



Happy Staff = Happy School

# A Word for Stressful Times

by Glenn Capelli

## Working in schools can be stressful!

These articles are intended to help the great people who work in schools reduce stress and increase satisfaction.

## Key points

What is your philosophy?

Do you have someone that you can discuss your philosophy with?

In times of stress return to your philosophy, the reason why you work in schools.

Just because you're an adult, doesn't mean you need to take everything seriously, all of the time.

Slow down, we're moving too fast. Forgetting to smell the roses is not wisdom.

Glenn Capelli

When I started teaching high school in 1979, my Principal Glynn Watkins asked all the teachers to consider our philosophy, for teaching and for life.

Even though we never used the word 'mentor' in the 1970's and 80's, in 2008 when I attended Glynn's funeral, I realised that he was my number one *mentor*. On reflection I learnt the importance of having someone you can talk with about your philosophy.

What is your philosophy? What is your personal set of views and theories – as an educator and as a person?

How does this philosophy shine in all elements of what you do?

In times of stress and real challenge remember to return to your philosophy, the reason you do what you do.

My philosophy comes down to a word - **neoteny**. Neoteny isn't a well known word yet but it's a revolution I am working on. A thick dictionary will tell you that *neoteny can be explained as the juvenile physical characteristics that carry over with the species into adulthood*. A feature like our forehead for example, it doesn't change, remaining the same from birth right through to maturity. Anthropologist Ashley Montagu believes neoteny goes beyond the physical characteristics and suggests there might be non-physical features present at infancy that also remain with us throughout our lifetime.

In my book *Thinking Caps* book I've defined neoteny as 'Ageing, yet retaining the childlike behaviour traits of spontaneity, creativity, exploration and living with a sense of wonder. What we add, as we age is wisdom.'

There are so many implications for this:

- Children need a childhood
- Natural play is one of the best developers for the brain
- As a school we need to nourish a neotenous environment
- As teachers we must try to maintain freshness in what you do
- Aim to help each other grow

As adults we shouldn't feel we have to give up our colouring-in, our love of crayons, our sense of fun. What we need to add as we age is wisdom, not terminal seriousness. In times of stress, go fly a kite or kick a footy or look at a smiling child's face and remember why you do what you do. Wisdom is living life with appreciation.

Neoteny is not just for a private reflective moment, it's for every day. Spread neoteny and grow.

## Glenn Capelli

Read more about Neoteny in *Thinking Caps*

by Glenn Capelli from book stores or at [www.glenncapelli.com](http://www.glenncapelli.com)

Plus find the *Neoteny Song* on itunes

