

Behavior Crisis Management Tool #11

Developing Manageable Consequences

PURPOSE

The purpose of this issue is to provide you with manageable and realistic guidelines for inappropriate behavior on the part of your students.

EXAMPLES

John is a student who has been giving Mrs. Green a difficult time all day. John now does something minimal but because Mrs. Green has not dealt with him all day she comes across very harshly with her consequences. John does not understand because he does not see the incident as serious. The consequence that Mrs. Green has given John is later realized by her as too harsh and as a result of feeling guilty lets him off the consequence early.

Mrs. Menendez has tried to ignore Julio's attention seeking behavior all day because that is what she was taught to do. However, she is now feeling that it is getting out of control and feels she has waited too long to address it. Because she feels inadequate and may have done the wrong thing she takes it out on Julio with a very harsh consequence that is totally unmanageable.

Mr. Longo has given William a consequence for an inappropriate behavior but William is a very manipulative young man. William cleans the garbage off the floor, straightens out the desks and books around the room all in sight of Mr. Longo. Mr. Longo then calls him up and says to him that he does not have to serve the consequence because of his cooperative behavior. William has learned how to manipulate the system.

WHAT MAY NOT WORK

When it comes to providing consequences for inappropriate behavior, you must be very realistic, timely, and have the sense of conviction that the consequence you have chosen fits the behavior by the child. If this sense of equality between consequence and the type of inappropriate action is not met then you will be seen as over reactive, out of control, and your judgment will be questioned.

Because some teachers wait too long to address a behavior pattern their own frustration builds up and will sometime cloud the reality of the situation when they finally deal with it.

TRY THIS

1-LIMITS AND GUIDELINES ARE VERY NECESSARY FOR A CHILD'S EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

For children, realistic, fair and well defined limits and guidelines represent a "safety net" within which they can behave. Children will know that any act of poor judgment will be brought to their attention if limits are well defined. Consequently they will be brought back to the safety net. Being a teacher should not be a popularity contest. Such guidelines and limits should come from both the home and classroom. However, in some cases parents may not be equipped to provide the correct guidelines that make a child feel secure and therefore the school becomes the second chance for such options to be provided to the child.

2-ALL BEHAVIOR SHOULD HAVE A CONSEQUENCE

This means appropriate behavior is rewarded and negative behavior given consequences. Consistency, whether reward or consequence will assist the child in developing a frame of reference on how to behave.

3-CONSEQUENCES BY THEMSELVES WILL NOT WORK

Consequences tell children what not to do, but rewards tell children what behavior is acceptable. If long term changes in behavior are desired, then reward must be included. They can include verbal praise, written notes of thanks, extended playtime or computer time, or lunch with the teacher

4-CONSEQUENCES SHOULD BE LIMITED TO SOMETHING THAT YOU CAN CONTROL

Quantity or severity of consequence is not always important. The most important thing to remember with discipline is that you begin it and you end it. Maintaining both boundaries is crucial. In too many situations, the teacher may begin the discipline but due to its harshness, unrealistic expectations of time, manipulation by children or inability of the teacher to follow through, there is no closure. For young children with no concept of time, 2 minutes in a "time out" chair (controllable) rather than 10 minutes (uncontrollable) is just as productive. For older children it is very crucial to maintain realistic time limits since they can become more oppositional or defiant if the time is too long.

5-NEVER TRADE A CONSEQUENCE FOR A REWARD

If children do something inappropriate and then something appropriate, then the two incidents should be treated separately. If you begin to trade off, children become confused and may be forced to become manipulative in order to get out of the consequence. You can complement the child for the good behavior and provide a reward but still explain that the inappropriate behavior consequence must still be carried out.

6-FOCUS ON INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR, NOT THE PERSONALITY

Remember, children are not stupid, their inappropriate behavior is unacceptable. You may want to use such phrases as poor judgment, inappropriate behavior, lapse of judgment, acting before thinking etc., when confronting the act. Focusing on the act allows children to save face. Children that tend to grow up in homes where personalities are attacked tend to model that behavior in their social relationships.

7-CHOOSE YOUR BATTLEFIELDS WISELY

Try to view energy like money. In this way you will be deciding whether an issue is worth \$2.00 worth of energy or \$200.00. Investing too much energy in situations may lead to early teacher "burnout". However, it is very important that both teachers and assistant teachers agree on the priority of issues so that the child is not confused.

8-TRY TO PROJECT AN UNITED FRONT

If one teacher should disagree with the other's tactics or reasoning, try to discuss it at a private moment. Open disagreement concerning a disciplinary action can sometimes confuse children and place them in the uncomfortable position of having to choose between teachers.

9-DELAY A CONSEQUENCE WHEN YOU ARE ANGRY

The use of delay allows for a different perspective than that which is viewed at the height of anger. Say, "I am so upset now so go to your seat and I'll deal with you in 15 minutes." The use of delay will reduce impractical consequences.