



## Why You Shouldn't Try To Convince Difficult Students To Behave

By Michael Linsin on March 25, 2017

It happens every day in classrooms from Fresno to Kathmandu.

The teacher pulls aside their most difficult student for a private meeting.

Sometimes it's a lecture.

Sometimes it's a pep-talk. Sometimes it's to threaten or praise or question like a trial lawyer.

But in every case, the teacher is trying to *convince* the student to behave.

They're trying to use their tone of voice and creative use of words to inspire a change in behavior.

And although there can be some immediate improvement, it never lasts. In fact, the likely result is a worsening of behavior.

Because, when you try to convince students to behave, you're showing how much it means to you.

You're letting them know how much their behavior affects you, stresses you out, alters your mood, or gets under your skin.

And in so doing, you give away your leverage. You weaken your influence. You're cede the upper hand in the relationship and give your most challenging students the power to make or break your day.

This isn't something they consciously think about, mind you. It's just human nature.

When there is a crack in the foundation of leadership, however small, your students will fill it – or wrest control of the classroom right out of your hands.

To turn around your most difficult students, and actually *change* their behavior, you must never show how much it means to you.

Unless you need private information, it's best to refrain from pulling them aside for one-on-one chats.

Instead, if they misbehave, follow your classroom management plan. Enforce your consequences calmly and matter-of-factly. Pretend **you don't give one whit whether they misbehave or not.**

Deliver your news, then turn on your heel and walk away as if nothing happened.

**Never let them see you sweat.**

If, however, you notice real improvement in behavior, then let them know it – directly and honestly.

*"Now that's how you do it!"*

*"I thought you were great today."*

*"You can't do any better than that. Way to go!"*

*"I knew you could do it."*

In the meantime, strengthen your leverage, influence, and leadership presence through your steadiness – your day-after-day kindness, consistency, pleasantness, and humor.

Show them, prove to them, through your smiles and hellos and friendly banter that *every day is a new day*.

Be the leader they need, not the weak-kneed groveler they don't.

Your refusal to pull them aside to woo, plead, coax, cajole, or manipulate communicates loud and clear that **you believe in them**.

That they really can do it.

It's an undeniable truth that they'll see in your eyes, your face, and your entire being every day of the week.

And it will change them.