

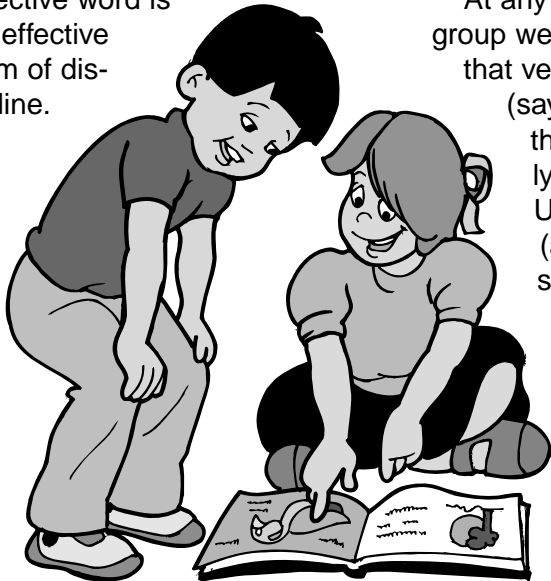


Effective Discipline, part 1 of 2—

Leading—A Process or an Event?

by Sandy Friesen

Leading is a **process** as opposed to an **event**. An **event** is an opportunity to make a decision, and a **process** is an opportunity to live out those decisions. This principle holds true when it comes to effective discipline. Occasionally, people feel that a time-out, lecture, stern word, or directive word is an effective form of discipline. In



truth, these are usually **events**, not **processes**.

As teachers, we usually desire classroom order in hopes that it will allow everyone the chance to concentrate on the lesson. Thus, learning will be accomplished and the students will be able to use the truths to help guide their lives. Thus begins the process of living Christ-like.

Ironically, since children are like adults, most need to experi-

ence a truth about a bazillion times before they choose to embrace it. Therefore, we spend a lot of time reiterating concepts. However, there are those who happen to catch a concept the first or second time and spend the rest of their time being re-taught something they've already learned.

At any rate, as leaders of a group we often feel confident that verbalization of concepts (saying words out loud) is the best way to effectively teach a concept. Unfortunately, research (and experience) has shown that "just hearing" is the least effective way to learn any concept (for about 85% of us).

So, what does all of this have to do with classroom discipline? Everything! Boredom is one of the biggest reasons for discipline problems. If we think of disciplining (discipling) as a process and not just an event, we begin to see the entire class time as a discipling opportunity.

Let's take an honest look at the behavioral problems you might be having, why they might be occurring, and how to fix them. I've noticed that when I am sewing, I refer to the machine's operating manual

when something goes wrong. I love the trouble-shooting pages. I can find a description of the problem and try the suggested solutions. If all else fails, I can send the machine back to the manufacturer. In the 22 years I've been sewing, I've never had to return a machine.

I've chosen this model to help describe some of the situations you may be facing. Granted, children are much more complicated than machines and need a great deal of creativity when dealt with.

Behavioral Problem #1

A student is talking when the teacher is talking.

Possible Causes

- A. She has something to say.
- B. She has a verbal/auditory learning style (she learns best through talking).
- C. She is bored.

Possible Solutions

A. Talk to the students before class. Find out what they are excited or concerned about. Have a "sharing time" before lesson time.

B. Ask the student to listen carefully because you know what a good listener he is and because you'll be asking her to re-tell the story to the class (or answer questions, etc.). NOTE: This is not a threat—"You *have* to tell the story," but a privilege—"You *get* to tell the story."

C. Stop class (in the spirit of love, not frustration), ask the student why she is talking (the question is to gain information, not to condemn her), and listen to what she says. If she says that she

already knows this, ask her to share with the class what she knows. In the process, the students will be teaching one another (which we know is more effective anyway).

(More behavioral problems and possible solutions can be found in part two.)

Questions For Further Study—

1. Why is “leading” better defined as a “process” rather than an “event”?

2. What one main factor helps children, as well as adults, embrace a truth?

3. Evaluate your own method of teaching.
 - a) What method(s) do you use?

 - b) Do you capture and keep the children’s attention?

 - c) How could you improve your teaching style?



Effective Discipline, part 2 of 2—

Addressing Behavioral Problems

by Sandy Friesen

Behavioral Problem #2

A student won't sit still.

Possible Causes

- A. She has to go to the bathroom.
- B. She is uncomfortable.
- C. She is a kinesthetic or tactual learner. (kinesthetic=needs to move when learning; tactual=needs to touch when learning)
- D. She has been sitting all day and needs to move.

Possible Solutions

- A. Have a bathroom break.
- B. Before the lesson, ask everyone to get comfortable. The classroom arrangement may need to be re-thought. Children are usually more comfortable in an informal setting (sitting on pillows or on the floor) rather than at a desk or table.
- C. Know the learning styles so that you can determine the needs of your students. Then provide for those needs. For example, let a kinesthetic student balance on a balancing board while she is listening. Alternatively, let her hand out papers, write on the board, or choose a kinesthetic teaching technique (drama). The tactual student will listen more serenely if she has something to hold, touch, or do while she listens (color, draw, molding clay, etc.).
- D. Start with action games, exercises, field trips, activities, etc., to run off some of her energy.

Behavioral Problem #3

A student is rude or disrespectful in words or behavior.

Possible Causes

- A. She comes from a culture that models this behavior.
- B. She is feeling ill.
- C. She is acting out through aggressive language and or behavior.



Possible Solutions

- A. Talk to the students about acceptable and unacceptable behaviors. Talk to "rude" students privately and find out what is being modeled. Begin the process of modeling appropriate respectfulness. When a student says something "rude," stop and ask him if he can think of a polite way to say it. If he says he cannot, give him an example. Doing this with a gentle spirit will give him some other options.
- B. This will usually be a student who is not otherwise snappy or rude. Ask the student what is

wrong. LISTEN to what she says. Sometimes a blanket and pillow, or going back to Mom, is the solution.

C. Again, ASK, then LISTEN. Unless you build a relationship with the student, all the sharp retorts, intimidating looks, or time-outs will not move the student into a process of becoming Christlike. If the child is under a great deal of stress (parents divorcing, experiencing abuse, humiliation, has absent parents, has moved recently or frequently, etc.) disciplining them becomes a process, not an event. The student will learn to trust you, confide in you, and respect your opinion. Be consistent, educate yourself on that child's problems, and ask the Holy Spirit to give you wisdom and strategies to effectively help the student.

Behavioral Problem #4

The students are not participating.

Possible Causes

- A. They are scared.
- B. They are tired.
- C. They are bored.

Possible Solutions

A. Take a long, honest look at your style. Ask someone to observe you and be honest about what they see. If you are doing "things" (speaking aggressively, too loudly, rudely, in anger, without respect, etc.) or if you have a harsh personality (the need to be right, the need to have control,

the need to be an expert, etc.), ask the Holy Spirit to help your spirit relax and trust Him. Begin the process of becoming a caregiver rather than a controller.

B. Change the activity. It may be necessary to let the groups stay calm, rest on the floor, and talk casually about the lesson. On the other hand, it helps to speed up the activity. Get the children moving around, or ask them to help with the teaching.

C. Re-think your preparation time. Is it adequate? Who do you

have in mind when you are preparing (your personal convenience or your students' active interests)? Take new risks, and try new strategies.

Conclusion

Some hints that might help you enjoy the class time more.

▼Dress comfortably. Be able to move easily and change positions. Tight or restrictive clothing will send the wrong message.

▼Speak to the students the way you speak to someone you

respect and admire.

▼Look for solutions. There will always be problems, but focus on the "why." Don't assume stereotypical reasons for a problem to avoid finding a solution.

▼Remember that classroom disciplining (discipling) is a process and not just an event. Students will receive direction over a process of time. Be that mentor, guide, and role model that will show them the way to true discipleship.

Questions For Further Study—

1. How would you evaluate your ministry team's effectiveness in addressing discipline issues?
2. Have your children's workers share with you a particular child (or children) with behavioral problems and brainstorm ways of addressing the problem.
3. List some positive ways in which you will handle future discipline problems.