



10 WAYS TO END THE SCHOOL YEAR ON AN UP NOTE WHEN YOU'RE EXHAUSTED

Written by [Blogger Vicki Davis](#) and featured in [Forbes magazine](#).

Last night at 9 pm or so I had my head down on my desk in my classroom, upset because my computer kept crashing when I tried to render the graduation movie. Usually, I'm done far before now but the workload at school this year has been tough. If I had one wish for myself, I'm guessing it would be that I could enjoy all of this more.

But then again, it would be kind of like **enjoying a car wreck** because that is what the end of school is like for me. Things come at you. You try to respond quickly. You try to adjust. You start skidding and spinning, and suddenly it all stops and you see you're OK. I do love teaching. I do love being a Mom – my first calling. But it is so very evident to me why we are finite creatures, especially teachers. We just wear out.

But if I'm going to wear out, **at least I'm not going to rust out**. At least it is in a worthy cause. I think one of the hardest things about doing things for kids and their parents goes back to something I mentioned last week in my [review of Jon Acuff's book, Start](#). Critics math.

Critics math is:

1 criticism + 1,000 compliments = 1 criticism. At this point, I'm so very tired that when that movie plays tonight and I get the inevitable comment here or there that isn't so positive – that is what I'll remember. So, here is what I do to combat critics' math when I'm as vulnerable as I am right now. And remember, tiredness and emotional exhaustion always makes you more vulnerable. You are a sitting duck as the hunters will say for every malcontent parent or student that heads your way.



Protect yourself, educator.

1 – Remember why you do it. You're not doing these things for glory.

2 – Remember who you're doing it for. Look at the students who you love and do it for them



3 – Don't let a few unkind people ruin it for all those who are not that way.

I had a few kids prank my room on Tuesday and waste my time this week. Honestly, I've never been pranked. It totally hurt my feelings.

It came at a time when I was so tired that I almost gave up doing the graduation movie. Kids don't think, especially when they're about to graduate. I had to pick myself up and remember all the kids who I love and I know they love me. Those who have been frustrated with me and are passive aggressive – they will have a life without me and that is fine. I loved them anyway and if it is their choice to go out that way – they'll be lesser people for it.

4 – Don't expect to be thanked. It is nice to be thanked. Sometimes it happens. When it does, I save the notes and such and put them in a folder called "at a girl." I read them when I have rough days. On [my Facebook fanpage](#) I have a picture of a dozen roses (shown below) sent to me by a student and his Mom. I want to remember that sometimes I do make a difference.

My worth as a teacher is not determined by how many say "thank you" at the end of the year. So many parents and kids are exhausted and there is likely a bit of "you'll always be there next year" in it as well. *(Ever wonder why leaving teachers are showered by their students and parents – people know they have to thank them.)*

5 - Let the rough end drag. My granny always said this and I quote it multiple times a week during the end of the school year. I could feel guilty about "Mount Laundry" in my room or that I haven't gone to buy milk and we ran out on Tuesday. But I'm not.

Right now, it is just about making it through – one more day. Tomorrow, I can start to jackhammer Mt. Laundry and go buy milk – today I just gotta make it.

6 – Find your joy. I keep a joy journal. It is proven to be a permanent mood booster.

At the end of every school year, I **write down the best things that happened.** I don't even write down the worst. The worst things that happen I chalk up to the cost of doing important jobs. Important jobs always have a cost to the person who holds the job. You're never paid enough to be a firefighter, policeman, or teacher (principal, janitor, IT staff) and quite a few other jobs as well.

This is your job. This is your life. If you're going to live a good one, it is up to you, my friend, to find your joy in your day and your profession. There are kids who love you, I promise.

When I was in business, I knew I had a good month because I got a big fat bonus. That doesn't happen in teaching so I should sit down and make my own bonus. I should document and pay myself with the memories that will stick with me. I make my own joy by counting the blessings and great things that happen.

7 – Don't take guilt trips. The other thing that gets me about the school year is that I can – in my tiredness – start taking a guilt trip. Mom says "You can't go on a guilt trip unless you pack your own bags." I didn't have enough time to do Lego Mindstorms this year and we didn't get in our last race. OK. I can say "you know what, we got to do a lot with them, it is OK." or, I can start packing my bag and piling on the guilt.

When you see dog poop in the yard, do you intentionally step in it? NO! For goodness sakes, no! It is nasty and you know it will stay with you a long time as strangers back away from you and go get in another checkout line at WalMart and little children wrinkle their nose. Guilt trips make you repugnant. You've given all you have and now, my dear friends, THAT IS ENOUGH. Yes, that is worthy of a caps lock. Celebrate the great journeys and if guilt trips come knocking – make notes about what to do better next year. Every year, I work and change things around to make them better for the next year. Put the biggest guilt trips as your indicator that something should change next year. If it isn't something that really needs to change and it is tiredness talking then just don't go there. Move on.

No guilt unless you've done something unethical and if you have — get help now. Liars make poor teachers because you teach with your life. For most of you, guilt is the tiredness talking.

8 – Let go of grudges and forgive. People are people. You've got some who are a pain in the neck and you are a pain in the neck to some people yourself. Like oil and water, some of us in schools just don't see eye to eye. We don't mix.

For me, I have to let it go. Bitterness and unforgiveness will ruin your summer. You'll think you're better and BAM! you'll be sitting by the pool and someone will say something and you're right back to arguing in your head with your nemesis. When you are bitter, you take your enemy with you everywhere you go.

Let it go. For me, as a Christian, I take it to God and ask Him to handle it. He always does by either showing me I was wrong or by helping the other person see it – usually it is a mix of both. If you're perfect, go ahead and seethe. But guess what? You're no longer perfect if you're steeping your life in the bitter tea of fury. You're poison.

If it helps, write what they did one more time and burn it. Go talk to someone who will listen and not fan the flame. Take steps to help prevent a repeat next year (if you're at the same school.)

When my husband was a child and got mad at his Mom, he would beat his head against a wall until he had blue lumps. **If you are bitter and begrudging you are just hitting your own head.** It is just as ridiculous as the baby keeps trying to get even with Mom by hurting himself.

9 – Plan things you'll enjoy As a profession, we do 98% of the work in 3/4 of the time each year. If you realize that some of those folks who are "feet up on desk-ers" and leave the moment school's out, you'll realize that some of us are way over the top – probably working 125%+ of the hours of other professions in 3/4 of the time each year. Cut yourself some slack.

It is very hard for me to do nothing. In fact, I would say it is probably impossible. But sometimes, I need to veg out and be mindless.

I love rafting. I love walks / runs and listening to books on tape. I love cooking (and eating) good food. I LOVE LOVE LOVE the mountains. (I also love to write. 😊) So, these are things I'll plan into my schedule. Take time to write 10 things you LOVE and make sure 5 of them cost little or nothing.



10 - Laugh So I decided to be intentional about laughing and made a [flipboard magazine](#) of the stuff that makes me laugh. Collect things that make you laugh so you can share and look at them when you want. Plus, studies have shown that when promotions happen, people who are funny get promoted over the stick in the mud. (See Forbes Magazine: [Want to get promoted? Be Funny.](#))

Good luck, my friends. I know I'm out quite a bit earlier than many of you and my friends down under in Australia are in mid-year. But take the time to end well, whenever the end comes.

You rock, educators. I care about you and this profession very much. Next to my babies in the classroom, the professionals who connect in the places I frequent are one of my greatest joys. Now, off to school and on to graduation. The moment is here.

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