

Meta Matters

Tips for New Teachers

Issue 2

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Ten Top Emergency Techniques for Challenging Behaviour

With the best will in the world there are times when things can get out of hand in the classroom. Effective classroom management is the best way of ensuring that lessons run smoothly. Read issue 1 of Meta Matters to get tips on classroom management. Sometimes even the best laid plans and lessons can and do occasionally go astray and sometimes you may find yourself with one challenging student who doesn't respond as you would like them to. So in this newsletter we give you some emergency techniques to help you on the rare occasions that a student causes a problem or the group runs amok! These tips do come with a health warning though. If you find yourself using these techniques more than occasionally then it would be a good idea to review your classroom management strategy and get advice and help from your mentor or head of department.

The following techniques involve 3 levels of intervention. Start with the lowest level and only work to a higher level if absolutely necessary.



And then.....

8 - Level 3
Step outside

9 - Level 3
The Hot Spot

10 - Begin each day
afresh

Level 1 Technique 1 The 5 second pause

You sense the energy level change in the class or feel that there is a potential for things getting out of hand or escalating.

Our instincts are very important in the classroom and often let us know that we should be doing something! There isn't anything specific yet so its easy to ignore what is happening. Don't do this because it's not likely to go away.

Stand in the centre of the room and say 'Do you know what? Lets all just stop for a moment.' Pause and look at each person briefly, Then say 'That's better—lets all just take a deep breath and a moment to relax.' Take a deep breath in and breath out slowly. Say 'that's better so lets move on.' Some students may look at you oddly or make a comment. Ignore this. They will have taken the breath with you and that is all you wanted and at least you will feel more in control.

Level 1 Technique 2 The 10 second funny quip

Humour can defuse many challenging situations and being able to see the funny side and make a joke with the students can often provide a way out for a student who is backing themselves into a corner.

Be aware of the difference between humour and sarcasm. Sarcasm can be hurtful and can be seen as harassment so be careful to make sure that no-one is the butt of a joke but everyone can smile and laugh about



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Level 1 Technique 3 The 20 second intervention

Given better choices, students usually make better choices but sometimes the choice is between complying with what you want them to do or keeping 'face' with their peers. If you ask a student to do something and then stand and wait for them to comply they may not want to do so because they perceive your request as a power struggle and don't want to 'loose' in front of others.



In this technique simply walk up to the student, make your request and thank them before walking away without looking back. For example; 'Joshua put your feet on the floor please. Thank you'. Do not use a question inflection in your voice and say thank you to presuppose that the action has already happened. Joshua may not comply straight away but will almost certainly do so within 30 seconds.

Level 2 Technique 4 Use a 'Yes set' to gain agreement

If one student or a small group are not engaging, rather than focus on what they are doing wrong, focus on what they are doing right. Approach them and say Well done girls you are all sitting down, in my class and having a discussion. Now you can start to work together to complete page one of the work sheet in front of you. When people hear 3 things that are true they are likely to follow on with the 4th even though they may not have intended doing previously. This technique is taught in all classic sales training!

Level 2 Technique 5 The 1 minute conversation script

This script does not allow for any argument or retorts from the student and is designed to gain compliance quickly.

Use the students name and remind them of a good quality they have and how they have shown this in the past. Then contrast this with their current behaviour and state precisely what you would like them to do next. Thank them and walk away.

For example;

'Julia I know you are a helpful and kind person, I saw you helping Jo last week. What you are doing at the moment isn't helping the group to learn easily so what I would like you to do is stop upsetting Mary and Frank on your table and complete the work you have started quietly. Thank you for listening.' Walk away.

Level 2 Technique 6 The Choice – consequence point

This strategy simply offers a choice to the student and explains the consequences. Most teachers use the phrase ‘if you carry on doing that, I will have to, or you force me to do X’. This seems to offer a choice but is in fact a threat or a challenge. An alternative is to say; ‘Anna, you can continue to do interrupt the class, the consequences of continuing are that everyone in the class will be behind with the assignment and will have to complete it at home Follow this up with ‘When you stop interrupting and allow everyone to work quietly the consequences everyone can finish it today and have the evening to themselves. Its your choice Anna.



Level 3 Technique 7 The Emergency STOP



This technique requires that your temper and body language is under control and you are very calm and assertive. You can use this as an emergency technique when you see something that is potentially dangerous or harmful. Make a very clear and large gesture with your hand in the direction of the student—like a police stop sign. Look directly at the student and say STOP in a clear and firm voice. Then freeze. Keep your head still, maintain eye contact and stay silent. Done correctly the student will freeze too and won’t move until you give the instruction. Then calmly give your instructions. As soon as they do say thank you. Allow a period of time before you discuss the consequences with the student

Level 3 Technique 8 Step Outside

Rather than sending a student outside the class, it is often better to ask the student to step outside with you. Many of our students have experienced being excluded from a class, so going with them is a different and more adult response. Once outside follow a clear script.

State what you observe. ‘Michael, what I see you doing is....

State what you feel about this. This feels like.....

State what you want to happen. I would like you to.....

State your expectations of the student. I know you can do this because last week

.....

Level 3 Technique 9 The ‘Hot Spot’

Most guidance on challenging behaviour does not acknowledge that there may be times when you feel it is necessary to read the riot act to students. It is unfortunate if you do, but there are ways to ensure it is a very rare occurrence and does not spoil any good relations you have built up. Choose a different place in the room from where you normally stand. Move purposefully to this place and read the riot act. Keep going until everyone in the room looks contrite and is quiet. Then move back to the front of the room and change your state back to a pleasant and smiling one. Say that is much better, now lets move on. The bigger the distinction in your state the more your students will want you to stay away from the ‘hot spot’.



And Finally.....



*Inspire Empower
Aspire Transform*

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We look forward to hearing from you soon



Technique 10 Begin each day afresh

- Students can change very quickly and its really important not to label a student as a 'bad student'. Just because a student is challenging one day does not mean that they will continue to behave like that forever. If you think they will, our behaviour will reflect this unconsciously and the cycle will continue. So each day assume that each student will be committed and a joy to teach. Give each student a new chance every day and be amazed at how they respond to your belief and hope for them.

For further information and training on Managing Challenging Behaviour go to course information on the website

www.meta-training.org.uk

Dealing in 3 D — Disengagement, Disaffection and Disruption in the Classroom

Managing Reluctant Learners in the Classroom

Dealing with Challenging Behaviour in College

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Our highly skilled trainers utilise advanced learning practices, model skills and strategies that work.

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