

Positive Child Behavior Management In The Classroom

Part 3

By
BOB LANCER
©Bob Lancer

Here is yet another way of maintaining your power to be in charge. Rely on the principle of "automatic leadership". According to this principle, human beings *automatically* reflect in their own behavior and attitude the behaviors and attitudes to which they are consistently exposed. As you maintain your own sense of security within, and express that with composure and decorum, you model and therefore lead your students, including those with behavior problems, toward more security in their sense of their own power and more orderly self-control.

The teacher who snaps at students, yells or impatiently argues with them, or expresses frustration with aggressive gestures or other forms of body language models poor self-control on both the emotional and physical levels. While he may resort to these modes in an effort to establish classroom order, his example leads his students in the opposite direction.

To really put the principle of automatic leadership into practice, *take advantage of* those instances when you feel most tempted to trigger off with anger and stress by *exercising* your muscle of self-control. Your power to maintain your peace and poise strengthens through exercise like a muscle. As it grows stronger, you not only find your daily experiences with your students less taxing, your example leads your students, albeit subtly and gradually, to exercise their power to maintain emotional balance and orderly self-conduct.

This practice requires the practice of paying close attention to how you feel, so that you can recognize when you are beginning to feel threatened or insecure about your own power in response to a student's show of defiance or disrespect. The sooner you notice yourself slipping into a stressful state, the more quickly and easily you can regain your composure. For instance, to shake the feeling of insecurity and return to confident peace and poise, you might begin by taking a few deep breaths. Then, become aware of the focus

of your attention, so that you can direct your attention to how you are feeling. By simply observing your feelings as you breathe consciously, you will find yourself able to let go of some or all of your anxiety and return to calm confidence.

The principle of automatic leadership has a double edge to it: You lead your disruptive students toward higher performance, or they lead you to lowered performance! Their feelings of insecurity about their power and their unruly behaviors exert an influence upon everyone around them, including their teacher. A very angry, rude, disorderly student draws upon your attitude and behavior with a sort of magnetic power, imposing her chaotic condition upon you.

It comes down to strength against strength. If the power of the student's condition of insecurity and the force of his disturbing actions proves stronger than your power to feel secure and to deal with it in a calm, confident, orderly manner, you will find it impossible to avoid reflecting that student's troubled emotional state and chaotic self-conduct. This makes it so important to consistently practice functioning in a calm, secure, confident manner, and to work at maintaining your peace and poise most intently when it feels most difficult to do so. Your goal is for your self-control to grow stronger than any student's power to disturb it.