

# Promoting Discipline & Learning

by Dr. Marvin Marshall

## *Promoting Responsibility - Or How Not To*

This article first appeared in the May 2008 issue of teachers.net/Gazette at <http://teachers.net/gazette/MAY08/marshall/>

**Although the intentions are admirable, giving rewards for expected appropriate behavior does as much harm as good.**

The following is from a post at:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/DisciplineWithoutStress/>

**I just wanted to quickly relay a rewards-based disaster.**

One of our seventh graders, in fact, the daughter of a teacher, recently wanted to go to **the Positive Behavior Support (PBS) reward dance**. She is an A honor roll student, never a discipline problem, and a wonderful kid. *In the haste of "bribing" misbehaving students to be good, we neglected to "reward" her for doing what she had motivated herself to do.* Long story short, she did not have enough PBS tickets to go to the dance. How horrible!

**Looks like rewards systems don't quite cover the good kids** as well as they should. Good thing that they are intrinsically motivated and feel good about the fact that they are great kids and their teachers love them!

The following was a mailing response post:

Your experience really points out what I think **is a big problem with any reward based behaviour program**--the fact that the goal of the program (often not clearly stated) is simply to get kids to behave. *When the goal is obedience, then*

*the program isn't truly too worried about the kids who are already obedient.* Then things happen--just as they did in your school where a wonderful child is left feeling terrible. **Of course, no one intended for that to happen but still that's often the result.**

That's why I feel so strongly about **DISCIPLINE WITHOUT STRESS**. The goal is to raise everyone, not just those who are a big problem--so the program can focus on all kids. That's what I love: **EVERY kid gains**. Some gain by bringing themselves up to Level C, while those who are already there gain, too. They learn about Level D, which is such a valuable understanding for living the rest of their lives. No other program that I'm aware of provides this understanding.

Thanks for participating on our mailing!

Kerry Weisner  
British Columbia, Canada

The following explains the levels referred to above, *where every kid can grow without the use of unfair external manipulators*. It describes Part III, ***The Raise Responsibility System***, of the **[Discipline Without Stress Teaching Model](#)**.

**The foundational step is TEACHING *The Hierarchy of Social Development*. It is the effect of the hierarchy—how people grow—that makes teaching it so valuable.** The hierarchy has four levels (concepts). As with any hierarchy, the highest level is placed at the top.

**LEVEL D - *Democracy* (highest level)**

**Develops self-discipline**

**Shows kindness to others**

**Develops self-reliance**

**Does good because it is the right thing to do**

***The motivation is INTERNAL.***

This level is characterized by taking the **initiative to be responsible**. On this level, a person's **MOTIVATION is Internal**. The concept of *democracy* is used because **democracy and responsibility are inseparable**. (After the concepts are taught, the usual practice is to refer just to the **LETTER OF THE LEVEL**, rather than to the words themselves.)

## **LEVEL C - Cooperation/Conformity**

**Listens**

**Cooperates**

**Does what is expected**

**The motivation is EXTERNAL.**

This level is characterized by consideration and complying with requests, but the **motivation is External**. Action at this level is prompted by **MOTIVATION** to please others, receive a reward, or to avoid an imposed consequence. The difference between the two is in the **MOTIVATION**, rather than in the behavior. For example, if a teacher asks a student to pick up trash and dispose of it, and the student does, that demonstrates **Level C**. If, however, the students see the trash and takes the **initiative** to dispose of it WITHOUT THE TEACHER'S FIRST ASKING, that demonstrates **Level D** motivation. **The behavior is the same. The difference is in the motivation.**

**These two higher levels of motivation are BOTH acceptable.**

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**The two lower levels of behavior are NOT acceptable.**

## **LEVEL B - Bullying/Bossing**

**Bosses others**

**Bothers others**

**Bullies others**

**Breaks classroom standards**

**Needs to be bossed to behave**

This level is characterized by a **lack of impulse control**, a lack of

consideration for others, and by displaying inappropriate behaviors. See [Reducing Bullying](#).

## **LEVEL A - Anarchy (lowest level)**

**Noisy**  
**Out of control**  
**Unsafe**

This level is characterized by the **absence of order and by chaos**.

*Sample hierarchies for primary, upper elementary, and middle/high school levels are available at [Levels of Development.pdf](#).*

*The levels (concepts) can be taught with **examples** from home, from school, and from the community--as well as with stories and events from around the world. **Eliciting** examples of each level increases understanding and makes the concepts more meaningful and personal. Read how one teacher taught the hierarchy at [A Butterfly Analogy](#).*

### **SIGNIFICANT POINTS:**

Although some **adults initially** feel uncomfortable using the **vocabulary**, the **specific terms** used to describe the levels have been found to be **the most effective in empowering students to resist bullying, resist negative peer influence, and bring satisfaction from one's own efforts**.

Since all language has meaning only in context (e.g., when to spell *to*, *too*, *two*), students of all ages have **no problem confusing letters used in grading and the levels of development**. Also, students of ALL ages can understand the terms; however, the concepts and meaning behind each level vary depending upon age.

Teaching the levels has a number of advantages. **Two** of the more significant are: **(1) The deed is separated from the doer so students never need to defend their actions** (which often lead to

adversarial confrontations), and **(2) The vocabulary can be used in every grade level by every staff member.**

### **ADDITIONAL NOTES:**

(1) The hierarchy is *NOT* an assessment tool for someone on the outside looking in. No one can know the motivation of another person with complete accuracy. In a classroom when all students are putting forth effort to learn, the motivation of some students will be at **Level C** while others will be at **Level D**. Only the individual students themselves can accurately assess their level of motivation.

(2) As we live our lives, we all experience the various levels. If you have experienced great anger, chances are that your concern was about you, with little concern of the effect that your behavior had on others (**Level A**). If you ever drove faster than the speed limit, you made your own rules of the road (**Level B**). If you were courteous and considerate of others, your *motivation* could have been to do what others were doing (**Level C**), or your motivation could have been to be courteous and considerate of others because that was the ***right thing to do*** (**Level D**).

To perpetuate a civil society, *motivation at Level C is essential*, and this is the motivational level at which most of us live our lives most of the time. When working with young people, however, the **GOAL** is to **promote motivation at Level D** because motivation at this level brings the most satisfaction from one's efforts. **Key concept: Obedience (Level C) does not create desire.**

(3) Rewarding **Level D** motivation is counterproductive. Since ***rewards change motivation***, once a reward is given, **Level D** motivation will be compromised. Receiving the reward might very naturally become the motivational focus.

(4) Using the *hierarchy becomes significantly more effective* when you **FOCUS** on the ***DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE MOTIVATIONAL***

**LEVELS OF D and C.** *The more you make this your standard practice of **having students reflect on their motivational level**, the more effectively the system serves both you and young people.*

See [\*\*Using the Hierarchy to Promote Learning.\*\*](#)

The following sites will shorten the learning curve for those new to **Discipline Without Stress: [A Quick Start.](#)**

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