

# Behavior Management Training that "Sticks"

Strategies for OST Supervisors

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# Research

- National Afterschool Association
- National Institute on Out of School Time
- The AfterSchool Corporation
- National Association for the Education of Young Children
- Weikart Foundation on Youth Development
- Mott Foundation
- Wallace Foundation
- Southwest Educational Development Library
- National Education Association
- Afterschool Network
- Expanded Schools
- Center for Youth Program Quality
- US Dept of Health and Human Services

# Behavior Management

**Difficult to teach**

Every situation is different

**Limited resources**

Even teachers have limited training

**Arguably the most important part of the job!**

Skills in this area are imperative to success and  
job satisfaction

# TRAINING THAT “STICKS”



**1**  
**CONCEPT**  
Introduce the concept  
to the staff team

Read as a group  
Post in a common area to refer back to  
**TEACH**

**2**

**3**  
**DISCUSS**  
Discussion questions  
Role playing  
Staff input and examples

Conclude initial discussion  
with some final tips

**4**  
**TIPS**

**5**  
**COACH**  
Observations  
Feedback  
Goal-setting

Revisit topic and  
discuss each week  
for 2-4 weeks

**REVIEW**

**6**

## FOLLOW THESE STEPS TO SUCCESS!

Each training topic is designed to be introduced and discussed in 15-30 minutes, moving to a new topic every 2-4 weeks. In addition, follow-up coaching, feedback, and reflection allows the concepts to "stick" with staff, leading to lasting skill development. Supervisors can read directly from the cards, paraphrase, or incorporate their own examples into the concept introduction. The coaching model/approach can vary depending on staff preference. All 6 steps are key to the "Training That Sticks" model.



# BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS



## CONCEPT

Having a system in place to manage behavior is key to dealing with many issues when they arise. Effective systems integrate the promotion of positive behaviors with consequences for negative behaviors.

There are many schools of thought related to such systems. Try to think about the systems or techniques you use in the context of your own life. For example, how might you feel having a chart on the wall where everyone could see if you were having a rough day?

When creating your system, make sure to provide a variety of ways for youth to earn points/stars/punches/stickers/etc each day. Systems that don't allow students a chance to make up for poor choices can be ineffective because then the youth has little additional motivation to start making better choices.

## TEACH

- 1) **Is the system simple and developmentally appropriate?** Youth must be clear on how the system works, how incentives are earned, and what would cause incentives not to be earned.
- 2) **Is it visual?** There must be an opportunity for youth to see the expectations on a regular basis. Choose a design appealing to the particular age group.
- 3) **It is doable?** Don't start a system that requires you to add up hundreds of points or distribute prizes every day. Make sure the system is easy to implement.
- 4) **Is there a chance to recover after a "slip"?** Students should never be in a situation where they lose the opportunity to earn all of their points for the day at once.



# DISCUSS

What might make someone feel appreciated and motivated at work?

How can you incorporate these elements into your work with youth?

What behavior management systems have you come across (personally or through working with youth)? What are your thoughts on their effectiveness?

*Brainstorm details about a possible behavior management system, how it will be created, implementation, and how to introduce it to the youth.*

# TIPS

- Systems that involve both giving and taking away points/stickers/etc can backfire and lead to power struggles. Once a youth has earned something, think carefully about the pros and cons of taking it away. Consider exploring other approaches to deal with the situation.
- Share a space? Use tri-fold boards for your system to make it truly portable.
- Tight budget? Youth love being rewarded in many different ways, such as receiving special privileges.

# REVIEW

How did you introduce the system to the youth? How did it go?

Are there any challenges or questions that have come up related to the new system?

Are there any ways that the system needs to be modified?





# INTERRUPTIONS



## CONCEPT

Trying to lead an activity while being interrupted consistently can become frustrating, and is often quite time consuming.

Sometimes youth are so excited about what you are saying that they cannot contain their thoughts! Or sometimes they are having other emotional reactions and cannot wait their turn to express their feelings.

Teaching calming strategies that youth can do when they feel the urge to interrupt can be helpful, such as taking deep breaths and focusing on what the speaker is saying as opposed to what they want to say in response.

## TEACH

**1) Model the interrupting behavior with the group.**

Wait for a time when you can talk as a group. Ask a youth to talk about their day, then interrupt by talking and/or putting up your hand enthusiastically (or any other interrupting behavior you have witnessed).

**2) Ask the group what they noticed about your behavior.**

**3) Ask the youth who was speaking how they felt when you interrupted them.**

**4) Ask the group why you might have been interrupting, and brainstorm ways to listen and be patient.**

Having youth roleplay and illustrate the desired behavior is helpful.



# DISCUSS

Have you ever had a strong reaction when being interrupted? If so, how did you handle this? And in retrospect, is there anything you would have done differently?

What are some reasons why youth might interrupt?

What are some strategies you could teach the youth to help decrease the interrupting behavior?

# TIPS

- Have these discussions at a time outside of the interrupting behavior, not in the moment. For younger youth, try reading "My Mouth is a Volcano" by Julia Cook as a group.
- For older youth, instead of modeling the behavior yourself, try assigning them the role of "speaker" or "interrupter" during a roleplaying exercise. Don't announce who is has which role, just allow the scenario to play out and then ask the group what they noticed.

# REVIEW

Has anyone dealt with youth interrupting since we last talked about this?

*If so:*

How did it go?

What would you do the same/differently next time?

How did you feel afterwards?

*If not:*

Can you think of any systems or strategies you have used that prevent interrupting from occurring?





# PICKING YOUR BATTLES



## CONCEPT

Addressing every behavior issue or minor infraction can be time consuming, exhausting, and can lead to a negative environment. But ignoring issues that erode group trust and cohesion can also be damaging.

OST staff will need to find a balance between addressing significant issues and letting other, smaller issues slide. Finding this balance can become easier with experience and intentional reflection.

## TEACH

1) **Think about your program's core values.**

It is likely that safety and respect are among these values.

2) **Think about behaviors that occur with the youth in program.**

Focus on a day that was challenging.

3) **Decide which behaviors occurred that go against your program's core values.**

Did a youth tease another youth? Was a youth not standing in line properly? Do these behaviors go against your program's values?

4) **Think of ways to address these behaviors that contribute to a positive, safe environment for youth.**

For example, you might choose to address all teasing incidents but not every time a youth appears to not be listening.

# DISCUSS

Share your responses to the "teach" steps.

Can you think of a time when you practiced picking your battles? How did it go?

Can you think of a time when you did not practice picking your battles when it might have been beneficial? How might you handle a similar situation differently in the future?

# TIPS

- If a smaller issues becomes pervasive (for example, maybe many youth are having trouble lining up every day), consider focusing on one topic for the entire week. This can help cement expectations and prevent future issues.
- Have another staff member observe and share feedback on how you addressed (or strategically ignored) various behaviors in your group.

# REVIEW

Have you been able to practice picking your battles with the youth recently? If so, how?

After trying the recommended strategies, did you notice a difference in the youth's behavior (or yours)?

Do you have any other ideas on how to think about picking your battles when working with youth?





# LOUD MELTDOWNS



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## CONCEPT

Loud meltdowns always seem to happen at the worst times. Resist your instinct to rush in, desperately trying to silence the youth!

Sometimes youth cry or yell, and it's not necessarily a reflection of how well you are doing your job (although it is important to reflect on the role you played in the situation afterwards). This behavior is usually a reflection of their emotions and their ability to manage them.

Occasional loud meltdowns can be a normal part of development, and situations like these are great opportunities to help youth learn new ways to manage intense emotions.

## TEACH

**1) Evaluate the environment.**

Is the youth able to move to a private space? If not, can you redirect other youth elsewhere?

**2) Verbalize emotions.**

*"It looks like you are feeling really upset right now."*

**3) Allow space.**

Sit silently with the youth, allowing them to express their emotions.

**4) Show care and concern before making a plan to move forward.**

*"Now that you've let some of your feelings out, do you feel ready to talk about what happened?"*

# DISCUSS

Have you found yourself in a situation like this?

Why might a student have a loud meltdown?

What role might a staff have leading up to a meltdown?

What approaches have you found to work well for you?

Have you seen a staff deal with this situation well? If so, how did they handle the situation?

# TIPS

- Meltdowns can be a trauma response. Make sure to report the incident to your supervisor.
- Get on the youth's level, if possible. If they are on the floor, sit next to them as opposed to towering over them.
- Do not try to have a conversation with a youth in an extremely escalated state.
- Empathetic statements are always an option.  
*"Sometimes we feel angry when we don't get the prize we wanted."*
- Afterwards, have the youth come up with a plan to deal with intense emotions in the future.

# REVIEW

Has anyone dealt with a loud meltdown since we last talked about this?

*If so:*

What happened and how did it go?

What would you do the same/differently next time?

How did you feel afterwards?

*If not:*

Why do you think this didn't come up?

Did you see someone else deal with this issue?

Do you have any feedback for them?



# Thank you!



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