

# The teacher blues

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afraid to approach them for help or notes even if you don't like them or vice versa. You have a job to do and personal feeling shouldn't stand in your way.

Personal feelings not belonging in the workplace aside, don't underestimate the power of peer pressure. It's hard enough keeping your chin up in a job that is high on effort and low on instant gratification (*most of the time*), certain old faithfuls only make it worse. These geysers can be recognized by their very obvious dislike of anything that is fresh, new or positive. "Why do you bother

twenty seconds, chances are your students are right and you need to 'get a life'.

A lot of employers, particularly in private schools, are exploitative, but teachers also often sell themselves short. Rather than waiting for that seemingly heartless employer to recognize your endeavors and increase your salary (*this is generally akin to waiting for Godot*), be proactive. Be aware of your skills and maximize your earning potential by staying current. If your employer doesn't invest in your future together by subsidizing teacher development, do it yourself. Take short courses through local initiatives like the teachers' resource center, universities or online schools. Be aware of pay scales in your subject area and experience level and ensure you receive adequate compensation. Don't be afraid to ask for what you're worth. Most private school owners have their own economic interests right up their with 'interests of the child'. The least they can do is share the pie. This doesn't make you a less devoted teacher; it makes you a more intelligent person.

Recognize that your significant other probably doesn't want to hear all about your work all the time any more than you want to hear about theirs. Make a conscious effort to keep trade talk to a minimum. I have it on very good authority its very hard to keep the romance alive if all your partner does is talk about positive discipline. Yes there are those significant others out there who might find that exciting... but that's a different story.

Have a role model, just like you expect your pupils to have. Someone who can energize, inspire and motivate you to be good at what you do, and keep getting better. This doesn't have to be someone from the teaching profession, just someone who uses/used their work as a source of joy as well as revenue. Think of them whenever you're down. Think about how they would react to a negative situation, and shape your own response accordingly. Giving off a positive vibe will not only help the students but also the self.

If thinking of your role model fails to do the seemingly impossible and banish your teacher blues, if the task of moving adolescent bodies from inaction into motion makes you despair rather than salivate, try thinking about what it would be like to apply Feng Shui to your classroom. Which student would have to face where, which one would work best suspended from the ceiling, and how much of your classroom would have to be underwater. ■

exams, use the blackboard, make teams, or use cards. Thicker journals do not mean more effective learning.

Use school time to work and not to socialize. If you can do an hour of corrections at school that means an hour of corrections you don't have to do at home. If you have to be in school early because your husband or driver will then drop the kids off to their school, use that half hour to catch up on paperwork, plan lessons or do corrections. Resist the urge to pop into the staff room for a snack of thick, juicy gossip and head for an empty classroom instead. If there are no empty classrooms, find a quiet corner of the staff room. If there isn't a quiet corner, make one by putting up a small sign asking for a little bit of peace and quiet, or simply alienate everyone with rudeness till they leave you alone (*can be fun but generally backfires in the long run*).

Faced with a new school year and unfamiliar lesson content, work with others in your department who have already taken that route. Pore over their old lesson plans and review a couple of students' journals. Ask them questions if you have any. Brainstorm with colleagues about the most effective way to make a point or deliver a lesson. Don't be

trying? *Children are horrible, work is horrible, and the food stinks*", they say, as they take up table space in a crowded staff room and trade tidbits from the student rumour mill. As a teacher, it's in your own interest to stay close to colleagues who are motivated and upbeat rather than whiney all the time. Yes working conditions for teachers tend to be bad, worse or terrible. But if you have to do something it's easier to do it without the ball and chain of futility attached to your ankle.

Remember that being a teacher is just one aspect of your self. Don't let it be the only one. It is tempting to pour your self into a job, especially one with the potential of fulfillment that teaching has. There is always so much to do at school and so much more that can be done. But (*and this is the tricky bit*) there are other people out there who can do it just as well, and who will probably get paid for it too. Make some alone time for yourself. Read a book that has nothing to do with education. Watch a movie and not an instructional video. Go for a drive. Keep up to date with the world outside the classroom. A simple test for how good you are at this is to try relating to someone who is not a teacher. If you run out of things to say within