

# **STUDENT BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT, USING THE EMOTIONAL ROOMS**

**JOHN JOSEPH AND KYM BROWN, 2001**

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## Student Behaviour Management

The key to successful student behaviour management lies primarily in the student's capacity to engage with the classroom curriculum. Classroom behaviour and curriculum learning outcomes are influenced by a number of factors including:

- ❖ learner States
- ❖ teaching styles and learner modalities
- ❖ diet, water, sleep, exercise, posture, environment, poverty
- ❖ relevance of topics
- ❖ connectedness to peers and teachers
- ❖ feedback/assessment practices
- ❖ prior experiences
- ❖ threat, rewards and punishment
- ❖ labelling and grading
- ❖ time

Teachers may have major influence over some of these factors, ranging to very little influence. Whatever, influence and responsibility are most effective when shared. When picturing students who exhibit chronic patterns of disruptive classroom behaviour a compound of contributing factors usually arises. For example, a student may come into the classroom in an angry mood due to an incident at home. She may have no recess or lunch, be teased by classmates and find the science lesson irrelevant. Teachers may label this person a trouble-maker and use time-out extensively so that others in the class are not disrupted. How does a student in this situation find the internal character and resources to create new, positive dispositions? There are literally tens of thousands of students who attend schools on a daily basis that fit this kind of scenario. Where do teachers find the time and resources to construct attachment and learning programs for these students?

In this section we will address two key areas – an understanding of how behaviour is learnt and some classroom strategies for managing low to medium level disruptions. Students who consistently disrupt classrooms require skilled and persistent intervention programs. These programs are beyond the scope of this paper.

***If students keep using poor behaviour and teachers keep using the same methods of exclusion and punishment, who is really the slow learner?***

## Understanding how behaviour develops

Human behaviour is complex and the subject of hotly contested oppositional views. We take the view that all behaviour is learnt, and through consistent use, eventually committed to long-term memory to be drawn on in times of crisis. Behaviour is purposeful. It is employed to respond to current scenarios. What may appear as a poor choice to one person may also appear as the *only solution* to another. Another major factor emerges when considering behaviour - that of the current chemical mix in the brain. Behaviour may move rapidly from logically sequenced steps to irrational, impulsive actions. When the human brain needs to react emotionally to a crisis situation it finds it difficult to engage the rational mind at the same moment. Hence behaviour has a duality:

### Past experience in solving a particular problem The current mix of chemicals in the brain

Students may be unwilling to change patterns of behaviour simply because it does not fit with a teacher's view of appropriateness. Further, those who develop patterns of disruptive behaviour may *want* to change their response but be trapped in negative chemical mixes that only allow them access to past experience when facing new crisis. This helps us to explain why some people are able to clearly articulate better responses when they are being counselled, but move back into old patterns when the real crisis emerges again.

Chemicals such as cortisol, adrenaline and dopamine serve multiple roles but they do act as memory fixatives. It is relatively easy to influence their release in the human brain, in fact thought can trigger it. Imagine that you are standing in the doorway of a plane, parachute folded, ready to jump. Cortisol and adrenaline are being released, yet you have not made the jump. Do you think that you would ever forget such a moment? It is highly unlikely. The whole event may be over in a matter of half an hour yet the memory will last a lifetime. Imagine if every classroom lesson was such a memorable event! High energy, aggressive or violent human behaviour has a similar memory pathway. The episode is stored in a part of the brain called the amygdala – responsible for our intense emotions, and processed in our frontal lobes – the area of the human brain with the highest concentration of receptors for emotions.



Where behaviour that is likely to upset others is concerned, emotions filter our rational thinking. Depending on the extent of the situation, the capacity of sensory information and rational thinking to get processed is weakened, severely in extreme cases. Each particular emotion activates a series of memories and physical responses, inhibiting the flow of some chemicals and creating surges with others. To understand behaviour and to support students who act out their life's frustrations at school, we need to deeply understand the causes and reactions of our own and our students negative triggers. Let's explore that notion further.

## Understanding our emotions

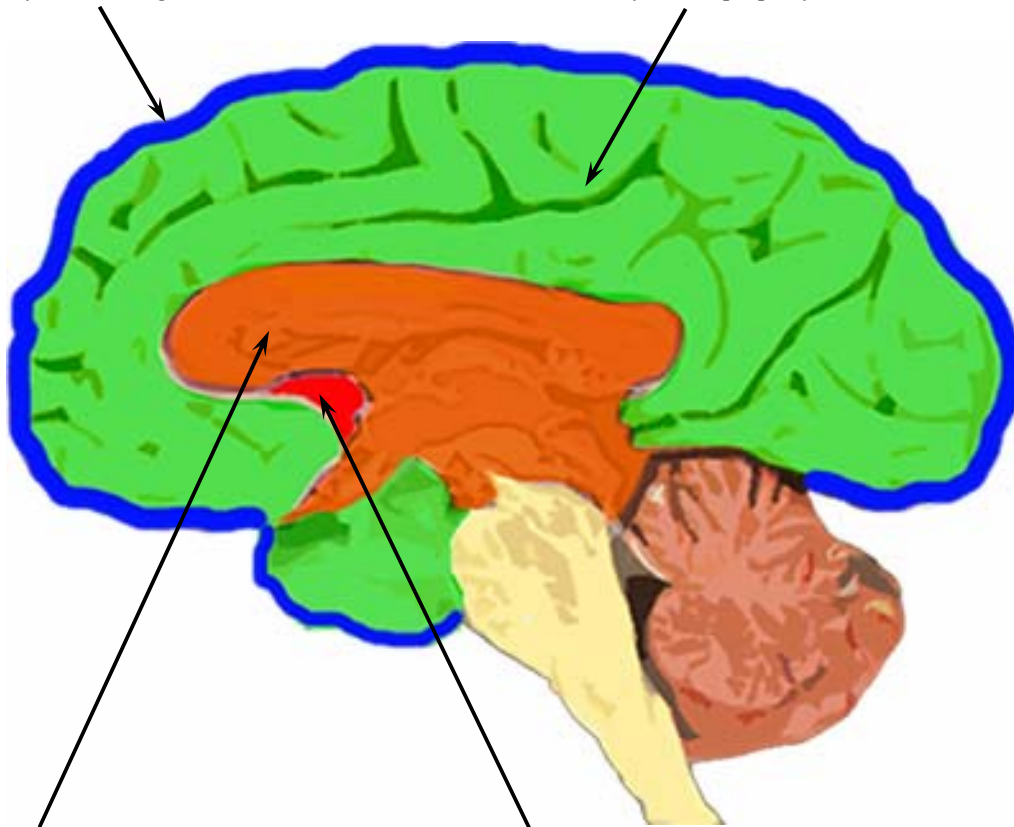
The following diagram is a highly simplified model to help explain human behaviour, particularly the emotional elements. Its simplicity is its key to success. Thousands of school students across Australia have learnt about behaviour by studying this model. Testimonials from students, parents, caregivers, teachers and school administrators provide evidence that an understanding of how behaviour develops can act as a catalyst to behaviour change.

### The Blue Room

*The motivation room  
Creative, imaginative, dreaming, visualising,  
self-oriented  
Sees possibilities  
Mind wanders, often dreaming*

### The Green Room

*The doing room  
Thoughtful, rational, caring, sharing, other  
people-oriented  
Acts on possibilities  
Mind focused, purposeful*



### The Orange Room

*The emotional room  
Thoughtful, caring, engaging, happy  
simmers, brews ideas, stews on issues  
Considers consequences  
Sadness, happiness, love, surprise, shame  
Mind filtered through emotions (Orange and  
Green Rooms interact)*

### The Red Room

*The fight or flight room  
Impulsive, destructive, action-oriented  
  
Ignores consequences  
Anger, fear, rage, panic  
Access to logical thinking (Green Room)  
usually denied*

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*Full A2 colour posters of The Rooms available from Focus Education*

## Exploring the Rooms

Consider the four Rooms. What experiences do you enjoy in your Blue Room? What experiences send you to your Blue Room?



What experiences do you enjoy in your Green Room? What experiences send you to your Green Room?



What personal (non-schooling) experiences do you enjoy in your Orange Room? What personal experiences send you to your Orange Room in a positive way?



What personal experiences do you dislike in your Orange Room? What personal experiences send you to your Orange Room in a negative way?



When was the last time you were in your Red Room? What experiences send you to your Red Room?



Most people, children or adults, find it easier to recall episodes from the Orange and Red Room. Young children and adolescents may have particularly vivid recollections of Red Room incidents. Some even talk about them as recurring nightmares. Our Orange and Red Room incidents, and how we handle them, help to create and shape our personality. Those who spend hours on end in a negative Orange Room find it difficult to break depressing thought patterns. Those who move into Red with little provocation are unpredictable, prone to violence and struggle to make and sustain relationships with others.

## Using the rooms

Now consider a classroom situation. Make a list of incidents that are likely to send you to your Orange or Red Room. Try to get at least ten.



•	•
•	•
•	•
•	•
•	•
•	•
•	•

When any one of these situations occurs in a classroom, your brain will likely trigger an Orange or Red Room response - after all, you have just identified this as the likely outcome! Depending on your past experience, and what you desire to achieve by the ensuing actions, you will react in a certain way. Sometimes teachers are not aware that their reactions are no more than impulsive responses, used over and over again. Students who are often in trouble become very perceptive at noticing their teachers' and others' Orange and Red Room triggers and can seize classroom power by manipulating the emotional Rooms. We have included for you a list of Orange and Red Room Triggers, drawn for teachers across all year levels. Indicate which ones of these might also activate an emotional response from you.

<input type="checkbox"/> Bullying	<input type="checkbox"/> Spitting	<input type="checkbox"/> Day-dreaming (off task)
<input type="checkbox"/> No equipment	<input type="checkbox"/> Wearing caps inside	<input type="checkbox"/> Saying "I'm bored"
<input type="checkbox"/> Calling out	<input type="checkbox"/> Out of uniform	<input type="checkbox"/> Eating in class
<input type="checkbox"/> Lying	<input type="checkbox"/> Answering back	<input type="checkbox"/> Low motivation levels
<input type="checkbox"/> Swearing	<input type="checkbox"/> Task refusal	<input type="checkbox"/> Not listening to instruction
<input type="checkbox"/> Throwing things	<input type="checkbox"/> Play fighting	<input type="checkbox"/> Sending notes across room
<input type="checkbox"/> Swinging on chairs	<input type="checkbox"/> Mumbling under breath	<input type="checkbox"/> Picking on others
<input type="checkbox"/> Lateness to class	<input type="checkbox"/> Racist comments	<input type="checkbox"/> Lack of care for others
<input type="checkbox"/> Stealing	<input type="checkbox"/> 'Dobbing'	<input type="checkbox"/> Laugh at others' mistakes
<input type="checkbox"/> Untidy work	<input type="checkbox"/> Chewing gum in class	<input type="checkbox"/> Going to toilet too often
<input type="checkbox"/> Cheating	<input type="checkbox"/> Pen tapping	<input type="checkbox"/> Clinging to parent
<input type="checkbox"/> Fighting	<input type="checkbox"/> Doing homework in class	<input type="checkbox"/> Farting in class
<input type="checkbox"/> Whining	<input type="checkbox"/> Teacher 'baiting'	<input type="checkbox"/> Making silly comments
<input type="checkbox"/> Poor manners	<input type="checkbox"/> Talking while teacher is	<input type="checkbox"/> Making stupid noises
<input type="checkbox"/> Teasing other children	<input type="checkbox"/> Asking 'why' questions	<input type="checkbox"/> Touching teachers
<input type="checkbox"/> Running in corridors	<input type="checkbox"/> 'Lame' excuses	<input type="checkbox"/> Sexist comments
<input type="checkbox"/> Starting before instructions	<input type="checkbox"/> Poor attitude to school	<input type="checkbox"/> Rudeness
<input type="checkbox"/> Graffiti on blackboard	<input type="checkbox"/> Lack of respect	<input type="checkbox"/> Slouching in chair
<input type="checkbox"/> Breaking things	<input type="checkbox"/> Vandalism	<input type="checkbox"/> No homework
<input type="checkbox"/> Drinking in class	<input type="checkbox"/> Passing notes across room	<input type="checkbox"/> Graffiti on blackboard

Imagine what life might be like for the classroom teacher who has an Orange or Red Room reaction to most of these! This has the potential for severe stress. Consider this list from a student’s perspective, especially a secondary student who has interactions with between 3 and 6 teachers daily. Some teachers might exhibit an Orange Room reaction to say, swearing while others ignore it. For some teachers, instruction cannot continue while a student is wearing a cap in class. For others, who cares? Some teachers thoroughly enjoy being asked, “Why are we doing this?” Others view it as insolence. Teachers often expect students to have high levels of empathy – the ability to read emotions in others, to take another’s perspective, to be sensitive and caring – but this is high level emotional intelligence and classrooms almost always have students who are not capable in this domain. Others have students who refuse to respect the emotions and perspectives of others because they see them as power-based and unfair.

In our work with many classes across all year levels we have asked students to identify things that teachers do that put them into their Orange and Red Rooms. Notice that every one of these is negative. The human brain can more easily remember and recall negatives than positives.

- |                          |                                 |                          |                         |                          |                                   |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Yelling                         | <input type="checkbox"/> | Put downs               | <input type="checkbox"/> | Not listening to all sides        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Having class favourites         | <input type="checkbox"/> | Not explaining things   | <input type="checkbox"/> | Picking on certain kids           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Using time out for minor issues | <input type="checkbox"/> | Lying to kids           | <input type="checkbox"/> | Scared to tackle tough situations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Not caring                      | <input type="checkbox"/> | Threats                 | <input type="checkbox"/> | Telling lame jokes                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Calling kids names              | <input type="checkbox"/> | Throwing things at kids | <input type="checkbox"/> | Bullying                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Using too much power            | <input type="checkbox"/> | Sleazing onto kids      | <input type="checkbox"/> | Giving bad reports                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | No feedback on work             | <input type="checkbox"/> | Using sarcasm           | <input type="checkbox"/> | Not understanding                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Never do sport or go outside    | <input type="checkbox"/> | No fun                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | Handing work back late            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Moving on before readiness      | <input type="checkbox"/> | Talking too much        | <input type="checkbox"/> | Threatening to call parents       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Avoiding the not smart kids     | <input type="checkbox"/> | Being a ‘dork’          | <input type="checkbox"/> | Giving work that’s too hard       |

Can you recall a classroom incident where a teacher put you in your Orange Room in a negative way? How did you feel? Can you remember simmering and brewing in the Orange Room for a while? What learning was taking place during this time? Were you anxious to return to that teacher’s class next lesson?

One of the reasons that detention or time-out rooms do not work is because students who go there are expected to sort out their issues (a Green Room activity) when they are swamped with Orange or Red Room chemicals. Students rarely come out of such places more skilled or knowledgeable than when they went in – just more frustrated or determined to get even. Time-out or suspensions can provide welcome relief for the rest of a class, and *can* be used as a time for reflection, motivation, goal, setting and planning. It is rarely successful because of the emotions that various stakeholders bring to the situation.

## What do students and teachers need to know to manage their own behaviour?

Consider the following categories that contribute to emotional intelligence. Think (Green Room) of some activities or indicators that might support yourself and your students to deal with classroom conflict and emotionally charged episodes in more productive ways.



<b>1. Emotional self-awareness</b>	Success indicators/activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognising, naming emotions as they occur</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being mentally prepared for crisis situations</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding the causes of an emotional incident</li> </ul>	
<b>2. Managing emotions</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Able to express emotions without impulsive behaviour</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Able to delay gratification</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fewer suspicions, anxieties about others</li> </ul>	
<b>3. Empathy, reading emotions in others</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Able to take another's perspective</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Able to read cues from others</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being sensitive to others</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Caring</li> </ul>	
<b>4. Self-motivation</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsible for own actions</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Able to focus on tasks for extended periods</li> </ul>	
<b>5. Handling relationships</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Able to understand and analyse relationships</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Able to manage or resolve conflicts</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take responsibility as leader or other group member</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skilled at communicating with others</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share with, cooperate with and assist others</li> </ul>	

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# WARNING!

**KEEP OUT** of your Red Room when teaching.  
**AVOID** your Orange Room if you feel you might lose control of your Green Room.  
**PLAN** your reactions to known crisis triggers.

## Using the Rooms as a counselling tool

Develop programs and strategies so that students can:

<b>Blue Room</b>	Be motivated to be in control of their own Rooms Visualise the benefits, change their attitude towards schooling Make believable affirmations Relax, meditate, write, seek feedback
<b>Green Room</b>	Recognise and name emotions and physiological responses Understand the causes of emotional incidents Manage negative triggers, find positive triggers Write goals, share with trusted others Identify weaknesses and strengths Plan solutions to known problems
<b>Orange Room</b>	Be mentally prepared to deal with situations Choose best option based on pre-planning Debrief situation from a range of perspectives Take responsibility for own actions
<b>Red Room</b>	Remove self (& or others) from negative triggers Breathe deeply Don't try to resolve issue, ease back to Orange Use a soft voice, allow soft touch or restraint

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### Physiological responses resulting from Red Room incidents

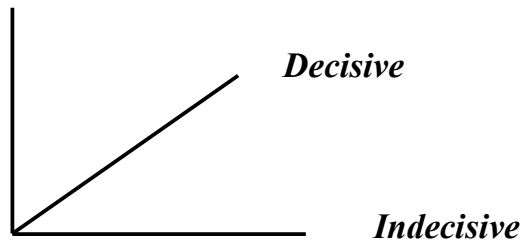
- slowing of emotional reaction, drop in adrenaline levels
- simmer and brew for hours or even days, pass blame
- create high levels of arousal, remain on a knife's edge for hours or days
- undergo extended cognitive appraisal, recreate the situation with multiple scenarios
- develop memory engrams that are powerful, unable to get incident off mind
- cause moods to develop and be sustained, feel powerless
- develop negative feedback loops between the emotional and rational parts of the brain
- create future responses for our brains to use, Red Room response committed to memory

**It is not the event that is stressful, it is how the mind *interprets* the event and copes with it.**

## Constructing a positive, fair and responsible classroom environment

All classrooms requires codes of conduct, call them rules if you like. School students, particularly younger children depend heavily on routines and the security of adults who can manage a positive and safe environment. Each teacher's personality, own schooling experience and pre-service teaching experiences will influence the way they go about setting up classroom codes of practice. Bill Rogers (1992) identifies three types of classrooms:

### *Demanding*



After: Bill Rogers, 1992

### **Demanding**

In Demanding Classrooms, the teacher defines the code of behaviour and imposes strict discipline to enforce rules. Consequences are punishment-oriented. The learning program is usually centred around teacher input, with each student expected to keep up with the learning pace. The classroom is usually competitive, with students sitting in rows. There are very few opportunities for student interaction. Those who obey the rules and are average or above average achievers usually feel welcome, although there is sometimes relatively high levels of fear. There is consistency in management and punishment. Such a classroom shows little interest in others' points of view. Parents of students sometimes state their preference for this type of classroom management because it seems to be similar to their own schooling experiences.

### **Indecisive**

In Indecisive Classrooms, the more powerful or disruptive students define the behaviour, and discipline is slack or based on power relationships between students. Consequences are either punishment oriented or left to chance. The learning program is often ad-hoc with few students being able to make sense of what is being taught. The classroom is strongly competitive and has a strong sense of fear within it. Students in these classrooms are often sitting in groups settings but they rarely work collaboratively. There is little consistency in management or punishment and teachers often need to raise their voice – sometimes to yelling – to gain attention of the class.

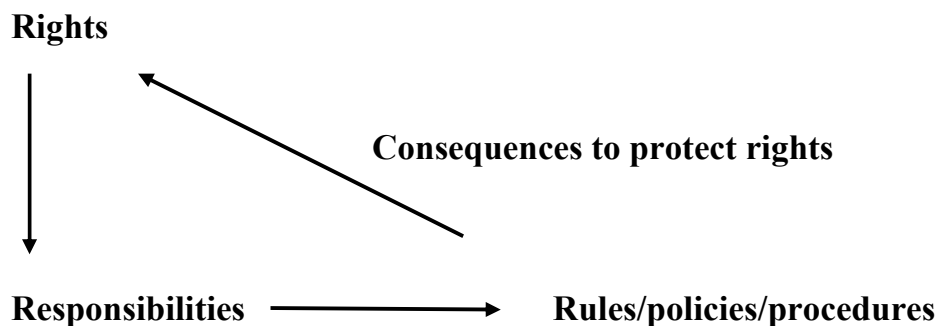
## **Decisive**

In Decisive Classrooms, the teacher and students define the code of behaviour and use logical consequences and restitution to maintain a supportive learning environment. The learning program is student-centred, with an emphasis on opportunities for success. Students are given opportunities to learn things that interest them as well as being expected to engage productively in the mandated curriculum areas. The classroom is strongly cooperative, has a sense of safety and an atmosphere that enhances self-esteem. Students are often seated in groups and occasionally expected to work collaboratively to complete learning tasks. In Decisive Classrooms, students are taught about codes of behaviour and held accountable to their classmates and teacher(s) for their actions. Issues are often dealt with through such strategies as class meetings, debates, re-enactments and replays. Most students feel welcome and know that their views can be expressed and listened to.

### ***How are codes of behaviour (rules) framed in a Decisive classroom?***

In a Decisive classroom, teachers promote the relationships between rights, rules and responsibilities, providing the required instructional time for students to thoroughly learn the codes of behaviour. Joseph and Brown (1996) have developed a process for framing class rules or policies with students. The framework requires several ‘lessons’ to complete.

In your first meeting with your new class, it is advisable to provide some interim rules (eg hands up to speak; sit in seats unless teacher asks you to move; walk in the classroom etc). State clearly that these are an interim measure, and that the framing of positive behaviour codes is something that needs to be addressed seriously and with full participation. We begin by looking at the relationship between rights, rules, responsibility and consequences:



## The Rights and Responsibilities of Learners

A **Right** is a natural entitlement.

**Responsibilities** are actions we take that protect our rights and the rights of others.

Because we all have the same rights as learners, we have a responsibility to protect the rights of others.

In classroom there are at least four categories of conduct (rules) which should be addressed. These are, Safety, Learning and Teaching, Treatment and Conflict Management.

<b>Rights</b>	<b>Responsibilities</b>
Everyone in the room has a right to feel safe	Therefore, we all have a responsibility to keep ourselves and others safe
Everyone in the room has a right to learn without being interrupted	Therefore, we all have a responsibility to stay on task
Everyone in the room has a right to be treated fairly and with respect	Therefore, we all have a responsibility to treat others fairly and with respect
Everyone in the room has a right to solve or manage their differences without violence	Therefore, we all have a responsibility to try to solve our differences without violence

### Classroom codes of conduct (rules) for learners

**Codes/Rules** are boundaries for acceptable behaviour. They stem naturally from responsibilities.

Codes of conduct (rules) should be:

- promoted as a support for learning in the classroom
- related to safety, learning and teaching, treatment, conflict management
- few in number
- negotiated and agreed upon
- linked with logical and/or natural consequences
- made specific
  - link with positive behaviour
  - include the 'not-negotiable'

## **Possible classroom codes of conduct (rules)**

### ***Safety***

In our classroom we keep ourselves and others safe

### ***Learning and Teaching***

In our classroom we stay on task and support the learning of others

### ***Treatment***

In our classroom we treat each other with respect and we look after our environment

### ***Conflict management***

In our classroom we manage our conflict without physical or verbal violence or abuse

## **Consequences**

A consequence is the outcome(s) of a particular behaviour. They are usually put in place to protect the rights of others, although they are sometimes used as a demonstration of teacher or student power, or revenge. Consequences can be natural (the natural course of events that follow an action), punitive (imposed to hurt or discourage in some way), or logical (based on the infringement and requiring restitution).

## **Punitive consequences**

Schools have historically used punitive consequences as a matter of course, even though some students continue to display inappropriate behaviour - they usually get better at not being caught! Punitive consequences are destructive of relationships and seldom achieve the desired result, leading to increased frustration, anger and a breakdown of the teaching/learning process. They engage the emotions leading to increased Orange and Red Room incidents. They are usually decision-driven and fail to solve problems in the long-term. Based on the notion that, *I will hurt you if you don't comply with me*, classrooms that consistently use punitive consequences can be scary places for students and their teacher(s).

### **Characteristics of punitive consequences**

- based upon personal authority
- arbitrary
- judgemental
- often emphasises the past
- instil fear, leading to Orange and Red Room reactions
- demand compliance
- remove responsibility

## **Natural consequences**

Natural consequences can be successful if students reflect on the likely outcomes of their actions and have the resources of character to make better decisions. For example, the student who never completes homework, and is informed that they may fail a subject as a result of this, could decide that homework is worth doing. The use of natural consequences, where disruptive classroom behaviour is involved, may lead to bullying and frustration as students disregard decisions. In these situations, students may ‘bait’ teachers into making unrealistic threats. These are the classrooms where the students are ‘hanging from the rafters!’

### Characteristics of natural consequences

- based on other people taking responsibility
- arbitrary
- judgemental
- often escalates into unsafe situations
- strongest personalities take control
- create insecurity

## **Logical consequences**

Logical consequences are based on notions of fairness and restitution. They are supportive of relationships and focus on solutions to problems rather than quick-fix decisions. Unfortunately, logical consequences seem to take a longer time to show results, and time is a scarce resource in many classrooms. The use of logical consequences is based on a principle that behaviour is learned and purposeful and classrooms are places where inappropriate behaviour is challenged within a supportive learning framework.

### Characteristics of logical consequences

- emphasise relationships and respect for others
- relate to behaviour
- non-judgemental
- concerned with present and future
- build respect
- present choices
- build self-responsibility

Beginning teachers who expect their students to enter classrooms with exemplary behaviour patterns, or to do what they are told because a teacher has spoken, are often shocked by the seemingly disrespectful nature of some students. The tendency to move towards punitive consequences or to try and ignore issues through natural consequences is strong. Resist this. Both options place beginning teachers – and many experienced teachers – in their Orange and Red Rooms. This makes reflection on issues difficult to undertake because they become caught up in emotional processing.

## **Examples of consequences in action:**

### **A student refuses to undertake a learning task:**

#### *Natural consequence*

The student falls behind in learning

#### *Punitive consequence*

The student is sent to time-out/detention or given extra work to do

#### *Logical consequence*

The student is required to catch-up the learning at another time

### **A student tosses rubbish onto the classroom floor:**

#### *Natural consequence*

The floor looks untidy

#### *Punitive consequence*

The student is sent to pick up numerous papers at lunchtime and/or to write lines

#### *Logical consequence*

The student is asked to pick up the paper and place it in the rubbish bin

### **A student is bullying another student:**

#### *Natural consequence*

The students become physically and emotionally involved. Learning for the rest of the class stops.

#### *Punitive consequence*

The students are sent to detention or suspended

#### *Logical consequence*

The students are supported in sorting out or managing their conflict in non-violent ways

### **A student verbally abuses another student**

#### *Natural consequence*

The students become emotionally involved and the issue escalates

#### *Punitive consequence*

The abusive student is sent to time-out or asked to write lines

#### *Logical consequence*

The students are counselled, following the school's grievance procedures for harassment. Some form of restitution is planned and implemented.

### ***What do I do when students ignore a logical consequence?***

This is where it gets tough because the issue has now escalated into two problems. For example, the paper tossed onto the floor was not picked up and the student has now refused to follow a reasonable direction. Can you feel the tendency to punishment getting stronger? Resist it! You will be passing most of your power and control directly on to the student, who may actually be seeking this.

Remain in your Green Room. Ask the student once more to pick up the paper. If refusal follows offer a choice such as, *‘Either you pick up the paper now or we will discuss this issue at break time.’* At this point leave the issue alone. Avoid escalation but make certain that the whole affair is discussed at the earliest opportunity. **Deflect** from escalation, **Diffuse** when necessary but always **Deal** with issues.

### ***Should I be using a ‘Step system’?***

The ‘Step system’ is currently in vogue in many schools. Under this system, students who infract the classroom rules are given a warning, followed by another warning for a further misdemeanour, and some sort of pre-determined punishment for a third violation. This system has some merit - it does give the class respite from chronic disrupters and all members of the class know clearly where the boundaries lie. On the other hand, it fails miserably when referenced against logical consequences. A warning for hitting another person, followed by a warning for calling out in class then removal from class for talking is hardly logical.

Schools are places for learning. Behaviour is learned and so should be subject to the same rigour of teaching and learning as any other aspect of the curriculum. The ‘Step system’ is decision driven, not solution driven and in this author’s opinion, does not warrant further consideration.

### ***How do I go about framing codes of conduct (rules) with students?***

- Discuss the concept of people’s “rights”
  - the rights we share as members of the wider society (eg a right to feel safe)
  - define what we mean when we speak about rights (one definition might be, ‘a right is a natural entitlement’)
  
- Identify the rights that we share as learners, and classify into the categories of
  - safety
  - teaching and learning
  - treatment
  - conflict management
  
- Explain that because all learners share the same classroom rights, they also share a responsibility for protecting the rights of others.
  - discuss what we mean when we speak about responsibilities (eg an action for which we are morally/socially accountable ...)
  - examine some of the responsibilities we share in the wider society and at home (eg a responsibility to keep ourselves and others safe)

- For each of the classroom rights identified, identify the corresponding responsibility (you could use a T-diagram)  
eg. *We all have the right to feel safe. Therefore, we all have a responsibility to help others feel safe.*
- Examine the list of responsibilities for each category. Frame a code of conduct (rule) to incorporate the responsibilities listed.  
eg. *In our class, we behave safely.*
- Once you have a list of 4 codes (rules), examine each of them in turn and develop either a list of ‘descriptors’ or a T-chart to help students identify what they would see and hear if each of the rules were successfully observed by each member of the group. These descriptors must be demonstrable because they make the codes of conduct (rules) very specific and practical.

### **Sample Descriptors chart**

eg. *In our class, we behave safely. This means that we:*

- *sit flat on our chairs*
- *walk in the class*
- *hand things to each other .....*

NB There may be occasions where descriptors are best framed in ‘negative’ terms (eg. “*we don’t hit each other*”). This is more explicit than attempting to frame such non-negotiables in positive terms.

- Decide on a means of displaying the codes of conduct (rules) and descriptors so that they can be readily referred to by teachers and students.

### **Sample T-chart**

<i>Treating others fairly and with respect</i>	
<i>Looks like</i>	<i>Sounds like</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greeting each other politely</li> <li>• Encouraging each other</li> <li>• No Put Downs</li> <li>• Using ‘I’ Statements</li> <li>• Using assertive statements</li> <li>• Asking before using someone’s equipment</li> <li>• Helping out when someone is hurt</li> <li>• Make sure of our facts when dealing with other’s behaviour</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Hi! How are you, .....”?”</li> <li>• “You did really well with .....””</li> <li>• “I liked the way you .....””</li> <li>• “Would you mind if I borrowed ....?”</li> <li>• “I feel ..... when ..... and I would like ...”</li> <li>• “Stop ....., thanks!”</li> </ul>