

Sunday, August 31, 2008

Teacher Survival Strategies

Build an Invisible Teflon®, Flack-Jacket, Stormy-Day Suit

Teachers encounter stressful situations, often minute-by-minute.

Sometimes this is the result of student activity, sometimes the byproduct of colleague interaction, sometimes the stress is set off by parents' protests, sometimes a response to a principal's foibles or pathology.

But, teachers need to remain calm, composed and in control. These stresses are inevitable. Friction generates from so many teachers and students brushing closely; rubbing fur the wrong way, stroking feathers, scraping scales, scratching slime, pricking on another person's quills.

So many peculiarities, so many wants, so many unmet needs. Wishes and intentions come into play to create an environment ripe with conflict, stress and tension.

Every school day does not need to lead to an "emotional meltdown." Each day can be exhilarating, joyful and fun.

The key: The invisible Teflon®, Flack-Jacket, Stormy-Day suit that repels stresses and disintegrates tension. Think:

Water bouncing off a duck's back; in the water, but never getting wet. There are three keys to a Well-Fitting Invisible

Teflon®, Flack-Jacket, Stormy-Day Suit. The three keys to safe and secure external reaction to the daily stresses of teaching include:

Making a stress-controlled day a personal choice

Distancing yourself from the fray by dissociating any personal involvement, i.e., don't take it personally

Making a game of it. Make the day fun. So, building an invisible Teflon®, Flack-Jacket, Stormy-Day suit is part choice

and part taking responsibility. But, avoid overdoing this dynamic. The old saw, often attributed to Eleanor Roosevelt (no pun intended) of, "No one can upset you unless you first give them permission," overstates the roles and importance of cognition and choice.

But, why permit the abundant hassle and challenges of a normal workday to steer your mood towards a downhill

direction? Even more, why allow upset to stalk you into the next day, or the next week?

The challenge is to get off the "One-Way-Street" of passive, "It's happening to me and I have to control it," and on to the "I take greater charge of my attitudes and control my emotions each day; sometimes, less so; but the trend is for more control and more enjoyment."

Self-Talk - Nails, Spikes or Daggers: Avoid Puncturing Holes in your Invisible Teflon®, Flack-Jacket, Stormy-Day Suit

In fact, it is possible to dance sweetly through an incident, then "pound and pepper" yourself with negative self-talk once you "figure out the meaning" of what happened. What occurs in this "post-incident assault" on your sanity, peace of mind, and happiness is an incursion into "self-inflicted" scrapnel wounds.

So, why face the original "incident" unscathed, only to scratch, stab and wound yourself afterwards using negative self-talk?

Why allow your self-talk to churn, flood and surge on the inside when you are protected from the

outside? Summary: Peace of mind, calm, enjoyment, happiness and fun can be part of your workday; if you work at it.

Building an invisible Teflon®, flack-jacket, stormy-day suit means protecting yourself by emotional distancing.

And your follow-up task is to manage and control your self-talk to avoid shredding the self-protection that you enjoy.

The benefit of such an approach to self-protection is less stress, greater enjoyment and a more professional demeanor.

Build in all the self-protection that you need, and enjoy the added confidence that you experience when you face workday situations with your invisible Teflon®, flack-jacket, stormy-day suit.

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