



Happy Staff = Happy School

# Less Stress Behaviour Management

## Working in schools can be stressful!

These articles are intended to help the great people who work in schools to reduce their stress and increase their satisfaction.

## Key points

Earlier in my career I was taught the power of "When you...Then you..." by a wise guidance officer.

She had a very calm manner, even in response to significant, inappropriate behaviour. My skilled colleague would calmly respond, "When you speak in a calm voice, then you'll be ready to resolve this situation".

**A good head and a good heart are always a formidable combination.**

Nelson Mandela

Student behaviour can add a layer of complexity to the school environment. At times students can be unpredictable, even irrational. It is this unpredictable nature that adds to our stress levels. If only they'd behave the way that we want them to!

Ultimately we can't control anybody else's behaviour, only our own. Behaviour management plans and policies are designed to encourage students to make better decisions and to take responsibility for the decisions they do make. Poor choices lead to consequences that are less attractive to the student.

Consequences of unacceptable behaviour need to be fair, appropriate and consistent. Whilst they need to be stern enough to act as a deterrent, they also need to be realistic and relevant. Thinking about appropriate consequences beforehand is helpful as rash decisions, made 'on the spot' and 'in the heat of the moment' can be difficult to implement. Hollow threats that can not be applied undermine our credibility.

It is vital that we mean what we say and that we follow through. If we tell a student that if they do X then Y will happen as a result and they subsequently do X, then Y must happen – no matter how sorry they are. It is important that students learn the causal link between their behaviour and the consequences.

As staff in schools, our role is to provide the framework that encourages students to make the right decision by consistently apply those expectations. For each rule, there should be a reason. Staff should be able to support or justify each rule with a logical argument. Ensuring that all staff are aware of the school rules and expectations is important to consistently applying those expectations. If you feel like you are a 'lone voice' raise the issue at an appropriate time, in an appropriate forum. Through working together, a school staff can achieve a great deal.

It is important that students see that whilst you 'like them as a person', you 'don't like their behaviour'. Everyone wants to be liked, so giving students a chance to be liked by you 'even more' by showing them the difference between their behaviour and their personality. Tell them how it makes you feel when they behave in a certain way if necessary.

School staff need to be consistent, reliable, predictable adults in the lives of students. Some children have challenging and unpredictable home lives.

Accepting that we can't FORCE somebody to DO something is important. It helps us to manage our expectations and our stress level when some students make poor choices.

**"It isn't what happens to you, it's how you choose to let it affect you!"**

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Steve Francis is an expert in work-life satisfaction and is the author of three books, 'Time Management For Teachers', 'A Gr8 Life...Live it now!' and 'First Semester Can Make or Break You!'. He was a Principal for 20 years. Steve lives in Brisbane with his wife and two school aged children.

