



Autopilot

BY BEVERLY STUCKWISCH

I wrote this poem after having a particularly rough patch in January of 2024. Living in the Midwest and having quite literally 40 consecutive days without sunshine certainly didn't help. That being said, I think most teachers can relate to having felt like they were in a rut—or on autopilot—at some point in their career. I definitely don't feel like this all of the time, or even most of the time, but when I do it can feel all-consuming. Writing about these feelings helps me to process and work through them, and I hope that reading this can help others do the same.

Autopilot.

No excitement.

No vigor.

How can I expect my students to be enamored with the lesson when I don't even want to teach it?

Stagnation is contagious—or something like that.

They're on their phones again.

They tuned me out a long time ago.

Headphones in. Screens up.

I should redirect them, but I can't bring myself to do it.

Pick your battles—or something like that.

I love teaching,

Don't I?

I definitely have loved teaching. It's just hard when you can't

Remember your "why"—or something like that.

When I finished college, I felt like I had a dozen possible paths laid before me.

For several years, those paths still felt like options.

Not so much anymore.

Sometimes, I feel stuck.

Those who can't do, teach—or something like that.

Present at a conference to try to reignite something.

Only 6 come to my session, 3 leave early.

A woman talks loudly through the presentation I most wanted to hear.

Teachers are the worst students—or something like that.

Push myself.

Pursue leadership opportunities.

Have my merit questioned; question it myself.

Fake it till you make it—or something like that.

Have a moment that resuscitates me a bit.

Get excited again—about trig, of all things.

Remember that it used to feel like this a lot.

If I've changed, then I can change back; but

Change is hard—or something like that.

Beverly Stuckwisch is a Knowles Senior Fellow and math teacher at Dublin Coffman High School in Dublin, Ohio. She has 11 years of experience teaching Algebra 2, Algebra 1, Precalculus, Statistics, Chemistry, and AP Chemistry. She currently

serves as the math department chair and is always looking for new and creative ways to engage her students. She is passionate about growing her students' confidence and voice in math and is working to build a Thinking Classroom. Similarly, she aims to elevate teacher voice and confidence in sharing their stories through her work as a peer advisor, Associate Editor, and now co-Editor in Chief for Kaleidoscope. Reach Beverly on X/Twitter at @BStuckwisch or at beverly.stuckwisch@knowlesteachers.org.