

MORALE

Monte Selby notes from various presentations regarding the topic of morale.

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Lots of ideas below – but first a few rambling thoughts.....

If this isn't obvious, what I have written below is simply a collection of ideas and thoughts that I share during discussions of morale. It's not organized like a book...that's on my to-do list!

For those who have asked about using some of my music with staff (at meetings, in class, before school, staff development, etc.) - yes - that's fine with me. I've been told by educators who use the music that it works best when you display the lyrics for others to read while listening. It also makes sense to use quality sound equipment (one teacher told me that trying to play songs for other teachers through her built-in computer speakers was not very effective.). Just thoughts....write me if you'd like ideas on how to apply certain songs to specific situations. For LOTS of ideas related to using energy-boosting music and activities with staff, go to my website and check out the book (with CD) I developed with Rick Wormeli, Kathy Hunt-Ullock, and Debbie Silver.

I would also suggest, when using favorite music (a song) in a staff meeting or classroom to motivate or instruct, give it purpose:

- a. attach it to photo clips of YOUR student/staff successes
- b. ask that everyone write – for example “what specific student does this remind you of”. or “write down an example or story that comes to mind when you hear this song”
- c. Make a connection for them – why it is important to you. Don't assume that everyone will find significance in a song you love!

I know I often go overboard on this topic – but I really do think using music (because it hooks the brain through patters and emotion) to set up a message, and then using YOUR school images to paint a picture of success is smart! Create a video, even for your own classroom, that shows students at their best (It's your highlight video of what you want from students). Students need models: academic, behavioral, social, athletic, etc. Rick Wormeli points out that all great writers (historically) have modeled after other writers, AND THEN OUTGROW THE MODEL. My point is this; if we show all students what it looks like when great students (and staff) are being

successful, some students will take that to an even higher level..... Music helps remind all of us what that ideal model looks like every time we hear the song.

Before I leave the music topic, please excuse a bit a preaching...! Current research says that many students report watching educators illegally “rip” or “burn” CDs. If you play music for others, you might be asked to “burn them a copy”. Please don’t. The number of songwriters in America with publishing contracts is about half what it was five years ago (due to lack of revenue related to illegal copying). Out of respect for the songwriters who are contributing to my educational projects, encourage colleagues to simply order their own copy. Thanks for listening! Onward.....

We start with a look at PURPOSE. All meetings (classroom, staff meetings, teams, committees, boy scouts, church advisory board, etc.) should begin with clarifying purpose.

When you attend one of my sessions regarding MORALE, we start with identifying your PURPOSE in attending the session. How often do we have meetings where an irritated adult (or student) says “what was our purpose in meeting today???” By clarifying the purpose, we have a better chance of meeting the needs of the group. Teachers mention to me that promoting morale is important because of test pressure, public pressure, parents (or lack of), stress, change, working with negative people, and because we all need reenergized at times. Talking about MORALE won’t solve the world’s problems, but some of the ideas below will at least help us deal with problems in a more productive and positive way...

When we set NORMS, everyone has a better idea of what to expect. Next year, when you know a group will meet throughout the year, talk about what is most annoying at meetings from the past. Then agree not to allow those things to happen. Setting the group’s expectations for behavior and productivity will help..... Consider allowing the most negative person, or the “rule enforcer” type person to monitor the norms. Give them permission to make sure that the group is following the rules or NORMS that everyone agreed to live by. If some people have to be negative – at least allow them to be negative about some that is constructive. ☺

Keep in mind the benefits of using THINK/PAIR/SHARE (TPS) activities to turn whining into problem solving. More on that later.

MORALE

1. Moral principles, teachings, or conduct. 2. a: the mental and emotional condition (as of **enthusiasm, confidence, or loyalty**) of an individual or group with regard to the function or

tasks at hand b: a sense of **common purpose** with respect to a group. 3. the level of individual psychological well-being based on such factors as a sense of purpose and **confidence in the future**.

Many of the ideas that follow encourage **enthusiasm** by taking advantage of the natural positive energy associated with fun and laughter. I offer the caution that fun should not be at someone's expense or driven by sarcasm.

Keep in mind the importance of a regular avenue for sharing successes – identifying successes promotes **confidence in the future**. Confidence tends to be built upon successes. Educators are not always the best as sharing successes. Consider taking 15 minutes to do a Think/Pair/Share activity that allows everyone to write down successes (their own, those observed of students, teachers, custodians, parents), share those in a small group, and then share to the whole group. The nature of most school improvement processes in the United States requires that we look at our school profile to identify weaknesses. It is important that we give successes equal attention.

Look for ideas below that encourage empowerment. I'm defining empowerment as actions that promote personal and professional growth. Leaders who empower others to meet organizational goals by supporting personal and professional growth will build **loyalty** and **common purpose**. Remember that large groups require more effort and revisiting to sustain common purpose.

Look at everything for whether it **adds energy** to a group or drains energy. Laughter, useful ideas, success stories, solving problems will **add** energy. Complaining, whining, unproductive discussions, and unrealistic expectations will **drain** energy.

STRATEGIES/ACTIVITIES/IDEAS

Selby's rule of NO. Before you say no, ask yourself 1. "**Why am I saying no?**" (is it illegal? Unfair? Or perhaps I just don't have the time), and 2. "**What would it take for me to say yes?**" (...perhaps define the obstacles and let the employee or students work out those details).

Power and control are not the same. Power can be defined as the level of effectiveness achieved by the organization. Leader's who tend to "control" activities and ideas will also tend to limit activities and ideas because lack of time, energy, and resources eventually leads to the frequent saying of "NO!" Employees (or students) who try to initiate good ideas and activities and frequently hear no, tend to lose the common purpose we are striving for. To guard against saying no for the wrong reasons, try using the "rule of no".

Questions (for a think/pair/share activity) to help move a meeting from a gripe session to something that helps build **Confidence in the future:**

How is your organization better than it was when you were hired?

As good as you are, how could I (we) help you get better?

What is it you (we) do better than most other teachers (schools)? What would you like for us to learn that we could do exceptionally well?

If you are at your best, what is the legacy you leave with children for the rest of their lives?

If this year was to be your best year, how would you know? How can I help you get there?

On your best day ever, what happens in the first 10 minutes of class?

What is the best parent/teacher conference you ever attended as a parent? What happened?

What happened on your most fun/rewarding day of teaching ever?

Great Leaders will help people look for improvement, not perfection. (Who I am is not necessarily who I will become...)

Improving schools is stressful work. Fun makes work less stressful and more enjoyable. What are a few ideas to **promote fun**?

Form a laughter committee – their job is to create something each week that promotes staff laughter (not at someone, and no sarcasm). Laughter is also about bonding. (Crazy Red Bandits call meetings when they are tired of students, and need to tell funny stories of the week to reengage with students. No complaining!).

Grab a library cart, a bucket of ice cream, and chocolate topping – then head down the hall after school and serve the adults (by the way, when students ask for some, respond with “We’d love to have you join us in the teaching profession...you’d be great...and we have fun doing something really important)

Videotape great moments...kids and staff learning with great instructional strategies while having fun **IN THE CLASSROOM** – compile it and show staff and parents. You are promoting a certain culture...

Have students present at faculty meetings on great things that have happened in the classroom. Start an “energizer” club. Meet, eat, and tell funny stories of things that happen at school. No griping, no complaining, no talk of bad parents or kids or teachers or principals. Staff members from schools with a “club” like this report that it helps them want to come to work and keeps them teaching at their best – even in the worst of times.

AGAIN!!!! Look at everything for whether in **adds energy** to a group or drains energy. Laughter, useful ideas, success stories, solving problems will **add** energy. Complaining, whining, unproductive discussions, and unrealistic expectations will **drain** energy.

Email a photo of a student's success to his/her parent. The picture can simply be a student enjoying a classroom activity. It helps parents feel connected to school and learning. With a digital camera, it is quick, and sends a powerful message that you look for the best in students. To post pictures on the web, you need permission.

At a back-to-school general assembly in Illinois, the staff did a presentation of improvements in their district during every decade since the 1960's. They include music and culture from each decade. Think about the message about their intentions for the future.

When asked to brainstorm characteristics of good/bad staff meetings, teachers say:

Bad meetings: Boring, no agenda, tangents, complaints, too long, redundant.

Best: Cancelled!, involvement, short, purpose, celebration, sharing, humor, food. Problems are solved, successes are shared, and useful ideas are generated.

Ideas to promote our purpose:

Have everyone write a short graduation speech as if they were valedictorian.

Ask staff or students to analyze how the activity, assembly, project can be improved.

DOTS – First, print the names of all students with a large (size 48?) font. Before the staff meeting, place names where they are easily visible. At a staff meeting, provide all staff members with adhesive “dots” that they can place next to the names of students they know well. Ask staff to make a point of connecting with their students who have few or no dots. Try the activity again at a later date to see if there are still student who are not connected with an adult at school.

OTHER REMINDERS????

*Don't suck the energy out of the room.

One group does Gator Aid. Teachers send out an email to invite teacher to Gator Aid. Faculty does stuff together even during the summer.

Option was shared about pool activities.

Ladies' Night out → teams- shopping, movies,

Birthdays were shared and everyone would end up going to eat out

Positive anonymous notes to teachers to one another stating good things that you see.

When planning for change – keep it practical. Who Does What By When....
Don't "over discuss".

A PROCESS I recommend is to:

1. Brainstorm Areas for Improvement (go for maximum number of ideas)
2. Clarify (as you read through ideas, are we all understanding these the same way?)
3. Prioritize (spend your five dollars – or place five "dots" on your top priority choices).
4. Brainstorm Solutions
5. Clarify Solutions
6. Prioritize Solutions
7. For the top selected solution, decide the next meeting time, and then determine "Who Needs To Do What By When"

QUOTES/IDEAS FROM PEOPLE TO CONSIDER:

Article by Chris Tucker, American Way magazine (American airlines) August 15, 2002
"Managing the Edge" p.66. Futurist and consultant Watts Wacker's new book THE
DEVIANT'S ADVANTAGE: HOW FRINGE IDEAS CREATE MASS MARKETS. Away from
the norm is where we get growth and innovation (both positive and negative). Starts with a
Devox – "out on the Fringe, then moves to the Edge, then to the Realm of the Cool, and then
becomes the Next Big Thing." (then Social Convention, can go to Cliché, Icon, Archetype, or
Oblivion). Think about a Tattoo? 1. To embrace deviance as a source of innovation and
creativity, recruit from the Edge by looking for people of unconventional backgrounds and points
of view. 2. Remember, deviants love work and hate jobs. They are attracted by challenges and
repelled by repetitive assignments. 3. Celebrate deviance. Deviants flock together – hire one...
and

"The biggest disease today is not leprosy or tuberculosis, but rather the feeling of being
unwanted, uncared for, and deserted by everybody." – Mother Teresa of Calcutta

Great Leadership can create extraordinary situations and actions by empowering ordinary people.

In a study of high school students who were NOT involved in non-classroom activities, they
were asked "why are you not involved in activities?" The most common response was "**no one
asked me.**" Adults also tend to become involved when asked directly, rather than when reading
a request in a newsletter or on a poster.

What is your **perspective**? In ancient times, there were three workers who had the task of carving stone into blocks for the cathedral. When asked how they would define their job, the first replied “I come to work and carve stone into blocks.” The second said “I am part of a team building a cathedral.” The third said “I am helping create a unique site where future generations will be inspired to worship.” (not an exact translation, but it occurred 2,731 years ago...)

Educators are artists when:

Those who work with their hands are called laborers.

Those who work with their hands and mind are called craftsmen.

Those who work with their hands, mind, heart and soul are called artists.

Leadership, at its best, is for the artist.

BRAINSTORM OF IDEAS TO PROMOTE AN ENVIRONMENT WITH HIGH MORALE:

CALL PEOPLE BY THEIR NAME

SAY GOOD MORNING

PRAISE GOOD WORK

PROVIDE FOOD

USE HUMOR (NOT SARCASM)

INTERACT AND LISTEN

BE APPROACHABLE, ALWAYS

BUILD TRUST – UNDER PROMISE/OVER DELIVER

SHOW STUDENT WORK

SOLVE PROBLEMS WITHOUT TALKING BAD ABOUT PEOPLE – ATTACK PROBLEMS

COOPERATIVE LEARNING

BE WELL PREPARED AND ORGANIZED

DISPLAY ENTHUSIASM – NO EXUSES

DIVERSE ACTIVITIES (NOT KNOWING WHAT TO EXPECT)

CULTURE OF RESPECT

USE TEACHER’S WRITING TO TEACH PEER EDITING (STUDENTS LOVE TO “CORRECT THE TEACHER”)

ALLOW PEOPLE TO MOVE – NO ONE WANTS TO SIT ALL DAY

TAKE PHOTOS AND VIDEOS – WE LOVE TO SEE OURSELVES BEING SUCCESSFUL

PERSONALIZE YOURSELF – TELL STORIES THAT ARE IMPORTANT TO YOU

Further suggestions from schools around the country?

Read or view the video called FISH. It has short lessons that remind us to choose our attitude, play, be there, and make their day.

One group does Gator Aid. Teachers send out an email to invite teachers to Gator Aid. Faculty does stuff together even during the summer.

Non-profit groups (schools) can sometimes rent the community swimming pool (for instance) in the evening to invite school families to socialize together.

Ladies' Night out → teams- shopping, movies.

Birthdays are shared and everyone ends up going to eat out

Send positive, anonymous notes to teachers stating good things that are observed.

Allow students to demonstrate (during a staff meeting) great, creative lessons in which they have participated.

Use videos, photos, cartoons, and comments to display images of the good things happening at school.

Benefits of Laughing and Humor

Dr. Lee Berk and Dr. Stanley Tan of Loma Linda University in California did a study on the effects of laughter in September/October 1996. They found (the web link to this site is below) that after exposure to humor, there is

a general increase in activity within the immune system, including: An increase in the number and activity level of natural killer cells that attack viral infected cells and some types of cancer and tumor cells.

An increase in activated T cells (T lymphocytes). There are many T cells that await activation.

Laughter appears to tell the immune system to "turn it up a notch."

An increase in the antibody IgA (immunoglobulin A), which fights upper respiratory tract insults and infections.

An increase in gamma interferon, which tells various components of the immune system to "turn on."

An increase in IgB, the immunoglobulin produced in the greatest quantity in body, as well as an increase in Complement 3, which helps antibodies to pierce dysfunctional or infected cells. The increase in both substances was not only present while subjects watched a humor video; there also was a lingering effect that continued to show increased levels the next day.

a general decrease in stress hormones that constrict blood vessels and suppress immune activity.

These were shown to decrease in the study group exposed to humor.

Lower levels of epinephrine in the group both in anticipation of humor and after exposure to humor. Epinephrine levels remained down throughout the experiment.

Decreased dopamine levels (as measured by dopac). Dopamine is involved in the "fight or flight response" and is associated with elevated blood pressure.

aerobic exercise, which provides a workout for the diaphragm and increases the bodies ability to use oxygen.

positive emotions that can enhance, not replace, conventional treatments. Hence it is another tool available to help fight the disease.

when laughter is used as adjunct to conventional care, it can reduce pain and aid in the healing process. Laughter offers a powerful distraction from pain.

Free benefits with no negative side effects.

In a study published in the Journal of Holistic Nursing, patients were told one-liners after surgery and before painful medication was administered. Those exposed to humor perceived less pain when compared to patients who didn't get a dose of humor as part of their therapy.

Summary of how humor contributes to physical health found in the article [Humor and Health](#), contributed by Paul McGhee.

Muscle Relaxation- Belly laugh results in muscle relaxation. While you laugh, the muscles that do not participate in the belly laugh, relaxes. After you finish laughing those muscles involved in the laughter start to relax. So, the action takes place in two stages.

Reduction of Stress Hormones- Laughter reduces at least four of neuroendocrine hormones associated with stress response. These are epinephrine, cortisol, dopac, and growth hormone.

Immune System Enhancement- Clinical studies have shown that humor strengthens the immune system.

Pain Reduction- Humor/laughter allows a person to "forget" about pains such as aches, arthritis, etc.

Cardiac Exercise- A belly laugh is equivalent to "an internal jogging." Laughter can provide good cardiac conditioning especially for those who are unable to perform physical exercises.

Blood Pressure- Women seem to benefit more than men in preventing hypertension.

Respiration- Frequent belly laughter empties your lungs of more air than it takes in resulting in a cleansing effect - similar to deep breathing. Especially beneficial for patient's who are suffering from emphysema and other respiratory ailments.

HYPERLINK "http://www.holistic-online.com/Humor_Therapy/humor_therapy_benefits.htm"
http://www.holistic-online.com/Humor_Therapy/humor_therapy_benefits.htm

"The art of medicine consists of keeping the patient amused while nature heals the disease." (Voltaire)

"The chemicals that are running our body and our brain are the same chemicals that are involved in emotion. And that says to me that . . . we'd better pay more attention to emotions with respect to health." (Candace Pert)

"There ain't much fun in medicine, but there's a heck of a lot of medicine in fun." (Josh Billings)

"The simple truth is that happy people generally don't get sick."
(Bernie Siegel, M.D.)

"Humor is the instinct for taking pain playfully." (Max Eastman)

"A clown is like an aspirin, only he works twice as fast." (Groucho Marx)

"Laughter is the shortest distance between two people."
- Victor Borge

In *Prescription to Laugh: Healing Through Humor And Laughter*, By Lynn Shaw, MSW, she wrote that laughter is innate and can be shared. Humor is learned and isn't always appreciated by more than the interpreter. There has to be an intellectual connection as well.

HYPERLINK "http://www.selfhealingexpressions.com/healing_through_laughter_and_humor.shtml" http://www.selfhealingexpressions.com/healing_through_laughter_and_humor.shtml

Humor and Laughter: Health Benefits and Online Sources says some benefits of laughing are: reduces stress, lowers blood pressure, elevates mood, boosts immune system, improves brain functioning, connects you to others, fosters instant relaxation, it's fun!!!

Humor and Laughter: Health Benefits and Online Sources says laughter can be a great workout for your diaphragm, abdominal, respiratory, facial, leg, and back muscles. It massages abdominal organs, tones intestinal functioning, and strengthens the muscles that hold the abdominal organs in place. Not only does laughter give your midsection a workout, it can benefit digestion and absorption functioning as well. It is estimated that hearty laughter can burn calories equivalent to several minutes on the rowing machine or the exercise bike.

Humor and Laughter: Health Benefits and Online Sources says laughter stimulates both sides of the brain to enhance learning. It eases muscle tension and psychological stress, which keeps the brain alert and allows people to retain more information. Laughing also elevates moods. Striving to see humor in life and attempting to laugh at situations rather than bemoan them will help improve your disposition and the disposition of those around you. Your ability to laugh at yourself and situations will help reduce your stress level and make life more enjoyable. Humor also helps you connect with others. People naturally respond to the smiles and good cheer of those around them.

Humor and Laughter: Health Benefits and Online Sources gives tips for adding humor and laughter in life. They include: Remind yourself to have fun, Spend time with those who help you see the bright side, Get regular doses of humor such as television sitcoms, movies, plays, or books.

HYPERLINK "http://www.helpguide.org/aging/humor_laughter_health.htm" http://www.helpguide.org/aging/humor_laughter_health.htm

Put Laughter In Your Life By: Herbert G. Lingren, Extension Family Scientist

Herbert G. Lingren listed several ways to put laughter and humor in your life. They include:

Remind yourself to have fun. When the going gets tough, just repeat to yourself, "*Life is crazy,*" and "*It's OK to be foolish on occasion.*"

Head off stress with regular doses of humor. Remember "*A shot of humor is like a dose of medicine; the effects linger, dissipating gradually, over several hours.*" See a funny movie or humorous play. You'll find yourself thinking about it after you get home, and often into the next day. Later you'll need another dose. Gauge the "humor half-life" of whatever amuses you and replenish your dosage as needed.

Take a "laugh break" instead of a coffee break. Keep a "humor first-aid kit." Fill it with comedy tapes, a book of jokes and stories, a disguise and other comic props to draw on when you feel the urge to be silly.

Make a "silliness" check at 4:30 in the afternoon. People around you need to see you smile, whether at home or at a meeting. A well-developed sense of humor is especially essential to avoid burnout for people in certain professions: teachers, doctors, educators, nurses, counselors, farmers, ranchers, etc.

Lighten up. View would-be calamities through the eyes of your favorite comedian. "Say to yourself, "*How would Seinfeld or Kelsey Grammer react to this?*" "*What would they do in my shoes?*"

Spend time with those who help you see the bright side. Get together regularly with friends to share funny stories about daily disasters, with an eye toward constructive solutions.

Learn to laugh if you can't. If you'd like to be able to laugh but can't, if you're feeling angry, afraid or grief because of divorce, illness or other major stress, force yourself to laugh anyway. Think about what's bothering you and try a "*tee-hee.*" If that doesn't make you feel better, try a throatier "*heh-heh,*" then a "*ha-ha*" from the chest, or a "*ho-ho*" from the belly. If your laughter

ignition seems hard to start, think of something absurd – like George Washington in a pink tutu – to help trigger your mirth.

More ways Herbert G . Lingren suggests to add laughter and humor to everyday life:

Hang around funny friends, or better yet, marry a funny partner.

Start looking for the absurd, silly, incongruous activities that go on around you each day.

Take a 5-10 minute humor break each day. Read jokes, add to a humor notebook, listen to a funny tape.

Rent comedy videos, go to a funny movie, watch humorous programs on television.

If you hear a joke you really like, write it down, or tell it to someone else to help you remember it.

HYPERLINK "<http://ianrpubs.unl.edu/family/nf389.htm>" <http://ianrpubs.unl.edu/family/nf389.htm>