



# JOY

## Innovative, Recreational, Stress Relief Youth Empowerment Strategies

### Intellectual Output 4

### Youth best practice burnout recovery collection



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## **The profile of the child or youngster who risks burnout**

An overall appreciation of the cases presented below underlines the fact that the category that is most exposed to burnout is made up of children and youngsters who have high educational demands, be they imposed by others or self-imposed, who are overly sensitive and who develop in an environment that involves over the top academic standards.

## **Risk factors in society and education**

These are factors that facilitate burnout, such as: the demands of the educational environment, parents' exaggerated expectations, societal pressure stemmed from the fact that in general students who get higher grades are appreciated in the detriment of those who don't, absence of psychological preparation for facing both success and failure, lack of meaningful communication with family members, peers and teachers, focusing on exams and their results instead of favouring harmonious personal development, the scarcity of school psychologists.

## **Psychoeducational suggestions**

- a) implementing school activities and programs dedicated to personal development through group communication by the means of drama therapy and psychodrama;
- b) educational activities, focused on outdoor movement;
- c) taking part in activities in the fields of role play and group improvisation on a given topic;
- d) organizing reading and creative writing clubs with a focus on creations like "journals" and "letters to self", meant to underline authentic moral and cultural values that will work as a harmonizer between the youngster and both the external environment and their own self.

## **CASE 1 - Shattered dreams**

### **The description of the situation:**

The student B.P. is enrolled in the 12th grade in an ivy league high school in Iași, Romania. He has no other siblings, a fact that made him the centre of attention for his parents,



but which has also paved the way for their exaggerated expectations. Even if the family environment is calm and stable, the parents' frustrations, originating in their own professional failure or in their incapacity of transcending their social-educational condition, have left their mark on the youngster's childhood and adolescence. Their unjustified ambitions, especially since their personal achievements contradict them, have created a heavy burden on the teenager's psyche that led to regression in the psycho-emotional plane.

P is an ambitious, intelligent, talented teenager, who lives in a continuous competition with himself; he is endowed with a fierce ambition towards self-growth and a great capacity for making forward-thinking plans when it comes to the next steps for achieving the established goal. Because of reasons that dealt exclusively with his parents' ambitions, he had to enrol in two different middle schools, continuing with yet another institution, a different high school, where he also had to change his original group of classmates. Basically, a random information about the possibility of finding a better-prepared teacher in a different class, made the parents pressure the student to take the necessary exams that would get him enrolled in the new desired class. Since he is of a sensitive and docile nature, the teenager complied with his parents' wishes, even if the situation was against his own preferences. As a consequence, his grades began to drop, also he started showing signs of transforming his extroverted nature into an introverted, secret-holding one. These changes in behaviour also had a direct impact on his relationships with his peers, who perceived him as cynical, mysterious and conceited. Being perceived as such made him more anxious and fearful. Therefore, his parents and his friends became his major sources of stress. His only oasis of peace was represented by running from himself towards an imaginary world, into a bubble whose main rule was that aggressivity was "forbidden by law".

The breaking point was reached at the end of the 11th grade, when the teenager announced his parents about his decision to go to the Faculty of Theatre once high school is over. His parents nipped his wish in the bud, as they were adamant about him following a career in Medicine.

Given that his parents expected things that not even they have managed to get for themselves, together with the distance from his friends, have created a suffocating and repulsing world for P, who could hardly manage all this downfall. Of his own free will, P went to see the school's psychologist and then a therapist hoping to understand more about himself and the events of his own life. The result was hardly convincing. The diagnosis seemed "insufficient" to P, given the lifestyle he had: stress and exhaustion. He continued to see the

psychologist, holding the conviction that he has what it takes to get over his problems before they become too much for him to handle.

**Diagnosis:** stress and exhaustion.

**Favouring factors:** parental pressure, living in his own imaginary universe, the impossibility of following his dream of becoming an actor.

**Burnout Trigger:** the fact that his parents have not accepted his dream of becoming an actor.

**Psychologist's recommendations:**

The psychologist recommended P to follow his dream, to focus and channel all his energy into attaining his goals. P was advised to enjoy the perks of role playing, courageously assuming characters during the Drama class and to form a strong partnership with his family in order to maintain the spirit of common sense and free will.

The psychologist had several meetings with P's parents, during which she managed to make them agree to allow him to follow his career choice, arguing that theatre has therapeutic value during adolescence, leading to self-trust, especially if freedom is permitted when it comes to choosing his future field of study.

As a conclusion to the afore mentioned actions, returning to his natural way of being came easily to P and the transformation was visible to his peers, friends and teachers.

## CASE 2 – **Burnout initiated by changing schools**

**The description of the situation:**

The student C.S. is from Iași, Romania. She is part of a four-person family, alongside her parents and a younger sister. We are dealing with a normal family, with strong bonds and no conflicts. Both parents have jobs; the mother works from home, a fact that allows her to be close to her children. C has a good relationship with her parents and she is in the habit of sharing all the events of her life. The father is a joyful, optimistic person, while the mother is more rigorous and distant; however, none of their traits is beyond the limits of normality. C's relationship with her sister is very good, there are no rivalries or ego between them, as they



support and help each other. The age difference is not significant, a fact that permits them to be close.

C is pretty ambitious, intelligent, talented with both science and arts, excelling in the field of drawing and painting. Her sensitive side, together with the physical changes (her height is above average) and her wish to be amongst the best, make her an ambitious, studious teenager. She spent her primary school years in an average school, but the exam for entering the 5<sup>th</sup> grade has gotten her into an ivy league school. Given that she is of a sensitive and introvert nature, she hasn't managed to make many friends during middle school, in spite of the fact that her family is part of a bigger group of friends who have children, with whom both C and her sister interact quite well. It is noticeable that C prefers both active and static games, unlike her sister who prefers outdoor and movement activities. In time, this fact has started to have unwanted effects on her general state of mind because she was avoided by her peers even when they had to participate in group projects. She went from bad to worse until she became closed and distant. She stopped wishing to interact with children her age or to enjoy going to school. She kept on wondering why the others didn't accept her. Why can't she become friends with her classmates? What was she missing? What was she doing wrong? All these questions came against the background of her family having many friends, whose children interacted well with her and vice versa. All these questions that appeared during her talks with her mother have been accompanied by physical symptoms such as loss of attention, melancholic moods, exaggerated reactions, isolation from her peers, emotional instability. All these symptoms got worse during the last year of middle school when the pressure of the high school admittance exam was highest. This fact determined the family to turn to a psychologist.

**Diagnosis:** stress.

**Favouring factors:** introverted nature, the environment, reduced social skills, the stress of exams.

**Triggers:** Her stress was initiated by changing schools and the implications of having to integrate in a new group.

**The psychologist's recommendations:**

The psychologist recommended the girl to develop self-trust through introspection and to identify her qualities and her good aspects; to develop social skills through relaxation exercises; to accept failure by perceiving it as an opportunity to become better; to open herself to new experiences, to overcome her fear of the unknown that we all feel at some point, be it related to situations, events, people or emotions. Also, our teenager was recommended relaxation exercises in order to diminish or even eliminate tension and exaggerated reactions, but also energizing exercises in order to get over her melancholic mood. She worked on strengthening self-trust and on accepting physical transformations inherent to entering adolescence. Developing social skills was also tackled, a very important aspect when it comes to interacting with the others.

C changed her class and she continued to attend her meetings with the psychologist and now she no longer experiences issues related to socializing.

### CASE 3 - Stress related to school

#### **The description of the situation**

The student P.C.T. is 14 years old and he studies in Iași. He comes from a harmonious family, in which both parents have jobs. He has an older sister who has already graduated from college. Ever since he was in the 5th grade, he has shown interest in studying and has got high grades across the board. At the moment, he is in the 8th grade. At the end of the previous school year he went through a rough patch and experienced exhaustion. This unfortunate situation was related to frustrations accumulating as a result of the boy thinking that he would not be able to graduate with the maximum grade. P was always tired, agitated and unsatisfied by the feedback he got from teachers, in spite of the fact that he got good grades.

As the main teacher, I witnessed moments when he could not focus unless he made great effort and episodes of emotional turmoil during written evaluations and activities during which he was not satisfied by his own performance. Also, the boy stopped being as sociable as he used to be.

**Diagnosis:** stress related to school.





**Favouring factors:** a busy school schedule (he studies English intensively), exaggerated demands from himself, performance anxiety (fear of making mistakes).

**Triggers:** Burnout was triggered by the perceived importance of grades in the process of admittance into high school.

**The psychologist's recommendations:**

The student was advised to go back to the sportive activities he was involved in before passing into the 7th grade, which he abandoned because he could not handle the busy schedule at school. He was recommended to maintain a fair balance between effort and the importance of the tasks he undertakes, to get rest, to walk and move in fresh air. The student was made aware of the subjective factor in assigning grades and of the fact that they do not always mirror a student's true value. The psychologist insisted on the importance of re-establishing connections with his friends and his peers from school or from the sports club he attended.

At the moment, the student is balanced, he interacts in a healthy manner in his groups and he is well adjusted to his realistic academic potential.

## CASE 4- Ana's story

Adapted from the article found at: <https://ioanamarinescusima.ro/exista-fenomenul-de-burnout-la-copii/>, written by Mirela Horumbă, Psychologist

**The description of the situation:** piano + theory, ballet, canto, English. She would also like to add Drama, the parents want different things, maybe a sport, Math is required, but it seems that there is no more room for anything else. Sometimes I feel that Ana's schedule already looks like a complicated grid, on which it is difficult to find an empty space or to insert anything. And yet, there are children who are even busier than she is. They arrive home at 9 p.m. and they start working on their homework, they study two foreign languages intensively (that is three times per week), to which they add the study of an instrument, canto and dances, they have two or three activities during the weekend and they take part at least twice a month in competitions or contests outside school.

**Diagnosis:**

Burnout syndrome refers to a state of physical and emotional exhaustion caused by prolonged stress, being a direct consequence of the imbalance between requests, resources and the degree to which an individual can feel satisfaction regarding life in general.

#### *Emotional exhaustion*

The child always feels tired, the level of energy is low and there is a general state of unwellness, where the joy of childhood disappears.

#### *The state of detachment*

Children start finding all sort of excuses in order to avoid getting involved in activities that used to be enjoyable and they start rejecting responsibilities. Sometimes there is also a state of emotional absence.

#### *Reduced performances*

Children have the feeling that they no longer have resources for performance, which is reduced. They lack interest and their grades also drop.

It is important to highlight the fact that in many cases, aggression can be observed, parents don't understand what is happening and they increase the pressure on the child. This leads to an even higher level of exhaustion. It is not uncommon for children nowadays to be caught into this carousel and more often than not there is a misinterpretation of this type of behaviour, meaning that children are labelled wrongly as "lazy, bad, ungrateful", when, in fact, what happens to them is that they go through burnout.

### **Favouring factors:**

Many parents think that if their children have a busy schedule all the time, they will become winners in life. It is important to permit children to have free time, a time to be used as they see fit, it is important to let them get bored (the best source of creativity) or just allow them to do nothing. We have lost our equilibrium and it is hard for us to have a healthy emotional relationship with our children. Therefore, we are part of a neurotic society that raises a generation of neurotic children.

### **Triggers for Burnout:** oversteering, premature emotional and intellectual exhaustion.

There is a risk that these children who have such a busy schedule will become tired easily and lack the desire and power to study and work later on.

### **The psychologist's recommendations:**

How are the parents supposed to approach the relation between school, after-school activities and free time? Life skills are not formed by offering information, but by teaching children what to do with the information. And the most important aspect is to allow children their free time. It is important that children have 8 hours of rest, 8 hours of activities and 8 hours of leisure every day. Lifestyle influences self-esteem and trust greatly. I believe we are on the wrong track when it comes to our children, and we often forget that it is vital that they are alright and not that we comply with social pressure.

## CASE 5 – Tomas story

### **Situation description**

In the last class of the gymnasium, the preparation for the exams began. Pupils often found tests, and all subjects were assessed.

Tom was very eager to go to university, but he wasn't sure he would pass the exams and score the required number of points. Therefore, he spent a lot of time studying, reading additional literature, preparing for exams. He no longer met friends, because he devoted all his time to science, he gave up his free time. With the advent of spring, Tom's health began to deteriorate. Tom always felt tired, did not have the strength and motivation to work, he felt depressed for a long time. He could not fall asleep in the evenings, woke up early in the morning. He lost his appetite, eating only when his mother told him to. Tom started to have frequent headaches and stomach aches and he consulted a family doctor.

### **Diagnosis**

The doctor diagnosed burnout syndrome and referred Tom to a psychotherapist

### **Favouring factors**

Burnout occurs because Tomas have been in a state of stress for a long time and this state is depleting his vital resources, psychological energy, emotions and he just getting slower and slower to react to things, have less and less motivation to do something and started to get deeper and deeper sink into a state of meaninglessness

### **Triggers**

The burnout was due to not being able to cope with the ever-increasing workload. He felt stressed about it and sought a result, he wanted to do more and more and he was getting worse and worse, because he had nothing to do - the resources he could do with were exhausted. Then an imbalance arose and Tom began to live in such a self-fulfilling prophecy that the less energy



he has, the more he strives to do. But because he had less energy, he did less. Then the result you sought was getting farther and farther.

### **Psychologists recommendations**

In the event of a burnout, you should go in the opposite direction than if you came to a burnout - work less, give up commitments that you may have already made and that are not really necessary. The boundaries need to be clearly defined. Burnout can also be caused by lack of sleep in life, poor nutrition, lack of physical activity. In life, you need to maintain a healthy balance between work, education, and time for yourself. Because if you don't have space for yourself and a burnout has come into your life, whether you want it or not, you'll need to make that space. Sometimes the emergence of a hobby also saves from burnout.

Activities that are completely unrelated to the work you normally do. This is a new activity that can activate your brain activity, your psyche, and help distract your mind a little from what is depressing you to what is elevating you. You can also fight burnout by creating, learning an art, creating or learning to play music, playing a new instrument. Presence in nature and physical activity help from burnout.

Nature is created in such a way that, whether we like it or not, it helps us to align our brain waves in the right direction. In nature, we can relax much better - it is air, space, being where we naturally came from. This can be very helpful with burnout. And of course, keep in mind that in the event of a burnout, you can always turn to professionals who will help you make a plan on how to get out of the burnout, and where you can leave your daily worries that put you in that burnout and learn new skills that you will help maintain a balance between work, family and private life.

### **PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

For school staff:

1. Take into account the time of lectures and breaks between lectures to allow sufficient time for rest.
2. Coordinate the workload of lectures and independent work.
3. Take lunch break time so students can have a quiet lunch in order help them eat regularly.
4. Set up a canteen near the academic environment where you can get fresh, warm and healthy food.



5. Offer for students as many active activities related to the academic environment as possible, to increase communication and social support from academia to reduce student nervous tension and bad mood.

For students:

1. Control your dietary regularity.
2. Sleep for at least 8 hours.
3. Allocate enough time for leisure, try to spend free time actively.
4. Master the ways to overcome stress by fighting nervous tension.
5. Engage in social activities in an academic environment. This can increase the environment the level of social support received, to reduce the nervous tension and stress experienced

## CASE 6 – Inga's story

### Situation description

Inga is attending the first half of the 11th grade. She's been very worried about the whole school time their achievements, although there is really no reason for it gives. She was and is a good student. That was in the Elementary school, at the end of the middle school and especially now in the upper school. Her performance has not gotten worse - rather in the on the contrary - but for over a year Inga has not only been worried about her grades and results, but she got hers learning scope increased again. She describes it like this: you has to make an enormous effort, because a high school diploma with average worse than 5 is "worthless" and you so that there is no longer a comprehensive selection of courses. Inga has taken the upcoming exams in the lender marks and always starts learning on time. Her parents support her in endeavors, but in recently they have also been telling her that they are not doing that much target.

For several months Inga has had severe problems falling asleep, concentration problems that make things worse, and sometimes she torments downright "crying fits". Inga is then deeply desperate, sad and angry at the same time. Each-in the evening she lies in her bed and feels peculiar lich also as sufficiently tired, she feels exhausted as well-so. But as soon as she lies down, her thoughts begin to circle. She ponders whether she has learned enough, and the she is dominated by fear that it will not be enough. She paints herself gloomier scenarios of her future. After the alarm clock at half past six she is awake again, feel sexhausted himself and ends up with the same exhaustion feeling that she fell asleep again.



Her mood in the morning is bad, it is sullen and hardly approachable. Attempts at appeasement by her parents make her angry tend, and she then feels misunderstood by the whole world. Inga's social life is completely in the background moved. She also "has no time" for a friends. Deep inside Inga despairs of herself, she believes that she is too stupid and too lazy. Only sometimes it flashes thought inside her and she may for a brief moment see that she is trapped in a carousel of work and like a hamster in a wheel tries to run against it.

In the meantime there have been problems with appetite, leading to further disputes between her and her mother leads. Mother is afraid that Inga could become anorexic, she hears so much about it. That's why mother often doesn't believe Inga when she says that she is not hungry.

### **Diagnosis**

Inga shows all signs of burnout

### **Favouring factors**

The burnout of Inga was caused by non-compliance with the work and rest regime, excessive desire to get a good mark

### **Triggers**

She has been working so hard for a long time that sleeping petite disorders, self-doubt, exhaustion and pronounced have stopped feeling fluctuations

### **Psychologists recommendations**

So, first of all, prescribe her a drug that induces sleep and anti-depressive, ie has a mood-stabilizing effect. So that first of all, ensure that Inga's sleep is regulated and that you can at least start the day more rested.

Inga just needs change her style of work. Reduce your own pressure, and then you can also live and learn more tense. But that's exactly where the problem lies: she has heard this request many times.

This processing mechanism is so integrated into her personality, that every psychotherapeutic attempt to do something about it change, it would take a while for actual and sufficient could show profound changes.

In addition, Inga needs a psychotherapeutic support and possibly also a learning coach. In the psychological therapy should be about your self-esteem, yours self-insecurity and a reconciliation with their learning and life situation.

In addition, the next step is to arrange a family meeting talk to clarify with all those involved who in this system what position and who are contributing to it can Inga get well. Maybe the



father, sister or brother tend very clearly not to take Inga seriously. After all, the conversation leads to the all family members understand that Inga is in a state of illness.

## CASE 7 - George and his father`s expectations

### Situation description

George is 15. He is a good-looking boy with a sympathetic nature. He likes football, riding the bike and network computer games. He has two good friends with whom he spends time and hangs around on social media. In the weekends they watch films together or go to KFC or McDonald`s. He seems to be a normal teenager.

He is from a ``good`` family: his father is an engineer and technical director at an important local company. He is very respected and earns a high salary which allows the family very high life standards, such as vacations abroad, brand expensive clothes, a holiday cottage in the mountains, etc. His mother is a family doctor and has a practice in town.

He has two elder sisters, Valeria and Daniela, who are 19 and 21. Valeria is at the Faculty of Law, she plans to become a judge or a great lawyer and Daniela will take over her mom`s practice or become a specialist doctor, as she is already enrolled at the Medicine Faculty in the second year.

George is in the 9th grade at the same prestigious high school where he entered in the 5th grade. He passed the high school entrance examination with good results and a lot of work. He is a good student. He is sympathized by teachers and classmates.

His father always told him that he was endowed with special abilities, that he would succeed in life, like he had done, like his mother had done, like his sisters had done before him.

Three months after the beginning of the school year George attempted suicide. He returned to high school assisted by a psychiatrist and a psychologist after one month. As he continued to feel the same terrible pressure from family and school, he had a new break down in a few months. He was hospitalized in the psychiatric hospital in town for a longer period.

The best expectations for George are to finish the school year.

He doesn`t want to go to school, he is no longer interested in school. Recently he went to the countryside, in his grandparents` village and there he discovered he likes to drive a tractor and help with agriculture machines and works. Maybe he will go to an agriculture vocational school. He would like that, even if his father doesn`t want to hear about it.

### Diagnosis

Burnout manifested by repeated suicide attempt, depression, acute stress disorder.

### Favouring factors

-Continuous family pressure to be successful, to succeed in life, to be better than his classmates, to have achievements comparable to his parents and sisters.



-Raised high school expectations and academic standards, as well as involvement in many school contests at different subjects – Maths, English, Romanian, Informatics, Physics, basketball. Teachers` pressure to keep up with all demands the best as possible.

-Lack of free time to relax and enjoy life.

-Lack of freedom to do the activities he enjoys and to discover himself.

### **Triggers**

On the one hand, burnout was triggered by the high effort to take the high school entrance examination, which was a great victory for himself, but appreciated as rather a normal and predictable achievement by family and teachers.

On the other hand, burnout was triggered by a feeling of ``no way out`` and suffocation. Only one month after the start of the school year, he had a serious discussion with his father who insisted on George stating to study thoroughly for preparing the end of high school exam and the Medicine Faculty entrance examination which should take place in 4 years. His father had already planned for him additional private classes in Romanian, Maths, Physics, Biology Chemistry.

### **Psychologists` recommendations**

George should continue to be treated and supervised by a psychiatrist and a psychologist. He also needs support, understanding and affection from his family without inflicting more pressure and control on him and his life.

He is also recommended to attend a school where he does not feel constraint to go and is not exceeded by tasks.

Vocational therapy and personal development are also recommended to George so that he get in touch with his real personality, to discover who he is, to increase his self-esteem and learn to enjoy life and himself.

## **Case 8 - Violeta and her need to succeed**

### **Situation description**

Violeta is a teenager of 14. She is a nice dark blonde girl with big blue eyes. She is in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, last year of the secondary school.

Violeta is crying almost every evening for some months, she is exhausted she works really hard at school, in fact she works all the time, she strives hard. But she is dissatisfied and everything goes wrong. She is confused, she makes mistakes out of confusion and then she works harder to correct her grades. The more she works, the more mistakes she does. She just can't stand it any more. She can't do anything right.

Her grades are quite good: 7, 8, 9 of 10, but this not the problem for her, she knows all the answers and everything should be perfect, she should have 10. However, this doesn't happen. Everything should be perfect, but it is not.





She struggles so much to have a good job later, to attend good school, maybe to study abroad.

Her parents support her very much, they encourage her as much as possible. Last week they even took her to a psychologist, as her mood concerned them very much lately. She is eating almost nothing and she sleeps very badly. Violeta refuses to go out with her friends or neighbours and she studies all the time.

Everything comes from her school mates, who compare their grades all the time. Violeta's pressure does not come from her parents, but from her school mates.

### **Diagnosis**

Burnout manifested by anorexia, perfectionism, fatigue, poor sleep.

### **Favouring factors**

Violeta is an ambitious, competitive and perfectionist young woman. She puts too much pressure on herself to succeed in order to be. She has created a false image of herself and she has a low self-esteem.

The parents' lack of interference in putting her on the right track is favouring her wrong motivation to be a good student and to be successful.

### **Triggers**

Burnout was triggered by the competitive environment in the class and by her incapacity to raise her school performance to the highest level. She is afraid she will not be liked and accepted by her classmates and she is not capable to detach from their influence and be herself.

### **Psychologists' recommendations**

Violeta is recommended to have therapy with a psychologist in order to discover herself as a person to be and to make efforts to accept herself with qualities and flaws, to increase her self-esteem, to learn that it is important to be a good person, not to be a perfect one and that people like and love you for what you are not for being perfect.

Violeta should limit her study time, so that to have time for other activities. She is strongly encouraged to get involved in different activities with her family and friends and to practice a sport regularly.

## **Case 9 – Marias' story**

### **The description of the situation**

Maria comes from traditional Russian family. Her grandfather moved to Estonia in the 1970s as a guest worker before the Olympic Games 1980, and her grandmother joined him later.

Maria's mother was born in Estonia and married a fellow Russian man. Both of them

attended Russian school when were young, so they do not speak Estonian language very well. Maria is the second child and has an older sister who attends Russian gymnasium.

Maria attended Russian kindergarden and primary school but because her parents want integrate her in Estonian society, they sent her to Estonian school. Parents see her future in Estonia and want that Maria finishes the university in Estonia and get a good job in capital city.

Maria knows Estonian language because it is in Russian school program from the second grade but still it is very difficult for her to be good when all subjects and all communication at school are in Estonian language. She was studing hard at school and also at home but at the end of the first school year she burned out and has stress.

Parents and teachers support her in different ways but oldest sister does not like Maria's efforts and always shows that it was wrong decision to go to Estonian school and that instead of doing hours and hours her homework, Maria could go out for walks and ice-cream with friends that she has known since kindergarden and her time in Russian school.

Maria suffers also because not all classmates like her Russian accent when she speaks in Estonian and not all support her Russian traditions in clothes, food and doing some things differently than Estonians are doing. Maria often feels misunderstood and no one can explain her what is wrong because she is only Russian in the class. Two classmates help her with homework but only when she asked them. Actually, Maria does not have time for socialising and making friends in a new school, she is all the time busy with studies.

Still there is a strong pressure in the family to do well in school and parents want that Maria continues to study in Estonian school.



## **Diagnosis**

Maria shows clear signs of burnout. She is disciplined and self-conscious. She wants to be an obedient daughter and a good student, but can no longer cope with the load.

## **Favoring factors**

The burnout was caused by hard work at school and at home. Maria has not enough rest. She is concentrated only on school subjects in Estonian language. She lost self-confidence and feels all the time pressure at home and very often misunderstanding at school.

## **Triggers**

Maria's stress was initiated by changing school and language of studying. She lost connections with old friends and did not find new.

## **Psychologists recommendations**

Maria has to leave time for herself, for developing her talents and making friends.

The best way is to spend summer time in Estonian family in countryside with Estonian children. Such programs for Russian children are popular in Estonia. Non-formal communication in Estonian language not about school subjects but about daily life in farm, fresh air and healthy food can help to balance physical and mental health and relax after hard school year.

Other suggestion is to join art or handcraft clubs where creative knowledge and skills can be developed. Work with hands and concentration on artistic work will help to change learning approach, to think not only about school but about other side of life and reduce stress.

It will be good to visit such club together with new Estonian friends because it will be a great opportunity to communicate about different things, not only about school subjects.



## Case 10 – Aigar story

### **The description of the situation**

Aigar is 6 grade student at a prestigious school. He has good grades. He is well versed in computers and other new technologies, reads a lot, walks a little.

Aigar has almost no friends, as he believes that his classmates know less than he and they have nothing to talk about. Classmates consider him an egoist, arrogant and a nerd and do not invite him to their companies.

There were moments when Aigar told the teachers and parents that he would quit school, since he already knew everything and the school could no longer give him anything else.

Recently, Aigar began to feel that he spends too much time in the computer and therefore his eyesight has deteriorated. He also began to feel less confident in class, as his memorization became worse. The teachers began to notice this. Aigar's grades got worse. Classmates began to laugh at him. And his parents were worried about his behavior, as Aigar became rude, twitchy and nervous.

Feeling that he was no longer the smartest and most successful in the class, Aigar began to withdraw into himself and get angry. He began to spend less time in the computer and read less, but he also did not think of other activities for himself, so more and more often he began to lock himself in a room and sit, doing nothing. After a while, he began to skip lessons and wander aimlessly around the city.

The teachers informed the parents that their son is skipping classes and may have problems with grades and transfer to the 7th grade.

### **Diagnosis**

Burnout due to an overabundance of information. Loss of goals and guidelines in study and life.

### **Favoring factors**

Self-education overload. Long transmission at the computer and books.

### **Triggers**



Selfishness and egocentrism. Reassessment of abilities and capabilities. Loneliness and lack of friends.

### **Psychologists recommendations**

Aigar should go in for sports, spend more time outdoors, play different games, better team games like football, volleyball, basketball.

It is very important to establish social life, make friends, communicate with them on various topics, go on hikes, to museums or on excursions together.

It is very important that someone wants to listen to Aigar and he can be proud of his knowledge again. It is better if it is his peer, classmate, but if it is an adult, this can also help Aigar understand that his knowledge is important and in demand. It will be good to ask him to head up a computer club for beginners or some other club where he is needed.

### **Case 11 – Alex story**

#### **The description of the situation and general information:**

Name: Alex

Age: 16

Gender: Male

Occupation: High school student

Nationality: Russian, French

In daily life, Alex goes to school between 08:30-16:30. In the break and after school he hangs out with his two friends and sometimes with a group of fellow Muslim guys from different classes and ages. Around 17:00 he arrives home, has dinner with his family and spends his evenings catching up on homework, chatting with his friends on messengers and scrolling through social networks.

Alex is a first-generation migrant (was brought to France as a teenager). He lives together with his parents and his 2 younger siblings. Alex has a tight group of two friends that he got to know while spending the first month in France in the reception centre.



Back in his respective country his family had an upper middle class and educated background, but his class and socio-economic status has changed upon arrival in France and his family is now living in a more modest way.

Alex recently moved from middle school to high school. There is a strong pressure in the family to do well in school. His parents constantly remind him that they made an effort in order he gets into a good high school. Hence, he is struggling to achieve good marks, but doesn't always succeed. Only one friend, a fellow Moroccan guy, came to the same high school. At school he hangs out with a group of mates from the same socio-cultural background (mainly migrant pupils) from different classes because he does not feel included by his new classmates. Consequently, he is exhausted by schedules which have been overflowing since his childhood and by the obligation to perform. He feels tired, abandoned and experiences burnout.

His friends from middle school do not make time to hang out with Alex because they are busy making new friends and establishing themselves at their new schools. Although Alex is a French citizen he has a Chechen (Tchetchen) background. His parents are Muslims though they are not strictly practicing. They observe mainly nutritional traditions such as halal.

Alex does not feel either French nor Chechenian. He struggles with his national identity. His peers and the general society make him feel non-French, but he can also not fully relate to his roots. Hence, he feels excluded by his classmates which is especially troubling for him because he is a very social guy. Very often he overthinks the situation and it takes a lot of energy from him.

Alex feels some discrimination and is being avoided or misunderstood even if it is not clearly visible. He experiences no sense of roots or strong sense of identity within his learning environment. Alex feels that his religious community is under scrutiny and attack even though all the friends and family that he has are good people.

**Diagnosis:** stress and exhaustion.

**Favouring factors:** identity crisis, difficulty to make new friends, family pressure to perform better in school, exhaustion.

**Burnout Trigger:** The inability to reach parent's 'horizon of expectations' in terms of school performance, difficulty to find new real friends in school.

**Recommendations:** To do something creative, like art activities outside the school

environment. It is recommended to take part in outdoor graffiti sessions organised by the local youth center. This could give an opportunity to experience new creative techniques with the help of the professional artists. Moreover, it is a great opportunity to meet young people from various backgrounds with various interests. Working in a relaxed context on a creative project will distract and inspire a person with the creativity of others. Also, this common artistic activity can bring a sense of belonging to the community.

## Case 12 – Lisas' story

### **The description of the situation and general information:**

Name: Lisa

Age: 18

Gender: Female

Occupation: High school student

Nationality: French

Lisa's panic attacks, discomfort and emergency room visits begin in 2020, in Nice. Lisa, as a pupil subject to burnout was full of hope and projects that were not always realistic. She is then a good student and encouraged by her parents to exploit her full potential.

Her parents were aiming for the royal road: a preparatory class (a two years class, usually in a private school that prepares pupils to enter the most prestigious educational institutions in France) HEC (school of business) says the young woman. Lisa multiplied the options, private lessons, music classes, tennis club, extracurricular math classes...under the watchful eye of her parents. Who didn't see or did not want to see that their daughter was isolating herself, becoming angry, insomniac and in a word, unhappy.

As an average pupil who needed to revise her lessons, the given tempo was a constant stress for her. She didn't even had time to think, to know if this was really what she wanted, she has not been given the opportunity to be herself. She felt like she was emptied. And the mechanism kicked in: exhaustion, collapse in self-esteem, withdrawal, depression.

Lisa was a sensitive children who wanted to do well but who, at some point, no longer understood what was expected of her. The level of demands was constantly raising making Lisa



feel that her efforts were not enough. Little by little she started to lose self-confidence. She felt like a child who gets good grades, but teachers blamed them for lack of classroom participation. She first suffered from nervous exhaustion: she didn't sleep, had tears in her eyes and was irritable. Then, when she cracked, it turned into depression and suicidal urges and thoughts.

**Diagnosis:** exhaustion and depression

**Favouring factors:** family pressure to perform better in school, exhaustion, fatigue.

**Burnout Trigger:** The inability to reach parent's 'horizon of expectations' in terms of school performance, very high expectations from her family.

**Recommendations:** The advise is to work with parents and to help Lisa to become aware of her own abilities. It is important to help her to "decode the world in which she lives" or act as a buffer. It is important to give back importance to pleasure and time without any form of pressure or any goals. Time when she just does what she wants. A spontaneous week-long yoga retreat during summer vacations might sound like just the ticket! Also, during the school year it is possible to take three full days in a beautiful place, to reconnect with herself and nature in the mountains, forest or near the sea with no devices, phone, or internet—and it restores the body, mind, and soul. Weekly yoga and breathing activities are strongly recommended.