

ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

Behavior Intervention and Support Module: Looking at Teacher Behavior Patterns

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~ Module 3, Session 1 ~ Lecture Notes

Introduction

In many classes there are students who tax teacher patience and frustrate efforts to assist, understand, or tolerate them. The behavior of these students can result in teacher feelings of instant frustration, disappointment, worry, helplessness, and inadequacy. Often these immediate, basic, and honest feelings are lost as they quickly turn into reactions of anger, sarcasm, revulsion, or abandonment.

Teachers can improve their own behavior by:

- a. anticipating those student behaviors that give rise to undesirable personal responses, and
- b. creating a plan and practicing more appropriate and helpful responses in the face of “hot button” student behaviors.

The “Fight or Flee” Response by Teachers:

When teachers are faced with challenging student behavior they often respond ineffectively by yelling, ridiculing, making smart comebacks, making embarrassing comments, nagging, ignoring, threatening, arguing, griping, or lecturing students. Teachers tend to “blow-up” or “give-up” caught in a cycle of authoritarian (fight or punish) to non-authoritarian (flee or passive) behavior. Aggressive behavior leads to passive behavior and vice versa. It becomes a perpetual see saw experience until teachers learn how to manage their behavior in an appropriate and positive manner.

When teachers are authoritarian and use punishment the following effect may occur:

- students are not taught what they should do, only what not to do;
- students and teachers are unable to establish positive, caring relationships due to frequent negative, punitive interactions

- students get attention for misbehavior, and over time, students may learn to misbehave to get attention.

Typical student results to the fight or punish style of teacher interaction are as follows:

- Hostility
- Resistance
- Unresponsive Low Self-esteem

When teachers adopt a permissive or passive style of behavior it can:

- interfere with building positive uplifting student teacher relationships
- teach students to display inadequacy or an “I can’t do it attitude”
- promote immature verbal responses by both student and teacher

Typical student results to the flight or passive response style of interaction are as follows:

- Insecure
- Demanding
- Dependent
- Low Self-esteem

What are some of annoying behaviors that cause teachers to fight or flee?

- Verbal and physical abuse of another student
- Word and mind games to avoid an issue i.e., “That’s not what you said” or “I didn’t hear you.”
- Intentional disrespect—spitting at or right in front of you, lying, destruction of property
- Excessive use of vulgar or sexually explicit language
- Refusal to do what is asked or challenging you
- Getting in your personal space
- Lazy behavior, unmotivated to work
- Inattentive behavior—looks around, talks, doesn’t pay attention
- Speaking when the teacher is speaking
- Getting the last word in
- Bad attitude—“whatever,” “so”
- Racial remarks—openly or quietly
- Pouting, whining, tantrums
- Sarcastic remarks or comebacks
- Ridiculing another student

Sensible Tips:

Your attitude and perceptions impact your students' expectations and their reactions toward them.

In order for teachers to create positive rapport with students (knowing well in advance annoying behaviors will occur) they can:

- Set the tone—greet students, welcome them, and be available, positive and proactive. Don't assume for a moment that students come to school, your class or individual setting behaving.
- When a student is angry or frustrated don't argue or try and convince them of an alternative decision. This tends to create more upset. Just **LISTEN**, restate what you heard and then make a time to discuss the issue later.
- Pause before you pounce—count to 10, walk away, “get a grip”.
- Set personal goals to control your fight or flee response to challenging student behavior.
- Do the following:

—PLAN AHEAD for behavioral needs of student

—Request help when needed and seek opinions and ideas from others

—Generate a number of solutions and implement strategies for improvement.

- Leave your prejudices at home i.e., they're lazy, unmotivated, stupid, can't do anything right.
- Carefully control the structure of your room from desks to organization of materials.
- Give students an “obnoxious” amount of praise and encouragement.
- Put aphorisms up on the board frequently i.e., “If it's believable it's achievable.” Every “attempt is a victory.”
- Stress cooperation not competition to give students a voice in their education.
- Focus on creating caring, respectful relationships among all students and teachers. For example, have your high school students create the rules with your input.
- Structure instructional activities to ensure a “no fail” situation.
- Determine antecedents or what might precipitate inappropriate behavior e.g. waiting in line, task difficulty and then remove them.
- Have a sense of humor and appreciation for the developmental level of your students. For instance, if you are working with junior high school students with serious emotional problems, view the kids as “deviantly gifted” instead of disturbed. It will make your day much easier and lighter.

Cautionary note: Some students may require mental health interventions which address long range issues involving home life, emotional disturbance and other life issues. This is

especially true at the secondary level. The ideas and specific planning forms and documents included in the following sessions may be used in concert with mental health intervention.