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Short Article

Students (and Teachers) "No-Excuse Zone"

Teachers need to model the "No-Excuse Zone" habit if they expect students to extinguish students' lethargic and excuse-giving behaviors. The reason for adopting the "No-Excuse Zone" response to students' excuses is that learning is easy, and because excuses have no place in describing a learning situation. Limited learning is an artificial construct, and excuses should not be used to explain away sub-standard effort or student disinterest. What are those Excuses? EXCUSE #1: "I don't have any good ideas."

FACT: Ideas are abundant and never were in short supply at any time.

Evolution prompted our ancestors to think, learn, create, invent, problem-solve, make decisions…so the capacity to develop new ideas is hard-wired into our genes.

Prompts to new ideas sprout in our minds like weeds in a garden.

And, the ability to produce new ideas is multi-dimensional. Each of the Multiple Intelligences (that think through us) produces a new slant on a similar concept. In fact, each idea has seven or more renderings in our imagination and experience systems.

In addition, each person is unique and benefits from a constellation of unique experiences…this makes our ideas different than every other persons, even if six billion people now live on Planet Earth.

The statement, "I don't have any (new, good) ideas" is pure bunk.

EXCUSE #2: "I'm not good at (an expert) at anything."

OK. So, what's stopping you from putting in the effort to become good at something on your way to expert status?

And you are in good company. Successful people always believe that they don't know very much because they realize that there is more to learn than anyone could possibly know.

But an expanding Internet Universe of knowledge is not an excuse for failing to apply yourself to a learning task.

So, think like daydreamer and a procrastinator. But think later, after you do something.

EXCUSE #3: "I'm not a skilled (technical, computer) person, so I an not able to do this."

"Skilled" and "technical" are matters of degree.

You can't type 120 words a minute, but you can "hunt and peck" five words a minute.

You can't recite the Rubyat from memory on national television, but you can talk to a group of students using phrases on note cards to jog your memory.

You can't run a sub four-minute mile, but you can walk, hop, crawl, roll or navigate your personal power chair somewhere.

The point: You can do something. So do it.

EXCUSE #4: "Learning this seems like it's going to take a long time, I just don't think I can finish it."

It is going to take a long time compared to what?

It will definitely take a longer time, if by this time (tomorrow, next week, next month, next year), you have done nothing about it.

A vehicle that sits in the driveway or garage gets zero miles to the gallon. (In fact, since a bit of gasoline evaporates as the vehicle sits for an extended period of time, gasoline decreases while movement remains non-existent.

Whether the learning or the learning task takes a long time is only a matter of perception.

Sure, it will require effort, energy and commitment. But, without starting; that level of effort, energy and commitment for the undone task will remain exactly the same.

However, if you get in gear and complete even a small portion of the task today, the remaining task will be less by tomorrow.

EXCUSE #5: "Rome wasn't built in a day."

Maybe not, but it was built.

Someone started. And someone else built on top of what earlier folks built.

We start with huge advantages because we have lots of resources, ideas and structures to build upon.

So, ignore this lazy, lame excuse of an excuse and get busy.

Summary

When students and teacher enter the "No-Excuse Zone," they meet the "tough-love" philosophy that ignores their excuses and tells them to "Get busy."

Whether the excuse giver is a perfectionist who is afraid to start because the results "Won't be good enough;" or whether the person is "just plain lazy," the return response is the same.

"Get to work. Your excuses gain no traction here."

"This is a "No-Excuse Zone."

"No parking is allowed."

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