

Anu Ariste Estonia:

Words of Inspiration – EF meeting

There is no other profession more interesting, challenging or full of responsibility than that of a teacher/educator. Sometimes a teacher has to be a doctor who can easily find the patient's painful and weakest spot and start healing it. Sometimes teachers are builders who carefully lay the bricks, one by one, to finally make a fortress or at least establish a foundation for the children who can then start building on their own. Teachers often have to be psychologists who can understand the windings and turnings of a human soul. Very often, we can say mostly, a teacher has to be an artist who creates something extraordinary. The better she is with her paintbrush and the choice of vivid colours - the brighter, clearer, and finer her painting will be. A teacher is like a gardener who has been given many little plants. The more care and love these plants receive, the more powerful and beautiful they will be. Whatever the teacher's role is – it is important that she encourages her students with her energy and creativity.

However, a teacher is just a human and even her energy resources run out eventually. Therefore the key question about teaching is – how to be, and more importantly stay bright, energetic and youthful throughout the years? How not to burn out and spend energy uselessly?

Here I would like to share a thought-provoking story with you:

The Woodcutter

Once upon a time there was a very strong woodcutter. He asked for a job from a timber merchant and he got it. The pay was very good and so were the working conditions. For those reasons the woodcutter was determined to do his very best. His boss gave him an axe and showed him where he was to work in the forest.

The first day the woodcutter cut down 15 trees. His boss was extremely impressed and said, *“Well done. Keep it up. You are our best woodcutter ever.”* Motivated by his boss's words, the woodcutter tried even harder the next day, but he cut down only 10 trees. The third day he tried even harder but cut down only 7 trees.

Day after day the woodcutter cut down fewer and fewer trees. *"I must be losing my strength"*, the woodcutter thought. He worked over-time, but it still was not enough. He went to his boss and apologized, saying he could not understand what was going on.

The boss took one look at the axe and asked, *"When was the last time you sharpened your axe?"*

"Sharpened my axe?" the woodcutter replied. *"I had no time to sharpen my axe. I have been too busy trying to cut down enough trees."*

Our lives are like that. We sometimes get so busy that we don't take time to sharpen the "axe". As a plant needs light to grow, so does a teacher need time for herself, to grow personally and professionally. We all need time to relax, think, and learn. If we don't take the time to sharpen the "axe", we will become dull and lose our effectiveness. A good teacher likes to learn, otherwise it would be difficult to inspire the others.