



SECTION ONE

Successful Discipline Rests with You



In this section you will learn

- How to accept responsibility for establishing a positive discipline climate
- How to select effective discipline strategies
- How to allow students to make appropriate choices
- How to anticipate student behavior patterns
- How to use proactive attitudes to help students be successful

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

This is a book about classroom discipline. This is not a book about lesson plans or grading papers or writing objectives on the board each day. It's not about taking attendance or delivering lectures or even about designing fair test questions.

Instead, it is about an issue far more puzzling and complex than any of these. It's about being sent to the principal and sassing the teacher and passing notes in class. It's also about teen substance abuse and bullies and students who bring weapons to school.

These problems have plagued teachers for as long as students have been coming to school. If you have discipline problems during the school year, take heart. Everyone who teaches does. *Everyone.*

We long for a positive discipline climate in our classes. Everything runs smoothly when that happens. We teach well. Our students learn what we want them to learn. The school day is a joyful, satisfying experience. When the climate is a negative one, however, even our best lesson plans are useless. We can't teach because our students are too disruptive to pay attention. We do not enjoy these frustrating days. We endure them. Our students do, too.

With this in mind, it's understandable that the word *discipline* usually has an unpleasant connotation for most of us. Our hearts sink at the thought of coping with discipline issues. We tend to think of *discipline* in the same way we think of the word *misbehavior*: discipline referral, disciplinary detention, or being sent to the office for disciplinary action.

Discipline in this book is not a negative. Quite the opposite is true. In this book the word *discipline* means the systematic and positive training you provide for your students to help them develop self-control. It is the means by which we have orderly classrooms and high-achieving students.

Fortunately, the discipline dilemma that all teachers face has solutions. We can take control of our classes. We can have a positive learning environment in our classrooms.

This book offers a wide variety of ways to create a peaceful and productive classroom. It's about how to manage the students in your class with sensitivity and dignity so that there is harmony in your classroom instead of strife.

This book is also about the most important factor in the discipline dilemma: the teacher. Never doubt that you make a difference in the lives of your students. In many ways teachers are the most idealistic people in our communities. While other adults see a group of teens loitering on the sidewalk just wasting time, we teachers don't seem to notice the silly clothing and too-cool hairstyles. Instead, we see the future.

We see what others cannot: potential doctors, teachers, accountants, lawyers, soldiers . . . our colleagues-in-waiting. Perhaps it is this gift that makes us struggle in the face of so many obstacles to help our students become the people we know they can be.

ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY

Establishing a positive classroom discipline environment is a complex undertaking. It can cover issues as insignificant as dealing with a lost pencil or a talkative student to more serious ones such as incomplete assignments, cheating, and weapons at school. Creating a positive classroom discipline climate is a challenging task that demands that students operate within carefully constructed boundaries while, at the same time, developing into independent and self-disciplined learners.

The difficult and complex nature of classroom discipline issues is the result of several significant factors. Classroom discipline practices vary widely from region to region, district to district, and even from teacher to teacher. Discipline practices are also affected by the ages, abilities, personalities, maturity levels, backgrounds, and interests of the students they govern.

To further complicate matters, a classroom discipline climate is an ever-shifting environment where the naturally occurring daily changes that happen as students learn and mature influence discipline practices.

Because of the fluid nature of classroom discipline, no magic bullet exists. There is not a perfect solution that will work in every classroom all the time. Instead, teachers today must do what sensible teachers everywhere have always done: craft discipline plans uniquely designed to create a comfortable, businesslike, and safe learning climate where their students can achieve academic success.

The responsibility for a successful discipline climate rests with the classroom teacher. Although too many of us blame our students, their families, the school board, or even society for the discipline problems we encounter, the ultimate responsibility for creating a productive classroom is ours.

If we are the ones who are responsible for the discipline climate in our classrooms, then we are the ones who can make positive and effective choices to help our students. When we assume responsibility for the discipline climate in our classes, then we also gain the power to make positive changes.

Luckily for those teachers who accept this responsibility, the skills necessary to create a positive discipline climate can be learned. If we want to provide an atmosphere for achievement where we engage our students in actively acquiring knowledge through cooperation and motivated hard work, then we must realize that we are the keys to their success. Students will respond positively to our personalities, our energy, our enthusiasm, and our charisma.

Accepting this responsibility does not mean that a career in education becomes any easier; we still face unique problems. We have little or no chance for advancement and many of us are poorly paid. We are seldom recognized publicly for our hard work. Parents and principals may be grateful, but they don't knock on our classroom doors every day to tell us what a good job we are doing.

Teachers who decide to develop positive relationships with their students, who decide to use alternatives to punishments and threats, who decide to cope with the problems that we all share become successful teachers who are free to make positive changes because they have accepted responsibility for their actions.

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

Take comfort in the thought that you are not alone with your discipline problems. We *all* experience them, even those teachers who seem to have well-disciplined classes. Successful teachers *do* have discipline problems just like the rest of us, but they have found ways to minimize their negative impact.

Many of our discipline problems, surprisingly enough, are not directly caused by our students. Here is a list of some of the many factors that can have a negative impact on your classroom performance:

- ▶ Overcrowded classes
- ▶ Too little productive time with students
- ▶ Students with overwhelming family problems
- ▶ Ineffective local discipline policies
- ▶ Overworked and unsympathetic administrators
- ▶ Parents or guardians who do not support school personnel and policies
- ▶ Parents or guardians who are unreachable or difficult to contact
- ▶ Buildings that need repairs and better maintenance
- ▶ Colleagues whose problems with classroom management spill over into our classes
- ▶ Uncertainty over the right action to take when problems occur
- ▶ Outdated textbooks, equipment, and other materials
- ▶ Teacher distress and burnout

In addition to the negative factors that can affect classrooms, many positive factors can also help you create the classroom that you would like for your students. Here is a list of those influences that have a positive bearing on your classroom performance:

- ▶ Economic status, race, and gender are no longer the barriers to education that they once were.
- ▶ School districts continue to develop a variety of programs designed to meet the unique needs of every student. We no longer offer a one-size-fits-all version of education.

- ▶ Today we know more than ever about which teaching methods are effective in helping our students learn. Research-based learning strategies and differentiated instruction are just two of the positive methods that are changing how we teach.
- ▶ Many private businesses and foundations recognize the need for assistance in public education and are generous in their support.
- ▶ Teachers are better prepared than ever to assume their professional responsibilities. Professional development opportunities abound both locally and on the Internet. New teachers have become one of our best resources.
- ▶ Technology makes it easier for us to be better teachers. We can reach out to students and their families in a variety of ways, learn new information, access lesson plan ideas from thousands of other teachers, and keep abreast with the latest news and trends in our field with just a few keystrokes.

WHY PUNISHMENT AND OTHER INEFFECTIVE DISCIPLINE TECHNIQUES DO NOT WORK

Teachers who want to create a well-disciplined class realize they cannot do this by using outdated practices. It is only natural that we tend to model our teaching styles on the experiences we had in school. We want to re-create for our students the positive experiences that we enjoyed. We want to inspire them as we were inspired. We want to shape their lives as school shaped ours.

But in our attempts to do this, we sometimes re-create the negative experiences that we had in school as well. Punishment is used far too often in public schools today. It is, in fact, the most often-used discipline practice in secondary schools across our nation.

Punishment is a historical tradition in child rearing. We have been taught that if we “spare the rod,” we will “spoil the child,” even though research has shown time and time again that spanking has an adverse effect on almost every child. Yet very few adults can say they were never spanked when they were children.

Another reason that punishment is used in schools is that both parents and children expect it. Teachers who decide never to resort to punishment may seem to be too nice or too weak to be effective classroom leaders.

The problem is that punishment often does work—in the short run. If you want to establish brief control of a class, setting an example by punishing one pupil will quickly cause the others to sit up and take notice that you mean business. Many of us can recall embarrassing moments at the hands of an insensitive teacher. Most of us can also clearly remember an unfair incident in a class long after we have forgotten the weighty content of the course.

Many adults look back with nostalgic fondness on particular teachers who were very strict. These tough teachers held their students to very high standards of conduct and taught their subject matter thoroughly and well. Class reunions abound with fond stories about these respected teachers. More careful consideration, however, indicates that those tough teachers are revered only if they were caring, knowledgeable, and fair as well as strict.

If the modeling that we attempt for our students includes crowd control mainly through punishment and the fear of punishment, then it is not likely that we will be successful in creating the kind of positive classroom environment that we want. Rising dropout rates and the increase in the numbers of at-risk students are only two indications that we need to move away from discipline practices that are mainly punitive to take a more humane approach to our students.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT ADOLESCENTS

The turbulent adolescent years are marked by erratic growth and unpredictable changes. The turmoil of these years produces students who need understanding, reasonable, and compassionate teachers. Although making broad generalizations about any group is a risky business, many secondary students share some relevant character traits. These traits can have a significant impact on the success or failure of classroom discipline policies.

In the following list, you will find a few of these shared adolescent character traits, together with the chief challenge each one poses for the classroom teacher. This will be followed by three brief suggestions for making sure that each character trait can have a positive effect on your classroom.

Peer Pressure Is Intense for Teens

It is no surprise to teachers that teens are greatly influenced by their peers. Adolescents turn to their peers for support and guidance. Unfortunately, the guidance they receive is not always beneficial.

The Challenge

To give students the positive values that will enable them to resist negative peer pressure.

How Teachers Can Help

- ▶ Create positive identities for all of your students by including team-building exercises in collaborative work so that students can learn to work together in a positive way for a common goal.
- ▶ Create positive peer pressure by allowing students to participate in the creation of class rules, policies, and procedures. Involving students in this process will encourage them to work together to enforce them.
- ▶ Bring in brief articles for class discussions about positive values that would benefit your students. Use them to discuss the choices they make about almost every aspect of their lives and the positive and negative outcomes of those choices. You can extend the impact of these discussions by displaying these articles on a bulletin board. They will serve as visual reminders of the values you want your students to develop.

A Teenager's Emotional Energy Is High

The world of adolescence is a technicolored one. Emotions and experiences that are familiar to most adults are brand-new for your students. This makes teens easily impressionable, sensitive, moody, and excitable.

The Challenge

To channel this intensity into productive outlets.

How Teachers Can Help

- ▶ Build in class activities that allow students to be active and involved. Role-playing, panel discussions, and games are positive ways to begin.
- ▶ Use the time that might be wasted at the end of class for a forum to discuss teens' current concerns. Even a brief discussion can give your students some options other than the unacceptable responses they might make to events in their lives.
- ▶ Adjust your own attitude. Learn to view adolescents as joyful and vigorous rather than annoying. Laugh with them. Use that mixture of relief and nostalgia that you feel when you recall your own teen years as a guide to understanding your students.

Having Fun Is Very Important to Secondary Students

The competition that many educators feel with the entertainment value of popular culture, the Internet, the music industry, and television is real. Many students, used to attractive and fast-paced entertainment, grow restless when they are expected to concentrate for a long time.

The Challenge

To engage our students' attention fully for an entire class period.

How Teachers Can Help

- ▶ Divide lesson plans into ten-minute blocks of time and include several shorter activities in a lesson.
- ▶ Use a variety of activities to make class interesting for yourself and for your students. Don't be afraid to be creative and a little off-the-wall in your approach.
- ▶ Include music, art, and other areas of popular culture in your lessons. Have students fill out questionnaires to find out their interests. (See Section Eight for student interest inventories.)

Secondary Students Don't Always Use Time Wisely

Students in the secondary grades are very busy people. They have after-school jobs, active social lives, and a dizzying round of family, sports, and community activities. Even though they may fill their days with numerous activities, many teens tend to choose activities that offer short-term gains rather than long-lasting benefits.

The Challenge

To guide students in making wise use of their time.

How Teachers Can Help

- ▶ Watch out for the signs of trouble—sleepiness, inattention, or poor performance in class—and talk with the student. If the problem persists, contact the student’s parents or guardians for help.
- ▶ Work with your students to help them set both long-term and short-term goals for themselves. Help them determine what activities need to take priority if they are to reach their goals.
- ▶ Focus on time-management techniques to help students stay on track. Show your students how to use a daily planner, a syllabus, and a personal calendar.

Adolescents Want Their Schooling to Have a Practical Purpose

Secondary students are intensely pragmatic about the work they are assigned in school. Vague assurances that “You will need this when you get to college” just do not provide the relevance that many students need to do their best work.

The Challenge

To make students understand why they need to learn the material in a lesson.

How Teachers Can Help

- ▶ Follow sound educational theory and design lessons around a clearly stated objective. Use this to motivate your students to want to learn the material. Make sure that you yourself know how and why they will need this information. Just because it is part of your district’s curriculum is not a convincing reason.
- ▶ Include as many real-world applications for the knowledge and skills that you teach as you can. Build in the connections to past learning and to what the students have learned in other classes.
- ▶ At the end of class, ask students to brainstorm ways that they can use the material in the day’s lesson before the next class meeting.

Adolescents Do Not Want Absolute Freedom

Secondary students need and want guidance from caring adults. They need positive role models who will show them how to build constructive relationships with others and how to manage the sometimes troubled course of their lives.

The Challenge

To provide support and guidance for a large group of needy young people.

How Teachers Can Help

- ▶ Be a positive role model. Studies have shown that positive and helpful teachers tend to create positive and helpful students. Modeling stable behavior is a good way to begin.
- ▶ Set reasonable limits on the behaviors you will and will not tolerate. When your students test those limits, you have an opportunity to teach them—by your example—how to set limits for themselves.
- ▶ Be accessible for your students. Plan time after school when you can meet with students or sponsor a school organization. Above all, be a friendly adult who cares about their concerns.

Insecurity Is a Far-Reaching Problem

Even the toughest adolescents are not always as sure of themselves as they would like us to think. Their confidence is a thin shell that is easily cracked by failure or the fear of failure.

The Challenge

To make students feel more confident about their ability to succeed in school.

How Teachers Can Help

- ▶ Involve all of your students in your lessons. Many students have learned the fine art of being invisible in a classroom. Be sensitive to their fears and shyness, but get students engaged in positive activities where they can succeed.
- ▶ Be positive with your students. Focus on their good points. Make sure you let them know about the good things they do. Students have no reason to try harder if a cranky teacher is going to criticize them needlessly.
- ▶ Begin a unit of study with activities that are easier to complete successfully than the ones later in the unit. When students see they can accomplish the work, they tend to try harder to complete assignments.

Mistakes Usually Arise from Inexperience

Contrary to what we may believe on a day when nothing is going right, our students do not get out of bed with the intention of failing our class and upsetting as many people as possible in the process. Students miscalculate the amount of time that it will take to complete a project, or they say the wrong thing to the wrong person at the wrong time. These errors and countless others like them are made by young people who are trying to figure out the complicated business of living.

The Challenge

To reduce the negative effects of the mistakes that students make.

How Teachers Can Help

- ▶ Spend time each day showing students how to do their assignments. Many of them need to practice such skills as breaking down a long-term project into manageable sections, previewing a reading passage, or following directions.
- ▶ Teach your students that mistakes are part of living. We all make them. Be quick to apologize when you make yours. You will set a good example if you do.
- ▶ Be patient. Try not to overreact. Consider whether the error was intentional or accidental. There is a big difference, for example, between a swear word whispered to another student in the back of the room and one shouted at you.

Teens Need to Be Treated as Worthwhile People

Our students want the same things other humans want: to be taken seriously. Handling discipline problems in as dignified a manner as possible will show your students that you value and respect them.

The Challenge

To foster mutual respect through courtesy.

How Teachers Can Help

- ▶ Refuse to fall into the trap of backing a misbehaving student into an emotional corner. Do not become confrontational if you want to treat your students with respect.
- ▶ Never belittle a student's hairstyle, manner of dress, way of speaking, ideas, beliefs, aspirations, or any other personal quality. There is a big difference between correcting a student's error in a professional manner and making fun of that student.
- ▶ Listen to your students. One of the best ways to connect with your students is to allow them to talk to you, a caring adult.

HOW MUCH AUTONOMY SHOULD YOU ALLOW?

One of the most puzzling challenges confronting teachers in secondary schools is how to determine just the right amount of autonomy to allow students. While many teens are mature enough to independently manage their social and academic responsibilities, almost every class has students who require more support, encouragement, redirection, and intervention than others.

There are many factors to consider when making decisions about just how much freedom to allow students. Two of the most obvious ones are the age and general maturity level of the students in a particular class. For example, twelfth graders should be capable of more independence than younger students.

Another aspect to consider is the length of time that you have known your students. At the beginning of a school term, it is wise to be conservative in your approach. As you get to know your students, then you can confidently allow them an appropriate mix of freedom and supervision. Don't be afraid to set

firm limits at the start of the year and then relax them as your students prove themselves capable of handling more freedom.

As you consider the question of student independence in your class, keep in mind that it is very important that your students perceive you as being fair to all students. Be able to demonstrate that the freedom you provide for one student or group of students is available to all of the students in your class.

The amount of autonomy to grant your students is also influenced by your teaching situation. Those instructors who teach physical education, laboratory sciences, or similar courses with a high potential for injury must consider the question of student autonomy in a very different light from those teachers who are in a less active classroom where it is easier to keep students safe. It is essential that you closely supervise students in situations where they

- ▶ May get hurt
- ▶ May harm someone else
- ▶ Could steal or cheat
- ▶ May engage in seriously disruptive behaviors
- ▶ Could be significantly off-task and unproductive

Finally, you must be completely comfortable with your decisions about student autonomy. Don't be cajoled into granting permission for activities that students may enjoy, but that would not be ones that you would enjoy having a supervisor watch. It is far easier to relax a strict rule than to try to regain control of an unruly class.

THE BEHAVIORS YOU CAN EXPECT FROM YOUR STUDENTS

As a secondary teacher you will find that no two school days are alike. Constant change is perhaps the chief characteristic of secondary students in general. You will find that the young people who arrive on the first day of class will by the last day not only have learned the course material, but also will have matured physically and emotionally as well.

Between those two days, however, you can expect several general behaviors from your students. Anticipating these behaviors will allow you to plan how you will react to them in a positive way.

- ▶ Because there can be a mixture of ages and maturity levels in the typical secondary classroom, you can expect to see behaviors that reflect this range. Some of your students will appear older than their years, and their behavior will reflect this maturity. Still others will strike you as immature and impulsive.
 - Get to know your students as well as you can as quickly as you can. Learning about them as individuals will help you cope successfully with their needs.
 - Offer a variety of learning activities to appeal to as many students as possible. Provide plenty of opportunities for enrichment and remediation so that all students can master the material.
 - Teach and require courtesy. Help all students move to become self-disciplined about their work and their behavior.

- ▶ In each class, some of your students will want to be invisible and others will vie for attention or even notoriety as class clown.
 - Make sure all students know how to do their work well. Anxious students who are prepared for class will find it easier to behave appropriately and not act out in an attempt to disguise their insecurity.
 - Call on all students equitably and respectfully. Giving students an opportunity to jot down their thoughts before they are required to make an oral response will make class discussions much less stressful and more productive for all students.
 - Ignore as many negative behaviors as you can and promote as many positive ones as possible. Keep students focused on what is acceptable and what is not to mitigate both types of behaviors.
- ▶ Some students will seek power and control in positive ways and others will seek it at any cost. Finding ways to harness this desire without engaging in a power struggle is one of teaching's greatest challenges.
 - Resist the urge to make a sarcastic remark to quell students who want to be noticed. Not only will you lose the sympathy of the targeted student's classmates, but you will lose their respect also.
 - Make sure that you present yourself as the clear leader of the class. When students sense that you are uncertain or faltering, they may attempt to take advantage of your weakness.
 - Provide opportunities for those who want to be noticed to gain attention for positive, cooperative behaviors instead of oppositional ones.
- ▶ Almost every student will engage in a constant and almost reflexive testing of the boundaries set by the adults in their lives. This may manifest itself in restlessness, distraction, defiance, and off-task behavior.
 - Make sure that the rules, policies, and procedures for your class are not only clear, but that your students are aware of them.
 - Build in plenty of choices for students. Helping them learn to make wise choices will not only make the routines of your classroom run smoothly, but will also benefit all of your students in the future.
 - Stress the positive consequences that can happen when students cooperate with you and work within the confines of the school environment.
- ▶ Secondary students have a strong desire to have their voice heard. They will seek opportunities to express themselves in a variety of positive and negative ways.
 - When a student speaks to you, stop and give that person your full attention.
 - Encourage students to express themselves in a positive way. Provide opportunities for interaction such as class discussions, mock trials, student publications, and other collaborative projects whenever feasible.
 - Allow students a voice in classroom decision making. Solicit their opinions about various topics such as due dates, classroom chores, or the establishment of common rules.
- ▶ Secondary students enjoy helping others less fortunate than themselves. Their developing sense of altruism can enrich almost any lesson.

- Encourage students to participate in some of the many online charities such www.freerice.com, the popular site that provides food for the UN World Food Program. (See Section Ten for more information about charitable online opportunities.)
 - Post articles that highlight teen community service activities. Local newspapers are good sources for information and articles about community service activities for your students.
 - Design a class project that involves your students in an activity that benefits their school or community.
- Students are acutely sensitive to actions that they deem as unfair. They are quick to protest the slightest hint of inequity—real or imagined.
- Although it is one of the biggest challenges that all teachers face, make a point of being as consistent as you can in making decisions that can affect an entire class.
 - Be sure that all of your rules and policies are reasonable and easy to enforce.
 - Whenever you can, be as flexible as you can. For example, students often regard as extremely unfair those teachers who refuse to round up a grade when the fraction is at least half a point. If you can make it a policy to always round up, then your students will probably not challenge you on that topic.

PROACTIVE ATTITUDES THAT CAN HELP YOU CREATE A POSITIVE DISCIPLINE CLIMATE

According to conventional wisdom, it isn't the problems we face that determine our successes or failures. It is our attitude about our problems that ultimately determines whether our teaching is a success or a failure. Since discipline problems are inevitable, you will benefit from accepting them as challenges and not as stumbling blocks to success.

One of the most important factors in determining the success or failure of the discipline climate in a classroom is the collection of attitudes the teacher brings to work each day. Those upbeat and confident teachers who come to work convinced that their students can succeed are inspiring to us all. Their successful attitudes may be invisible, but they are absolutely vital in the creation of a positive discipline climate in their classrooms.

Being an optimistic person doesn't mean that serious problems don't exist. A positive attitude just means you are working on a solution in a productive and efficient manner. Problems move you forward when you choose to work to solve them. When you experience discipline problems, don't be discouraged; they will stimulate you to use your creativity and talents to create a well-disciplined classroom. Spend your energy on the larger problems first. Choose to deal with those problems that will give you the greatest benefit right away.

Small attitude changes can also create substantial patterns of success. For example, many teachers claim that at least one of their classes is terrible. However, when they stop to look at the situation clearly, they do not have a terrible class. What they have is a class with many well-behaved students in it and just a few who are not.

Fortunately for all teachers, many useful resources are available for those who want to have a well-run classroom where students are engaged in self-directed activities. To learn more about how to create a productive classroom, turn to these sources:

- Parents, guardians, and families of your students
- Your students' current teachers

- ▶ Your students' past teachers
- ▶ Coaches and other extracurricular activities sponsors
- ▶ Your students themselves
- ▶ School records
- ▶ Standardized tests
- ▶ Internet sources
 - **You Can Handle Them All** (www.disciplinehelp.com). Here you will find suggestions for successfully managing more than one hundred common discipline problems.
 - **National Education Association** (www.nea.org). At the NEA's Web site, use the "Tools and Ideas" tab to access helpful resources about successful classroom management.
 - **American Federation of Teachers** (www.aft.org). At the AFT's Web site, use *discipline* as a search term to find hundreds of useful suggestions.

We all know that in creating a productive classroom atmosphere, we must do more than teach academic content. We need to take a positive approach to our students and to our teaching responsibilities if we want to make a difference in our students' lives. You can take several significant actions to communicate to your students your positive attitudes about their potential for success.

Have Confidence in Yourself

You must have confidence in your own ability to reach your students. If you are to be successful in overcoming the barriers to a positive discipline climate, you must communicate your belief that your students can grow and change for the better. Few students will try to succeed without a confident teacher who believes in them.

Show Your Students That You Care About Them

Communicate your positive attitudes to your students to show them you care about their success or failure in your class. To do this you must develop a personal relationship with each one. You do this when you show you are interested in their opinions and concerned about their welfare.

Plan Lessons That Are Challenging But Attainable

Let your students know you have confidence in their power to succeed by designing lessons where success is attainable. When you plan a unit of study, begin with information that students can relate to previous learning so that they immediately feel confident about what they already know. As the unit progresses, the work should gradually become more difficult so that those students who may have been reluctant to try at first are willing to take a chance and do the challenging work necessary for successful mastery.

Conduct Yourself Professionally

Present yourself to your students and to your colleagues as a professional educator. That means doing all of the things good teachers do: maintain order, be very organized, teach innovative lessons, and provide your students with the kind of adult role model that they need.

Accept Responsibility

Take responsibility for your attitude about the discipline problems in your classroom. Let go of the negative thoughts you have about your students and about the past experiences you have had with them. Concentrate on the positive steps you can take to help your students become self-disciplined.

At the end of every section of this Guide, you will find a brief table of some of the positive choices relating to the topics in that section. In this section's "Making Positive Choices," you will find the first of these choices that can transform the school day for you and your students.

Making Positive Choices

Instead of . . .	Try to . . .
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Blaming others for the failures of your students▶ Bemoaning the ill effects of peer pressure▶ Forcing students to work quietly too often▶ Delivering long-winded lectures▶ Wondering why you should be forced to entertain your students▶ Saying, "You're going to need to know this someday"▶ Overreacting when a student misbehaves▶ Becoming confrontational with a misbehaving student▶ Giving students too much freedom▶ Feeling annoyed at the exaggerated emotions of your students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Accept responsibility for what happens in your classroom▶ Help students learn to work together as a team▶ Provide safe outlets for energy, emotions, and enthusiasm through active learning strategies▶ Break class into ten- to fifteen-minute intervals of activity▶ Create lively, appealing lessons that engage student interest and ignite curiosity▶ Involve students in activities with real-world applications▶ Pause and reflect on the cause before reacting▶ Make arrangements to work together to find a solution▶ Consider the age, maturity, and personalities of your students as well as safety issues▶ View your students as joyful, lively, and on their way to a bright future

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

Use the information in this section to guide you as you think about these questions. They are designed to encourage you to think more deeply about the issues in the text or to discuss those issues with colleagues.

- ▶ Do you agree with the author's assertion that every teacher has discipline problems? What implications does your belief have for your teaching practices?
- ▶ Although all teachers may face similar discipline dilemmas, not all teachers have serious discipline issues in their classrooms. Recall a teacher in your past who never seemed to experience serious discipline issues. What techniques did that teacher use that you could implement in your class? What are some positive and negative factors that affect the discipline climate in your classroom?
- ▶ If, as the author believes, adolescents do not want absolute freedom, how can teachers provide their students with structure and boundaries as well as freedom and choices?