

on a course, frame your plans, and determine your destiny. Without a doubt, life and death rests in the tongue, so guard your mouth. These tips can improve the quality and clarity of your speech:

- *Think before you speak to determine the appropriateness of your words.*
- *Avoid uttering offensive remarks, even in jest; offhand comments aren't always funny or appreciated by others.*
- *Speak positively over your life, career, future, and family members.*
- *Don't complain—it makes you feel worse and gives power to a negative situation.*
- *Talk directly to individuals with whom you have a concern instead of talking about them to others.*
- *Be proactive, precise, and direct to decrease the chance of being misinterpreted or misunderstood.*
- *Improve your vocabulary to increase your chances of communicating clearly and accurately.*
- *Use audience-appropriate words.*
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See Acceptance, Attitude, Believing in Yourself and Others, Expressing Yourself in Words, and Optimism.

Z

Zero Tolerance for Substance Abuse

You've heard the sad stories and witnessed lives torn apart by substance abuse. To reduce drinking and driving, many states have enacted zero-tolerance laws, and many school systems endorse zero-tolerance policies for substance-free environments. Hence, a word to the wise: Avoid flirting with any area of dangerous, addictive behaviors that can lead to a path of trouble in your life, or in the lives of your students. Smoking in your car during a planning period, taking drugs in a drug-free school zone, or camouflaging vodka in your soda bottle are inappropriate behaviors at work and behaviors you cannot hide over the long-term. Violating any school policies can result in being fired and your teaching certificate revoked, especially if substance abuse is involved. Aside from disrupting your physical wellness and posing a danger to yourself and

others, when your senses are impaired, you may be incapable of acting responsibly on duty and could be found negligent in a court of law.

*People do not always know when they are entering a danger zone with substances such as drugs and alcohol. Addictive habits can start innocently as chronic pain or stress nag at a person's resistance. Any behavior or thought pattern that disrupts your balance or violates public laws, creates a reason for concern. If you long for or imbibe addictive substances while you are at work, you need to seek help. Your school guidance counselor has helpful contact information for your specific need and you might also contact your primary care physician or other health professional for referral to an appropriate agency. See *Occupational Wellness and Physical Wellness*.*

Zest

It's not about soap—it's about experiencing life to the fullest! Take sheer delight in being alive and model this passion for life to your students. Enjoy what you have and make the best of all you have going for you. It is a waste of time to compare yourself to others, long for your good old days, dream of retirement, or approach your work with indifference because your feelings were once hurt. The result of that kind of thinking and apathy is misery. Instead, go for the gusto! LIVE!

*As the popular song goes, "Don't worry, be happy!" Abraham Lincoln has been quoted as saying, "Most folks are as happy as they make up their minds to be." Have you made up your mind? Such decisions already have directly affected your overall wellness, but it is never too late to make a fresh, exciting start. We hope that you will decide to enthusiastically embrace your life. See **Attitude, Joy, and Passion**.*

Zzzs

Do you need sleep? Although sleep needs vary, most adults require six to eight hours of sleep each night to function well. Lack of sleep can lead to impaired performance involving memory, logical reasoning, and learning; decreased productivity; increased perceptions of stress; and a greater need for healthcare services. It also is a contributing factor in traffic accidents and absenteeism. Stress, including school- and job-related pressures and family concerns, is named as the top reason for sleeping difficulties (National Sleep Foundation 2007).