



## Why You Should Never Use Restrictive Methods With Difficult Students

The tendency is to corral difficult students, to limit what they can do, where they can go, and who they can be with.

You keep them close. You provide a staccato of reminders and direction, of do this and don't do that. You keep them bubble-wrapped, tethered, and under your thumb, lest they completely blow it.

It's exhausting and time-consuming. But sadly, it's the most commonly practiced and recommended method for dealing with difficult students. The idea being that if you can keep them away from certain classmates and risky situations, you can avoid trouble.

The problem, however, is that it doesn't work.

Sure, you may be able to **hover and micromanage** their lives enough to get through a week, maybe two. But avoidance isn't a real strategy, and soon enough they'll break free. They'll rail and rebel against your straitjacketed restrictions.

Furthermore, an inhibitive approach labels students and makes them feel different and creepy and not good enough. It ingrains their tendency to misbehave ever deeper into their identity.

It whispers in their ear again and again that they *are* their misbehavior. It becomes as much a part of who they are as their hair color or shoe size. They wear it around their neck for the world to see like a bright woolen scarf.

*“You’re not allowed to be in any group with Josh or Karla.”*

*“I want you next to me when we go to the library.”*

*“You must always sit closest to my desk.”*

*“You’re never again to go near the monkey bars at recess.”*

*“You may not be in line next to Jason, Eric, or Joanna.”*

Not to be confused with the effective use of consequences – which are predetermined, limited in duration, and universally applied to all students – the above statements are methods used by teachers to *avoid* misbehavior from recurring.

But this form of classroom management is tragic to your most challenging students. It’s dreary and dreadful and devoid of hope. It’s more about the teacher than it is about the student and what is best for them.

The truth is that difficult students need to feel like regular students before they can start behaving like regular students. Thus, they need the same parameters, the same **classroom management plan**, and the same freedom within boundaries afforded to every other student in your class.

For every day is a new day. Every moment is a fresh start. Every footstep is a chance to get it right, to put the past in the past.

Like all students, if they cross your boundary lines of behavior, you follow your classroom management plan. You hold them accountable using predetermined and previously taught consequences only.

You allow them to reflect on their mistakes, learn from their missteps, and give it another go with their dignity intact. And once they've fulfilled their responsibilities, they're truly free.

They're free to receive **your forgiveness**, your smiles, your kindness, and your unwavering belief in their capacity to grow and change and prove wrong those who have written them off. They're free to choose to behave rather than have it foisted arbitrarily upon them.

And this makes all the difference.

It fills them with the first stirrings of genuine confidence. It awakens their self-worth. It produces a desire to experience more and more of the cool relief that belonging and acceptance rains down upon them.

Now, this strategy only works if you're consistent. It only works if you nurture and protect the relationship between you. It only works in conjunction with your focused, not-miss-a-thing powers of observation — for with freedom must come verification.

It is this core Smart Classroom Management principle of freedom within boundaries for *all* that will finally get through to your most challenging

students, penetrating and softening their heart in a way they'll never see coming.

It is, in fact, the only surefire way to *change* behavior, to send them on their way after their time with you resurrected, transformed, and ready to take on the world.

*Note: The Classroom Management Secret and Dream Class are now available at [Amazon United Kingdom](#), France, Italy, Spain, and Denmark.*