

## 5 Simple Ways To Eliminate Stress From Your Teaching Life

By **Michael Linsin**

Stress is a killer.

And not just physically. It can also ruin your teaching career.

It can destroy your peace and happiness. It can affect your relationship with students.

It can severely limit your ability to manage your classroom.

The good news is that there is a lot you can do about teaching-related pressure, strain, tension, and the like.

Even if you're prone to stress, it doesn't have to be your everyday reality.

In fact, with just a few simple strategies, you can eliminate it from your teaching life.

Here's how:

### **1. Decide.**

One of the most powerful and effective ways to rid yourself of stress also happens to be the simplest. It's called [the decide-first method](#).

The way it works is just before your students arrive for the day, shut your classroom door and allow yourself a few minutes of uninterrupted silence. Close your eyes, take a few deep breaths, and clear your mind.

Once settled, you're going to make one very important and very conscious decision.

You're going to decide that no matter what happens that day, you're going to keep your cool – inside as well as out.

Even if a family of orangutans comes swinging through your door, you're going to remain as calm as a mountain lake.

And amazingly, almost magically, you will.

The first time you try it will be a revelation. But if you run through the same routine every day, being calm and composed will become who you are.

## **2. Say no.**

Nearly every teacher would benefit by using more of this two-letter word. In fact, if you don't say no regularly, chances are that you're overworked and near the end of your rope.

Now, it's important to mention that I don't just mean saying no to taking on extra responsibilities or joining another committee.

You may also need to say no to gossip, procrastination, micromanagement, busywork, and commiserating with negative colleagues.

Saying no can feel awkward or uncomfortable at first, especially if you have to tell someone face to face. But once you take a stand, you'll be shocked at how much time you have to focus on what really matters.

You'll be shocked at how much better you feel and how favorably your students respond to you.

The truth is, if you want to love your job, and be most effective, you must learn to say no often.

## **3. Accept.**

So many teachers get worked up over things they have no control over — like new policies, programs, curriculum, etc. But why do this to yourself?

When something new comes down the pipe, it's far better and less stressful to accept it straightaway and then turn your thoughts to how you can make it work for you.

You don't have the time, nor can you afford the mental energy or anguish, to ruminate, complain, or become anxious over *anything* that has been decided by someone above your pay grade.

To do otherwise is unhealthy and self-sabotage.

I've found over the years that I can take just about anything and make it my own, find a workaround, or, if it isn't something I absolutely have to do, ignore it altogether.

#### **4. Stop convincing.**

Teachers who struggle with unruly behavior, disrespect, poor listening, and a chaotic room environment tend to rely on their ability to **convince students to behave**.

Which, even if you're blessed with natural charisma and a silver tongue, is a losing proposition.

Besides being ineffective, trying to counsel, question, scold, guilt, coax, manipulate, persuade, or otherwise find the perfect words to get students to behave is incredibly burdensome and the most stressful strategy you can use.

Instead, lean exclusively on your classroom management plan.

Let it do the dirty work for you. So many wonderful things happen when you simply allow it to fulfill its intended purpose.

Not the least of which is your peace of mind.

## 5. Shift responsibility.

One thing nearly all stressed-out teachers have in common is that they willingly, eagerly even, take on what are – or should be – their students' responsibilities.

After teaching a directed lesson, they fail to shift full responsibility for actually doing the work (independent practice) to their class. Instead, they disrupt the learning process by reteaching what they just taught minutes before.

They interrupt with reminders, clues, and suggestions. They rush to the side of every student who shows the least bit of struggle.

They don't allow their students to wrestle with the material, build academic stamina, or draw their own conclusions. They think that giving and giving and giving is what good teaching looks like.

But it's not.

**Micromanaging**, coddling, and over-helping very effectively produces learned helplessness. It dissuades listening and encourages dependence on you.

It creates a room full of needy, grabby students that make you want to run screaming for the parking lot.

### **You Can Do It**

You can't be an effective teacher if you're laden with stress.

It shortens your patience, mars your judgment, and weakens your ability to build influential relationships with your students.

It also brings tense, negative energy into your classroom *that you can't feel*, but that visitors experience the moment they walk through your door.

No matter who you are or where you teach, the simple changes above can help you eliminate stress from your teaching life.

But it does take discipline. It takes forethought and commitment. It takes determination and the will to swim against the tide of what everyone else seems to be doing.

But you can do it.

The journey begins with one small, daily decision.