

Discipline *without* Stress® Punishments or Rewards: How to Promote Responsibility & Learning

Dealing with Difficult Students - *Create visual images to prompt behaviors you desire.*

P = Send POSITIVE messages.

Notice the number of times you **state something negatively that could be stated in positive terms.**

Promise with the positive by using *contingencies*, rather than *consequences*—*which usually prompt negative feelings*. Notice the difference between how the following two are perceived:

“As soon as you finish your work, you can go to the activity center.” (Contingency - stated in the positive)

vs. “If your work is not done, you’re not going to the activity center.” (Consequence - stated negatively)

C = Offer CHOICES.

Choice empowers. Choices give ownership, a critical component for **changing behavior**.

Giving three options—rather than two—removes all perceptions of coercion. Be it a situation, a stimulus, or an urge, *a person always has a choice regarding the response*. Don’t accept victim-type thinking that is counter-productive to fostering responsibility, e.g., “He hit me first!” “I had no choice!” and “He made me do it.”

R = Encourage REFLECTION.

Ask reflective questions that foster growth and responsibility, e.g., “Are you willing to try something different?” “If you could not fail, what would you do?” “What would an extraordinary person do?”

Be cautious of “why?” questions; they allow the person to give an excuse, be a victim, and avoid responsibility. Besides, young people often do not know or find it difficult to articulate the reason they behave as they do.

- √ Have the student **practice the procedure** for doing the activity/lesson. Be sure that the student knows **what and how to do** what you have assigned.
- √ Rather than telling that the student is off task or telling the student what to do, **ask** the student to **reflect on the level of chosen behavior** of the **Raise Responsibility System’s hierarchy**. See <www.MarvinMarshall.com>.
- √ **Teach impulse management.** The conversation sounds something like, “Every time you stick your foot out to trip your friend, you are a victim of your impulses. *Do you really want to go through life being a victim?* If not, let’s establish a procedure so that when you get that impulse, you can **redirect it**. For example, **picture and feel** your foot chained to the floor. That image will help you to be **in control**, rather than be a victim of an impulse.” See <www.MarvinMarshall.com/impulsemanagement.html>.
- √ No one comes to school to get into trouble. Think of students as **lacking skills** to handle impulses—or that the behavior is the student’s *best effort at the time to handle a frustration*. Few students are maliciously disruptive.
- √ **Reflect on your own goal.** You **goal will direct** how you handle the situation. If your desire is to **help** the student, then be willing to negotiate. There may be factors involved of which you are unaware.
- √ Students with short attention spans have a difficult time getting started on a task. Give **clear, concise, starting directions**, e.g., feet on the floor, **sternum up and out**, pencil and paper in proper position. Have students complete the following to themselves, “*The first thing I see myself doing is. . .*”
- √ When a student is off task or exhibits inappropriate behavior, be positive **by stating what you want**—not what you don’t want. Simply tell the student what you **would like** to see happen. This helps the student understand your desires and stops the student from engaging in one behavior only to engage in another, non-productive one.
- √ Use **labeling**. Teach students to **label any distraction** as “*distraction.*” Show students how to keep a record of them. Tracking distractions increases the likelihood that students will stop and think about what they are doing. This helps them reflect and make more appropriate choices.
- √ **Ask for the student’s help.** Put the problem to the student; let the student know that **you** don’t know how to solve the disruptive behavior. Asking for help taps into a natural desire to help others when in need.
- √ **Put the person in charge of the activity.** It is almost impossible to be in charge of stopping a disruption (e.g. , continually getting off task in a group activity) if the person is in charge of preventing it.
- √ **Ask four questions that lead to a change in behavior:**
 - (1) “What do you **want?**”
 - (2) “Is what you are **choosing to do** helping you get what you want?”
 - (3) “If what you are choosing to do is not getting you what you want, then what is your **plan?**”
 - (4) “What are your **procedures** to implement your plan; specifically, what will you do?”
- √ Have a **classroom meeting** and put the topic on the table.
See <www.DisciplineWithoutStress.com/sample_chapters.html>.
- √ Improve your relationship by quietly **tutoring** at the student's desk—or in private.