

Behaviour Strategies

HELP FILE

Learning Problems

I feel desperate for children who cannot achieve at school and when one tunes in to the fact that -

"Behaviour is a message of how a child is feeling and coping with their world" then so much is self evident for so often the student who is a problem in class is the student who cannot achieve at learning.

Take "Billy" for example. A quiet little boy, who doesn't disturb or disrupt but who doesn't do anything either. Who when it is carefully explained how he can do something, just sits there or cuts his sheet up, or screws the page up, or scribbles all over the answer - which the teacher then sees and says How can you do that to your work Billy Or Why did you do that Billy? Or Billy don't be so silly, it's easy ... you can do it, I know etc. etc. etc.

The problem is ... Billy cannot do it But nobody seems to understand. He has tried so hard to do it but it doesn't come out right for him. He likes to get things right. He knows the answer but he can't get it right on the paper. Sometimes it looks okay to him but his teacher marks it all wrong.

OR

Sarah, who may not catch on quite so quickly but who tries really hard but nobody seems to notice. The teacher seems to be so focused on those who have done well or those who can't do it at all that she is beginning to feel nobody cares that she got one more right today than yesterday and instead of 4 for her test she's got 6 this week etc. She's really trying but why should she nobody notices anyway.

OR

Melody, who is extremely loud and aggressive and then refuses to do anything. She has a similar problem to Billy - writing doesn't work for her. Her behaviour is not withdrawn but angry and attacking, then giving up. Similar problems, different behaviours.

These are real problems for the classroom teacher, often they require specialist help but they also requires acknowledgement from the teacher, an acceptance that he or she may not be able to put things down as others do, that they are not "dummies but so very frustrated. So is the teacher and other children as they always do , pick it up and run with it and is so doing can sometimes be extremely hurtful and make things far worse. Children pick up and interpret many non-verbal messages a teacher may give out without even being aware of it.

These children like Billy, Sarah, Melody need special care in your behaviour management planning. They need for you to focus on their other skills, other abilities, what they can do, what they can achieve and to tune in to their feelings and acknowledge their strengths.

In addition to giving Billy responsibilities which do not require pen and paper, such comments which acknowledge the difficulties and the feelings that come with the learning difficulties and questions which help search for solutions can all help. e.g. Billy, you must be so frustrated when it doesn't work for you. What can we do to help you? What would you like me to do? How can I help you? What do you need? What is another way you could do this? Etc. etc.

In addition to getting special help, parent support etc., the teacher needs to plan to meet these children's needs in different ways but it requires careful thought, consideration for the child and a focus on your responses to achieve more cooperative behaviour, so that school is not that horrid place of silent suffering but it is a place where I am accepted and appreciated for who I am, and where the child is given opportunities to achieve some success.

With every lesson plan there should be a behaviour management plan running parallel down the page - a preventive process.

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