

WhatwayDSays

Teacher development e-book

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HOW to...

be a resilient teacher
5 ways to stay positive
amidst the pedagogical noise



Did you know that education is a profession that loses about 50% of its workforce within the first 5 years?

(The Teacher Turnover Crisis: Evidence from South Africa, TUT, Jan 2013)

South Africa continues to experience a situation where a large number of qualified teachers are choosing to leave the profession... and it is not at all surprising. With class sizes rising and salary and pension expectations dropping, it is no wonder that the Rainbow Nation has found itself in such a quandary.

The overnight change in systems, the miscommunication from the powers that be and **the expected strain on the (already sensitive) system post-lockdown** requires a level of resilience most other professions do not ask for and teacher training programmes do not teach.

- With the anticipated increase in pressure post-lockdown, should we expect a mass exodus of valuable qualified professionals who choose to no longer put up with the pessimism?
- Is it possible for teachers to overcome the negative drivel?
- What can teachers do to become more resilient towards the negative pedagogy around them?

This e-book serves to respond to these questions by offering tips to teachers on becoming more resilient in their trade. It is hoped that by doing so, we are, in our own way, opting to be part of the nation's solution.



Remember who you are and whose you are

To know who you are

Who are you?

- Don't answer that question with your name.
- Don't answer that question with your profession.
- Don't answer that question with your familial relationships.

This is a difficult question to answer on a philosophical level. This simple exercise may help:

- **What three adjectives would describe you?** Not how others would describe you but, rather, how would you describe yourself?
- **Mention 3 past experiences that have shaped your current perspectives.** It cannot be denied that the experiences we have had have shaped who we are.
- **What choices have you made that might define who you are?** For example, you've chosen the career of your heart over the career of your parents' choice (or vice versa). What might this say about you?
- **It is not uncommon to define yourself according to the religion you follow** as it is usually a constant determiner of the choices we make.

To know whose you are

As humans, we have a basic need to belong. We function best when we are a part of something larger. The most basic alliance for most of us is the family to which we belong. Together, we have shared experiences and inside jokes. We are accepted unconditionally. Family, our most relevant source of authority, is the root of our existence and, whether we choose to accept it or not, the choices we make in life have an effect on them. That is what shapes us, what keeps us grounded and, at times, what challenges us.

Resilience stems from basic knowledge of *who you are and whose you are*. With a strong and certain knowledge of your **self**, you may be more prone to develop a resistance against the negativity around you and an ability to swim through the tide determinedly.



Understand your emotions

How are your emotions related to your experiences at work? What particular aspects do you enjoy; which aspects rouse a more negative mindset for you? One of the keys to resilience is to find out what makes you tick. Using our emotions as a resource instead of a barrier creates a new behavioural model.

How can you use the **energy** your anger invokes to *act as fuel* when dealing with a situation, while still being compassionate and graceful?

3

Mindfulness

“Mindfulness refers to the **moment-by-moment awareness** of one’s thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and the surrounding environment. It allows one to stop and give attention to one’s thoughts without judgement or criticism.

Teaching is a **calling for kind and compassionate people** who are devoted to making a positive change in the lives of the ones they teach. However, too many in the field, both newly trained and experienced teachers, are unprepared for the **social and emotional demands of the classroom**. This often leads to stressful situations and is one of the leading causes of disharmony in the classroom, demotivation, discouragement, burn-out, anxiety and the will to quit.

When we practise mindfulness, we tune into what we are **sensing in the present moment**, rather than revisiting the past or imagining what is to come. Research has shown that mindfulness **reduces anxiety and depression**.

By training our mind to consciously become more aware of our inner and outer experiences, we learn to manage our emotions better. Mindfulness is, thus, effective when dealing with conflict in the classroom, in the staffroom, as well as with school administration. Thus, it can help one **feel more in control**, which, in turn, leads to **better job satisfaction**.” (Extract taken from [The Mindfulness and Lifestyle Journal and Planner for Teachers](#))

[Click here to find out more about the Mindfulness & Lifestyle Journal and Planner for Teachers](#)

4

Challenge your Curiosity

Ask questions with the true intention of learning more. It is only with knowledge that the unknown becomes recognised. Keep abreast of current affairs related to your staff, your school, your district. How can we use this information to benefit our situation?

“Resilient people are curious,” says Elena Aguilar in her book *Onward: Cultivating Emotional Resilience in Teachers*, where she encourages teachers to respond to a challenge by saying “Wow, that was really hard. That pushed me to my limits. What can I learn from that?” Thus, teachers are encouraged to reflect on who they are as ‘learners’ who view challenges as learning experiences.

5

Embrace Change

Ironically, change is the only constant in life. Nothing stands still. Nothing remains the same forever. The wheels of change must turn and, with them, we must adapt. Sometimes, a change might occur that throws us completely off track. How we deal with this is what determines our level of resilience. Be an avid ‘learner’ by using your knowledge-building prowess to find out more about the unknown. When the unknown becomes familiar to us, we tend to accept it more readily.

While these key guidelines offer basic information on building resilience, it must be mentioned that it is non-exhaustive. However, by understanding the key factors that contribute towards your resilience, you will find positive reasons to *stick out the tough times* and continue in the important work you are doing building the future of our nation, one child at a time.

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<http://whatsaydsays.wordpress.com>

To read my previous e-book entitled
How to transition back to school after lockdown
please [click here](#).

Email whatwaydsays@gmail.com to let me know about the topics you would like to read about in future.

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