



**S O U T H E A S T
P S Y C H**
PSYCHOLOGY FOR ALL

EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR IN ELEMENTARY- AGE STUDENTS

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TODAY'S AGENDA/TRAINING OBJECTIVES

- What are some reasons that students display disruptive behavior?
- A few “golden rules” for promoting positive behavior
- Effective strategies for managing general misbehavior
- Specific strategies for dealing with:
 - Aggression
 - Bullying
 - Noncompliance/disrespectful behavior
 - Homework issues



WHAT MOTIVATES OUR STUDENTS TO BEHAVE IN CHALLENGING WAYS?

- Negative attention is better than no attention
- Tired! It's been a long day!
- Academic difficulties- avoidance
- Home/family stressors
- Medication wearing off
- Imitating behavior displayed by others
- Previous experiences with peers/adults that have not been positive



SOME “GOLDEN” RULES FOR ENCOURAGING POSITIVE BEHAVIOR

- “Catch them being good”
 - “Gotcha grams”
- Praise: criticism ratio 5:1
- Special privileges- can be randomly given (intermittent reinforcement)
 - “Student of the Day”, sitting in your chair, line leader, picking from the “treat drawer”
- All staff using same approach
 - Meet regularly to decide as a group how specific misbehaviors will be handled
- Consistency!
- Follow-through! We earn or lose credibility quickly



STRATEGIES FOR YOUR BACK POCKET

- Planned ignoring
 - As a staff, identify negative behaviors that do not pose physical or emotional safety risks and do not require immediate attention
- Attention to positive behavior
 - “I really appreciate the students who are standing quietly in line ready to go outside.”
 - “Thank you to the students who are in their seats waiting for snack to be passed out”.
- Praise, praise, praise!
 - Be specific; this lets the student know you are sincere



RESPONDING TO VERBAL AGGRESSION

- Define “aggression”
 - Verbal or physical?
 - Severity- as a staff, discuss frequently observed acts of aggression and develop a “scale”
- Redirecting verbal aggression
 - Intervene immediately and offer student opportunity to apologize
 - Model prosocial method of handling the situation
 - “Brian, I know you really wanted to play on this swing. Next time, instead of saying mean things to Amanda, you can ask her to take turns with you and let you swing next”.
 - Assign consequence based on severity of act



AGGRESSION SCALE

- Mild aggression:
 - Teasing
 - Name calling
 - Poking, tickling, getting in the way
- Moderate aggression:
 - Yelling obscenities
 - Knocking things off a desk
 - Tripping
 - Throwing an object at the wall, floor
- Severe aggression:
 - “Getting in someone’s face” and yelling
 - Throwing an object at a person
 - Hitting, punching
 - Fighting



RESPONDING TO PHYSICAL AGGRESSION

- Assess the situation immediately to determine the severity of act
 - Poking versus fighting
- If behavior is mild, intervene and issue consequence (time out, loss of free time etc.)
- If behavior is serious, implement your program's protocol for breaking up physical altercations
- For students that repeatedly display aggressive behavior, respond consistently each time
 - Issue immediate consequence (time out etc.) and provide warning that next aggressive act will result in removal from group for the day, call home, etc.



ZERO TOLERANCE FOR BULLYING!

- Address the bully: redirect inappropriate behavior and issue warning; second incident earns consequence
 - Loss of privilege, assignment that helps bully understand victim's feelings, anti-bullying poster
 - Send the message of ZERO TOLERANCE
 - Find opportunities to praise helpful, cooperative peer interactions
- Helping the victim:
 - Strategies that will reduce likelihood of repeated bullying (sitting in different location, staying close to supervisors, trying not to interact with bullies)
 - Strategies for responding to bullying (ignoring, “I statements”, brainstorming creative but respectful comebacks)



HOMEWORK DIFFICULTIES/AVOIDANCE

- Kids are tired at the end of the school day and often have difficulties settling down to do MORE schoolwork
- Provide protein-based snack before starting homework time
- Assess cause of homework challenges
 - Frustration from not understanding skills?
 - Mental fatigue?
 - Medication wearing off?
 - General low academic self-esteem?



STRATEGIES FOR SPECIFIC HOMEWORK ISSUES

- Not understanding the assignment
 - assign a staff member to sit with this student and explain assignment/ work through a portion of it
 - praise skill acquisition
- Mental fatigue
 - allow for frequent short breaks (15 minutes of work, 5 minutes of pleasure reading, quiet play at seat etc.)
- Meds wearing off
 - similar to mental fatigue; encourage working for brief periods with frequent breaks
 - jumping jacks, pushups can help get rid of “crash effects”
- Low academic self-esteem
 - often leads to homework avoidance/disruptive behavior
 - assign a staff member who has a good relationship with the student to spend one-on-one time working on assignments
 - staff member should providing frequent praise/stickers/encouragement for good effort



MANAGING NON-COMPLIANCE AND DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

- Repeat request once/make sure student has heard you
- Try to remain emotionally neutral
 - Know your personal limits and triggers
- Offer the student options
 - “You have a choice. You can choose to return to your spot in line or you can choose to remain out of line. If you choose to remain out of line, you will also be choosing to stay inside during playground time”.
- Reinforce compliant choice through praise, special privilege, etc.
- Make sure noncompliance receives stated consequence
 - “Punishment should fit the crime”



RESOURCES

- McGinnis, Goldstein, Sprafkin, & Gershaw: *Skillstreaming the Elementary School Child: A Guide for Teaching Prosocial Skills*
- Sprick and Howard: *The Teacher's Encyclopedia of Behavior Management: 100 Problems/500 Plans*
- Walker: *The Acting-Out Child: Coping with Classroom Disruption*



THE END!

- Questions?
- Comments?
- Cases to problem solve?

For further information, please contact me at:

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Thank you for your participation!

