



5 Ways To Be A Calmer, More Effective Teacher

If you have a tendency to become tense, stressed, or uptight around your students, then they're far more likely to misbehave.

Because a tightly wound teacher translates to a tension-filled classroom—the kind of tension visitors can feel tingling in their sensory receptors the moment they enter your classroom.

And make no mistake. Tension is bad for classroom management, causing students to become excitable, unfocused, and primed to cause trouble.

The good news is that it isn't difficult to change.

It isn't difficult to approach each new day of teaching with a calm, unruffled sense of purpose—dissipating tension like a lifting fog reveals a sunny day.

Here's how:

Decide.

Maintaining a calm attitude throughout your teaching day is a choice you make *before* your students arrive. So every day, sometime prior to the morning bell, give yourself a moment of peace to sit quietly at your desk. Take a few deep breaths and relax into your chair.

Now decide that no matter what happens that day, no matter how crazy or how alarming, **you will not** lose your composure. And guess what? You won't. [This technique](#), employed by scores of professional athletes, seems almost too easy. But it's remarkably, inexplicably effective.

Slow down.

By slowing your movements to an easier-going, more graceful pace, your mind will slow down as well – becoming less distracted, more observant, and better able to respond to your students.

You don't have to move like a Tai Chi master or in any way dampen your enthusiasm. It's more of a reminder not to get caught up frenetically shuffling papers, pacing a groove in the floor, or [racing mindlessly from one task to another](#) – as so many teachers are wont to do.

Speak calmly.

When giving directions, providing information, and responding to your students, it pays to speak calmly. It soothes nervous energy, helps students focus on you and your message, and gives them confidence that what you say is important and worth listening to.

[During lessons, however, all bets are off.](#) You might find yourself whispering with wide-eyed fascination one moment and giving an oration like James Earl Jones the next. Calmness on inside doesn't mean passionless or moribund on the outside.

Breathe.

It's remarkable what a few long, slow breaths can do. Almost immediately, blood pressure drops, your expression softens, and tension drains from your body. By taking a couple of deep breaths every hour, you'll exhale the tension and excitability right out of your classroom.

Oxygen provides vital energy and brainpower. And when you become aware of your breathing, you'll not only calm your own nerves, sharpen your mental acuity, and brighten your state of mind, but you'll become a calming, centering influence on your students.

Prepare.

You may have heard it said that it's physically impossible to be nervous if your body remains relaxed. This may be true, but far it's easier said than done. Relax the mind, however, and the body is sure to follow.

A simple, real-world way to do this is to be mentally prepared. Take a couple minutes to review your lesson plans. Visualize how the day will proceed. See yourself responding to your students with poise, dignity, and calm assuredness.

Calming Waters

Excitability in students is a major source of misbehavior, and in nearly every circumstance, teachers are to blame.

Perpetually busy, racing thoughts, under the gun, unsure, unprepared, stressed-out. These common teacher behaviors create tension in the classroom and push students' buttons like almost nothing else.

It makes them feel like they're forever clicking to the top of a roller coaster, anticipating a drop that never comes. They can't sit still. They can't pay attention. And all they want to do is squirm, chat, play, and roughhouse . . . anything but listen to you.

But you have the power to fix it. You have the power to calm the stirred waters of your classroom. It takes nothing more than a new way of thinking – a simple turn of the wheel, a change of direction.

And it's smooth sailing ahead.

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