



Teaching For Success®

Quick Answers

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Q: There Is Too Much to Do; How Can I Get it All Done?

A: Follow Grandma's Rule

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Have you experienced some of the many stress-related and too-much-to-do events inherent in teaching?

These include:

- Student assessments,
- Grading deadlines,
- Lesson planning complexities
- Enforcing proper classroom behavior
- Stage fright.
- Fear of being wrong or making a mistake.

These can all occur during a typical semester.

So what can you do?

How do you motivate yourself to deal with stressful situations so that you can reduce their negative affects? Up until now, possibly, you have not given this question much consideration; you somehow have gotten the job done but feeling little better as a result. So what can you do to improve?

Psychology offers a motivational tool that is so simple and effective that anyone can use it with surprising results, yet it doesn't cost a penny. Grandma's Rule is the time-honored truism that when applied at the dinner table to children states: "Eat your vegetables first and then you may have your dessert." To put it in other words: "First, do something you HAVE to do. Then, do something you WANT to do as a reward."

It's so simple; it's so effective. Take the example of grading a stack of student papers or tests. Unless you truly enjoy this task, turn the papers into your vegetables and then read a favorite book, take a short walk, cook your favorite dish, compose an e-mail to a friend, browse the frontiers of Web or just relax while taking a cat nap and turn that activity into your dessert.

Teachers must accomplish a great amount of work each term. When you are motivated, the same work seems less daunting and overwhelming. Grandma's Rule is a motivational tool that you should include in your professional management repertoire.