



How can you, as a teacher, cope with stress at work?

Six tips from teachers for teachers



Lars Tummers, in collaboration with Michael Musheno, Victor Bekkers & Evelien Vink
Erasmus University Rotterdam & University of California, Berkeley

Based on FP7 Marie Curie Fellowship 'COPING', funded by the European Commission
www.larstummers.com/coping

Setup of powerpoint



1. Background of the coping project
2. Six tips on how to cope with stress, from teachers, for teachers
3. Summary and next steps



Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam

1. Background of coping project

Project background: Understanding how frontline workers cope with stress



Working directly with students can be stressful. Work pressure is high, parents and students can be demanding and there is also a life outside of work.

This research project, funded by the European Commission, analyses how frontline workers cope with stress in their job, and how this affects their clients (here: students). We are studying the following groups:

- Social workers in the United States and the Netherlands
- Teachers in the United States and the Netherlands
- Frontline workers in the United States implementing the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare)

In this specific document, developed for teachers, we show tips teachers give to their fellow teachers on how to deal with stress.



Interviewing 10 teachers about coping with stress at work

This document focuses on interviews with 10 teachers in the United States. Below, we show some background information about these teachers. To preserve anonymity, we will not use specific names anywhere.

Subject	Description of sample
Type of school	7 high school, 3 middle school
Subject	Varies (among else biology, chemistry, English, history, social studies)
Average age	41
Gender	8 female, 2 male
Ethno-racial identity	Varies (Caucasian, African American, Hispanic)
State	Arizona 6, California 4
Highest degree of education	University Bachelor 4, University Master 6

Thanks to all the participating teachers!

Analyzing tips from teachers, for teachers

In this document we show tips given by teachers for teachers on how to effectively deal with stress at work.

The specific question within the broader interview protocol is:

“Do you have any tips for teachers about ineffective and effective coping strategies?”

A general comment about the importance of this subject is shown by the following quote of an interviewed teacher:

“I think this is really important work which is why I wanted to do it, just because so many teachers do burn out, and coping strategies are definitely important. So, that would be my biggest advice to social workers, teachers, that you have to take care of yourself first if you’re going to do this work for the long haul because we need people to do this work, we definitely need it.”





How can you, as a teacher, cope with stress at work?

Six tips from teachers for teachers

Tip 1: Don't work too much extra time



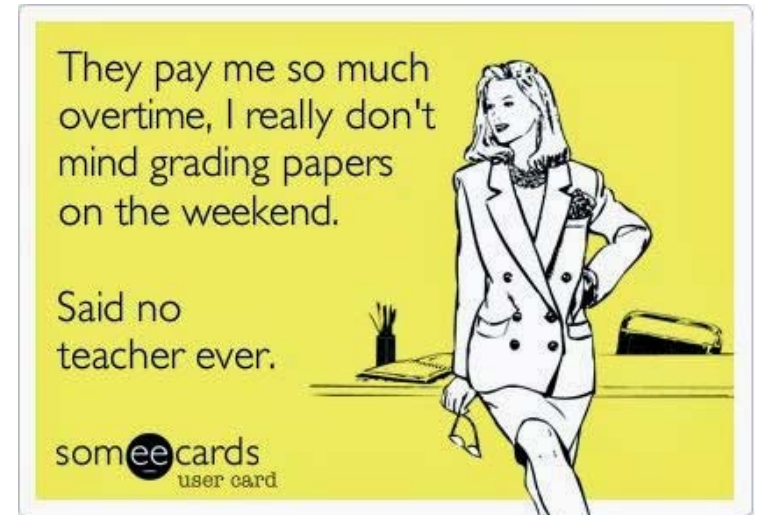
Biology teacher (male):

“Especially right off the bat when you’re a new teacher, it can just suck your whole life away because you coach, you can do clubs, you’re teaching, and then you don’t have time for yourself.”

“that’s a tip I would say is good for a teacher is to say, once you walk out that door, as much as you wanna grade those papers... put it away.”

English teacher (female):

“Staying here to all hours and not really being productive. I’ve gotten a lot better about that... I learned how to just say: “You know what? I’m not being productive, I need to stop and pick this up some other time.”



Tip 2: Find something next to teaching you enjoy

Biology teacher (female):

“I’d say in dealing with stress, find something that is an outlet that you enjoy. Like, for me it’s the exercise, for someone else, it might be singing, whatever.”

English teacher (female):

“I would say that you got to be careful about taking it home with you. It’s hard, though, especially when it’s a personal thing. For me, I’ll go work out, I’ll go run or bike. It takes my mind off of it.”



Tip 3: Know that you can't save the world



History teacher (female):

“Unfortunately you have to understand that there's nothing you can really do about a lot of situations. If you have a kid that is a crack baby, there are certain behaviors they're going to have. It's a matter of, are you going to let that get on you, or are you going to deal with it at the moment and then move on?”

English teacher (female):

“I feel like teachers that burn out are ones that are all consumed with this work, they think they're gonna save the world all on their own. I know I'm not Superwoman. You can't do it.”



Tip 4: Find social support at your workplace

Biology teacher (female):

“to have the camaraderie, I think we happen to be really lucky here in the science department, I think we all get along really well, and I think that really helps reduce some of the stress, and we have an awesome department chair.”

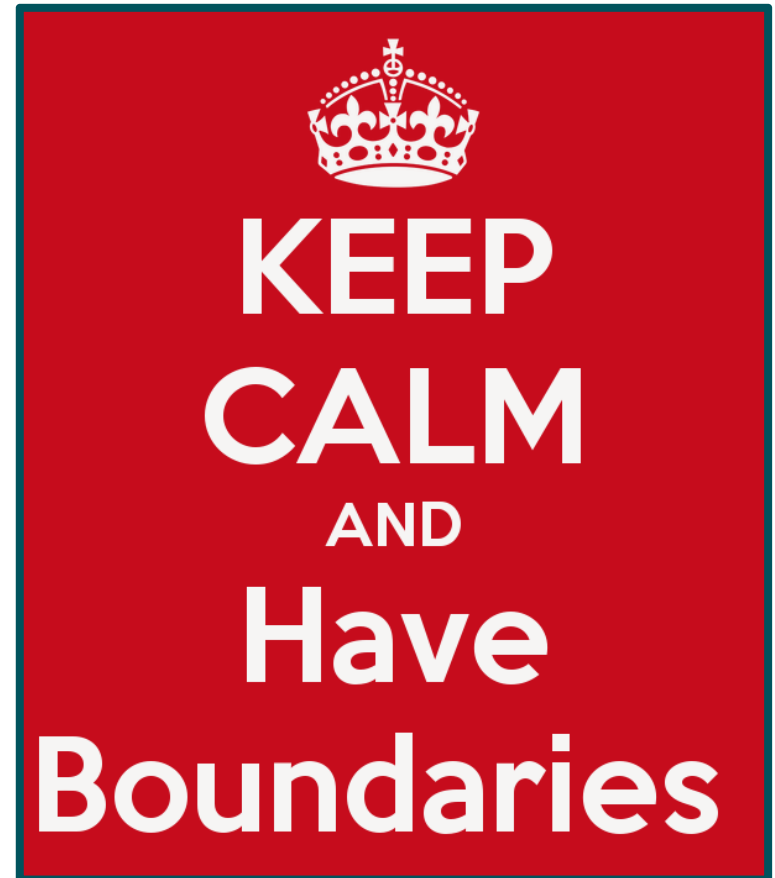


Tip 5: Don't talk about school after school



English teacher (female):

“I try and keep things separate. I have a lot of friends who are teachers, so it’s hard, because those are all the people I met when I moved here, but even when I’m with them, sometimes I’ll just say, “Let’s just stop talking about school.”



Tip 6: Be reflective about how you spend your time



English teacher (female):

“it’s important for me to be reflective, that that is also a coping strategy. Just to not have things pass over you, but to look at them for a little bit and say, “What happened? Is there something I can change?” And if not, let it go. If you can, try and work on it.”



History teacher (female):

“First thing be sure that you have your classroom environment organized and schedule and plan out your grading. Don't try to do too much in terms of the activities and things you want to grade, because what happens is that you're spending your time on your weekends and on your planning periods doing that grading.”



Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam

3. Summary and next steps

Summary and next steps



This document: Six tips from teachers, for teachers on how to cope with stress

Tip 1: Don't work too much extra time

Tip 2: Find something next to teaching you enjoy

Tip 3: Know that you can't save the world

Tip 4: Find social support at your workplace

Tip 5: Don't talk about school after school

Tip 6: Be reflective about how you spend your time

Next step: Large scale survey on coping, well-being and performance. Goal: to among else find which coping strategies are effective on a large scale

For more information or questions, please visit www.larstummers.com/coping or email Tummers@fsw.eur.nl