



Are You Sabotaging Your Own Classroom Management Success?

By Michael Linsin

One of the most common email questions we get is . . .

“What about students from disadvantaged backgrounds?”

The question never ceases to knock me back on my heels because, truth be told, every strategy on this website has been developed in classrooms with students living in among the most challenging circumstances.

Disadvantaged, crime-ridden, poverty-stricken, you name it.

The fact is, it doesn't matter where you teach or who shows up on your roster, the well-behaved classroom you long for is within your grasp. But there is an obstacle blocking the path of so many teachers in their quest for a dream class.

It's a negative attitude.

For if you don't believe it's possible to transform your class, if your default setting is to point the finger at outside circumstances, if you're in the habit of bemoaning the make up of your classroom or the neighborhood you teach in, then it will never happen for you.

A defeatist point of view will undermine everything you do – sealing your fate to a career of frustration, disappointment, and dissatisfaction.

What follows are seven principles that form the ideal attitude for exceptional classroom management. Adopt them for yourself and in the words of Thoreau, you'll “meet with a success unexpected in common hours.”

You have to believe it.

In order to create the class you really want, you have to believe deep down that you can – not merely as a possibility, but as a foregone conclusion that you will. Decide right now to seize hold of that image you have of **your perfect teaching experience**. Keep the image locked clear and vibrant in your mind, believing in it and never letting it go until it materializes in front of you.

You have to believe in them.

So many teachers are defeated before ever getting started because they look at their students and think, *there is no way this group can ever be the class I really want*. But as soon as you make that false determination for yourself and your students, all hope is lost. Instead, choose to see only the best in your students. Think only in possibilities. Focus only on what you hope them to be – and then make it happen.

You have to stop making excuses.

It's easy to view the challenging and sometimes appalling home lives of students as an excuse for poor behavior. It's easy to blame parents, the neighborhood, and even the school itself for the chaos of your classroom. They are among the many ready-made scapegoats you can drag out whenever you need them. But the truth is, offering excuses, even in the privacy of your own mind, is akin to giving up on your students – as well as on yourself.

You have to take responsibility.

Regardless of how difficult it may seem, you must take responsibility for both the successes and failures in your classroom. Whether you are or aren't directly responsible for this incident or that disruption is irrelevant. Take ownership anyway. By taking responsibility for everything within the four walls of your classroom, you instantly become a better, more effective teacher.

You have to commit to doing what is right.

You won't always feel like [enforcing consequences](#), being a stickler for polite behavior, or ensuring routines are done properly. There will be moments when you'll have an overwhelming desire to let things go. But you must make the hard decisions, even when it's the last thing you want to do, even when it seems no harm will come by looking the other way, even when it is the last minute of the last day of school.

You have to ignore the squawking birds.

There is no shortage of teachers willing to line up to tell you why you can't create the class you really want. Commiserating over the perceived hopelessness of the job is a favorite feel-better pastime in teacher lounges and lunchrooms the world over. And if you're willing to listen, you'll get 101 reasons why you can't do this or that with *those* students. **But none of it is true.** True for them perhaps, but not for all. And certainly not for you.

You have to become a student of classroom management.

All students behave predictably to certain teacher behaviors and classroom management principles. Stick to what works, and you will succeed. But you must be a student of classroom management. [You have to put in the time learning the strategies that really work](#) and understanding how they relate to one another. A semi-understanding of classroom management won't do. In fact, it will likely make you worse off.

Yes, You Can

It isn't always easy to have a positive attitude about teaching when seemingly everyone around you, including your closest teacher chums, think you're off your rocker – or at least, naive.

But the truth is, they're wrong.

There are scores of teachers all over the world, some in the most difficult circumstances imaginable, who this very minute are enjoying the dream class they've always wanted.

You can too.

You really can create a classroom your students love being part of and you love teaching. You really can provide [a safe-haven from the raging storms](#) outside your classroom door. You really can bestow inspiration, love, and lessons that last a lifetime.

But you have to think different than most. You have to go your own way. You have to ignore the cacophony of voices that say you can't do it.

You have to box up all those self-defeating thoughts and negative attitudes still bouncing around in your head and carry them out to the school dumpster – saying goodbye forever.

There is a lot at stake.

So much is on the line.

And your students are counting on you.