

Prevention Strategies

Adapted from Fritz Redl's Strategies

Staff working with students who have severe emotional disabilities can often prevent crises from occurring. Fritz Redl has proposed a list of helpful strategies that can be used in the classroom to handle many situations.

1. Proximity Control: Closeness of the child to the teacher in a stressful moment may stem an outburst, not so much because of fear of detection but because the child can draw added strength from the teacher's nearness. The staff member can stand near the student or in some cases can touch the student in a reassuring way (hand on shoulder). Touch should be used with caution, as it may be upsetting to some students.
2. Planful Ignoring:: The technique of ignoring depends on the situation and whether or not we can safely afford to ignore what is happening. The student may be using the behavior to test the staff. By ignoring the behavior we are showing our disapproval of that behavior. Attend to him when he/she is on task.
3. Signal Interference: We signal by a nod, pointing or a gesture calling attention to the fact that what is going on should be controlled. Signals are usually most effective in the early stages of misconduct and may prevent incidents from escalating.
4. Emotional Drain Off: When a child can verbalize anger and frustration s/he is less likely to act it out. This may be done by allowing the child to openly express feelings either to the group or to the teacher, whichever seems most appropriate or available.
5. Humor: Laughter can serve several useful functions. It can reassure the child he has little reason for anxiety. By handling an incident with humor, the teacher retains the leadership of the group, while wiping out the anxiety. Humor should be genial and kindly. There is no place for sarcasm or ridicule.
6. Hurdle Help: Some children misbehave in school when they do not know how to cope with some aspect of the work. If this occurs, provide some assistance and help the student over the hurdle of what seemed difficult. The teacher's strategy is to help the child with the task at hand, to prevent the misconduct.
7. Diversion and Re-Direct: Sometimes a growing restlessness becomes evident with the student or the class as a whole. Rather than concentrate on the over-excitement, it may be wise to change the nature of the activity or re-direct the students to a new focus of interest activity.
8. Support from Routines: In some groups problems arise because children do not know what is expected of them. The establishment of routines meets this need. Consistent daily management and organization are the best tools to support positive behavior.
9. Direct Appeal: A direct verbal appeal to the student to discontinue the misbehavior may be sufficient to alter the situation. Direct appeal is most effective when used sparingly. It should be clearly stated which behavior is unacceptable, what needs to be done instead of the inappropriate behavior, and the likely consequences for the student's choices.