



Happy Staff = Happy School

Making the Most of 2012

Working in schools can be stressful!

These articles are intended to help the great people who work in schools.

Key points

Schools are 'people places' and are therefore more stressful and potentially more satisfying places to work

We judge ourselves according to our intentions but we judge others by their behaviour and presume their intentions.

We need to be patient because we can't always see the difference that we make.

In 2012 aim to be LESS judgemental and MORE patient!

Our perception of intent has a huge impact on trust.

Stephen MR Covey

New Year's resolutions are only achieved by 6% of those who make them (perhaps because they are often alcohol fuelled). Having good intentions is a good start but it simply isn't enough. It's ultimately your behavior that counts! This year I'm encouraging you to focus on two behaviours – MORE of one...and LESS of another.

There is no doubt, working in schools can be stressful. Jobs that involve working with people are inherently stressful. Schools by their very nature are 'people places'. However jobs working with people are also more potentially satisfying. It's a yin and yang situation!

One of the reasons why working with people can be stressful is that we can't control other people's behavior, only our own. This restricts our power and sense of control. It is helpful to monitor our own reactions to situations and learn to only worry about the things that we can control. According to Stephen Covey we judge ourselves according to our intentions because we know what our intentions are. However we judge other people by their behaviours and PRESUME what their intentions are. Our perception of other people's intent has a huge impact on how we view them.

If we are quick to judge and presume that others have negative or selfish intentions, then we immediately 'label' them. This can then become a filter through which we view that person. This almost invariably becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. We are more likely to notice behaviours that are consistent with the opinion that we have formed of that person and less likely to notice other behaviours.

Have you noticed that when you buy a new car, almost every second car you see is the same as yours? The cars were there before you bought your car, you just didn't notice them. Your filters have changed and now you notice them.

It's the same with behavior. Once we make a judgement about somebody, we are more likely to notice behaviours that are consistent with that judgement. We start to look for behaviours to match our expectations.

Further adding to this complexity is the fact that we never REALLY know what is going on in the lives of other people. Rather than judging people too quickly and presuming their intentions are not good, we should try to be more understanding. An upset parent at your door may be dealing with a whole raft of issues in their home life. The school issue that they have come to you about might just be the tip of their iceberg. Resist the urge to jump to the conclusion that they are irrational and 'out to get you'. Instead focus on problem solving.

Apart from needing to 'pay our bills', there are a number of other reasons why people work. Most people want to feel that their work is important and that they make a difference. We want a sense of satisfaction, a feeling that our efforts are having an impact and are worthwhile.

However this takes patience when working in schools. I often feel it would be more rewarding to be a landscaper, a builder or even a painter...at least at the end of the day you could see what you had achieved.

Working in schools we need to be more patient than a painter. Our work is important and it does make a difference. However the difference we make takes longer to appear.

In 2012 by focusing on being MORE patient and LESS judgemental we can decrease our stress and increase our sense of satisfaction. Have a great year!

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