

# How to Create Positive Personal Power

## ▶ QUICK TOOL 9.10

### Personal Power: The Key to High Impact Teaching

Teaching apathetic, under-prepared students? Wrestling with learning styles, active learning strategies, outcome attainment? Do you have the feeling college teaching has fundamentally changed somehow when you weren't looking? Is the economic sea change adding significant stress and strain to your personal life?

If you're nodding in the affirmative, your personal power and energy may be nearing depletion, as mine does at times. I've wondered, is this a case of "What can't be cured must be endured?" Must I just wait it out until things get better? No, not at all. There are active, positive steps you and I can take to put some fire back in our personal power levels.

#### Step one

Pinpoint the cause of your power drain. Just as an electrical leak can slowly but surely deplete even the largest, strongest battery, difficult situations can lower our



personal power and self-confidence. Low self-confidence can result when we see things start to spin out of control.

For example, if you're not prepared, walking into a classroom or signing in online to find a group of unmotivated, passionless, and uncommitted students can quickly drain your personal power. When reality fails to meet expectations, mental energy is taxed. We are all having to adjust to what feels like a fantastic rate of change and high level of instability in our work and personal lives.

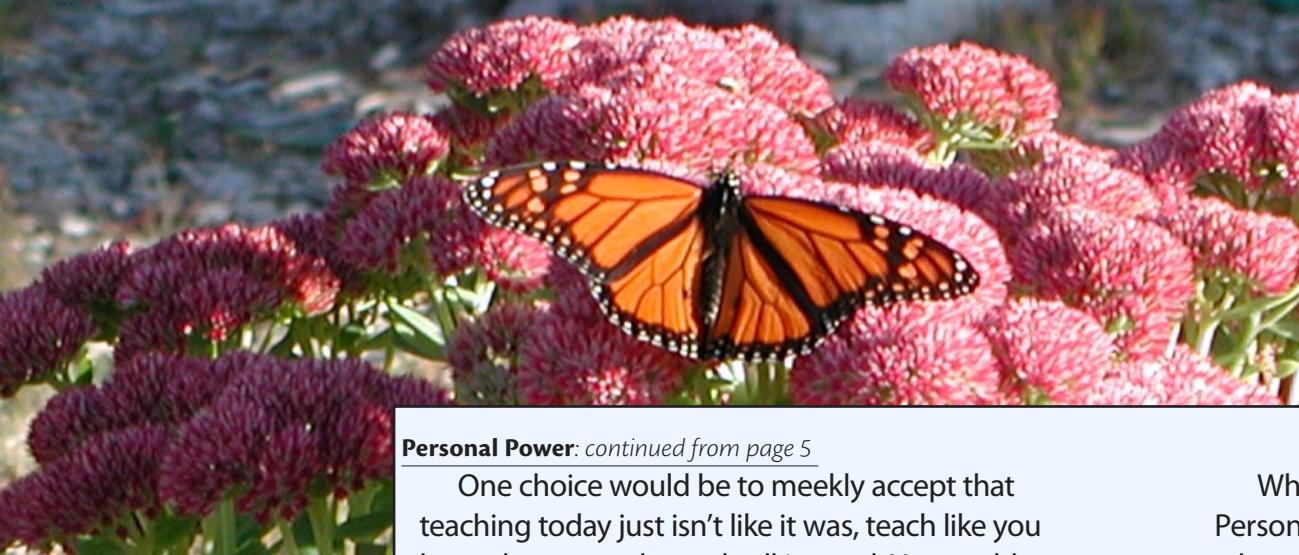
At the first sign of diminishing personal power levels, you need to make a firm decision to stop, challenge, and choose the path you want to take.

#### There are three steps to Present Time Power Consciousness:

- Stop and assess how you feel.
- Challenge yourself to take charge of your state of mind.
- Choose an action to positively impact your feelings.

First, remind yourself that you have a choice in how to respond to any teaching situation. You have the power to assess, challenge, and choose.

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In a world enriched by abundance but disrupted by the automation and outsourcing of white-collar work, everyone, regardless of profession, must cultivate an artistic sensibility. ...today we must all be designers.

~ Daniel H. Pink

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One choice would be to meekly accept that teaching today just isn't like it was, teach like you have always taught, and call it good. You could adopt the view that, after all, you can't change students, society, or higher education.

### The power to lead

But perhaps you can. What if you decide to see your teaching situation as a challenge to be met and a problem to solve? What if you decide to lead?

Have you read the book *Tribes* by Seth Godin? Did you know you don't need a title, an appointed position of authority, or an election-day victory to lead and make real changes? As Godin points out, the majority of people need and want to be led.

What do you really need to lead your students? A healthy sense of personal power, a clear direction, and a decision to make it happen. That's all it really takes.

With those three fundamentals you can make a decided difference in your classroom or online course beginning right here, right now.

What can you do to regain lost personal power? Personal power comes from your self-conversation about who you are and what your value is to the universe, your society, community, employer, students, family, and self.

When it comes down to it, personal power is a choice. It doesn't depend on the direction of the stock market, the price of oil, or the value of real estate. Ultimately, you can decide and set your value level. It's like setting the dimmer switch on a lamp from just glowing to full brilliance.

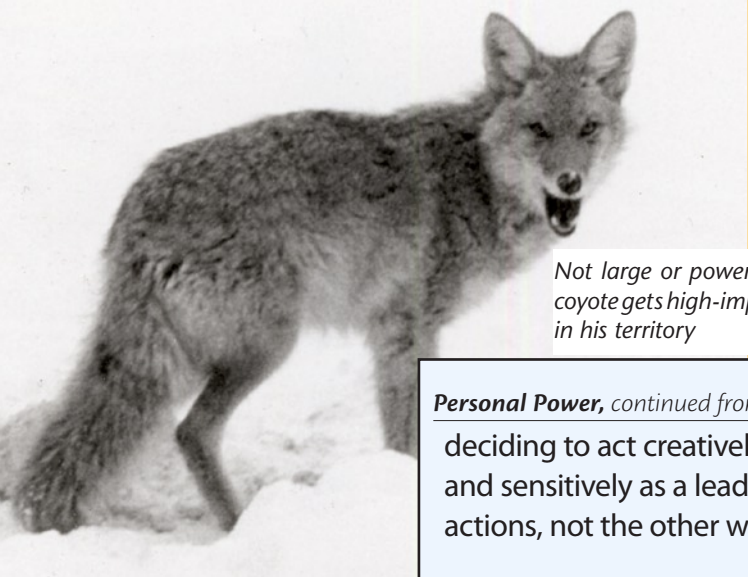
If your sense of power and well being has eroded, almost unnoticed, by all the negative news of the past two years, it's time to stop, assess, and decide how powerful and effective you want to be in teaching and in life.

To be an outcome-achieving, high-impact teacher, you need high levels of personal power. Your students will perceive this power as confidence and commitment, and they will respond positively to your energy and determination.

A high personal energy level goes a long way toward helping you stay in a creative zone. You get there by

**Personal Power:** *continued on page 3*





*Not large or powerful, yet the coyote gets high-impact respect in his territory*

**By forgetting the trivial, we leave room for the more important and meaningful experiences that shape who we are and establish our individuality.**

*~David A Sousa*

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deciding to act creatively, boldly, firmly, and sensitively as a leader. Feelings follow actions, not the other way around.

During the past two decades or so, teachers have been urged to match their teaching to students' learning styles and become totally student-centered.

This instructional view is a positive change from the previous era of totally teacher-centered classes. But today we need a collaborative and active learning environment that the teacher initiates and leads.

This sounds good in theory, but in practice, many students don't know what their preferred learning style is, beyond preferring one of the see, hear, or do categories. And, adopting a total learner-centered teaching approach can leave you feeling confused and drained of personal power, trying to continuously adapt to and guess "what students want."

This may sound heretical, but to be an effective teacher you must operate first from your strengths, talents, and experience. Of course, you must be open to understanding and regularly assessing the needs of your students. But you must not

allow your personal power to be drained by situations created by your own failure to lead your class, create boundaries for behavior, and maintain fair and rigorous academic standards.

Teaching today takes an incredible amount of self-confidence, and self-confidence for most of us doesn't just happen spontaneously. No, self-confidence and personal power must be built and maintained.

How can you recharge and maintain healthy power levels? First, assess your power linkages and determine what is keeping you going. Is it a belief, a commitment, a personal value? Whatever it is, strengthen the linkage with directed thought.

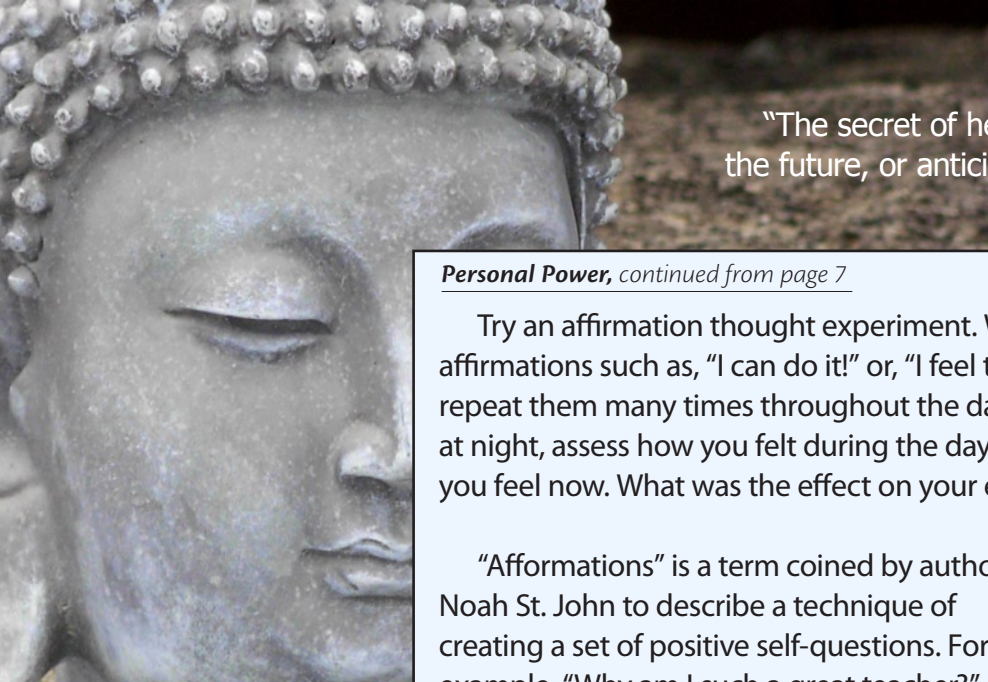
### **Affirmations, "Affirmations" and Meditation**

Here are three practical methods of increasing or recharging personal power reserves:

Affirmations are positive thoughts patterns describing a condition, feeling, or outcome that you are working to create. Consciously repeating clear, concise, positive statements to yourself does energize the mind, help meet challenges, and boost performance.

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"The secret of health for both mind and body is not to mourn for the past, worry about the future, or anticipate troubles, but to live in the present moment wisely and earnestly."

~Buddha

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Try an affirmation thought experiment. Write several affirmations such as, "I can do it!" or, "I feel terrific!" and repeat them many times throughout the day. Then at night, assess how you felt during the day and how you feel now. What was the effect on your energy?

"Affirmations" is a term coined by author Noah St. John to describe a technique of creating a set of positive self-questions. For example, "Why am I such a great teacher?"

St. John contends in his book *The Secret Code of Success* that the mind loves questions and will instantly go to work to answer any question put to it. As the mind creates answers to why you are a great teacher, you will find your energy level and self-confidence is instantly on the rise.

Meditation is also a powerful technique for increasing your energy level. Many forms and practices of meditation have been created over the centuries, making it too broad a subject for this short article. However, one excellent introduction to the subject is *Coming to Our Senses*, by Jon Kabat-Zinn.

A reading of the first couple of chapters of his book is a great help in understanding the fundamental benefits and practices of meditation. Certainly one

benefit is a relaxation and rejuvenation needed to operate today with healthy personal power levels.

Recognizing the mind-body connection is also crucial. Exercise has a powerful effect on levels of confidence and ability to deal with stress. I've learned the hard way that time for exercise and relaxation simply cannot be dismissed, no matter how pressing a crisis.

Finally, adhering to a common-sense life routine of exercise, adequate sleep, and nourishing foods is a very effective way to power up and fight the blahs. Whatever method you choose, you and your students can benefit from moving the need for personal power upkeep from a "good idea" to an everyday practice.

When you maintain a supply of mental fuel for taking charge, accepting the challenge of change, and leading your students, you'll be a high-impact, win-win instructor who can proudly say, "I have the personal power needed to embark on the teaching for success, high-impact adventure of change, higher performance and teaching enjoyment through outcome achievement!"

