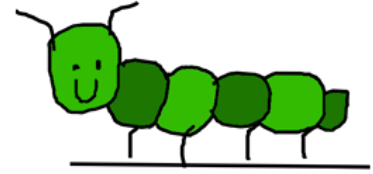


# Change is the Answer to Dissatisfaction

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Imagine that you are working in your classroom and your director walks in with a person you have never seen before and begins showing her around the room. Your director smiles at you and says, "Good morning, Ms. So-and-so! How are you? Don't mind us. We're just looking around."



Then you overhear your director saying things to this person like, "This is the lesson plan I was telling you about." "Yes, you could rearrange the room into centers for the children." "No, I don't know why that toy shelf is facing the wall." "Yes, you're right, all the art does look exactly the same. (sigh)" "Well, yes, they were sitting in Circle Time when we walked by 20 minutes ago. I'm not sure why they're still there." "Here is their actual schedule." "Oh, I would love it if you did that!" "You have some great ideas!" "The kids would love that!" "Their parents would be so pleased!" "Girl, you are a godsend!"

Obviously you would think that you were about to get fired. What would you DO? I'm not interested in how you would feel; I am interested in what you would DO. What would you wish you had done differently? What would you change?

Okay, initially you might try to shift the focus and make yourself feel better by getting defensive and playing the victim. (Insert violin music here.) But deep down, in your heart of hearts where you are honest with yourself, you would take responsibility for your situation. You would immediately begin to do all the things you already know you should have been doing all along. And you would seek guidance in the areas where you need help.

Here's the good news. You're not being fired. You just need to get fired up! You're just lacking a little quality called "engagement." An engaged employee is someone who enjoys her job and loves working with young children. Individuals who dive in and participate fully earn greater rewards and experience deeper personal and professional fulfillment. Show me a disengaged person, and I'll see lackluster performance, limited personal growth, and diminished rewards. Show me an engaged person, and it's just the opposite- high performance, accelerated personal growth, and inevitable success. Achieving replenishes energy, boosts confidence, deepens fulfillment, and elevates engagement. There's no justification for an employee to wait expectantly for the boss to furnish engagement, as if it's something somebody can give you. The key to sustainable high engagement is taking responsibility for yourself. Now is the time to own your own engagement. You gotta do it for yourself. Change your ways for the better *today*.

- Follow and support the rules and policies of the school. The rules are there to give the greatest number of people the best chance of working together well and getting the job done right.
- Do everything on your lesson plan. The hours will go by more quickly and it will feel like *less* work instead of more. Don't believe me? Try it.
- Keep the children busy with stimulating age-appropriate activities. You'll see that busy children who are learning to do things for themselves as they are allowed to express their creativity and expend energy in acceptable ways are far more fun and interesting and enjoyable to be around.
- Let your children know that you like each and every one of them. Be excited to see each of them every day.
- Follow your daily schedule. Children thrive on consistency!
- Stop doing things for the children that they should be doing for themselves. You are a *teacher*.
- Get along with your co-workers. Be pleasant to be around. Karma is an awesome supernatural thing!
- Stop gossiping. It soils your soul.
- Be on time – in the morning *and* after lunch.
- Pitch in. Look for ways to go above and beyond. Do it for yourself. There is research that supports the idea that doing things for others leads to a feeling of fulfillment and happiness within ourselves.
- Give 100% effort every day – whether you feel like it or not. There is truth in the psychology of "fake it 'til you make it," and "act the way you wish you were feeling." And staying busy makes time fly by!
- Try your best; no matter how much you would rather be doing something else in that moment.
- Implement ideas you learn at training seminars. Your supervisor will begin to see you as a leader and your children will be motivated to behave!
- Ask for what you need. Ask for what you want. Every three months or so ask your supervisor to have a "How Am I Doing?" meeting with you. Raises in child care may be only given in cents instead of dollars but you want every cent possible when it is time for your Annual Review.
- Find constructive ways to deal with problems. Complaining is easy but it doesn't improve or change anything. Employees who are known for their good attitude and helpful suggestions are the ones most often remembered at performance evaluation and raise review time.

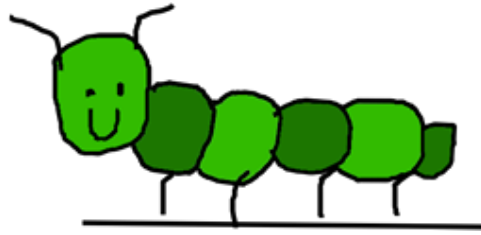
Here's where you start: Write down Ten New Behaviors for yourself and tackle one each day. I like to write mine in the form of Victory Claims, i.e., "I claim victory over my lesson plan." "I claim victory over time management." "I claim victory over enthusiasm." Some people like to write theirs in the form of positive affirmations. "I do the things on my lesson plan every day." "I enjoy learning how to do things better!" "I am on time every day." "I am enthusiastic in my classroom!" Either way, write them down, post them where you can see them and reward yourself when each one is conquered.

The bottom line is this: You can create something better for yourself and for the children in your classroom. You can be greeted by your director with the words, "You are a godsend!" I'll let you in on a little secret: Teaching young children should be fun and exhilarating. Fun is not a synonym for easy. No workplace is always a laugh a minute. That's why they call it "work." But, overall, child care is the most wonderful career I can imagine. We've got it all – autonomy in what we do and how we do it, daily hugs, nights and weekends off, working with people who think we are wonderful and are just so stinkin' happy to see us every day, opportunities to express our creativity through song and dance and art, being witness to learning and discovery every day, *and* we can even exercise while on duty and get paid for it! Chicken Dance anybody?

Want to read more? Read *The Employee Engagement Mindset: The Six Drivers for Tapping into the Hidden Potential of Everyone in Your Company* by Tim Clark. Better yet, ask your boss to buy it for the center and tell her you would like to be the first to read it. Brownie points anybody? ;)

# I Am Fired Up!

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