional) educational organizations. The authors studied specific factors that increase the risk of the syndrome of emotional burnout in educators. Body-oriented therapy and its possibilities to organize psychological support of teachers at special (correctional) educational organizations are described in the article. The results of a detailed experiment including the ascertaining, forming and control stages are presented. The manifestations of emotional burnout and correlation of its indicators with aggression, hostility, alexithymia were considered. A model of short-term body-oriented psychotherapy was developed. Approbation of the model is presented in the form of qualitative analysis, and statistical data were obtained with the help of mathematical statistics methods – the Pearson and Spearman correlation analysis, the Mann-Whitney U test. A statistically reliable relationship between the manifestations of emotional burnout and the manifestation of hostility, resentment, irritation was proved. The results of diagnostic evaluation of the symptoms of emotional burnout before and after the implemented corrective program were described. It was proved that body-oriented psychotherapy helps reduce negative emotional manifestations among teachers. The findings make it possible to clarify and expand the scientific explanation of the specific features causing the syndrome of emotional burnout. The data obtained can be used in comparative studies of the burnout syndrome among representatives of assisting professions. The study revealed and proved the necessity of using body-oriented psychotherapeutic techniques to overcome hostility among special education teachers.

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**Keywords:** Teachers, emotional burnout, body-oriented psychotherapeutic techniques..



## 1. Introduction

Positive effects of body-oriented therapy on human mental health are well known and obvious. Techniques of body-oriented therapy open the way to the somatic unconscious, contribute to the knowledge of one's own body, its primary impulses, the possibilities of influencing consciousness through bodily changes.

In Russia this trend is relatively new and very promising. However, the effectiveness of this technique remains unclear when it comes to particular problems such as emotional burnout of teachers.

The issue of emotional burnout has been widely debated recently by various specialists (Boyko, 1999; Gnedova, 2007). It is relevant to both practical psychology and medicine. The World Health Organization defines the syndrome of emotional burnout as physical, emotional or motivational exhaustion, characterized by decreased productivity in work, fatigue, insomnia, increased susceptibility to somatic diseases, alcohol consumption and suicidal behavior. Thus, this phenomenon presents a threat not only to professional effectiveness but also to bodily well-being (Gurvich, 1999; Schaufeli, 2009).

## 2. Problem Statement

The profession of a teacher, being an assistive one, is always at risk of emotional burnout (Aminov, 1997; Borisova, 2005; Mitina, 1997, 2004). For special education teachers, this risk is much higher, which is due to factors specific for the given field of education (Visotskaya, Cherkashina, Katcin, & Lisina, 2015).

Students with developmental disabilities require special attention and almost always an individual approach while solving didactic problems. In addition to some general intellectual or sensory disorders, many children may have character deformations, severe impairments in the work of the nervous system. Their behavior is unstable and can be accompanied by affects that threaten both the student and the environment. Great efforts are required on the part of teachers to implement the curriculum not only in terms of education and upbringing, but also correction and sometimes psychotherapy. At the same time, the productiveness of professional activity in special education seems to be much lower compared to the general education system. That is, teachers of special education institutions spend a large amount of energy, personal and emotional resources with a lower result (Gnedova, 2007).

All these factors have determined the necessity to study the manifestations of emotional burnout in special education teachers and the need to create psychological programs to overcome and prevent its negative consequences. In this respect, the most important task for psychologists is to find effective psychotherapeutic techniques that can be used in the setting of an educational organization.

In general the body-oriented approach as a technique of correction and psychotherapy is aimed at active interaction of a person with one's own body and training the ways of self-regulation. It also promotes ecological release of "blocked" emotions and resolution of some psychosomatic problems. An important advantage of this method is minimal involvement of the cognitive component, unloading of the so-called "control" of consciousness, which allows teachers to change the type of habitual activity for a while (Feldenkrais, 1972; Sergeeva, 2000).

These techniques of body-oriented psychotherapy have a number of advantages:

1. Available for self-use, easy to learn;

2. Efficient in overcoming emotional stress, bypassing conscious and unconscious attitudes, correction of which requires additional efforts;
3. Short-term impact, which saves teachers' time resources;
4. A variety of methods that allows you to try flexibly different techniques to solve miscellaneous tasks

### **3. Research Questions**

The researchers used the following questions as a guideline in their work:

1. How high is the level of emotional burnout in special education teachers?
2. What techniques of body-oriented psychotherapy would be most effective to reduce the manifestations of emotional burnout?

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The goal of the research was formulated, considering all these factors. That is to study the influence of body-oriented psychotherapeutic techniques on the manifestations of emotional burnout in special education teachers.

### **5. Research Methods**

Methodological basis of the research was a variety of approaches to the study of the emotional burnout syndrome (Boyko, 2004; Maslach & Jackson, 1994; Orel, 2005; Pines, 2002).

At the first stage of our experimental work, the level of emotional burnout, aggression and alexithymia was estimated, using the following diagnostic techniques: Diagnostics of the Emotional Burnout Level by Boyko, The Aggression Questionnaire by Buss and Durkee, and the Toronto Alexithymia Scale (TAS). To analyze the empirical data, mathematical statistics methods were applied: Spearman and Pearson correlation analysis (to find the relationship between the variables), the Mann-Whitney U test (to investigate the differences between primary and secondary data).

The study was conducted in September 2017 on the basis of the State Public Educational Establishment of the Sverdlovsk Region "Yekaterinburg Boarding School No. 9" which implements adapted general education programs. The sample consisted of 34 teachers, 32 women and 2 men, aged 23 to 69 years old.

### **6. Findings**

Analysis of the empirical data showed that more than half of the respondents (54.3%) had developed a phase of resistance to emotional burnout which presupposes the presence of such symptoms as reduction of professional duties, inadequate emotional response, emotions saving. This condition is characterized by active involvement of the mechanisms of psychological defense – the body switches to the following mode of work "I want - I do not want", the volitional component of character is reduced.

38% of the respondents have symptoms of emotional exhaustion, which are manifested in emotional detachment, psychosomatic, and psycho-vegetative disorders. It also turned out that psycho-vegetative disorders predominate among teachers aged 40-45.

In 26.5% of teachers, high rates of alexithymia were found.

Verbal aggression is expressed moderately in 91% of respondents, and 9% have a high level of this parameter.

Indicators of descriptive statistics are presented in Table 01.

**Table 01.** Descriptive statistics for indicators of emotional burnout, aggression and alexithymia

Parameter	$X_{av} \pm \Delta X$	Minimum	Maximum
Physical aggressiveness	40.12±17.73	11	88
Verbal aggression	45.9±18.1	16	88
Indirect aggression	57±20.24	26	104
Negativism	32.4±25	0	100
Irritation	34.8±20	0	81
Suspiciousness	47.2±17.9	11	77
Resentment	48.6±22	13	91
Hostility	95.8±31.2	35	142
Guilt	60.5±19	22	99
Tension	27.2±18	0	63
Resistance	55.5±22.5	7	105
Exhaustion	35.4±18.8	6	87
Alexithymia	65±12	43	85

The study of statistically significant correlations between variables, using Pearson correlation coefficient, showed the following:

- emotional burnout, namely, the parameters of the resistance phase have an inverse correlation relationship with the indicators of emotional and physical comfort;
- indicators of resistance and the phase of exhaustion are interrelated with the manifestation of indirect aggression, irritability and resentment;
- a positive correlation was found between the manifestation of alexithymia and irritability, the symptoms of emotional exhaustion, negativism, hostility.

Considering the results obtained, we identified further areas of work, and to overcome emotional burnout, we designed a short-term program grounded on the techniques of body-oriented psychotherapy. The entire sample of teachers participating in the primary examination was divided into two groups – the control and experimental one. The experimental group consisted of 10 teachers.

At the second stage of our experimental work, we developed a program taking into account the teachers' workload. The classes were held in the form of group training once a week. The correction work involved the following tasks:

To create motivation to learn the use of body-oriented therapy, to solve this problem, at the beginning of each class we gave a mini lecture, devoted to the history and features of body-oriented psychotherapy, paying attention to the mechanisms and the origins of psychosomatic disorders. We discussed such topics as "Everything starts with a sigh", "Psychosomatic: emotional tension as the cause of the disease", "My body is a part of me", etc.;

To teach bodily reflexion, the solution of the problem assumed forming of the ability to direct consciousness to the body, to understand bodily symptoms as signals of the mind - to achieve this goal,

the following techniques were used: "Verbalization of bodily sensations", "Body map", etc. In addition to classical body-oriented techniques, we used the techniques of projective drawing, which proved to be effective and aroused great interest among the teachers;

To teach some ways and methods of releasing bodily and emotional stress. One of the techniques is breathing exercises. The technique of diaphragmatic breathing was already familiar to some educators, but its possibilities to reduce irritability and anxiety turned out to be new.

On completion of the program, the repeated testing was carried out, using the same techniques as in the first stage of the study.

To analyze the influence of body-oriented techniques on the manifestations of emotional burnout, the teachers used a nonparametric method – the Wilcoxon test. The results of the analysis are presented in Tables 02 and 03.

**Table 02.** Values of the Wilcoxon test in the experimental group

Parameter	T	T (n=11)	Influence
Aggression	26	7:13	Not significant
Negativism	10	7:13	Ambiguity area
Irritation	17	7:13	Not significant
Hostility	5	7:13	Significant
Guilt	10	7:13	Ambiguity area
Tension	30	7:13	Not significant
Resistance	16	7:13	Not significant
Exhaustion	28	7:13	Not significant
Alexithymia	8	7:13	Ambiguity area

**Table 03.** Values of the Wilcoxon test in the control group

Parameter	T	T (n=11)	Influence
Aggression	10	7:13	Ambiguity area
Negativism	18,5	7:13	Not significant
Irritation	25	7:13	Not significant
Hostility	16	7:13	Not significant
Guilt	19,5	7:13	Not significant
Tension	9,5	7:13	Ambiguity area
Resistance	30	7:13	Not significant
Exhaustion	19,5	7:13	Not significant
Alexithymia	9	7:13	Ambiguity area

Based on the data in the tables, it can be seen that body-oriented techniques significantly influenced (decreased) the indices of hostility in the experimental group (Table 02). Other parameters have no statistically significant changes. There are no statistically significant changes in the control group data.

## 7. Conclusion

According to the data received, we realized that the correctional program did not directly affect the indicators of emotional burnout. This can be due to various reasons:

1. The impact of body-oriented techniques is deferred and their effect will be seen after a while.
2. The program of body-oriented psychotherapy requires further development and involvement of more effectual methods to influence the mind.

In spite of the above-mentioned facts, body-oriented techniques proved to be very effective in reducing special education teachers' hostility. Consequently, this method can be used by psychologists in educational organizations as an effective tool to support teachers and ensure their psychological well-being.

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