

# Introduction

## *About This Book*

It is first-period Reading class, and you have prepared a dynamic lesson with an engaging activator and a purposeful summary. The overhead projector is all set up, and you have adapted and prepared curriculum materials for those students who have learning difficulties. After the first five minutes of the class, however, you realize that this lesson is sinking quickly. You decide to use a different approach toward engaging some students, but instead get into an argument over why they should spit out their gum. A student insists on tapping his pencil on the desk while another hides her head under her sweater. Before you know it, the period is almost over and little has been accomplished.

Sound familiar? I believe teaching is one of the most difficult professions of all because of one main factor: human behavior. Human behavior changes constantly. In the case of a student's daily life, changes are determined by myriad factors, such as what happened at home before school, on the bus, in the hallway, or entering the classroom. Consequently, the teacher who has prepared an engaging lesson can have his or her efforts thwarted due to a limited approach toward teaching discipline.

### **THE BOATMAN AND THE PASSENGER**

Once there was a boatman whose job it was to ferry passengers across a lake. One day, as the boatman was about a fourth of the way across the lake, his passenger asked, "Have you read any of the great literature of our times?" To which the boatman replied, "No sir, I haven't." "One-third of your life has been wasted!" proclaimed the passenger. A few minutes later, the passenger asked the boatman,

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“Have you read any of the great poets?” “No sir, I don’t read that well,” answered the boatman. “Two-thirds of your life has been wasted!” declared the passenger. At that moment, the boat hit a large rock and water began gushing in. The boatman shouted, “Sir, do you know how to swim?” “No I don’t!” the passenger shouted back. The boatman said, “Well, your whole life has been wasted.”

I tell this story when leading workshops to illustrate the importance of developing a variety of teaching skills and strategies because when a teacher feels like the lesson is sinking and he or she is losing control of the class, a large repertoire of skills is essential to stay afloat and regain momentum. *Teaching Discipline & Self-Respect: Strategies, Anecdotes, and Lessons for Effective Classroom Management* is all about learning effective skills and strategies that can keep you above water when you feel like you’re about to sink. It’s also about learning discipline strategies that guide students toward self-discipline and self-respect in a dignified manner for both the teacher and student.

It is not uncommon to hear from teachers that today’s students are less respectful of authority and more difficult to handle. Many students have developed a negative attitude and genuine mistrust toward authority figures. Students’ response to threats and punishments is usually, “So what?” or “I don’t care.” However, there is a positive outcome to this challenge of managing seemingly unmanageable behaviors. As with effective teaching strategies, educators have cultivated new approaches toward managing classroom behavior that *do* work with today’s students.

Those of us who have chosen the honorable career of teaching understand that, in order to teach, we need to manage misbehavior in the classroom. We have also come to realize that some approaches are more effective than others. There are many books written on the subject of discipline and classroom management. Typically, books on discipline are created around a single system, such as the use of “behavior modification” or “logical consequences.” At one point in my career as a professional educator—which I believe means a teacher who is constantly learning and growing—I came to understand the true nature of discipline, and consequently saw the inadequacies of a single system.

What is discipline? The word *discipline* has its roots in the word *disciple* and means “to teach or train.” One definition is “to train by instruction or exercise.” We are more likely to succeed in helping a student change their unacceptable behaviors when we use effective discipline procedures. It is part of continuous process of *teaching or educating*. As teachers, we understand that there is not just one method by which we educate our students; rather, we draw upon numerous strategies and approaches to reach and teach a very diverse population with a wide range of abilities and social/emotional needs.

There is no one approach that will work at all times with every student. There are occasions when all students respond to a discipline procedure in a congruent manner. But, generally speaking, the approach must be tailor-made to fit the age and personality of each student. In addition, some teachers feel more comfortable with one approach to discipline than they do with another. For these reasons, this book will offer a variety of strategies and approaches for teaching students desirable behavior (and how to avoid undesirable behavior). From these teaching strategies, you can select the ones that best suit your students' needs as well as your teaching style.

The strategies in this book put the focus on ways to assist all students to learn the most important life lesson: *self-discipline*. When we have sufficient self-discipline, many of our problems can often quickly be solved. Conversely, when we have little self-discipline, mole hills can quickly become mountains.

## WHAT IS TEACHING DISCIPLINE AND SELF-RESPECT?

As previously mentioned, *Teaching Discipline & Self-Respect: Strategies, Anecdotes, and Lessons for Effective Classroom Management* does not take a “one strategy fits all” approach. Nor does it rely on punishment which comes solely from the teacher as an authority figure. It is an ongoing process of educating the student by achieving the following four basic goals:

1. Showing students what they've done wrong
2. Giving students ownership of the problem
3. Offering students ways to solve it and gain self-control
4. Leaving their dignity and self-esteem intact

An integral aspect of *Teaching Discipline & Self-Respect: Strategies, Anecdotes, and Lessons for Effective Classroom Management* is the use of prevention and intervention strategies that focus on developing an internalized sense of responsibility in students through alternative communication techniques and the use of realistic and palpable logical consequences. When we “discipline” children, we are actually assisting them to develop responsibility and *self-control*. It's easy for us to recognize the need for young children to establish self-control, but as children grow into adolescents they truly believe that they do not need controls or limits, and that without them they would do just fine. However, the fact is that, for

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both young children and teenagers, controls and limits do act as a source of *unacknowledged security* for them. This security is essential for managing a successful learning environment. When teaching discipline and self-respect, we also understand that the older the child becomes, the greater the developmental need for personal power. We understand that, in order to gain control, we must also give away some control through offering options and choices whenever possible. Unfortunately, some well-intentioned teachers take this theory to the extreme without following a guiding foundation based on sound beliefs and principles.

To further illustrate this point, imagine yourself sitting on a chair in the middle of a dark room. As you get up from your seat with your hands extended, looking for a solid object to hold on to, you touch a wall that quickly begins to crumble. How would you feel? What would you do? You would probably feel very insecure and most likely look for that chair and stay put. This image can be equated with the student who looks for limits and controls, but instead is given ambiguity and inconsistency, or a large dose of punishment which confuses and angers rather than educating.

Self-control can be equated with self-awareness, or being aware of the logical consequences of desirable and undesirable behaviors, then making the correct choices. We want all our students to learn valuable lessons about self-control and dignified social living.

### **OUTCOMES OF TEACHING DISCIPLINE AND SELF-RESPECT**

#### **A Feeling of Achievement**

Teachers are able to fulfill their main responsibility, which is to help students actively engage in the learning process. A student who has changed a negative behavior cycle feels a sense of accomplishment and purpose.

#### **Increased Professional Confidence**

Every teacher is faced with the task of classroom management of problem behaviors. As we gain the confidence successful interventions bring, we can then more easily handle all our teaching tasks, including guiding the most disruptive students toward self-discipline.

#### **Gaining a Healthy Perspective**

Often our solution to misbehavior in the classroom is to react to the behavior personally rather than to approach the problem professionally.

This book's approach helps teachers to gain the needed perspective in order to be effective managers of behavior and consequently reduce classroom confrontations. As a result, we have a different mind-set toward what was once very disturbing. For example, a student acting disrespectfully now becomes one of the daily responsibilities of being an effective teacher, which includes effectively managing student behaviors.

### **Decrease Labeling and Increasing Change**

Students who are prone to making poor decisions around how to act tend to be labeled “troublemakers” or “disruptive.” When things get to this point, *labeling is disabling*. Consequently, we offer that student little chance of breaking out of a negative behavior cycle. The focus of teaching discipline and self-respect is educating both the teacher and student on the choices available, which can promote positive change and a healthy self-image.

### **Promoting Positive Feeling Tone**

Creating positive feeling tone in the classroom promotes a genuine community of learners that can work cooperatively and support individual and group growth. *Teaching Discipline & Self-Respect: Strategies, Anecdotes, and Lessons for Effective Classroom Management* establishes a positive feeling tone by helping teachers understand how to develop better relationships with students, which in turn leads to improved cooperation. Educators who teach discipline agree that the goal of every school is getting students to cooperate, and that they get the best cooperation when they remember to provide many choices throughout the day. This book discusses the power of giving choices as well as guidelines to follow.

## **CHAPTER ORGANIZATION**

Chapter 1 offers strategies and activities that assist a teacher in creating the foundation for a cooperative classroom, a foundation that supports task behavior and reduces undesirable actions. These strategies help students to feel more part of the classroom community, and therefore more willing to fully participate in the learning process.

Chapter 2 provides information and techniques on creating a positive classroom environment. This chapter also discusses effective techniques for reinforcing positive student behavior and attitudes.

Chapter 3 offers effective strategies for more direct teaching of discipline. Some are geared more toward elementary students, and others

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to middle and high school students. Most strategies are effective with students of all ages.

Chapter 4 addresses understanding and respecting students who are culturally and linguistically diverse. Teaching also requires an additional set of behaviors to address the problems and issues of students who are brought up in poverty— who make up an alarmingly high percentage of our students in urban school districts. A discussion of students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) offers strategies to promote active support of and engagement with these students who have special needs.

Chapter 5 describes alternative interventions that can be used with students who are consistently disruptive and who act in unacceptable ways. I introduce these chapters with a method of objectively looking at a student's undesirable (and desirable) behaviors as cycles which tend to reinforce themselves. The next section offers a practical method for maintaining a professional approach to changing unacceptable behavior into acceptable behavior. To do this, we must first remember that the solution lies in discovering the purpose behind the misbehavior. Understanding the reason for any misbehavior unlocks the door to effective change. Conversely, identifying and supporting positive behavior cycles can be just as important, considering the nature of human behavior. This chapter would also be especially helpful to school counselors, behavior specialists, and administrators.

Chapter 6 describes eleven frequently reported undesirable behaviors that teachers are trying to manage every day in the classroom. Using "cycle diagrams" as a visual presentation for identifying each behavior cycle, I offer methods, procedures, and techniques to employ immediately for the purpose of changing the negative behavior as well as recommending mistakes to avoid.

Chapters 7 through 9 address the need for self-monitoring. Taking control of the classroom is often the most challenging aspect of teaching. Coupled with the many other facets for which teachers are responsible, controlling a classroom can create an abundance of stress in an educator's life. Consequently, I have dedicated this chapter to effective stress management for educators. We want to avoid walking down a road that can erode a teacher's initial idealism, resulting in burnout. I will offer common symptoms of being overly stressed, and present some of the strategies new and experienced teachers are using to regain their physical, mental, and emotional well-being.

Finally, I have included various lesson plans throughout the chapters for the purpose of promoting and teaching desirable behaviors. Activities and scenarios are sprinkled throughout the guide to interact with the information presented in the text.