

PROMOTING RESPONSIBILITY & LEARNING  
The Monthly Newsletter

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1. WELCOME

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MONTHLY DISCIPLINE AND LEARNING QUOTE:

"Life is the sum of all your choices."  
--Albert Camus, Nobel Laureate

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In a classic study, scientists put two rats in a cage, each of them locked in a running wheel. The first rat could exercise whenever he liked. The second was yoked to the first and forced to run when his counterpart did. Exercise usually reduces stress and encourages neuron growth, and indeed, the first rat's brain bloomed with new cells. The second rat, however, lost brain cells. He was doing something that should have been good for his brain,

but he lacked one crucial factor: control. He could not determine his own "workout" schedule, so he didn't perceive it as exercise. Instead, he experienced it as a literal rat race.

This experiment brings up a troubling point about stress. Psychologists have known for years that one of the biggest factors in how we process stressful events is how much control we have over our lives. As a rule, if we feel we're in control, we cope. If we don't, we collapse.

This exact point was made as it pertains to self-talk, victimhood thinking, and "choice-response thinking" on pages 14 - 17 in the book described at

<http://www.DisciplineWithoutStress.com/>

Available as an e-book at

<http://www.marvinmarshall.com/products.htm>

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NOTE: The April e-zine may be delayed because of my travel schedule. I will be the "core presenter" at the inaugural Caribbean Conference of School Administrators' International Best Practice Network in Jamaica, West Indies. Countries in attendance will be Anguilla, Antigua & Barbuda, Bahamas, Belize, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Dominica, Grand Cayman, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, Nevis, St. Kitts, St. Lucia, St. Vincent & The Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad & Tobago, Turks & Caicos Islands.

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## 2. PROMOTING RESPONSIBILITY

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I have shared the following demonstration with you, but it is significant enough that it bears being reinforced.

I use a chair turned on its side to demonstrate that OBEDIENCE DOES NOT CREATE DESIRE. I ask the audience to visualize that they are all students in my classroom. A chair is on its side, and I ask a student to pick it up. (For the experiment, all of the participants become the student.)

I then ask the audience to express their feelings when asked or told to put the chair under the desk where it belongs. Responses include "Why me?" and "I didn't put it there."

Then I present the following scenario: You are all still students in my classroom, but in this situation you are the first person to enter the room. I, as the teacher, do not see you enter because I am writing something on the front board. You see the chair on its side and take the initiative to place it under the desk where it belongs.

I then ask, "How did you feel?" Responses are "good, helpful, responsible, proud," etc.--always positive.

I make the point to the participants as I did in my classroom: If you want to feel good about yourself, take the initiative (Level D) to do the right thing because it is the right thing to do.

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With this in mind, I share a recent e-mail.

I want to share an incident I experienced regarding level D.

I purchased some items at the grocery store. When I took the bags out of my cart and prepared to leave the store for my car, I noticed I had a small key lime clutched in my hand that I had forgotten to put on the conveyor belt; so I hadn't paid for it. At ten for \$1, it would have cost ten cents. My first thought was, I don't want to walk all the way back to a cashier for ten cents. The store won't miss that meager amount. Nevertheless, I pulled a dime from my wallet and walked back to the nearest cashier and handed it to her, explaining the reason. She replied by saying, "God bless you for your honesty."

Well, I have to admit; I did feel better than I would have if I had simply walked to my car without paying the ten cents.

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Of course you may use this quote. I have received so much from your book, website, mailing that I'm happy if I can

contribute in any way.

Jean Pfeifer  
Reading Specialist  
Rio Rico, Arizona  
USA

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### 3. INCREASING EFFECTIVENESS

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After presenting at the conference of the California Association of Resource Specialists (CARS Plus, the California organization for special educators) last month, a question was posed to me: "What if the student refuses to answer any question you pose?"

My response:

Use two approaches: (1) Socratic dialog and (2) the Pygmalion effect.

1) Socratic dialog:

Lead the person through a series of questions. In this case, use THREE questions--all of them prompting a "YES" response.

2) Pygmalion effect:

Expecting the best from people can be a self-fulfilling prophecy.

EXample, "Do you think you are capable of making decisions?"

"Do you care about how you live your life?" "Do you believe

in yourself, as I believe in you, that you are capable

enough to be successful?"

Then leave the student with something to reflect upon, such as, "Give some thought as to where to start in order to reach your potential."

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### 4. IMPROVING RELATIONSHIPS

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The following relates to improved relationships between home and school from a post at

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/DisciplineWithoutStress/>

Here is a quick idea for making positive connections to parents. Often we try to make phone calls throughout the year, but this year, Darlene, my teaching partner, started to make it routine to phone parents whenever the child passes from one reading level to the next.

This has been a really wonderful thing to do.

First of all, it only takes a minute to make the call or leave a phone message that says basically, "Good news: Laurie passed another reading level today. She did well when doing her reading test; she made self-corrections, she sounded out words correctly and was able to retell the story well. I just wanted to thank you for helping her at home" (whether they seem to do this or not).

Secondly, it's totally positive--you're not giving any bad news, just purely good news. Every parent (especially the parents of lower achieving students or ones with problems) love to get positive messages like this. It also encourages them to keep/start helping with the practicing at home (whether they were or not before).

We've had such good responses from parents by doing this that I feel it's well worth the effort. I look forward to making these phone calls because it's fun to tell good news and we notice that it spurs the parents on to take more interest in helping their child. It also puts parent and teacher on the same team. We all know the reading level goal for the end of the year and each phone call helps parent and teacher to make it a goal to get to the next milestone in a timely fashion.

Just thought I'd share in case others hadn't thought of this (just as I hadn't thought of doing it myself)!

Kerry in B.C., Canada

More of Kerry's posts and those of others are at <http://disciplineanswers.com/>

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5. PROMOTING LEARNING

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Promoting intrinsic motivation is one of the keys for successful teaching and learning. Eric Jensen states that most students are already intrinsically motivated. However, MOTIVATION IS VERY CONTENT DEPENDENT. Students who are unmotivated in a math class can become excited and energetic when working out how to budget and spend their first pay check.

He suggests some key strategies to promote motivation:

1. Eliminate threat. ASK students about the factors that inhibit their learning. Then work on eliminating these.
2. Prepare students for a topic with teasers or personal stories to spark their interest.
3. Influence positively in everything you do and say. Make it a goal for every student to have a successful experience.
4. Teach students how to manage their emotions. (SUGGESTION: See <http://www.marvinmarshall.com/impulsemanagement.html>)
5. Use learning activities where students get feedback.

Here are a few additional suggestions from Karen Boyes:

6. Create opening and closing rituals in your classes. When students know exactly what to expect at the beginning and end of a class they feel safer and more comfortable about new learning.
7. Be aware of and include different learning style activities (visual, auditory, kinesthetic) and thinking styles (left brain hemisphere--orderly, sequential, logical and right brain hemisphere--spontaneous and random thinking).
8. Provide students with greater choices within the classroom.
9. Eliminate any kind of embarrassment or use of sarcasm.
10. Provide real life applications of curriculum content.

Relate new learning to students' current knowledge. The brain attempts to make meaning. Without relating new learning to existing knowledge, new information goes into short term memory.

11. Encourage good nutrition so the brain and body are fed their most effective fuels.

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Before presenting at the conference of the Association of Teacher Educators (ATE) in Dallas, Texas, I came across a conference program article by the 2008 National Teacher of the Year, Michael Geisen, of Crook County Middle School, Prineville, Oregon. He was quoted as saying, "I allow my curiosity and enthusiasm for learning to match that of my students, and we inspire each other to further explore and wonder about the big questions and the little details that make our world so fascinating."

The article concluded with the following comment a student said of him: "I think if he wanted to, he could make watching grass grow interesting."

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## 6. DISCIPLINE WITHOUT STRESS (DWS)

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The following is from POSTED QUESTIONS at the mailing:  
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Disciplinewithoutstress/>

1)

I am not sure how eliciting consequences has a place in an approach that is moving away from reward and punishment. Getting kids to choose their punishments (consequences) still promotes a thinking of "This is what happens when I do...."

Because a behavior looks like it is internally motivated, the kid is choosing a consequence but is being controlled, being compelled by the system to choose.

I don't see any healthy normal person choosing to punish himself. So I see the approach bringing the punishments through the back door because kids are encouraged to

participate in choosing consequences.

2)

My second point:

A lot of inappropriate behavior may be due to poor coping skills or unmet needs. Where is the focus on the child's concerns, not only his wants or solutions?

RESPONSE FROM A PARTICIPANT:

1)

Your points are things that I struggled with when I began implementing this six years ago.

Let me see if I can help you.

Without eliciting, DWS just isn't as effective. The students learn they have choices; it makes them more reflective, that they can handle or figure out problems, and that I respect their ideas (even though I don't always agree with them). Respecting your students is the fastest way to get them to respect you.

DWS isn't against consequences. A consequence is different from a punishment. A punishment is something that is imposed by a second or third party. It usually has no connection to the behavior and frequently belittles or shames the offender. It is coercive in nature and is designed to make the person feel bad or lose value in themselves. The idea behind punishment is to make the person "pay" for their mistakes, regret what they did, and change. Punishment usually does not help the person figure out how to change; it may make them want to but doesn't give them any tools for making the change. Punishment has very little instructive value, and I want my students to get as much instruction in as many arenas as possible.

When we elicit a consequence, we are asking the student to take a critical stance and look at the behavior from another point of view. It also allows the student to weigh options. This gets to conformity. Conformity to social norms is what keeps our society going. Let's face it; the thought of getting a speeding ticket keeps my eye on the speedometer in a local town known for its many speed traps.

The student may select consequences that are harsher than you would select. This puts you in the position to build a relationship with the student. I find that positive relationships with children in behavior situations help them to be more open in academic situations. I'm not saying I'm their friend; that would be inappropriate. I am, however, a person they can trust, even if they make a mistake, whether it is academic or social.

2)

As far as the poor coping skills, eliciting helps when nothing else will. For example, I had an explosive student. Every teacher he had from preschool on couldn't get through a day without this boy's melting down in an angry, violent tantrum. I had a private talk with him about the situation. He told me he didn't feel he had control over himself and felt embarrassed about the outbursts later, which made him nervous, and sparked new outbursts. I asked him what could I do to help him so he could learn to calm down when he felt this way. We worked out a plan for what to do when he felt this coming on that could help him from escalating, what he could do if it was too late, and what he could do afterward. We only had 2 incidents the entire year after that. One occurred soon after this was new to him; the other occurred the day before his mom remarried and he transferred to another state. It was his best year ever, and I have the letters from mom to prove it. It is one of the things I'm most proud of, and it was the first year I implemented DWS.

I've used this with very impulsive students with ADHD, with students who have varying degrees of autism, and students who are going through trauma (parents in the line of fire in Afghanistan and Iraq, parents who are facing life threatening illness, and parents who are in the middle of a messy divorce).

Our school has seen a tremendous difference since changing to eliciting. Our referrals are way down (almost nonexistent). My principal is amazed. I can't say enough about eliciting, except it is worth the time and effort to change your frame of mind and begin practicing it!

Joy Widmann, Crosscreek Charter School, Louisburg, NC

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## 7. TESTIMONIALS/RESEARCH

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I wanted to thank you for coming out to Hayward to speak to us. It was refreshing to be exposed to a lifetime of work and thought that has been directed towards creating and sustaining positive interactions and systems for student and teacher development. It is obvious you've spent much time considering human nature and its myriad conditions.

Much of what you shared I too have experienced and attempted to convey or express to my students, although in a much more incidental and disorganized fashion--specifically, the power of positive thought and talk, self-reflection, mindfulness, responsibility, internal/intrinsic motivation vs. external.

What I appreciate about you and your system is that it gives students an explicit, accessible and replicable model for quickly assessing any choice or situation they may be confronted with. Clearly, this extends beyond "behavior" and academics to a core principal of existence--choices.

I respect and admire your life's work. Thank you for helping humanity.

Kristian Hinz  
Bret Harte Middle School  
Hayward, California

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### Resources and Support

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INFORMATION about DISCIPLINE,PROMOTING RESPONSIBILITY, and PROMOTING LEARNING are available at <http://www.MarvinMarshall.com>.

BOOK information is available at: <http://www.DisciplineWithoutStress.com>

E-BOOK:  
[http://www.marvinmarshall.com/resources/discipline\\_ebook.htm](http://www.marvinmarshall.com/resources/discipline_ebook.htm)

SELECTED OLDER NEWSLETTER POSTS are available at his blog

<http://disciplineforsmartpeople.com>.

Schools in the United States can receive free books and free staff development by completing the application process at <http://www.disciplinewithoutstress.org>.

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About Dr. Marvin Marshall

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Marvin Marshall's proactive discipline and learning approach was inspired from his experiences as a parent, teacher, counselor, and school and district administrator in urban and suburban schools. More about the author is available at <http://www.marvinmarshall.com/about.htm>.

He has presented in 43 of the United States and in 14 countries on five continents and can be contacted for presenting a keynote or workshop from his website at <http://www.marvinmarshall.com>.

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About this Newsletter

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