

## **10 Steps for Avoiding Teacher Burnout**

"Why did I want to be a teacher?" We all face burnout, sometimes on a daily basis, and in my case, especially after fourth period. Most of the time, we can pick ourselves up, brush ourselves off, and go back to the drawing board to try another strategy to find success with student learning. I have to admit that it is getting more and more difficult to make that transition back to a willingness to try again. I can't help to think students are more difficult than they used to be a few years ago, and pressures from accountability are becoming more oppressive.

### **Step 1: Have Fun Daily with Your Students**

Share jokes, brief stories, puzzles, brain teasers, etc. This keeps it interesting for you and for your students. It only takes a minute and they are easy to align to the topic of the day.

### **Step 2: Take Care of Your Health**

The physical status of your body affects your emotional responses, so never feel guilty about taking care of yourself. Skipping lunch or breakfast are bad ideas. Make sure you get enough sleep each day. Take a rejuvenating micro-nap when you get home. Get some better shoes to put a spring in your step. I used to think that I was an active teacher and did not need exercise, but I realized that I need cardio-vascular and upper body exercise, too. Thirty minutes on a treadmill, two days a week will do wonders. Simple pushups strengthen your abdomen, back, and arms. You will be surprised at how much it helps you not be worn out at the end of the day.

### **Step 3: Learn Something New and Share It with Your Students**

Read an interesting book -- education or non-education related. Read a classic that you have always wanted to read but never got around to reading.

### **Step 4: Help another Teacher**

Share your motivating experiences locally or online. Edutopia is always here for that. If you take the time to respond to a blog, you may be surprised at the response. Start your own uplifting blog to help beginning teachers or nearly burned out ones. Be active in your professional organization by volunteering to teach, facilitate, or prepare workshops. Mentor another teacher, either formally or informally. We can all use as much help as we can get.

### **Step 5: Make Someone's Day**

Call a parent and tell them how good their student is. Find a student that is struggling and sincerely complement him or her on something they are doing well. Show gratitude for an administrator, or fellow teacher by sending them an appreciative note, giving them a hug, or presenting to them a small gift.

## **Step 6: Lighten Up**

Smile (it's after Christmas and it's ok). Try looking in the mirror, putting on a smile and then try not smiling for real. It is nearly impossible. So try smiling when you do not feel like smiling. When you greet your students at the door, smile at them and a miracle happens: They will smile back.

## **Step 7: Be a Scientist**

Experiment with new strategies and become an expert in them. Ask your students to help. Do a control group and an experimental group. Document your results and share them at a faculty meeting or a conference. Celebrate success.

## **Step 8: Look for the Positive**

Be a voice for positive thinking, even in the staff lounge. It won't change the situations, but you will feel better and others might be uplifted too. While teaching is hard, it is not all bad. Half empty glasses are not nearly as exciting as half full ones.

## **Step 9: Redecorate**

Switch out the bulletin boards, move the desks, and adjust the lighting. Add your favorite smells or be adventurous with new ones. I found interesting ones: rhubarb, teak wood, and Hawaiian breeze (usually spray, or solid.) Check with your schools policy about bringing plug-in oil or scented wax warmers.

## **Step 10: Trust Students More**

Let the students know that you will trust them more and give them opportunities to earn your trust. Try some project-based learning. Develop strong rubrics, share them with students, and then let them learn as you facilitate and coach.