

Avoiding Year End Burnout

Working in schools can be stressful!

These articles are intended to help the great people who work in schools.

Key points

Multi-tasking is NOT the answer

Focus on ONE task and complete it

Ask yourself - will this matter a year from now?

Misery loves company

Don't be surprised by the unexpected

Be kind whenever possible. It is always possible.

Dalai Lama

Many of us are running low on reserves at the end of the year. Events that wouldn't normally irritate us can become blown out of proportion. It is inevitable that the photocopier will jam when we are rushing to make copies, *that* difficult parent will arrive when we are feeling frazzled and the boss will want 'just a minute' when we are running late.

The following five strategies can help at this difficult time of year:-

Focus on One Task at a Time

Whilst there will be many things you NEED to do at this time of the year, it is important to focus on ONE task, get it completed and THEN move on. As tempting as multi-tasking sounds, the switching of your attention between tasks takes time and reduces your effectiveness. Focus!

Avoid False Guilt

When our reserves are low we can be tough on ourselves and add unnecessary guilt for tasks that aren't completed as well as we would like. Keep in mind – will it matter one year from now? If the answer is yes – revisit it and pay closer attention. If the answer is no – forget it, apologise if necessary and move on.

Don't worry about things that are beyond your control. If you can't control it, don't waste energy worrying about it.

Monitor Your Self-Talk

Be careful what you tell yourself – you are NOT expected to be super-human. Do the best you can do with the time, energy and resources available to you.

Associate with Positive People

It is vital when your reserves are low to avoid negative people wherever possible – *misery loves company!* Fly with the eagles instead of scratching around with the chooks. We all know people who light up a room....when they leave! At this time of the year it is important NOT to allow them to dampen your last reserves of energy.

Whilst it might be tempting at this time of year to 'seek colleagues who are sharing our pain', this often adds to our gloom. Instead I recommend identifying and avoiding negative people who are frazzled at this time of the year. Look out for colleagues who have a positive attitude, appear to be resilient and even tempered. Emulate what they do!

Finish Strong

It is important to keep going until the final day of school. Resist the temptation to start coasting before the end. There will be time to rest and recharge during the holidays!

In 'The Power of Optimism' author Alan McGinnis gives some great advice. *Don't be surprised by the unexpected. It's inevitable. Learn to expect and see yourself as a problem solver.*

Your own actions can affect the outcome in most situations. Whenever you have a negative thought try to short-circuit it. Moods are invariably caused by your own thoughts rather than by external events.

Steve Francis MScM, BEd, DipT, CSP

Steve Francis is an expert in work-life satisfaction and is the author of three books, 'Time Management For Teachers', 'A Gr8 Life...Live it now!' and 'First Semester Can Make or Break You!'. He was a Principal for 20 years. Steve lives in Brisbane with his wife and two school aged children.

