

Monday, June 30, 2008

## **Teacher Survival Strategies**

The Skills and Technology of "Getting Down on Yourself"

There is a skill and a technology for "Getting down on yourself."

What does this mean? First, "Getting down on yourself" is a kind of intrapersonal scolding that you perform to get yourself to do better the next time&hellip;

Or, to get yourself to do something that you failed to do&hellip;

Or, to get yourself to start something that you have been putting off, or avoiding.

So, what distinguishes "Getting down on yourself" from a "pep talk?"

"Pep talks" are positive, "You can do it," "It's a piece of cake," encouragements that you plant as you are attempting a task. Of course, the task must represent a challenge, otherwise, if the job is actually that easy, the only reason for the pep talk is because you don't believe in your abilities.

What distinguishes a "Getting down on yourself" episode is the harshness or severity of the internal dialog. The dialog also contains elements of a put down, complaint, criticism (maybe a reflection of the way your disciplining parent talked to you). (Maybe your reaction to yourself, now, is similar to to your reaction to your parents, then.)

These dialogs can be characterized by self-talk statements like&hellip;"How could you be so (stupid, dumb, idiotic)&hellip;"

"I can't believe you did that."

"Where are your brains?"

"You idiot, you should have&hellip;"

"You should have known better than to have&hellip;"

"What in the world were you thinking?"

"How in the world did you expect to \_\_\_ if you \_?"

Etc., ad infinitum&hellip;Side bar Come to think of it, this is the same language that has been heard in the hallway, spoken by teachers "kind" enough to scold students privately, or through the closed door for teachers that "Have had it" with one particular "thorn-in-their-paw" student.

Of course, this particular kind of incident is relegated to the "old days" of corporal punishment and "paddle to the seat of the pants" justice. Such scenarios would never be perpetrated in modern, enlightened schools&hellip;at least not when students (or their parents) can sue for infringements upon the student's civil rights. And, just like the berated, belittled, recalcitrant student will live to offend another day; unphased by the teacher's diatribe; so too will the stubborn and obstinate part of yourself "backslide, backbite, even backstab" and create problems for your future success.

Treat yourself kindly when you "Get Down on Yourself"

Treating yourself in a "mean manner" is ineffective (except for the devoted masochist, but that is another problem).

Mean, stern, harsh-discipline-type words and "get tough self-talk" fail to create the supportive internal environment that you need to motivate yourself.

One clue, "If you would have been embarrassed to say out loud to others what you are saying to yourself in private, then watch your intrapersonal dialog, too.

But, involve all parts of yourself, your positively and negatively motivated selves, in a productive, negotiated settlement.

Allow "win-win-win-win" management of your self, and gain the internal cooperation that you need to engage for your success.

Building a kindly attitude to all portions of yourself will "take the edge off" your "Getting down on yourself."

And who knows, you might come to like yourself as much as you like that loveable crew that you call your students.

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