FRUSTRATION AND STRESS PREVENTION/REDUCTION TECHNIQUES

by:
Melanie T. Tacaca
Teacher II, St. Francis Elementary School

Frustration and stress, which are inevitable in the teaching profession, are the boundless adversaries of our greatest goals. Zehm and Kottler (1993) list some external causes of stress for teachers as difficult students, irate parents, and collegial backbiting. Frustration can have a alarming result on teacher-student relationships, as it inclines to cause educators to make unreasonable decisions. Generally you know when you are becoming frustrated and can quickly recognize the signs and indications. As an educator, the question is not if you will become frustrated or stressed but when you will and how you will face it.

Signs of frustration or stress can include nervousness, anxiety, shortness of breath, and a tendency to make irrational decisions. First, you should be able to identify your own particular signs that frustration or stress is building so that you can decrease them. You should then have a idea that will aid you avoid or reduce frustration when it happens. Your frustration prevention or reduction techniques will be distinctive and personal to you; what works for one teacher might not necessarily be effective for you.

Playing soft, soothing music when feeling of frustration is approaching can have a valuable effect for both the teacher and students. Some teachers proactively play soft music during independent study time.
Displaying pictures throughout the classroom of beautiful destinations can help you keep calm. You might put up picture of beautiful beaches, snowy mountains, green valleys, ski resorts or Tropical Island to give yourself- and your student- chances for mini mental vacations.

Most teachers have certain lessons they truly relish teaching. When feeling of frustration or stress are approaching, try modifying your lesson plans and teaching lesson that not only meets the student learning goals but also brings you pleasure.

Sometimes just taking a short walk everywhere the school can be comforting and can head off feelings of stress or frustration. This can also help students release pent-up energy. For instance, there may even be a way to integrate the walk into your current curriculum by turning it into nature walk or a service project (e.g. picking up litter).

Challenging students can be a main source of frustration. Allow yourself to ask for help by asking a nearby teacher to take a challenging student for a short time. This activity is one that you should set up ahead of time making sure that your colleague is agreeable to this plan. Offering to do the same for the other teacher is a good technique to begin using this plan.

Strategically assigning independent reading time to students is another way to calm the classroom down and to provoke you with a break when frustration raises its ugly head.

For some teachers, one source of frustration is a messy desk, submerged in various unfinished tasks. If you are one these teachers, an easy way to decrease your frustration is to clear off your desk and take time to clean your area.

Frustration and stress often vanish when an administrator or a peer lets you know they value and appreciate your effort. Knowing which colleagues you should visit to help validate your work is another method to use in lowering stages of frustration and stress.
Partaking staff responsibilities can help too, as frustration and stress often arise when a teacher feels overwhelmed and behind. You should let your colleagues you are willing to cover some of their duties and also let them do the same for you. Also, sharing other ideas with teachers on frustration-and stress-reducing techniques is a way to increase your repertoire of strategies.

Zehm and Kottler (1993) mention additional stress-and frustration-reduction strategies, such as maintaining a healthy lifestyle with good sleeping patterns, free of alcohol and drugs. They also advocate continued training and professional growth tasks, such as varying teaching assignments, taking a sabbatical, having a faculty exchange, engaging in team teaching, supervising a student teacher, going back to school, conducting field trips, leading research projects, writing grants, and instigating technology projects. In addition, they suggest keeping a journal as a reflective strategy to help deal with stress and frustration.

References:

http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/105124/chapters/Developing_Positive_Teacher-Student_Relations.aspx