



Always Prepare

A BOOK EXCERPT

In Year 2000, Tahanan Books published a little gem of a book entitled *Letter to a Young Teacher: The Art of Being Interesting*, a series of essays written by Oxford-trained Jesuit priest and veteran instructor Joseph V. Landy. What follows below is an excerpt from this inspiring work, the product of 25 years of teaching young people in different parts of the world. **BY JOSEPH V. LANDY, S.J.**

If asked to put in a word the most important piece of advice I have for a teacher, I would answer instantly: PREPARE. And if pressed to name the second and third most important, I would answer again: PREPARE. Every class period deserves at least as careful a preparation as top TV newscasters give to their programs. They do not rely solely on habitual skills of pronunciation and elocution, rarely read their script to the camera without a private rehearsal away from the camera. They prepare for their time on the air. So should you for your time in the classroom....

Tomorrow you will meet face-to-face with a room full of live students. What more must you do? What kind of immediate preparation is necessary?

As much as possible, on the day before you meet a class, you should go over the material to be taught. How long this will take and whether you should trust memory or bring some jotted notes with you to the classroom will vary. But the rule is clear. Never walk into the classroom cold. You must know in advance exactly where you are going, what material you intend to cover. Meticulous planning is necessary. Don't think you can fake it. Remember your own days as a student. Your students will be no slower than you were in spotting the shabbily prepared teacher. In this matter, students are rarely fooled.

Next comes the hard part, where even the most promising teachers are in danger of missing the mark. They think no further preparation is needed. Do you?

Say you are a history teacher and have an exact knowledge of the battles you are going to discuss, a literature teacher and have worked out a careful analysis of the poems you intend to discuss, a science teacher and know all there is to know about the law of physics you are going to explain. Is that enough? Are you now

ready to enter the classroom, call the students to order, and commence teaching?

You would be if your students were pure intellects. Then your task would be simply to give a clear presentation of the ideas and information that are stored in your own brain, confident that these will automatically enter the brains of your students. If they do not, then your students will have no one to blame but themselves. They must have been sleeping or day-dreaming or watching the shenanigans of the class clown who sits in front of them. Can anyone hold you responsible for your students' lack of attention?

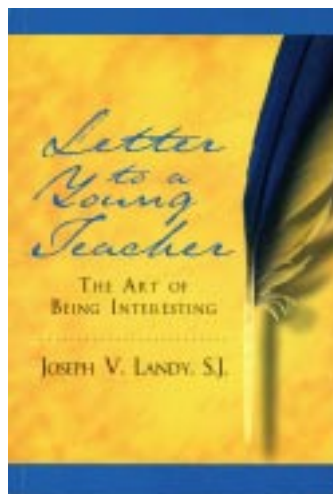
Yes. I can and I do. I say your prepa-

"Never walk into the classroom cold. You must know in advance exactly where you are going, what material you intend to cover."

ration has been incomplete. You have prepared intellectually, yes. But teaching is not a purely intellectual enterprise....Aristotle defined man as a "rational animal," a definition that is correct in the sense that our ability to reason things out is what distinguishes us from brute beasts. But it is a woefully incomplete definition. We human beings do more than use our reasoning power. We also laugh, weep, love, hope, fear and perform a host of other operations. To succeed in transmitting the lesson you have prepared from your mind to the minds of the young animals under your care, you must appeal to more than their rationality. The primary challenge you face when you walk into the classroom is not intellectual but psychological.

You have to find ways to induce your students to give their wholehearted attention to you. To do that you must know something about the psychology of attention....

In subsequent chapters we will look at five psychological factors that are espe-



cially useful for gaining attention in the classroom:

1. Activity
2. Reality
3. The Vital
4. Humor
5. Novelty

For some people—the kind that make their living as stage actors, salespeople, circus performers or the like—use of these attention factors comes naturally. They are born performers and know instinctively how to captivate an audience....

But most of us are not born performers, just as most of us cannot play the piano by ear. Before facing a class, and after we have prepared carefully the material we are going to teach, we have to spend time mulling over ways to weave one or more of these attention factors into our classroom presentation. Make this mulling a habit, and you will be a successful teacher.

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do things better

Useful news and tips from all over

Comfort for Strained Eyes

Hours of reading, checking papers and writing reports can create painful eye strain. The US National Institute of Health has some easy exercises you can do to soothe your eyes.

1. Blink or yawn to produce tears that will lubricate your eyes
2. Expose your eyes to natural light
3. Place your palms over your closed eyes and breathe deeply for 15-30 seconds
4. With your eyes closed, roll your eyes upward to the ceiling and down to the floor; repeat three times. Keeping your eyes closed, roll your eyes to the left and right; repeat three times.
5. Focus on things of varying distances. You can hold a finger directly in front of you and move it away from your face. Then focus on an object more than eight feet away. Repeat three times.

Be kind to your eyes; they're the only pair you have. Take frequent breaks, walk around, and focus on other things besides the text you're reading or writing.



Food for Thought

Can you eat your way to increased brain power? Yes, says WebMD.com, a health website. Here are tips on what you can take:

- **Caffeine:** Drinks that contain caffeine such as coffee, tea, and even Red Bull and soda can act as a quick pick-me-up by accelerating your heartbeat. Although the energizing effect doesn't last long, a cup of coffee or tea may be just what you need in the morning to jolt you into action for the rest of the day. Be careful not to overdose, though.
- **Sugar:** Studies show that people who take a sweet drink before taking a memory test do better. A chocolate bar or a small pastry might be a good idea just before you need to do something very mentally challenging or memory intensive, like studying or taking a test. But again, don't overdose because too much sugar can actually cause you to crash after the "high."
- **A healthy breakfast:** Scientists say that children who eat breakfast have better short-term memories than kids who go to school hungry. A growling stomach is, after all, a big distraction. But beware of high-calorie and high-fat diets, which can make you feel sleepy and lethargic.

i-Reklamo Mo!

i-Reklamo.ph, the online consumer assistance website of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), makes it easier for ordinary Filipinos to fight for their rights as consumers. Do you know, for example, that you have eight basic consumer rights? One of these is the "Right to Redress," or the right to be compensated for misrepresentation (or dishonesty), shoddy goods, or unsatisfactory services. Because of this right, manufacturers are obliged to replace defective goods, and consumers may request a replacement, refund, or repair of the defective product.

Thanks to Rule II, Section 7 of Republic Act 7394 (the Consumer Act of the Philippines), stores are now prohibited from "No Return, No Exchange" policies. If the manager or store representative does not act on your complaint, consumers have the right to proceed to the proper government agency (your first stop should be DTI). You may even file your complaint directly on the i-Reklamo.ph website.

