

# Effective Teaching Article, January 2006©<sub>104</sub>

## Conquering Teacher Burnout

by Lisa Frase

Teaching requires a wealth of energy. Burning out is a common problem in the teaching profession. It's easy to get overwhelmed with constant demands, stressful testing, school and district changes, paperwork, and everything else that comes with the educator's job.

Our first and foremost wishes are to give our students the best education possible, but it seems impossible at times when the rest of the world dumps on top of our heads, and expects us to perform. Often we hear teachers say, "I just want to teach."

If you are experiencing teacher burnout, send yourself to time out. Take the time to rethink your teaching life, and simplify it. Streamline what you do in the classroom. We often work ourselves to death trying to make things "cute". Instead, focus on what is most important, and consider the simplest, most effective route to achieving your goals. Give me a picture book and chart paper, and I can teach reading and writing. That's all I need really. I could cut and paste until my fingers are blue, but the most effective way to teach is through modeling and thinking out loud. I write what I think on the paper for visual learners, and then send kids off to try it out for themselves. Elaborate lessons may seem wonderful on the outside, but consider their value carefully before engaging in time consuming activities that mean little in the end.

Organize your day with a "to do" list. List out your priorities. What do you need to get done today to be effective today, and to prepare for tomorrow? A list will help you keep on track. Try to use your planning time, and any down time you have to "get things done." The less you take home, the better off you will be. Home time should be family and personal time. Tomorrow will be another day, and there will always be something else to do. Limit how much time you spend working on school work at home. If it helps,

arrive at school 30 minutes early, and leave 30 minutes late. If you work through your list during this extra hour, it should cut your work at home significantly.

Take time for yourself. Read a non-educational related book. Get your nails done. Get a massage. Spend time on a hobby. It's important that you don't let school consume your life. It's easy to get caught up spending 24/7 thinking about school related activities. This is the fastest path to burnout. Give yourself permission to enjoy life to its fullest. You may love teaching, but teaching should only be one part of your life.

Has burnout consumed you? If so, it's time to make some changes. The great thing about teaching is the flexibility it offers you. Change grade levels, change schools, or change positions within education. A new challenge can rejuvenate your sagging spirit.

This is a new year. Make a New Year's resolution. Don't let burnout get you down. Think of ways to reignite your passion while making time for yourself. Remember how it was when you began, and try to recapture some of that initial enthusiasm. Every school year brings new challenges. Consider your challenges gifts to be opened, and allow them to bless you rather than consume you.

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