Respect, Responsibility, and The Relationship Connection Lecture Notes

The most powerful weapon that teachers can use in developing respect and responsibility is to build a positive relationship with their students. Now, this may not seem like it's too hard to do, but it is hard to build a relationship with a student that you really don't like. Oh, I know we all have been taught to say, "I really like you, but I don't like your behavior." In case you missed it, it is very hard to like someone when you don't like their behavior because what are people if they are not a compilation of what they do? So let's realize that kids do have a sixth sense and really know if a teacher likes them or not. Understand that as a teacher you have to come clean and say to yourself, *I really don't like this kid, he is a wise guy, but how can I build a relationship with him that will make my life bearable when he is in the room*? This conscious effort must be made because, if you don't like someone, you normally shy away from even attempting to build a relationship with that person.

In order to build a relationship with students we have to have an idea about how the brain works.(She illustration Three) The brain is formed in three layers: the stem, which is where the brain goes for survival; the limbic system, which is the mid brain where the emotions are located; and the top of the brain, called the neo-cortex, where learning takes place. All incoming information has to be filtered by the emotions in the limbic system before it can make it to the neo-cortex for processing and learning. The minute the brain is placed under any kind of stress, it downshifts and goes into the stem for survival. The stem provides the necessary adrenaline, increased heart rate, and more oxygen during times of stress. That's why when a person gets placed under stress the heart rate and breathing rate goes up. The primary responsibility of the brain is the survival of its owner. The only two ways that a person survives is through the fight or flight mechanism. Once a person is placed under stress he will either run away or confront his attacker. Students who engage teachers in struggles and are disrespectful have learned early on in their life how to use the fight mechanism. To build a relationship with a difficult student requires that thought, time, and energy be spent breaking through the emotional wall.

Getting off the Brick

Often, teachers realize that they may have one or more students in their class who may be disrespectful and irresponsible. Once the teacher recognizes that this problem exists, they need to ask themselves two questions. Do I want to spend my energy battling this student everyday or do something that will ease the strain of having this student in the room and prevent the struggles from occurring? I think the answer is obvious. So what are the steps that need to be taken?

First, you need to acknowledge that the relationship you have with the student is strained. Also, understand that you may have contributed to the problem. Keep in the back of your mind that any negative comments you make to other faculty members concerning how you feel about the student may get back to the student, so try it a point not to talk negatively about any student you have. What is the expression on your face when you see the student enter the room? Do you express a feeling of relief when the student is absent, and do the other students in the class notice your sigh of relief when the student is not present that day?

The second thing that needs to be done is to schedule a meeting with the student alone. At this meeting discuss with the student your concern about his behavior, and ask the student if you as the teacher have contributed to the poor relationship that exists between the two of you. Understand that the student will probably not say that you are the problem. Let the student know that if there is anything that you have done to contribute to this problem that you are sorry and ask for the student’s forgiveness. Yes forgiveness. Remember, you are doing this to make your life more bearable. Your apology should be genuine. Keep in the back of your mind that you are trying to solve a difficult problem here, and that you may have to go out of your own comfort zone.

Once this is done, the student will now want to check things out to see if you are for real. He will engage you again and try to have another power struggle with you. Your attitude at the time of the next power struggle will communicate to the student that you are for real, then the brick with your name on it will be removed from the student's head.

Remember, power struggles take two people, and if you're having a power struggle, then that is an indication that you are trying and vying for power yourself.

A person can only control one thing in this life and that's himself. If we waste time trying to control others, our own frustration will become obvious to the student, which will only make the power struggle more intense.

Work on yourself, and ask yourself very plainly, why am I having power struggles with my students? Maybe you're having power struggles with adults as well. Try controlling the things that you can control and work on your own strategies for diffusing the struggles rather than complaining or blaming other factors for the problems that you are having.

All Roads Lead To Attention

Rudolf Dreikurs (February 8, 1897, Vienna - May 25, 1972, Chicago) was an American psychiatrist and educator who developed psychologist Alfred Adler's system of individual psychology into a pragmatic method for understanding the purposes of reprehensible behavior in children and for stimulating cooperative behavior without punishment or reward.

He suggested that human misbehavior is the result of feeling a lack of belonging to one's social group. When this happens the child acts from one of four "mistaken goals": power, attention, revenge or avoidance (inadequacy).

Dreikurs' reasoned that these students will "act out" based on the four, principled, "mistaken goals." The first reason for their misbehavior is that they desire attention. If they do not receive the attention they crave through their actions (good or bad, e.g. doing well on a paper or throwing a tantrum), they move onto seeking power (e.g. they may refuse to complete a paper). If their power struggle is thwarted, they then try to get revenge. If even revenge does not get the desired response, they begin to feel inadequate.

I teach a course in Cooperative Discipline, which is based in part on the Dreikurs model of the four immediate goals of attention, power revenge, and avoidance of failure. When I first began to teach the course I believed that these four motivations worked in isolation and were almost unrelated to each other. What I recently came to discover was that if a student doesn't receive attention for his behavior good or bad he will raise the stakes and move on to the next level and engage the teacher in a power struggle. If the student loses the struggle he will seek revenge and it is usually on the teacher.

When the required positive attention is given to a student they are then less likely to seek attention in a negative manner. Students who receive positive attention on a consistent basis will be more respectful, more responsible, and will find it far easier to connect with teachers, their classmates, and others of significance in their lives. When students don't receive positive attention they can become frustrated and angry and ultimately they become filled with despair. They begin to feel that they can't please their parents or teachers no matter what they do so what's the use in trying at all.

All roads lead to attention. When positive attention is given to a student The New 3R's become easier to teach. Students begin to feel recognized for their achievement and don't seek attention in negative ways that destroy the foundation of respect, and responsibility.

As a young parent I became aware of the importance of positive attention with my oldest daughter Sarah who is now almost 18 years old. When she was about 5 years old I was in the middle of my career as a school administrator. I worked long hours and usually came home exhausted from my day. I would get home and quickly change clothes and read the paper or just try and unwind. I didn't know it at the time but Sarah was waiting very patiently for me to get home. She wanted to play and she wanted to play with dad. She would come up to me and say, "daddy will you play with me?' I would say to her, "honey daddy is very tired, let me relax for about 30 minutes and then I will be ready to play with you, okay." She would come back to me after the 30 minutes and she would be ready to play. I played with her, but I really didn't have my heart in it. I mean who wants to play tag, or play dolls with a 5 year old girl. I never once came home and said what do you want to do, and never had an enthusiastic attitude when I played with her. Sarah's behavior began to change; she became more disrespectful and less compliant. I found myself constantly correcting her and I was becoming more and more frustrated with her behavior and attitude.

Let's look at this from a child's perspective. Anytime my father is spending time with me I am doing something bad, and I get my dad's attention. It is to my advantage to act up because that's the only time that my father spends time with me and gives me the attention that I want. It doesn't really matter to a child what type of attention they get. If they can't get positive attention they know that they can get negative attention. It wasn't until I started giving my daughter the required attention and involved myself with her by playing board games, going to the park, tickling her, and taking a real interest in her emotional needs did she become more respectful, responsible, and compliant.

All roads do lead to attention and if the correct attention is given to a child the New 3R's will be far easier to teach.

Teaching Respect

PRAISE—Begin a praise day and have all students write down something they like about another person in the class. It could start, "The nicest thing about you is…" and have the students finish the paragraph. This encourages respect amongst students and makes it the norm in your classroom. One student gets a turn everyday. The teacher becomes quality control and filters out any negative comments. One student a day leaves with a folder of nice comments made about them. Of course teachers should use praise as a tool for motivation. Remember to praise character, not achievement.

KEEP PROMISES—Students will wrap their life around promises you make to them. Make them sparingly and carefully. Consider all the variables and make sure you can control them. Don't tell students they can bring candy to school for Halloween, then find out administration doesn't allow it. Make promises and keep them.

SINCERITY AND HONESTY—Students can pick out a phony a mile away. Be sincere with your concerns and student abilities.

SAY HELLO—Say hello to all students. This encourages communication, helps to break down any walls between you and the student, and helps build a positive relationship.

CALL BY NAME—*NO NICKNAMES OR DEROGATORY REMARKS*

Don't fall into the trap of calling students a name that their friends call them. Remember* Leave it to Beaver? *His teacher did not call him Beaver; she called him Theodore.

AFFECTION—Because of the fear of touching, teachers have shied away from touching their students. We are not talking here about inappropriateness, but rather a hand on the shoulder, a high five, or a pat on the back. This not only affirms but also makes the student feel that you recognize and are aware of them.

LISTENING—There are five types of listening: ignoring, pretend listening, selective listening, attentive listening, and finally empathic listening. We all want

to be empathic listeners. This is when we listen with our body posture and our eyes. We reflect back content and feeling. We don't offer any advice but rather use listening as a means of strengthening the relationship. We want avoid reading our own autobiography into the conversation.

***2-3-4-5 X 10—**Every day for ten days straight have a 2, 3, 4, or 5 minute conversation with one of your students just like you would with a good friend. Have several of these going on every day. Around day eight the students will look to you for the conversation and develop a greater sense for you as a person.

LITTLE COURTESIES—The little things are the big things. Model what you want from your students.

RECOGNIZE EFFORTS—Recognize when a student does his best and focus on what he did that was right rather than what was wrong. Be positive and value the differing abilities of your students

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Encouraging Responsibility

BE PROACTIVE NOT REACTIVE

Understanding your own values and expectations is critical if students are going to learn responsible behavior. Too often, teachers react to students who fail to follow procedures, and the student may not even be aware of what the procedures are. Proactively teach students the behaviors you expect in your

classroom. **AWARENESS**

Try to get students to focus their attention on their own behavior and how it affects others. Never, never, ask, “Why did you do that?” Always ask, “What did you do?” Too often, when a student is asked why they did something it gives them an opportunity to alibi their actions and use circumstances or another person as a reason for their irresponsibility. Asking what rather than why forces the student to focus on his own actions.

BALANCE RULES AND REGULATIONS WITH COMPASSION AND UNDERSTANDING

Influencing the choices that students make can be accomplished when a teacher balances rules, regulations, compassion, and understanding. Too often, teachers believe that a giving the student a good talking to takes the place of a meaningful consequence. The talking to needs to take place after the consequences have been imposed. The student should at this point be given instructions on how to be more responsible.

ASSUME NOTHING—TEACH EVERYTHING

When a teacher gives instruction, he/she should never assume that all students heard the instruction, and more importantly that the students understood the instructions. Teach and re-teach procedures, behaviors, and courtesies that we want students to exhibit in your classroom.

MAKE A PLAN

Develop a plan with the student that encourages responsibility. Present the problem to the student and ask him/her, “What are we going to do about it?”