10 QUESTIONS TO DEAL WITH TOUGH PEOPLE AT SCHOOL

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INTRO:

Our ability to deal with people while we are at school is in direct correlation with our effectiveness and happiness in our career and job. If we are having tough interactions at school we need to be intentional so they don't expand from one tough interaction into a tough class, into a tough day, into a tough week, into a tough month, into tough semesters, into tough years, into a tough career! This sounds dramatic but I have seen many educators fall victim to this vicious cycle. These questions about tough interactions will allow us to return to our deeper purposes and stay out of the dark space of burnout.

Question #1:

What is REALLY going on here?

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As educators we really need to hone our ability to slow situations down and see the big picture of our interactions. This really is true in all of our life's interactions, but especially at school. The students and teachers are in a highly visual and stimulating environment which causes all our issues to come out in not so desirable ways when placed under pressure. As educators we need to slow down and analyze what the real issues might be when placed in a tough interaction.

Question #2

What are my thoughts about the situation?

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Before or after we react to situations we really need to stop and see what our thoughts about the situation really are. This is a tough task if we haven't trained our mind to do this, but it can be done! This requires us to ignore our default reaction mode and see what our brain is really thinking. The coolest part of this idea is that we have total control over our thoughts! If we start to realize that our thoughts are causing too much strife for us we can change them and feel better for ourselves and those we are interacting with.

Question #3

What are these thoughts causing me to feel right now?

Question #3: What are these thoughts causing me to feel right now?

We usually are pretty good at reacting to our feelings, but actually naming and identifying how we feel is not quite so natural to us as educators. However, as someone once told me, "you have to name it to tame it!" We need to check ourselves in this regard so we are able to connect the dots of our feelings to our actions. Once we are able to do this the benefits are far reaching in our interactions, relationships, and careers!

Question #4

Are these thoughts and feelings helping the situation or making it worse?

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Once we have been able to identify our thoughts and feelings we are able to take the next step and see if these thoughts and feelings are serving us well or not. Many times we may find that we are not serving ourselves well. I have found in many situations where my thoughts and subsequent feelings about the situation were the biggest part of or maybe the whole problem! If we realize the situation is worse, we need to change our thoughts moving forward.

Question #5

Why COULD the other person be acting this way?

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This question is really about exercising a little bit of empathy and trying to see things from the student or colleagues point of view. If we can learn to process why a seemingly normal person would react the way they are it allows us to use the tool of compassion and actually come into the space with a helping attitude instead of confrontational one. We may even learn that there is a lot more than meets the eye by approaching situations this way. The other person might open up and we see their life in a new light. This new light might even teach us a thing or two!

Question #6

How am I acting because of my feelings?

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We are really good at justifying why we act the way we do but once we address our own thoughts, feelings, and the other person's actions we can start to understand why we are acting the way we are! We start to own our actions more than before because they are the product of our feelings which are a product of our thoughts! If we make this connection the justifying starts to be minimized to the point of us just acting in alignment with our thoughts and feelings more. This analysis is usually missing if we haven't addressed the thought and feeling questions and leaves our actions to the hands of habit!

Question #7

Am I giving up my control in this situation? Why or why not?

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One thing that I have learned in education is that the best teachers and administrators are able to maintain personal control in tough situations. This is not something we usually want to give away but it happens naturally when we get stressed and don't process our thoughts, feelings, and actions very well. Some students even do their best to try and get educators to lose control. They push buttons just to see us get upset for their amusement. We really don't want to be on this side of the equation or we have also lost our ability to really help those students who need it most. It is important to note that control can be maintained regardless of noise level, activity level and is not the same as classroom management. Sometimes it might even be warranted to relinquish some control on purpose to allow students to grow in a situation. Just make sure it is on purpose and intentional!

Question #8

Do my actions support my "Why" or deeper purpose?

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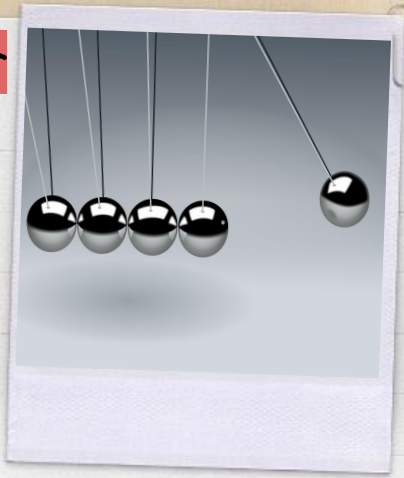

This question can really come as an afterthought but if we are in the middle of a tough interaction in education it is vitally important for us to analyze whether what we are doing supports our "Why." This really becomes a valuable filter for us as educators to analyze if there is real value to what we are doing. Are we disciplining just because we always have done it that way? Are we running through the motions with activities that have no meaning? Do we react the same way with every student who exhibits a certain behavior? If we have followed the previous questions then we are able to now connect our actions with our deeper purpose and why we got into education in the first place. This can be our most powerful weapon against long term burnout in education!

Question #9

What is the result of my thoughts, feelings, and actions?

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Once we have gone through a tough interaction we need to stop for a moment and see what the actual result of our Actions were. Did anything get resolved? Did the behavior we wanted to address change at all? Is our relationship with that individual changed for the better or worse? We need to see what the actual result of all this stress really was!

I think most of us have way too many times we never address the results or they were not what we would have hoped for. We really can't change anything we haven't measured in some way. This is that step! Don't blow it off as obvious or we'll miss the nuances of our relationships!

Question #10

What do I need to change in my next interaction?

Question #10: What do I need to change in my next interaction?

If we have addressed all of the previous questions after a tough interaction in education then we can make a plan for making them better next time. This process really begins from the moment we end a previous interaction until we are faced with another. We learn to read our thoughts and feelings quickly and it starts to become second nature to react to a new paradigm rather than a past one. You most likely will find similarities in our interactions but also learn to track others better based on our thoughts and feelings in the beginning of interactions. We start to see others differently when we change how we view them. This is the learning process on a deeply personal level.

Conclusion:

This process is very dynamic and will be shifting in each of us constantly but if we are really willing to engage in a new thought process in our interactions in education it can be the beginning of a new you as an educator! You will find yourself enjoying your work, making better connections with your students and colleagues, and stacking great experiences from each day instead of negative ones. I wish you well on your journey to the best version of yourself in this wonderful work of education! Are you ready to keep developing? Stay connected to us here at The Healthy Educator for great resources, coaching, and courses to keep you on the right track!