How I stay calm

The head teacher

Education transformed my life. I wasn’t academic, I was a plodder. (1) I had the most fantastic teachers. In a way, that’s where the stress and worry of this job comes from, the knowledge that a school can make a huge difference to the lives of young people. I feel a personal responsibility if I see something going wrong. Children are here for only a fixed period; any time that is lost, they’ll (2) get back.

There are 1,100 people in the building whose jobs are all essential to the running of the school, and I need to make sure that every single one of them is doing what they need to be doing. Our cleaners are (3) our teaching staff. Nothing can prepare you for being responsible for it all. However, most stressful situations that arise, be it with antisocial behaviour or angry parents turning up, we have systems to deal with them. When I arrived in 2012, I introduced a policy for both teachers and students of always remaining calm and non-confrontational. The minute you shout, people don’t listen to you; they just focus on the noise you’re creating (4) what you’re saying. The other thing that helps me remain calm is being highly visible, so that everyone – parents and those in school – can talk to me as soon as something is niggling them. It’s when things fester that they create most stress. So I’m at the school gate at the start and end of every day.

I’m an organized person; I won’t leave my office (5) getting everything ready for the next morning. One rule I try to stick to is that I do my work at work; I’ll stay late to get it finished, but I won’t take it home. And I run. I’m training for the London Marathon at the moment, so I run eight miles, three nights a
week. If there’s something I need to deal with, I can usually find a solution on my run, and by the time I get home I’m relaxed.

The football coach

When you’re watching your team out on the pitch, your heart might be racing, yet you’ve got to appear in control. You have to remain calm to make good decisions.

As coach, the whole responsibility for the club is on your (6) [ ] . You’ve got the chairman and directors to think about, (7) [ ] the supporters. You have to deal with injuries, loss of form by key players, their mental state, and things happening in their lives that affect their performance. You have to accept that certain things are (8) [ ] , and know what those are. So I can’t control those who officiate the game, I’m not in control of the opposition, and I’m not in control of what kind of football my players are going to produce.

The main strategy I have for staying calm is that I’m careful about who I listen to and what I read. In the past, I have taken things personally, so I won’t go on social media or message boards. (9) [ ] comments posted beneath online newspaper articles. You have to stay focused and believe in what you’re doing, but you can’t be too shut off, either.

There was a stage a couple of years ago when everything seemed to be going against me. I was bringing it all home. Last year, I made a decision that I would discuss only really massive things with my family and try to leave everything else (10) [ ] . That can be hard when you come home after a heavy defeat, but it’s the best way I can handle it.

By Anita Chauduri in The Guardian