

9 Things To Do When You're Feeling Burned-Out

By Michael Linsin on May 5, 2018

Burned-out is the worst place you can find yourself as a teacher.

Exhausted, stressed, craving time off. Every day feeling like the day before. It chips away at your peace and makes you dread getting out of bed in the morning.

The tendency is to simply endure, to put on a good face and get on with it.

Grind it out.

The problem with this approach is that burnout rarely fixes itself. Sure, a vacation can ease the problem temporarily.

But for those prone to it, burnout will continue to rear its head until one day it will never leave you.

Unless, that is, you make some changes.

What follows are nine actions you can take to reverse this very common but awful scourge and begin enjoying teaching again.

1. **Jettison extra responsibilities.**

Burnout can be a sign that you've got too much on your plate. Take a good look at anything outside of your contractual responsibilities and consider dropping them.

Step away from clubs and committees that you aren't required to be a part of and spend the extra time away from school. Yes, it may require a difficult conversation or two, but it's well worth it.

You are well worth it.

Simply [spending less time at work](#), and having less to concern yourself with, can be just the balm you need to feel fresh and looking forward to each day.

2. Start saying no.

Unless a new school-related opportunity is a definite yes, something you're excited to do, then it should be a definite no. Having uncertainty about it means that it isn't right for you.

The idea that teachers are somehow expected to leave their health and contentment, and even families, on the altar of education – which its culture sometimes perpetuates – is shameful.

And hogwash.

Saying 'no' more often will increase your peace and well-being and make you more effective. Surprisingly, it will also cause your colleagues and administrators to treat you and your valuable time with greater respect.

3. Tidy your classroom.

It's amazing how transformational a couple of hours of physical work can be.

There is something deeply cathartic about clearing out the clutter of your classroom and ridding yourself of excess environmental baggage. It's good for both the mind and soul.

In the long run it will also save you time, lower your stress, and help you stay focused on the 20% of your job that will give you 80% of the results (see [The Happy Teacher Habits](#)).

But a pin-neat classroom will not only make you feel good, it will actually improve behavior and attentiveness and send the message to everyone who enters that excellence and politeness are expected.

4. Build a hedge.

Misbehavior, disrespect, noisiness, chaos, excitability . . . these are the chief reasons teachers become burned-out. A kind, well-behaved classroom, on the other hand, is an impenetrable hedge against *ever* feeling this way.

This underscores the critical need to become well-versed in the timeless classroom management principles and strategies we teach here at SCM.

The good news is that they're doable for *anyone*, no matter what grade level you teach, where you work, or who is on your roster. But it takes knowing how to get there.

It takes knowing how to create a class that energizes you rather than the other way around. It takes digging through our website, learning what really works, and putting it into practice.

5. Enjoy every day.

Teaching is supposed to be fun. Kids are goofy and hilarious, and taking a group of disparate individuals and molding them into your dream class is a blast. The rewards are rivaled by few other professions.

So enjoy it. Embrace it. Tap into that passion to lead and make an impact that is lying dormant deep within and begin relishing every step along the way.

Choosing the good, the positive, and the joyful every day will give you the kind of natural charisma and easy influence that causes students to *want* to listen, learn, and behave.

It will also banish burnout forever.

6. Leave school at school.

Though not always easy, it's important that when you drive off the parking lot at the end of the day you mentally leave it all behind.

The key is to have something to look forward to.

Immediately reorient yourself toward your family and friends, hobbies and passions, which has a way of making whatever is going on at school not so darn important after all.

And if ever you feel guilty about leaving school at a decent hour, just remind yourself that you're far more effective when you have a chance to get away, gain perspective, and recharge your batteries.

7. Focus.

Sometimes it's the stuff outside of the classroom that causes the greatest stress and burnout. Refusing to get involved in gossip or school politics or worry about new changes in policy and curriculum can be liberating.

It can free you from the burdens and concerns that weigh down so many teachers.

A good way to insulate you from all the babble and never-ending educational reform is to double-down your focus on your classroom and on enjoying your students.

Spend your time and attention there, first and foremost, and limit your presence in the staff lounge, main office, or other classrooms.

8. Make a schedule.

Busy isn't necessarily productive.

It pays to take a close look at how you spend your time and determine where you can be more efficient. Make a morning and afternoon schedule for yourself based on your findings and stick to it.

If you've never done an evaluation like this before, it can be incredibly enlightening and may very well save you 20-50% of your time and energy.

It can also make you feel far more in control, which is a surefire antidote to the hopeless, powerless feelings that accompany burnout.

9. Close your eyes.

Take a moment every morning before your students arrive to sit quietly at your desk and close your eyes.

Focus first on your breath, and then [visualize yourself staying calm](#), following through on your classroom management plan, and delivering your lessons successfully.

This, too, will give you a greater sense of control, making you naturally unflappable and efficient. It will cause you not to waver, but to be true to your promises without second guesses or temptations to let things go.

You'll find yourself doing and being exactly who you want and know is best for your students.

As you maintain this daily practice, and feel yourself getting better and stronger, calmer and more in control, a deep feeling of satisfaction will overtake you – and never leave you again.

Attack The Problem

If you're experiencing burnout, chances are that things aren't going to get better on their own.

In fact, if you wallow in it and let it cycle unchallenged through your mind, which is hard not to do, it's going to get worse.

It's going to progress to the point where you become among the many who either leave the profession or hang on miserably by their fingertips, counting the days until retirement.

The good news is that it usually doesn't take a lot to fix.

A simple change in routine, attitude, or approach like any of those noted above can put you on a new and happier course in a matter of days.

But you have to take action. You have to fight back. You have to attack the problem with determination and refuse to accept that what you're experiencing is just part of the job.

Because it isn't, and never, ever has to be.