



How To Stay The Course With A Tough Class

By Michael Linsin on November 4, 2017

The tougher the class, the easier it is to be inconsistent.

The easier it is to give in and lose control.

Which is why when you have a challenging group of students you must be mentally tough.

You must be, as Winston Churchill once said, “a peg, hammered into the frozen ground, immovable.”

But how?

How do you stay the course day after day?

How do you stay strong when your students are *trying* to get under your skin?

How do you enforce a consequence when it's the last thing in the world you feel like doing?

Well, nobody does it naturally.

Everyone feels resistance. Everyone at times feels a seemingly irresistible pull to cave in, back down, and look the other way.

It can also be difficult to be “on” in every moment. Maybe you're not feeling well. Maybe it's Friday afternoon and you're just *so* ready to call it a day.

Maybe things are finally going well and you think, *“Why not just let it go this one time? What’s the harm?”*

Whatever the reason, failing to follow through on your promises is always a mistake.

Which is why you need something you can lean on, an attitude or frame of mind that stays with you and sustains you through your weakest moments.

What follows are three key thoughts that will give you the mental toughness you need to stay the course, no matter how challenging your class.

1. Do it for them.

The most effective teachers have an overabundance of mama/papa bear in them that says, *“It’s my job to protect my students’ right to learn and enjoy school, and come what may, that’s exactly what I’m going to do.”*

There is no one else to safeguard your students from disruption, **bullying**, being made fun of, and the like but you.

Their school year, their future, and their parent’s hopes and dreams for them are at stake. For one year, anyway, they’re entirely in your hands.

When you embrace this responsibility (and reality), it makes following through and doing right by your students so much easier. In fact, it makes it the most natural thing in the world.

2. Be willing to lose your job.

There is great strength in committing to a task, not merely in a sense that it’s something you’re determined to do, but rather something you invest in so completely that you allow yourself no other choice.

You will do it.

A powerful way to embody this feeling is to adopt the attitude that they – administration, powers that be, educational establishment, etc. – will have to fire you and drag you from the classroom to stop you from fulfilling [your promises to your students](#).

It represents a level of commitment that will effectively repel all forms of resistance, no matter how strong.

Ironically, with this mindset, not only will you never lose your job, but you'll be admired by your colleagues, beloved by your students, and left alone by your principal.

3. Accept that it's the only way.

When your class is out of control and the students seem so disrespectful, callous, and unmotivated, *what you're seeing isn't who they really are.*

Poor leadership, ineffective strategies, and inconsistency in the past have created what you're seeing.

The only way to fix it, the only way to sweep away the negativity and reveal the very best in your students – as well as in yourself – is to bring fair, honest, and consistent accountability into the picture.

Accepting that it's the only way to peace, the only way to inspired teaching and learning, and the only way to the stress-free career you really want is all the motivation you need to stay the course.

The Way It's Going To Be

Several years ago, there was a rumor that the President was coming by the school I was working at for a visit. (He never did.)

Honestly, the first thing that came to my mind was, *'Well, if he comes into my room, he'll have to follow the rules just like everyone else.'*

I laugh at the thought, but it underscores the level of commitment needed to follow through on your promise to create a safe and enjoyable learning experience for your students.

Even if you don't teach in an especially difficult school, or you're not in the midst of trying to turn around [an out-of-control class](#), cultivating a tough mindset is still incredibly valuable.

In fact, in time it will become not just an attitude or mentality you carry with you to school every day.

But who you are.