

Promoting Discipline & Learning

by Dr. Marvin Marshall

10 Counterproductive Approaches/ Free books and staff development

This article first appeared in the July 2008 issue of teachers.net/Gazette at <http://teachers.net/gazette/JUL08/marshall/>

In order to reduce school dropouts while increasing student achievement, a nonprofit public charitable organization has been created to implement the [**DISCIPLINE WITHOUT STRESS TEACHING MODEL**](#). Any public urban, suburban, or rural elementary, intermediate/junior/middle school, or high school in the U.S.A. in a *low economic area* can apply.

Learning requires motivation, but *motivation to learn cannot be forced*. Highly effective teachers realize this, so they prompt students to *want* to put forth effort in their learning by creating curiosity, challenge, and interest in meaningful lessons. In addition, *and especially with youth in poverty*, these successful teachers also create *positive relationships* with their students by practicing *positivity, choice, and reflection*. These practices are part of the teaching model.

If the school staff desires to implement the model, the school will receive free books describing the teaching model and free staff development assistance to implement the model. Applications are online at [**www.DisciplinewWithoutStress.org**](http://www.DisciplinewWithoutStress.org).

This teaching model *avoids approaches that inhibit motivation for responsibility and learning*. **Following are ten examples commonly used in schools today that are so counterproductive that they exacerbate the increasing dropout rate of schools today—especially in urban areas.**

1. Being reactive

Teachers too often become stressed by **reacting** to inappropriate behavior. It is far more effective to employ a **proactive** approach **at the outset** to inspire students to **want** to behave responsibly and then use a non-adversarial response whenever they do not.

2. Reliance on rules

Rules are meant to control, not inspire. Rules are necessary in games but when used between people, **enforcement of rules automatically creates adversarial relationships.** A more effective approach is to teach procedures and inspire responsible behavior through expectations and reflection. See [Rules.](#)

3. Aiming at obedience

Obedience does not create desire. A more effective approach is to **promote responsibility; obedience then follows** as a natural by-product.

4. Creating negatives

The brain thinks in pictures, not in words. When people tell others what NOT to do, the "don't" is what the brain images. Example: "Don't look at your neighbor's paper!" **Always communicate in positive terms of what you DO want.** Example: Keep your eyes on your own paper.

5. Alienating students

Even the poorest salesperson knows not to alienate a customer, but teachers too often talk to students in ways that prompt negative feelings. Negative feelings stop any desire of students to do what the teacher would like them to do. **People do "good" when they feel "good," not when they feel bad.**

6. Confusing classroom management with discipline

Classroom management is the **teacher's responsibility** and has to do with teaching, practicing, and reinforcing procedures. **Discipline,** in contrast, is the **student's responsibility** and has to do with self-control. **Having clarity between these the two is necessary** for both preventing and solving problems. See [Classroom Management.](#)

7. Assuming

Too often, teachers **assume students know how to do what is expected of them.** A more effective approach is (a) teaching expectations and procedures, (b) having the students practice, (c) having students visualize the process, and later (d) reinforcing the procedure by having them practice again. This process is **necessary** in order to have students be **successful in performing the activity.**

8. Employing coercion

This approach is **least effective** in changing behavior. Although teachers can control students temporarily, **teachers cannot change students. PEOPLE CHANGE THEMSELVES,** and the most effective approach for actuating students to change is to **eliminate coercion.** **NOTE: Noncoercion is not to be confused with permissiveness or not using authority.**

9. Imposing consequences

Although consistency is important, **imposing the same consequence** on all students **is the least fair approach.** When a consequence is **imposed,** be it called "logical" or "natural," students are **deprived of ownership** in the decision. A more effective and fairer approach is to **ELICIT a CONSEQUENCE** or a **PROCEDURE TO REDIRECT IMPULSES** that will help each student become more responsible. This can easily be accomplished by asking people if they would rather be treated as a group or as individuals. They will readily have a preference to be treated as individuals and have ownership in the decision that will **help** them, rather than hurt them.

10. Relying on external approaches

We want to assist young people to be self-disciplined and responsible. **Both traits require internal motivation,** but rewarding behavior and imposing punishments are external approaches. They also place the responsibility on someone else to instigate a change and, thereby, fail the critical test: **How effective are they when no one is around?** See [External Approaches](#). The greatest reward comes from the self-satisfaction of one's efforts. In addition, by rewarding kids with something **they** value (candy, stickers, prizes), we simply **reinforce their childish values** when what we really hope to do is to teach them about values that will last a lifetime.

In contrast to these counterproductive approaches, the *Discipline Without Stress Teaching Model* uses approaches that eliminate counterwill, the natural response to coercion.

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