

# Shouting Won't Grow Dendrites

Second Edition

*20 Techniques  
to Detour Around  
the Danger Zones*

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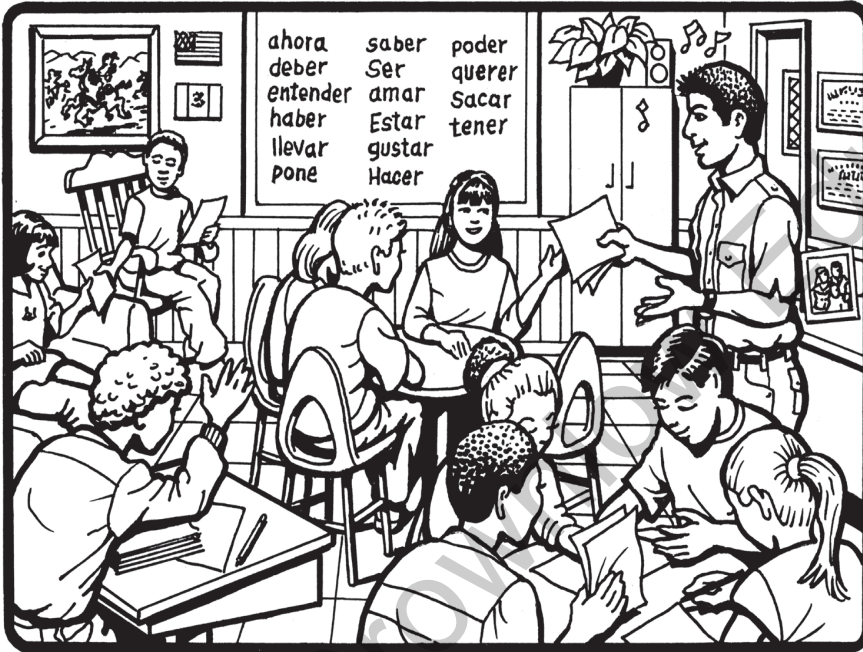
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The lighting provided is a combination of natural light from the windows on one side of the room and low lamp lighting on the other side. As none of Mr. Hernandez's students have allergies, there is a distinct smell of vanilla in the classroom that has a calming effect on the brains of students. There is a word wall of Spanish vocabulary on one wall along with some pieces of artwork. On Mr. Hernandez's desk are pictures of his wife, children, and dogs. On the wall beside his desk are his degrees. There are some live plants adorning the room.



It took a while, but Mr. Hernandez has managed to develop a relationship with each of his students. He started with the ones that he thought probably needed him most. He gives students the confidence to believe that they can learn Spanish and uses brain-compatible strategies daily to engage the brains of his students. Learning in his class is challenging but so much fun! Today, they are participating in a role play of a real-life scenario of a typical day in the life of a teenager. The role play is presented in Spanish.

## ➔ BAD NEWS

Visualize yourself as a teacher in a one-room schoolhouse in the 1800s. A student has aggravated you for the fifth time in the same day! You have had enough, so you pull a revolver concealed under your jacket and demand that the student sit down immediately or be buried in the schoolyard. The student promptly sits down.

Fast-forward to the 2000s. A student has aggravated you for the fifth time in one day. You have had enough and request that the student sit down or be sent to the principal's office. The student curses you, laughs, and continues his or her mischief.

# 2

## Expect the Best!

*I don't become what I think I can!*  
*I don't become what **you** think I can!*  
*I become what I think **you** think I can!*

Kerman, S., 1979

### WHAT: YOU GET WHAT YOU EXPECT



You may have noticed that, in almost every school where students change classes, there is a group of students who will be perfectly behaved in one classroom and out of control in another. Why does this happen? It may have to do with teacher expectations. You get what you expect! Students tend to live up or down to the expectations afforded them. Effective classroom managers possess the highest of expectations for student success and put plans in place to ensure that those expectations are met.

The research on expectations started in the 1960s. It began at Harvard University in the experimental psychology classroom of Dr. Robert Rosenthal. Dr. Rosenthal's students were charged with the task of getting white mice to run a maze in the shortest time possible. He divided his class into an experimental and a control group. Students in the control group were told that their mice were regular, run-of-the-mill lab mice. Students in the experimental group were told that they had carefully bred, top-of-the-line mice and to expect great things of them.

The rest is a matter of record. The mice in the experimental group ran the maze three to four times faster than those in the control group. In fact, there was no difference between the mice in the two groups. They were just randomly assigned to the experimenters; however, the students in the experimental group used more motivating and supportive interactions, and look what resulted! You get what you expect!

Robert Rosenthal teamed with a researcher by the name of Lenore Jacobson to ascertain whether what worked in the laboratory would work in a school system. They told specific groups of teachers in the Los Angeles County schools that they were being given students who had been identified by a test as late bloomers and to expect great achievement from these students this particular year. Other groups of teachers were told nothing

Preschool students who experienced wall colors that appealed to them as well as other positive environmental changes cooperated more after their exposure than before (Read, Sugawara, & Brandt, 1999).

When colors are used in close proximity to words in texts, colors can enhance a student's memory of the texts (Wallace, West, Ware, & Dansereau, 1998).

Color is being used successfully to reduce stress and create a sense of well-being in health care facilities (Frasca-Beaulieu, 1999).

Fifty years ago, it was found that the warm, shortwave colors of red, orange, and yellow tended to arouse people even if they didn't appear pleasing. The cool, long-wave colors of blues and greens tended to have a more calming effect (Shaie & Heiss, 1964).

## HOW: CLASSROOM APPLICATION



- Use high-energy colors such as red, orange, or deep yellow to motivate or excite students. Many primary classrooms are replete with colorful rugs and bulletin boards that catch the eye of the students and create an air of excitement in the room.
- Use calming colors such as blues, greens, pastels, or earth tones to create a more relaxing classroom atmosphere.
- Blue dry-erase or permanent markers are preferable for writing on the board, document camera, or a flip chart. However, for emphasis, use red markers. For example, if you want your students to focus on the punctuation marks in a sentence, write the sentence in blue and the punctuation marks in red.
- When grading papers, use more calming markers such as blue or green to make comments or correct mistakes. Red tends to be more alarming and offensive to the brain, particularly when it is coupled with negative remarks or recommendations.
- Have students who need them place pastel-colored acetate sheets on top of their textbooks or stark white paper when reading. Some students have improved focus and reading performance when looking through these colored sheets. Different students will read best with different colors, so keep a set of various colors in the classroom.
- Place colored markers or pencils on the school supply list for your students. Have them use these markers or colored pencils to underline important concepts or key words and phrases in their notes for emphasis. Color will call attention to crucial notes and make them easier for the brain to recall.



- The brain pays attention to things that are novel, new, or different. Keep novelty alive in the classroom by changing things in the environment such as rearranging student desks, bringing in plants, or introducing different types of music in support of the lesson.

- Dressing in a novel way, moving around the room, or changing the pace of the class or the tone of your voice are other ways to maintain students' attention (Feinstein, 2004).

- Changing students' locations in the room is a way to give them a fresh and different perspective. In fact, simply having students learn something in one location in the room and review it while sitting in a different location places the information at two different sites in the brain, enabling students to recall it from either place.

- The best way to keep novelty alive in the classroom is to vary instruction using the brain-compatible strategies outlined in Chapter 9. While it is important to maintain consistent classroom rituals and procedures, it is equally important to use a variety of methods for delivering instruction. This way, students come to class excited because they never know what to expect. For example, when teaching vocabulary, have students role-play the definition, illustrate the meaning, visualize the word connected to its definition, or write a song that symbolizes the concept.

- Relevance is a key component in understanding and retention. When students can see the connection between what they are learning and their world, retention improves. Therefore, always use real-life examples to illustrate points being made in a lesson. For example, when teaching students to solve word problems, I never begin with the problems in the math text. I use the names of students in the class and make up original problems based on actual events in their lives. For example, when teaching a lesson that helped students solve word problems by setting up an algebraic equation, I asked Jocelyn, Jamar, and Camry about a trip to the movies and set the equation up involving the outing.

- Emotion is an important way that the brain stores information. Anything emotional that happened in your personal life or in the world at large is long remembered. For example, in the opening of one lesson on the Holocaust, show poignant scenes from *Schindler's List*. In another lesson, don't tell students what concept you are teaching, but make alarming statements about teenagers as soon as they get in the classroom. When students are really upset, announce that they have just experienced the negative effects of *propaganda*. You'll have their attention.

- Teach your content with enthusiasm. Show passion and love for the subject you teach, and that passion will become contagious. There is nothing better for maintaining the attention of students than an interesting lesson taught by a motivated teacher. After all, one of the major reasons students disrupt is boredom.

REFLECTION



**What consequences will be effective in my classroom? (Remember that consequences may be necessary, but their use should be limited because they tend not to change misbehavior for most students.)**

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