

Table of Contents

About the Authors	xi
Preface	xiii
Introduction	xv
Fast and Easy Education	xviii
Five Principals for Educators.....	xx
Chapter 1: The First “R”	1
Teaching Responsibility	2
Establish Sensible Limits.....	3
Provide Healthy, Viable Choices.....	4
Specify Consequences	5
Elicit Commitment to Change	6
Develop Remorse	7
Supporting Backsliders	10
Responsibility Is Not Easy.....	11
Chapter 2: Change Starts Within	13
Obstacles to Change.....	13
Working Within Limited Frameworks	14
Offering a Limited Selection of Choices.....	15
Feeling Pressured to “Do Something”	16
Losing Control of Our Emotions.....	17
Not Recognizing Stress	19
Being Pressured by Outside Forces and Community Demands	20
Giving in to Habit	21
Being Influenced by Former Teachers.....	22
Overcoming the Obstacles to Change.....	23
Reduce Isolation	23

Look for Common Ground.....	24
Learn From Techniques That Fail.....	25
Chapter 3: Attitudes and Beliefs.....	27
Believe That Change Is Possible	27
Stay Connected Without Taking It Personally.....	28
Change the Label	30
Continue Accepting Students Who Reject You.....	31
Be As Tough As Necessary	32
Be Creative: Invent Interventions That Work.....	34
Expect to Feel Uneasy As You Try New Things	35
Understand That Students Become More Responsible	
When Given the Opportunity	36
Guard Against Burnout.....	36
Chapter 4: Why Students Misbehave.....	39
Making the Diagnosis.....	41
They Want to Be Noticed and Feel Connected.....	41
They Want to Hide Feelings of Inadequacy	42
They Do Not Know Better.....	43
They Are Ruled by Impulse	44
They Seek Fun and Stimulation	46
They Do Not See the Connection Between	
School and Life.....	47
They Cannot Empathize	49
They Want to Have Influence	50
They Want to Express Anger.....	51
Focusing on the Future	52
Chapter 5: Choosing the Best Discipline Strategy	53
The Five Criteria	54
Does It Preserve Dignity or Cause Humiliation?	54
Does It Demand Obedience or Teach Responsibility?.....	55
Does It Motivate Students to Learn?.....	56
Does It Lead to a Commitment to Change?.....	56

Does It Work?.....	57
Three Kinds of Discipline Strategies	57
Crisis Strategies.....	58
Short-Term Strategies	62
Long-Term Strategies.....	68
Unconventional Discipline Strategies	71
Using Humor and Nonsense	72
Agreeing With Refusals.....	72
Dealing With the “What Are You Going to Do About It?” Response.....	73
Giving an Improbable Answer	73
Thanking Students for Proper Behavior Before You Get It	73
Showing Your Own Imperfection.....	74
Using Audio- or Videotape	74
Throwing a Tantrum in a Controlled Way	75
Reducing Stress.....	75
Behaving Paradoxically	75
Chapter 6: Seven Goals for Successful Discipline	79
Create a Caring Classroom	80
Teach Self-Control	83
Increasing Students’ Interest in Self-Control	85
Methods of Self-Control.....	86
Promote Concern for Others.....	88
Establish Clearly Defined Limits	90
Using Values and Rules.....	91
Emphasize Responsibility Rather Than Obedience.....	92
Teach Conflict Resolution Skills.....	96
Seven Steps to Success.....	96
Five Questions to Ask	97
Two-Person Problem Solving.....	97
Problem-Solving Page.....	98
SODA	98

Class Planning and Problem-Solving.....	99
Combine and Network With Others.....	104
Chapter 7: Special Discipline Problems.....	109
Lack of Motivation	109
Emphasize Effort	110
Create Hope.....	112
Respect Power.....	114
Provide an Appropriate Level of Challenge.....	116
Build Relationships	118
Problems With Attention.....	119
Twenty-One Drug-Free Strategies	121
Containing Gangs.....	130
Meet Basic Needs.....	130
Do Not Allow Gangs to Represent at School	131
Be Vigilant in Enforcing the Law	131
Identify Service Projects That Need	
Student Involvement.....	131
Show Respect.....	132
Meet With Gang Leaders	132
Monitor Controlled Substances	133
Chapter 8: Frequently Asked Questions	135
Chapter 9: Conclusion: Worth the Struggle	151
Appendix: Case Study—Niles Community Schools	153
Behavior Vision	153
Background and Rationale.....	153
Implementation	154
Guiding Principles.....	155
Code of Conduct	157
Bibliography	159

Chapter 1

The First “R”

Discipline is less about punishing and more about teaching responsibility.

The purpose of school has been defined in many ways. School prepares students for college, jobs, and citizenship. School keeps students off the streets until they grow up. School teaches students how to think and socializes them. School teaches the three R’s: reading, writing, and arithmetic. But difficult students cannot learn the three R’s until they learn the most important R first: responsibility.

Perhaps the most fundamental and important goal of schooling is teaching the tools of responsible behavior. Virtually every school mission statement includes this concept. Unfortunately, the day-to-day process of discipline in most schools focuses far more on creating obedience. Although obedience is necessary for children to learn, it is in many ways the opposite of responsibility. Obedience requires students to do what they are told. Responsibility requires students to make the best decisions they can with their ability and understanding of the consequences.

We all make mistakes and learn from them, and we then go on to make new mistakes. Sometimes we do not learn from our mistakes and go on repeating them until we finally learn our lesson. Unless it has life-threatening consequences, making a mistake is not a tragedy. Not learning from a mistake is. Certainly, obedience is important. With it, society, schools, and families could not function. We need limits or rules that are followed without choice.

But we also need the freedom to make our own decisions. Finding a balance between obedience and responsibility can be difficult. If we require too much obedience, children will not learn how to make decisions on their own or to rebel when they should. Require too much responsibility, however, and a child's life can become unstructured, unpredictable, and chaotic. The balance lies in establishing rules or limits for what is not negotiable, while teaching students to behave responsibly. This balance is the core of an effective discipline plan.

Discipline models that teach responsibility differ most from those that teach obedience in how consequences are chosen and delivered. A model that teaches obedience uses punishment as a deterrent, seeks to create the fear of bad consequences when students break the rules, and rewards students for doing what is expected of them. Punishments and rewards may be effective for a limited time in the presence of an authority figure, but they will become almost entirely ineffective in the absence of that authority. Punishments and rewards teach students that breaking the rules is okay as long as they do not get caught and that they should be rewarded for good behavior. The long-term result is either compliant students who have trouble thinking for themselves or students who continue to make poor choices and misbehave as they improve their skills in avoiding detection.

Teaching Responsibility

Teaching responsibility requires motivating students to want to change, teaching them decision-making skills, and providing them with new skills for better behavior. They also need role models who can demonstrate these new behaviors in action. Students cannot do what they have never seen or what they do not know how to do. Interventions work best when students are taught what to do instead of simply being told that what they did was wrong.

Responsibility is taught within a structure of setting limits, providing choices, learning from the consequences of those choices, making a commitment to change, and developing a sense of remorse.

Establish Sensible Limits

Limits without choices (see, for example, *Assertive Discipline*, Canter & Canter, 1997) teach obedience. Choices without limits (see Kohn, 1996) teach chaos. There can be no true choices if there are no limits. More importantly, students cannot learn from the natural consequences of their actions when they are allowed to make choices without limits. Consider the following examples of how a teacher can intervene with a student who has hit another student.

- Limit, no choice: "Hitting is against the rules. If you hit again, you will spend Saturday in detention."
- Choice, no limit: "Tell me how you feel about hitting."
- Choice within limits: "Hitting is not acceptable. The next time you are angry, these are your choices. You can tell the person how you feel without hitting. You can demand that you be treated fairly. You can walk away. You can write a note. But you cannot hit. And because you broke the rule, your consequence is _____."

Without limits, there can be no responsibility. Limits draw the line between what is acceptable and what is not. They provide safe boundaries that allow students to explore and define themselves. In school, limits are rules. These rules must be selected carefully, based on values, and reflect the beliefs of most faculty and students. Most importantly, the rules must support and be compatible with the goal of promoting student learning.

Along with clearly defined limits, students must be confronted in a dignified way when they step beyond those boundaries. In successful programs for challenging students, adults and youth hold each other accountable for their behavior and are more likely to call each other on moves designed to manipulate or “get over.” Youth in these programs note that others did not let them “get away with stuff.”

Positive confrontation can be facilitated by having a mentoring process in place. This strategy can also help prevent an us-versus-them polarization. For example, a mentoring program called “tagging” was used effectively at a coed facility for 13- to 18-year-old adjudicated youth. When a new youth arrived, he or she would spend 2 weeks “tagging” with someone who had been in program for a substantial period of time. The pair roomed together, ate together, went to school together, and essentially did everything together. It was expected that the established youth would help acclimate the new arrival not only to the rules, limits, and protocol but to the more subtle nuances of the facility as well.

A similar program is used by an inner-city elementary school that has established a “student ambassador” program that pairs new students with “ambassadors” who show them the ropes, including the schools do’s and don’ts. The school discovered that some of its best “ambassadors” were its most difficult students.

Provide Healthy, Viable Choices

Choices are different from setting limits. Choices are often replacements for unacceptable behavior: “You cannot throw your books on the floor, but you can be angry in other ways. You can calm yourself by talking, writing, or coloring.” Choices must also be real. A threat presented as a choice is not a real choice because it does not improve a student’s ability to make decisions. Instead, it is simply a more sophisticated form of bullying. Telling a student

to “either stop interrupting or receive a detention” is a threat. The difference between a threat and a choice is control. When the teacher knows which answer is correct or there is only one way to respond (the teacher’s way), then there is no choice, only a threat. By contrast, real choices have at least two alternatives that are acceptable, and a teacher will have no preconceived preference for one or more of the alternatives. If the teacher does have a preference, he or she takes responsibility by sharing it: “I want you in class on time because I miss you when you aren’t here and I’d prefer to avoid the hassle of writing a referral.” The following examples illustrate the difference between threatening a student and giving him or her a choice.

- Threat: “Stop interrupting or you’ll receive a detention.”
- Choice: “Stop interrupting. If you really want to tell me something, you can either raise your hand or write it down and meet with me privately when we can discuss your concern without interrupting class.”

The student must see the choices as viable. If we offer a choice a student would never select, then it is not a real choice. Asking a student to “either tell me which of your friends did it or face the consequence yourself” is a choice most students would never make. Sometimes it is difficult to predict what might be a viable choice for a student, but common sense can help. Students rarely see as viable any choice that they perceive as a violation of their values or culture or of the values or culture of their friends (especially boy- and girlfriends), parents, or other teachers.

Specify Consequences

Consequences are the results of our choices. Consequences should be based on rules (limits) and guided by principles (values) that directly relate to and reinforce the reason for the rules. It is much more effective, for example, to ask a student to do something

nice for the person he or she has offended (a consequence based on the principle of making amends) than to make the student take a timeout and sit quietly for 10 minutes (a punishment). As long as consequences do not involve danger or other unacceptable outcomes, they are superior to external punishments.

Without consequences, students learn that their choices are irrelevant and that their behavior has no influence on themselves or others. The reality is, however, that our choices always have consequences even though they may be hidden or subtle. However, some natural consequences may not be effective deterrents in a school setting. For example, one consequence of hitting another student is that the student might not like the attacker any longer. That consequence will probably do little to prevent the misbehaving student from hitting again. Another consequence, such as having the student write a behavioral plan or practice appropriate behavior, may teach that hitting is wrong and that there are better ways to express negative feelings.

Elicit Commitment to Change

Anyone who has tried to lose weight, save money, or become more organized knows how difficult it is to change behavior. We believe that changing our own behavior is the most difficult of life's challenges. If we have trouble changing our own behavior when we want to change, imagine how difficult it is to change a child's behavior when he or she does not want to change. Without a commitment to change from the child, there is little hope that any intervention will have lasting results.

Developing a commitment to change in students is not easy, because it requires that students not only agree that what they did was inappropriate, but also that they be willing to change even if it requires hard work. We can facilitate commitment to change in the following ways: