



3 Bad Habits You Must Avoid This School Year

by Michael Linsin on August 19, 2017

Most teachers begin the school year strong.

They teach their classroom management plan in detail. They set expectations, polish and hone routines.

They build quick rapport and inspire good initial behavior.

Everything seems so easy.

But then, three or four weeks in, things begin to change.

Restlessness creeps in. Attitudes develop. Listening takes a nosedive and the room starts buzzing with voices and [excitability](#).

Some will tell you that this is only natural, that it happens to every teacher.

The truth, however, is that slowly, imperceptibly; you've fallen into a progression of bad habits.

This progression, which is extremely common, opens the door to misbehavior and *invites* it to come in.

It's also completely avoidable.

What follows are three bad habits that, unless you're aware of and know how to stop, will progress from one to the next like a California wildfire.

1. Complacency - The Kindling

At the beginning of the school year, your students are just getting their bearings. Many are hoping to turn over a new leaf. Others are looking for a fresh start, better habits, new friends, less trouble, etc.

They're more eager and receptive than at any other time of the year.

This is wonderful, of course, because it gives you a wide-open window to establish your boundaries and expectations. But there is a danger lurking.

You see, the novelty of a new school year can give you a false sense of how things are going. The bright, attentive faces, the positive energy, the natural motivation . . .

It can all cause you to become *complacent*.

It can cause you to let your guard down, take your foot off the gas, and question—in the far recesses of your mind—why you need to be such a stickler about following rules, [routines](#), and procedures.

2. Inconsistency – The Spark

Before you know it, you're letting a few, *wee little bitty* things go.

You ignore the occasional [call-out](#). You overlook, or fail to notice, how your students enter the classroom. You look the other way when enforcing a consequence is inconvenient.

And slowly but surely, these small inconsistencies send the message to your new class that you don't really mean what you say.

Predictably, their respect for you takes a hit. They start pushing boundaries to find out what you will and won't enforce. They begin thinking that maybe you're not who they thought you were.

Now you're struggling just to get their quiet attention. Your directions are met with yawns and sighs and zero sense of urgency.

Frustration builds.

3. Resentment – The Fire

Inevitably, no matter how disciplined you are with your emotions, when your students are ignoring you or misbehaving right in front of you, it's hard not to get frustrated.

It's hard not to become resentful.

It's hard not to react and try to regain control by glaring, threatening, or raising your voice. Which, in turn, makes your relationship with them antagonistic and distrustful.

It weakens your influence, likability, and rapport and undermines [your classroom management plan](#).

It turns you into just another mean teacher.

The end result is even more misbehavior, scant leverage to do much about it, and every day feeling like the Siege of Bastogne.

Stay True

This same sad progression will play out this fall in classrooms from here to Bangladesh.

So how do you stop it?

You stop it by being aware of how quickly and easily it can happen and by refusing to take even a single step down its slippery slope. You stop it by never giving in and never going back on your word.

You stop it by cultivating the mental toughness to do exactly what you say you'll do.

So right now, *this second*, vow to follow your classroom management plan as it's written. Stay true to your promises and high-bar standards.

Keep your foot on the gas.

And your students will only get better, sharper, and happier than they were the week before.