Building Classroom Discipline

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Chapter 12

Linda Albert's
Cooperative Discipline

Focus
- Close cooperation between teacher and students on making class decisions.
- Helping students connect with others, contribute, and see themselves as capable.
- A class code of conduct that promotes an optimal climate for learning and teaching.
- Involving parents as partners in helping students learn and show responsibility.

Logic
- To a large extent, students choose to behave the way they do.
- Students are highly motivated by the desire to sense they belong.
- Misbehavior is best understood as attempts to reach mistaken goals.
- Teachers best influence student choices through collaboration and encouragement.

Contributions
- Extended Dreikurs's discipline concepts to the classroom in a more useful form.
- Devised the Three C strategies to help students feel they belong and can succeed.
- Described dozens of good teacher interventions for use when misbehavior occurs.
- Established teacher-student-parent cooperation as pivotal in classroom behavior.

Albert's Suggestions
- Help every student feel they belong in the class and are valued members.
- Help every student connect with others, contribute to the class, and feel capable.
- Involve students and parents in planning the class discipline system.
- Turn every misbehavior into an opportunity to help students learn better behavior.
About Linda Albert

Linda Albert, author and disseminator of Cooperative Discipline, is an educator, counselor, syndicated columnist, university professor, and former classroom teacher who works nationally and internationally with educators and parents. She has authored regular columns in Working Mother and Family magazines and has made featured appearances on NBC's Today Show, CBS's This Morning, and CNN's Cable News.


Albert's Contributions to Discipline

Influenced by Adlerian psychology and the work of Rudolf Dreikurs, Albert became convinced that students' behavior—and misbehavior—results in large part from their attempts to meet certain needs. By attending to those needs and providing much encouragement, teachers can reduce misbehavior greatly and establish classrooms in which students participate cooperatively with the teacher and each other. Albert shows how this is accomplished and provides clear techniques and strategies for classroom use. She has contributed the concepts of the Three C's (capable, connected, contributing), the classroom code of conduct, the Six-D conflict resolution plan, and the Five A's of helping students connect with teachers and peers. She has also contributed a great number of specific suggestions on what to do and say in order to prevent and redirect misbehavior.

Albert's Central Focus

Albert's main focus is on helping teachers meet student needs, thereby prompting students to cooperate with the teacher and each other. This cooperation removes the adversarial tendencies that so often exist between teacher and student. Albert believes cooperation occurs more easily when students truly feel they belong to, and in, the class. To make sure students gain that feeling, she gives heavy attention to what she calls the Three C's—helping all students feel capable, helping them connect with others, and helping them make contributions to the class and elsewhere. Albert also shows how parental support can be obtained and used to advantage. Although she gives major emphasis to developing a classroom climate that significantly diminishes misbehavior, she acknowled-
edges that some misbehavior will occur in even the best-managed classrooms. She explains how to intervene effectively when misbehavior occurs. Beyond that, she provides strategies that minimize classroom conflict and permit teachers to deal with it in a positive manner.

Albert's Principal Teachings

- For the most part, students choose to behave as they do.
  How they behave is not outside their control. Virtually all students can behave properly when they feel the need to do so.

- Students need to feel they belong in the classroom.
  To do so, they must perceive themselves to be important, worthwhile, and valued.

- When students misbehave, their goal is usually either to gain attention, gain power, exact revenge, or avoid failure.
  At times, misbehavior can also occur because of exuberance or simply not knowing the proper way to behave.

- Teachers can only influence student behavior; they cannot directly control it.
  By knowing which goal students are seeking, teachers can exert positive influence on behavior choices that students make.

- Teachers in general reflect three styles of classroom management: permissive, autocratic, and democratic.
  Of the three, the democratic style best promotes good discipline. Albert refers to these three styles as hands off, hands on, and hands joined.

- The Three C's—capable, connect, and contribute—are essential in helping students feel a sense of belonging.
  When students feel capable, they are willing to apply themselves academically. When they can connect to others in a positive manner and can find ways to contribute to the welfare of the class, the positive relationships promote positive behaviors. With the Three C's in place, the amount of misbehavior drops dramatically.

- Teachers should work cooperatively with students to develop a classroom code of conduct.
  The code of conduct stipulates the kind of behavior expected of everyone in the class.

- Teachers should also work cooperatively with students to develop a set of consequences to be invoked when the classroom code of conduct is transgressed.
  When students participate in developing consequences, they are more likely to consider them reasonable and abide by them.

- When conflicts occur between teacher and students, the teacher should remain calm and relaxed.
  Teachers should adopt a businesslike attitude and use a calm, firm tone of voice.
Encouragement is the most powerful teaching tool available to teachers. Few things motivate good class behavior as much as large amounts of encouragement from teachers.

Teachers should remember that in order to develop a good system of discipline, they require the cooperation of students and parents. Both should be valued as partners and their contributions brought meaningfully into cooperative discipline.

Analysis of Albert's Cooperative Discipline

Albert has found that teachers everywhere are troubled, even overwhelmed, by student misbehavior. They feel incapable of dealing effectively with special-needs students, are dismayed by the number of severe classroom disruptions, and are increasingly worried about violence. These conditions are ruining the quality of teaching for many teachers and are destroying job satisfaction.

Albert says that in order to reverse this picture teachers require a discipline approach that permits them to work cooperatively with students and parents. She believes true cooperative understanding brings two prized results: First, the classroom can be transformed into a safe, orderly, inviting place for teaching and learning. Second, students have a good chance of learning to behave responsibly as well as achieving more academically.

The Goal of Classroom Discipline

The goal of classroom discipline is the same everywhere. It is to help students learn to choose responsible behavior. That goal can be reached by developing a positive relationship among teachers, students, parents, other teachers, and administrators. This relationship makes it easy to develop intervention strategies for misbehavior, encouragement strategies for building self-esteem, and collaboration strategies that involve students as genuine partners. These three strategies combine to produce positive student behavior.

Why Students Misbehave

Albert believes that most class misbehavior occurs as students attempt unsuccessfully to meet a universal psychological need—the need to belong. Students want to feel secure, welcome, and valued, and to a large extent their behavior influences how well those needs are met in the classroom. Although most students behave acceptably and, thus, get their needs met, some seem unable to do so. When that happens, many direct their behavior toward mistaken goals, so-called because students have the mistaken idea that through misbehavior they can somehow fulfill the need to belong. Albert believes students pursue four mistaken goals—attention, power, revenge, and assumed disability. Albert calls behavior that students direct at those mistaken goals attention seeking, power seeking, revenge seeking, and avoidance of failure.
Attention-Seeking Behavior

Although many students receive the attention they crave in the classroom, many others do not, so they seek it actively and passively. Active attention seeking involves what Albert calls AGMs—attention-getting mechanisms, such as pencil tapping, showing off, calling out, and asking irrelevant questions. Passive attention seeking is evident in the behavior of students who dawdle, lag behind, and are slow to comply. They behave in these ways to get attention from the teacher.

Albert says there is a silver lining to attention seeking: It shows that the offending student desires a positive relationship with the teacher but does not know how to connect. For such students, Albert suggests providing abundant recognition when they behave properly. Sometimes, attention-seeking behavior becomes excessive. For those times, Albert provides 31 intervention techniques. Two examples are (1) standing beside the offending student and (2) using I-messages such as “I find it difficult to keep my train of thought when talking is occurring.”

Power-Seeking Behavior

When students do not receive enough attention to feel they belong in the classroom, some of them resort to power-seeking behavior. Through words and actions they try to show that they cannot be controlled by the teacher and will do as they please. They may mutter replies, disregard instructions, comply insolently, or directly challenge the teacher. Active power seeking may take the form of temper tantrums, back talk, disrespect, and defiance. Passive power seeking may take the form of quiet noncompliance with directions. These students are willing to hide behind labels such as lazy, forgetful, and inattentive.

Power-seeking behavior makes teachers angry and frustrated. They worry they will lose face or lose control of the class. Albert says that power seeking has its silver lining, though, in that many students who display this behavior show good verbal skills and leadership ability, as well as assertiveness and independent thinking. Keeping the silver lining in mind, teachers can prevent much power-seeking behavior by giving students options from which to choose (e.g., You may do this work alone or with a partner). Delegating responsibilities, and granting legitimate power when appropriate. Once teachers find themselves engaged in a power struggle with a student, Albert advises teachers to seek a graceful exit, as described later in the chapter section entitled “Dealing with Severe Confrontations.”

Revenge-Seeking Behavior

When students suffer real or imagined hurts in the class, a few may set out to retaliate against teachers and classmates. This is likely to occur when teachers have a record of dealing forcefully with students. It also happens at times when students are angry at parents or others who are too risky to rebel against. The teacher is a convenient, relatively nonthreatening target. Revenge seeking usually takes the form of verbal attacks on the teacher (e.g., “You really stink as a teacher!”), in destruction of materials or room environment, or, most frightening of all, in direct physical attacks on teachers or other students.

Strategies that are effective in dealing with power-seeking behavior are also effective when students misbehave to gain revenge (see the sections in this chapter entitled
"Avoiding and Defusing Confrontations" and "Dealing with Severe Confrontations"). Two additional tactics are helpful for decreasing revenge-seeking behavior. The first is to work at building caring relationships with all students. This includes students whose behavior is often unacceptable. The second is to teach students to express hostility in acceptable ways, such as through talking about their problems or developing a personal anger management plan.

Avoidance-of-Failure Behavior
Many students have an intense dread of failure. A few, especially when assignments are difficult, withdraw and quit trying, preferring to appear lazy rather than stupid. Albert advises teachers not to allow students to withdraw, but instead alter assignments and provide plentiful encouragement to keep students involved. Specific suggestions include (1) using concrete learning materials that students can see, feel, and manipulate, (2) using computer-based instruction, taking advantages of the latest technology and many students' natural interest in computers, (3) teaching students to accomplish one step at a time so they enjoy small successes, and (4) teaching to the various intelligences described by Howard Gardner (1983). This last strategy encourages students to use special talents they might have in areas referred to as linguistic, mathematical, visual, kinesthetic, rhythmical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. In addition, special help can be provided by the teacher or by remedial programs, adult volunteers, peer tutoring, or commercial learning centers. It is important that withdrawn students be constantly encouraged to try. The teacher must show belief in them and help remove their negative thoughts about their ability to succeed.

Albert's Plethora of Strategies
Albert puts great stock in strategies that serve to prevent misbehavior, but she puts equal emphasis on strategies teachers can employ at what she calls "the moment of misbehavior." She states that her intention is to give teachers so many specific strategies that they are never at a loss for what to do next when a student misbehaves. Space within this chapter does not permit presentation of the numerous strategies she describes. Readers are directed to the Appendices of Cooperative Discipline (2003b), especially Appendix C, which provides a summary chart of the numerous effective interventions she advocates.

The Three C's of Cooperative Discipline
The fundamental approach to Cooperative Discipline is embodied in what Albert calls the Three C's of helping students see themselves as capable, connected with others, and contributing members of the class.

The First C—Capability
Albert contends that one of the most important factors in school success is what she calls students' I-can level. The I-can level refers to the degree to which students believe they are
capable of accomplishing work given them in school. Albert advises teachers to consider the following tactics to increase students' sense of capability.

1. **Make mistakes okay.** The fear of making mistakes undermines students' sense of capability, and when they are fearful, many stop trying. To minimize this fear, Albert would have teachers talk with students about what mistakes are, help them understand that everyone makes mistakes, and show students that mistakes are a natural part of learning. Teachers can point out that the more an individual undertakes, the more mistakes he or she will make. Albert urges teachers to be careful how they correct student mistakes. Too many corrections are overwhelming, as often seen in assignments that are returned covered with red ink. Teachers should correct mistakes in small steps, focusing on only one or two mistakes at a time.

2. **Build confidence.** In order to feel capable, students must have confidence that success is possible. To raise student confidence, teachers should convey to students that learning is a process of improvement, not an end product. When students improve, teachers should acknowledge the improvement. This is done by comparing the student's work only to his or her own past efforts, not against other students or grade level expectations. It should be remembered that people can be successful in a number of ways that do not involve written work. Students may show neatness, good handwriting, persistence, and a number of other specific abilities. Teachers should provide activities that bring all such talents into play.

   New tasks seem difficult to practically everyone, so there is little point in telling students a task is "easy" or saying, "Oh, anybody can do this." It is better to say, "I know this may seem difficult at first, but keep at it. Let's see how you do." When students succeed in tasks they consider difficult, their sense of capability increases.

3. **Focus on past successes.** Very few people are motivated by having their mistakes pointed out. When they know they are being successful, however, they tend to be enthusiastic. Success depends on two factors—belief in one's ability and willingness to expend effort. Albert says teachers should ask students why they think they were successful in activities or assignments. If they say it was because the task was easy, teachers can say, "It seemed easy because you had developed the skills to do it." If they say it was because they tried hard, teachers can say, "You surely did. That is one of the main reasons you were successful."

4. **Make progress tangible.** Teachers should provide tangible evidence of student progress. Grades such as "B" and "satisfactory" are ineffective because they tell little about specific accomplishments. Albert suggests more effective devices such as I-can cans, accomplishment albums and portfolios, and talks about yesterday, today, and tomorrow. She describes these devices as follows:

   **I-can cans** are empty coffee cans, decorated and used by primary-grade students, in which students place strips of paper indicating skills they have mastered, books they have read, and so forth. As the cans fill, they show how knowledge and skills are accumulating. These cans are useful for sharing in parent-teacher conferences.

   **Accomplishment albums and portfolios** are better for older students. Students can place in them evidence of accomplishments, such as papers written, books read, projects
completed, and special skills attained. Students should not be allowed to compare their accomplishment albums against each other. The emphasis is solely on personal growth, shown by what students can do now that they couldn’t do before.

Talks about yesterday, today, and tomorrow help students visualize improvements they have made. “Remember when you couldn’t spell these words? Look how easy they are now. You are learning fast. By the end of the year you will be able to . . .” or “Remember three weeks ago when you couldn’t even read these Spanish verbs? Now you can use all of them in present tense. By next month, you’ll be able to use them in past tense as well.”

5. Recognize achievement. Albert believes that sense of capability increases when students receive attention from others for what they’ve accomplished. She suggests that teachers have class members acknowledge each other’s accomplishments, recognize students at awards assemblies, set up exhibits, and make presentations for parents and other classes. Other suggestions include giving self-approval for achievements and providing positive time-out in which students are sent to administrators, counselors, or librarians for a few minutes of personal attention.

The Second C—Helping Students Connect

Albert feels it is essential that all students connect, meaning that they establish and maintain positive relationships with peers and teachers. As students make these connections, they become more cooperative and helpful with each other and more receptive to teachers. The Five A’s—acceptance, attention, appreciation, affirmation, and affection—are important in making connections.

Acceptance means communicating that it is all right for each student to be as he or she is, regardless of culture, abilities, disabilities, and personal style. Teachers need not pretend that whatever students do is all right but should always indicate that the student is a person of potential, worthy of care.

Attention means making oneself available to students by sharing time and energy with them. Albert suggests greeting students by name, listening to what they say, chatting with them individually, eating in the cafeteria with them occasionally, scheduling personal conferences, recognizing birthdays, making bulletin boards with students’ baby pictures on them, sending cards and messages to absent students, and showing real interest in students’ work and hobbies.

Appreciation involves showing students that we are proud of their accomplishments or pleased by their behavior. It is made evident when we give compliments, express gratitude, and describe how students have helped the class. Appreciation can be expressed orally, in writing, or behaviorally in how we treat others. In showing appreciation, it is important to focus on the deed, not the doer. Albert suggests making statements of appreciation that include three parts: (1) the action, (2) how we feel about it, and (3) the action’s positive effect. For example, a teacher might say, “Carlos, when you complete your assignment as you did today, it makes me very pleased because we can get all our work done on time.”

Affirmation refers to making positive statements about students that recognize desirable traits, such as courage, cheerfulness, dedication, enthusiasm, friendliness, helpful-
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ness, kindness, loyalty, originality, persistence, sensitivity, and thoughtfulness. By consciously looking for such traits, teachers can find something positive to say about every student, even those with difficult behavior problems. Albert suggests phrasing affirmations as follows: "I have noticed your thoughtfulness" and "Your kindness is always evident."

Affection refers to displays of closeness and caring that people show each other. Albert points out that affection is quite different from reward when kindness is shown only when the student behaves as desired. Affection is freely given, with nothing required in return. As Albert (1996a, p. 117) puts it: "[affection] is a gift with no strings attached. It is not 'I like you when' or I'd like you if. Instead, it is simply 'I like you.'" Unlike appreciation, which is directed at what the student has done, affection is always addressed to the student personally, regardless of the deed. It helps students believe their teacher likes them even when they make mistakes.

The Third C—Helping Students Contribute

Students who have no sense of being needed often see school as purposeless. They see no reason to try to make progress. Albert suggests that one of the best ways to help students feel they are needed is to make it possible for them to contribute. Some of the ways she suggests doing this are:

1. **Encourage student contributions in the class.** Ask students to state their opinions and preferences about class requirements, routines, and other matters. Students can also furnish ideas about improving the classroom environment. Sincerely indicate you need their help and appreciate it.

2. **Encourage student contributions to the school.** Albert suggests creating Three C Committees whose purpose is to think of ways to help all students feel more capable, connecting, and contributing. Teachers and administrators can assign school service time when students perform such tasks as dusting shelves, beautifying classrooms, and cleaning the grounds, all of which help build a sense of pride in the school.

3. **Encourage student contributions to the community.** Albert makes a number of suggestions in this regard, including:
   - adopting a health care center and providing services such as reading, singing, and running errands for residents of the center.
   - contributing to community drives such as Meals on Wheels, Toys for Tots, and disaster relief funds.
   - promoting volunteerism in which students volunteer their services to local institutions.
   - encouraging random acts of kindness, such as opening doors for people and providing help with their packages.

4. **Encourage students to work to protect the environment.** One of Albert’s suggestions is for the class to adopt a street or area of the community and keep it litter free.

5. **Encourage students to help other students.** Albert’s suggestions include:
establishing a circle of friends who make sure that everyone has a partner to talk
with, to sit with during lunch, and to walk with between classes.
- doing peer tutoring, in which adept students help students who are having difficulty.
- doing peer counseling, in which students talk with other students who are experiencing certain difficulties in their lives.
- providing peer mediation when students mediate disputes between other students.
- giving peer recognition, in which students recognize efforts and contributions made by fellow students.

The Classroom Code of Conduct

Albert strongly advises teachers to work together with their classes to establish a classroom code of conduct that specifies how everyone, including the teacher, is to behave and interact. In accordance with the code of conduct, every person is held accountable for his or her behavior all the time.

Developing a Code of Conduct

Albert would have the code of conduct replace the sets of rules that teachers normally use. Rules, she says, cause difficulty because students interpret the word rule as meaning what teachers do to control students. Moreover, rules are limited in scope, whereas a classroom code of conduct covers a wider variety of behavior. The code of conduct is developed as follows:

1. Envision the ideal. Spend time thinking about how you would like your classroom to be, if everything were just as you wanted. What would it look and sound like? How would the students behave toward each other?
2. Ask students for their vision of how they would like the room to be. Usually, students want the same conditions that teachers want. It is easy to merge the two visions.
3. Ask for parents’ input. Albert suggests involving parents by sending them a letter summarizing the ideas students have expressed and asking for comments and suggestions. This increases parental support for the code of conduct.

Albert (2003a) presents several examples of codes of conduct developed in elementary, middle, and secondary schools. They are quite similar at the various grade levels. This is one such example for the secondary level:

I am respectful.
I am responsible.
I am safe.
I am prepared.

Because "Excellence in Education" is our motto, I will:
- do nothing to prevent the teacher from teaching and anyone, myself included, from participating in educational endeavors.
- cooperate with all members of the school community.
- respect myself, others, and the environment.
Teaching the Code of Conduct

The code of conduct can be taught in three steps:

1. **Identify appropriate and inappropriate behaviors.** Begin by asking students to identify specific behaviors that are appropriate for each operating principle. For example, in discussing what one does when “treat everyone with courtesy and respect,” students might suggest:
   - Use a pleasant tone of voice.
   - Listen when others are speaking.
   - Use proper language.
   - Respond politely to requests from teachers and classmates.

   Behaviors that these same students might list as inappropriate might include sneering, putting others down, pushing and shoving, ridiculing others, and making ethnic jokes.

   Albert says it doesn’t matter if these lists become long. They are not for memorizing. Their purpose is to help students develop the judgment and understanding needed for evaluating their own behavior choices and for accepting responsibility for all their behavior all the time.

2. **Clarify appropriate and inappropriate behaviors.** It is not enough simply to list student suggestions. They must be clarified so that every student knows exactly what each suggestion means. This is accomplished through explanation, modeling, and role playing.

3. **Involve parents.** Students can write a letter to parents explaining the code of conduct and listing the appropriate and inappropriate behaviors they have identified. The teacher can add a postscript to the letter asking parents to save the letter for discussions with their children.

Enforcing the Code of Conduct

Albert advises teachers to do the following when misbehavior occurs:

1. **Check for understanding.** Ask questions to make sure students grasp that their behavior is inappropriate as relates to the code. Examples of questions are:
   - What behavior are you choosing at the moment?
   - Is this behavior on our appropriate list or inappropriate list of behaviors?
   - Can you help me understand why you are violating our code of conduct at this moment?
   - Given our code of conduct, what should I say to you right now?

   These questions are asked in a businesslike manner, with no accusatory tone.

2. **Problem-solve when disagreements occur.** Students may at times disagree with the teacher about whether a behavior is appropriate or inappropriate. These disagreements should be resolved in one of three ways:
   - with a student–teacher conference
   - in a class meeting dealing with the behavior
   - by any other mediation or conflict resolution process
3. **Post the code of conduct.** Make sure the code of conduct is displayed in the classroom. When prominently displayed, the teacher can:

- walk to the display, point to the operating principle being violated, and make eye contact with the offending student.
- write the number of the principle being violated on an adhesive note and put it on the student’s desk.
- point to the operating principle and say, “Class, notice principle number three, please.”
- point to the operating principle being violated and say, “Tell me in your own words, Clarissa, what this principle means.”

**Reinforcing the Code of Conduct**

Regular repetition and review are needed in helping students become proficient in monitoring and judging their behavior. Albert makes these suggestions:

- Review the code of conduct daily or weekly.
- Model self-correction. When the teacher makes a mistake, such as yelling at the students, the violation should be admitted, with a description of how it will be done correctly the next time.
- Encourage student self-evaluation. Ask students to make lists of their own behaviors that show how they are complying with or violating the code of behavior.

**Involving Students and Parents as Partners**

The effectiveness of Cooperative Discipline is increased when supported by students and parents. Albert makes many suggestions for obtaining their invaluable support.

**For Enlisting Students as Partners**

1. **Discuss with students the fundamental concepts in Cooperative Discipline:** (1) Behavior is based on choice. Students choose to behave as they do. (2) Everyone needs to feel they belong in the class and should be helped to do so. (3) The four goals of misbehavior are attention, power, revenge, and avoidance of failure. (4) The Three C's help everyone feel capable, connected, and contributing.
2. **Involve students in formulating the classroom code of conduct.**
3. **Involve students in establishing consequences for misbehavior.**
4. **Involve students in decision making about classroom and curriculum.**

**For Enlisting Parents as Partners**

1. **Inform parents about Cooperative Discipline and the class code of conduct that teacher and students have been discussing.** Ask for parents’ comments. This is best done through newsletters sent home to parents and may be reinforced through parent group presentations.
2. Establish guidelines for the style of communicating with parents. Teachers should use objective terms when referring to students and their behavior, limit the number of complaints made to parents, and anticipate student success because every parent needs to have hope for their child’s improvement.

3. Notify parents when behavior problems occur. Begin with a positive statement about the student, then identify the problem, and end with another positive statement about the student.

4. Structure parent–teacher conferences for success. When it is necessary to have a conference with a parent, use the Five A’s strategy:
   - Accept the parent without prejudice.
   - Attend carefully to what the parent says.
   - Appreciate the parent’s efforts and support.
   - Affirm the child’s strengths and qualities.
   - Affection for the child is made evident to the parent.

Avoiding and Defusing Confrontations

Teachers fear situations in which students defy their authority. It is important to think through and practice how you want to conduct yourself when students challenge you through power or revenge behaviors. Albert suggests practicing how to:

1. Focus on the behavior, not on the student. To do this, a teacher can
   - Describe the behavior that is occurring but without evaluating it. Use objective terms to tell the student exactly what he or she is doing. Do not use subjective words such as bad, wrong, or stupid.
   - Deal with the moment. This means talking only about what is happening now, not what happened yesterday or last week.
   - Be firm but friendly. Indicate that the misbehavior must stop, but at the same time show students continuing care and interest in their well-being.

2. Take charge of negative emotions. This refers to teachers’ negative emotions. In confrontations, teachers feel angry, frustrated, or hurt, but acting in accord with those emotions is counterproductive. One should, therefore:
   - Control negative emotions. Teachers should practice responding in a calm, objective, noncombative manner. This blocks the student’s intention to instigate conflict and helps everyone remain calm so the problem can be resolved.
   - Later, release the negative emotions. Emotions, though controlled, will remain after the confrontation. Albert suggests that teachers release those emotions as soon as possible through physical activity such as walking, playing tennis, or doing house or yard work.

3. Avoid escalating the situation. This recommendation dovetails with controlling negative emotions. Certain teacher reactions make situations worse, not better. Albert provides an extensive list of behaviors teachers should avoid, such as raising their voice, insisting
on the last word, using tense body language, using sarcasm or put-downs, backing the student into a corner, holding a grudge, mimicking the student, making comparisons with siblings or other students, and commanding or demanding.

4. **Discuss the misbehavior later.** At the time of the confrontation, make a brief, direct, friendly intervention that will defuse tensions. When feelings are running strong, most matters cannot be resolved immediately. Wait an hour or until the next day when both parties have cooled down.

5. **Allow students to save face.** Students know teachers have the ultimate power in confrontations, so eventually they comply with teacher expectations. However, to save face with their peers and make it seem they are not backing down completely, they often mutter, take their time complying, or repeat the misbehavior one more time before stopping. Albert advises teachers to overlook these behaviors rather than confront the student anew. When allowed to save face, students are more willing to settle down and behave appropriately.

### Dealing with More Severe Confrontations

Suppose that a very upset student is having a real tantrum, yelling and throwing things. What does the teacher do then? Albert offers a number of suggestions that she calls graceful exits, which allow teachers to distance themselves from the situation. These exits are made calmly, with poise and without sarcasm.

- **Acknowledge the student’s power.** Recognize that you can’t make the offending student do anything and be willing to admit it to the student. But also state your expectation: “I can’t make you write this essay, but it does need to be turned in by Friday. Let me know your plan for completing the assignment.”
- **Move away from the student, putting distance between the two of you.** Try stating both viewpoints, such as: “To you it seems I’m being unfair when I lower your grade for turning in an assignment after the due date. To me it’s a logical consequence for not meeting an important deadline.”
- **Remove the audience.** By this, Albert means deflecting onlookers’ attention when a confrontation arises. This can be done by making an announcement or raising an interesting topic for discussion.
- **Table the matter.** When emotions are running high or when the entire class is likely to become embroiled in a confrontation, say “You may be right. Let’s talk about it later,” or “I am not willing to talk with you about this right now.”
- **Call the student’s bluff and deliver a closing statement.** “Let me get this straight. I asked you to ________ and you are refusing. Is this correct?” The teacher stands ready with pencil and clipboard to write down what the student says. Albert also suggests using a closing statement, which she calls a one-liner to communicate that the confrontation has ended, for example, “You’ve mistaken me for someone who wants to fight. I don’t.”
If you feel yourself losing control, take a teacher time-out. Say something like “What’s happening right now is not okay with me. I need some teacher time-out to think about it. We’ll talk later.”

If you see that the student will not calm down, have the student take time-out in the classroom, principal’s office, or designated room.

Implementing Consequences

When a student seriously or repeatedly violates the classroom code of conduct, particularly through power or revenge behavior, you should invoke consequences in keeping with previous agreements. Think of consequences as an excellent teaching tool for helping students learn to make better behavior choices. Although negative consequences are usually unpleasant to the student, they are never harmful physically or psychologically. Albert refers to the Four R’s of consequences—related, reasonable, respectful, and reliably enforced. By related, she means that the consequence should call on students to do something related directly to their misbehavior. Betsy continues to talk disruptively; her consequence is isolation in the back of the room where she cannot talk to others. She should not be kept after class for talking, as the penalty has no logical connection with the offense. By reasonable, Albert means that the consequence is proportional to the misbehavior. She reminds us that consequences are used to teach students to behave properly, not to punish them. If Juan fails to turn in an assignment, the consequence should be to redo the assignment. By respectful, Albert means that the consequence is invoked in a friendly but firm manner, with no blaming, shaming, or preaching. By reliably enforced, Albert means that teachers invoke consequences and follow through in a consistent manner.

Albert describes four categories of consequences that teachers should discuss with their class:

- loss or delay of privileges, such as loss or delay of a favorite activity
- loss of freedom of interaction, such as talking with other students
- restitution, such as return, repair, or replacement of objects, doing school service, or helping students that one has offended
- relearning appropriate behavior, such as practicing correct behavior and writing about how one should behave in a given situation

Resolution of more serious misbehavior or repeated violations of the classroom code of conduct should be done in a private conference with the student. The purpose of the conference is never to cast blame but rather to work out ways for helping the student behave responsibly. Albert presents a Six-D conflict resolution plan to help resolve matters under dispute for use in conferences or between students in the classroom. The plan is as follows:

1. Define the problem objectively, without blaming or using emotional words.
2. Declare the need; that is, tell what makes the situation a problem.
3. Describe the feelings experienced by both sides.
4. Discuss possible solutions. Consider pros and cons of each.
5. Decide on a plan. Choose the solution with the most support from both sides. Be specific about when it will begin.
6. Determine the plan's effectiveness. A follow-up meeting is arranged after the plan has been in use for a time in order to evaluate its effectiveness.

Strengths of Albert's Cooperative Discipline

Cooperative Discipline powerfully helps students achieve their ultimate goal of belonging, which in turn reduces their amount of misbehavior. For use on occasions when students do misbehave, Albert has developed approximately 70 proven procedures for dealing with misbehavior, procedures that stress teaching proper behavior rather than punishing transgressors. She has provided a clear rationale for Cooperative Discipline and a detailed guide for implementing and maintaining the program. She recognizes the importance of strong support from administrators and parents and provides many suggestions for ensuring that support.

Initiating Albert's Cooperative Discipline

Cooperative Discipline can be put into effect at any time. Teacher and class, working together, envision an environment that would meet their needs. They identify specific behaviors that would contribute to such an environment as well as behaviors that would work against it. They clarify these behaviors through discussion, demonstration, and role playing. Teachers and students jointly decide on the consequences to be invoked for violations of the standards they have agreed to, remembering that consequences should be related to specific misbehaviors. They write out the agreement, which becomes known as the classroom code of conduct. Before it is finalized, copies of the classroom code are sent to parents for input and support. When the code of conduct is finalized, it is posted in the room. The behaviors it calls for must be taught, not taken for granted, and the code should be discussed regularly. This keeps it in the foreground for reminding students and for use when correcting misbehavior. When serious violations of the code occur, procedures of conflict resolution are applied. All the while, teachers make ongoing efforts to help students feel capable, connected with others, and contributors to the class and elsewhere.

Doing these things may require some changes that make one feel somewhat uncomfortable. Albert tells teachers to expect those feelings and urges them to stick with the changes until they become second nature. Change is more easily accomplished when teachers visualize success and give themselves encouragement with statements they repeat over and over, such as:
This may be hard, but I can do it.
With practice I can master this strategy.
I am going to be able to make my classroom better.

Role playing with trusted colleagues is also helpful in becoming comfortable with new tactics. Albert reminds teachers that success with new discipline strategies depends not so much on how quickly they are learned but on how persistently they are applied.

**KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS PRESENTED IN THIS CHAPTER**

The following terms and concepts are important in Albert's Cooperative Discipline. Check yourself to make sure you understand their meanings.

Cooperative Discipline
goals of student behavior and misbehavior (genuine, mistaken, belonging, attention-seeking, power-seeking, revenge-seeking, avoidance of failure)
Three C's (capable, connected, contributing)
I-can level
accomplishment albums and portfolios
I-can cans
circle of friends
Three C Committee
Five A's of connecting (acceptance, attention, appreciation, affirmation, affection)
classroom code of conduct
self-control
graceful exits
Four R's of consequences
Six-D conflict resolution plan

**SELECTED SEVEN—SUMMARY SUGGESTIONS FROM LINDA ALBERT**

Linda Albert suggests that you emphasize the following, as well as her many other suggestions:

1. Do what you can to help students perceive themselves to be important, worthwhile, and valued.
2. Remember, you can only influence how your students behave. You cannot control their behavior directly.
3. Liberally use encouragement (as distinct from praise). Encouragement is the most powerful teaching tool available to teachers.
4. A sense of belonging is important to good behavior. To promote a sense of belonging in the class, help students feel capable, show them how to connect with others, and help them contribute to the class (the Three C's).
5. Work together cooperatively with your students to develop a classroom code of conduct, which stipulates the kind of behavior expected of everyone in the class. Involve parents in this process, too, as valued partners.
6. When you must deal with misbehavior, do the following: (a) Describe the behavior that is occurring but without evaluating it. (b) Deal only with what is happening now (not what happened in the past). (c) Be firm but friendly. Being firm means indicating that the misbehavior must stop. Being friendly means showing students continuing care and interest.
7. When you must invoke consequences for misbehavior, make sure they are related to the particular offense, reasonable, respectful, and reliably enforced (the Four R's of consequences).
CONCEPT CASES

CASE 1 Kristina Will Not Work
Kristina, a student in Mr. Jake’s class, is quite docile. She socializes little with other students and never disrupts lessons. However, despite Mr. Jake’s best efforts, Kristina will not do her work. She rarely completes an assignment. She is simply there, putting forth no effort at all. How would Albert deal with Kristina?

Albert would advise Mr. Jake to do the following: Work hard at the Three C’s with Kristina. Give her work she can do easily so she begins to feel more capable. Then gradually increase the difficulty, teaching one new step at a time. Help her connect through a buddy system with another student and through participation in small group work. Give her opportunities to contribute by sharing information with the class about hobbies, siblings, and the like. Perhaps she has a skill she could teach to another student. Encourage her at every opportunity. Talk with her; ask her if there is something that is preventing her from completing her work. Show that you will help her however you can.

CASE 2 Sara Cannot Stop Talking
Sara is a pleasant girl who participates in class activities and does most, though not all, of her assigned work. She cannot seem to refrain from talking to classmates, however. Her teacher, Mr. Gonzales, has to speak to her repeatedly during lessons to the point that he often becomes exasperated and loses his temper. What suggestions would Albert give Mr. Gonzales for dealing with Sara?

CASE 3 Joshua Clowns and Intimidates
Larger and louder than his classmates, Joshua always wants to be the center of attention, which he accomplishes through a combination of clowning and intimidation. He makes wise remarks, talks back (smilingly) to the teacher, utters a variety of sound-effect noises such as automobile crashes and gunshots, and makes limitless sarcastic comments and put-downs of his classmates. Other students will not stand up to him, apparently fearing his size and verbal aggression. His teacher, Miss Pearl, has come to her wit’s end. Would Joshua’s behavior be likely to improve if Albert’s techniques were used in Miss Pearl’s classroom? Explain.

CASE 4 Tom Is Hostile and Defiant
Tom has appeared to be in his usual foul mood ever since arriving in class. On his way to sharpen his pencil, he bumps into Frank, who complains. Tom tells him loudly to shut up. Miss Baines, the teacher, says, “Tom, go back to your seat.” Tom wheels around, swears loudly, and says heatedly, “I’ll go when I’m damned good and ready!” How would Albert have Miss Baines deal with Tom?

QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

1. Make entries in your journal from Albert’s Cooperative Discipline that are pertinent to the five principles of building a personal system of discipline.

2. Indicate and describe the student and parent support structures you would implement to make Cooperative Discipline maximally effective.

YOU ARE THE TEACHER

High School English
You teach English to high school students, all of whom have a history of poor academic performance. Most of them have normal intelligence, although a few have been diagnosed with specific learning disabilities. Several live in foster homes or with relatives other than their parents. Many are bused from a distant neighborhood.

Some of the students are known to be affiliated with gangs.

Typical Occurrences
The students enter the classroom lethargically, find their seats, and as directed, most of them begin copying an assignment from the board. Something is going on be-
They agree to do so, but you know they will not comply and you expect them to be absent the next day. Other students read their letters. Some are good, while others contain many mistakes. The students do not seem to differentiate between correct and incorrect business letter forms. You attempt to point out strengths and weaknesses in the work, but the class applauds and makes smart-aleck remarks impartially. At the end of the period, you ask the students to turn in their letters. You intend for them to refine their work the next day. You find that two papers are missing and that Juan and Marco have written on their numerous A+ symbols and gang-related graffiti.

**Conceptualizing a Strategy**

If you followed the suggestions of Linda Albert, what would you conclude or do with regard to the following?

1. Preventing the problems from occurring in the first place.
2. Putting a clear end to the misbehavior now.
3. Involving other or all students in addressing the situation.
4. Maintaining student dignity and good personal relations.
5. Using follow-up procedures that would prevent the recurrence of the misbehavior.
6. Using the situation to help students develop a sense of greater responsibility and self-control.

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**References**


