

DISCIPLINE WITH DIGNITY

The Difficult Student

Teachers sometimes, mistakenly argue how they need to be tough, in order to ensure discipline from the difficult student. And some may even go to the extent of demonstrating it in punishments, albeit, with the best of intentions.

A group of students when asked for the three qualities most important for a successful teacher, never used the word 'tough', and only one of them used 'strict', but mostly mentioned words like "patience", "good will", "personality", "loving", "kind", "just: etc. These latter set of words seem to imply the need for a kind of interior toughness, which puts greater demands on the teacher herself. But are there ways one can effectively deal with a difficult student?

Mrs. Marie Gaspar of Calcutta says: "I talk to them casually after school hours and try to **find out what's worrying them**. Most often it's their personal problems, and problems at home which distract them and make them difficult."

Incidentally, several of her students when asked which teacher they admired as a good educator, mentioned her name. They described her as "gem": ideal mother and ideal teacher", "strict but gentle as a dove", etc. One adolescent girl said "I could kiss the ground she walks on".

Teacher's Role

Do students have a tendency to identify the roles of mother/father with that of teacher? In our surveys we have noted that many students, expect in their teachers qualities that are more easily found in one's parents. This indicates, perhaps, that being fatherly/motherly helps one to be accepted as a good teacher too.

A father or mother nearly always distinguishes between the child and his/her behaviour. They make the child feel that they accept him/her even while rejecting some of his/her behaviours. This acceptance makes it altogether easier for the child to deal with the unacceptable behaviours.

Forget it Uttara

What Uttara Bhattacharya needed after breaking a bottle of water was a few respectful words of encouragement. In class V, her class teacher once told her to fetch a bottle of water. After filling the glass bottle to the brim, while returning with it suddenly, it slipped from her hand and broke into several pieces. "I saw clouds in my eyes", she likes to recall. : When I narrated this

terrible mishap with tear-filled eyes to the teacher, she laughed and said, 'Forget it Uttara, you can surely give me a bottle on my birthday'. I became calm and felt valued once again".

Souramuni

Souramuni teaches in an English Medium School in a satellite town of Orissa. Every morning as he leaves his home, he rushes forward with enthusiasm, though he has no children of his own to take to school. "The thousand children in school are all of them mine," he likes to say.

What is the secret of his joyful countenance all through the day in school? "I try to think only well of my students. I'd like to think of them as successful people, well-meaning and achieving things in life. I can't find a reason for unhappiness."

Souramuni was awarded a special appreciation plaque by his organization, years ago. "I didn't work for the reward", he said on the occasion. "So when it came, I was astonished. It certainly was useful."

A Question to Remember

We are dealing with young minds. So give more importance to the 'child' than the subject. After all it's easy to cover the curriculum by turning all the pages and doing all the exercises. But where are the children in the end?

-Miss. C. Mathew, Calcutta

Discipline with Dignity

In order to administer discipline with dignity, educator Madeline Hunter advises to keep the discipline action confidential between you and the student or if you do need to be public about it, to make it positive. Here are some of her suggestions:

1. Vicinity. If you are covering a topic and a student is misbehaving, most of the time you can deal with it by simply walking over and standing next to the student while you continue to teach.
2. Inclusion. Use the student's name in a positive way. Say to the student, "Ajit, I need your help. While everyone is thinking of the names of the countries which border China, be my assistant, please, and keep track of the ideas".
3. Secret Signal. Just walk by the student and touch the paper he's writing on or gently touch his shoulder.
4. Private Choice. Give all the students an assignment such as, "close your eyes and think of as many chapter titles from our textbook". Then walk over to the student who is misbehaving and talk to him. Say, "It seems like you're either bored or frustrated. Can you handle this yourself or would you like some help from me?"

Adjacent Student. Avoid embarrassing the student at any cost. If a student is fidgeting or mildly disruptive, simply call on the person NEXT to him/her. This usually brings their attention back to the room.