

Punishment ≠ Discipline

Punishment is an unpleasant consequence for doing or not doing something. Punishment brings about dependence, anger, revenge, and power struggles. In other words, it is a “quick fix”.

Discipline is a method of guiding children that helps them learn how to control their own behavior. The purpose of discipline is to help children to learn to make good decisions on their own. Discipline brings about independence, security and responsibility. Discipline is about teaching a better way of handling situations and of making better choices. Discipline teaches students to be empowered.

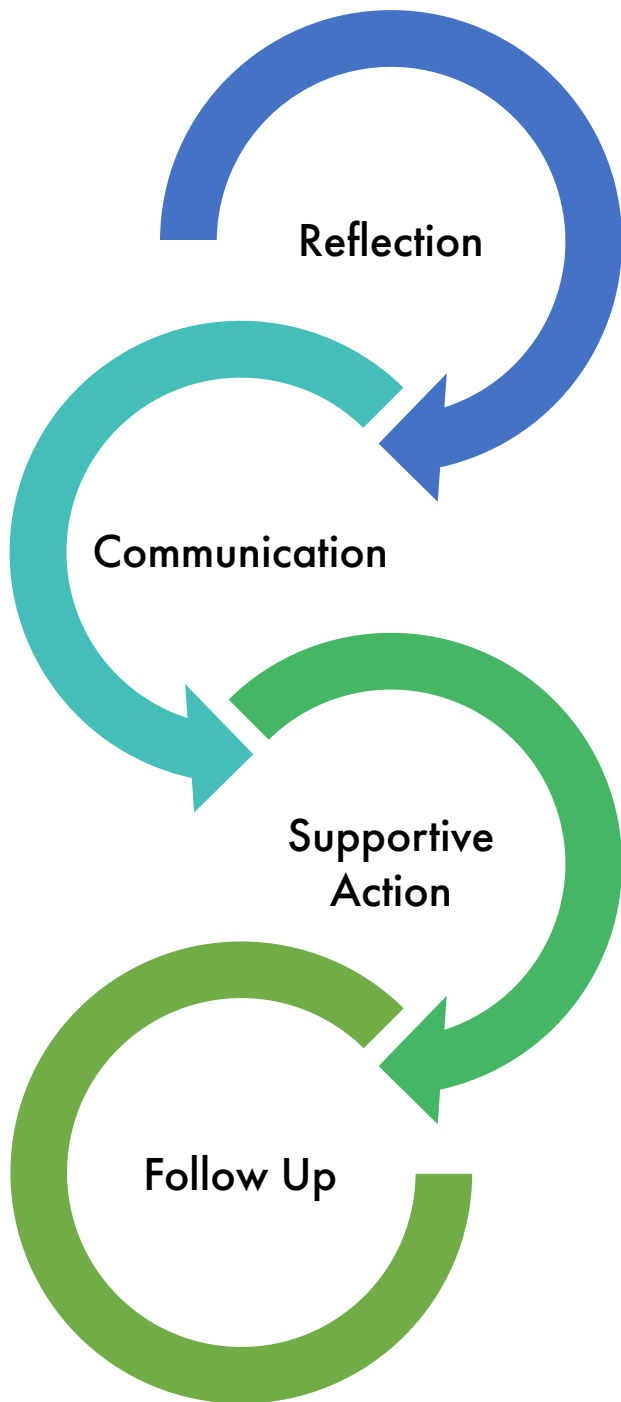
A good **behavior modification program** needs to have responsive, not reactive teachers. It needs to be built not on extinguishing negative behaviors, but on teaching more appropriate responses and behavior. This is done through teaching the appropriate behavior for every situation. *What makes a responsive teacher?*

The responsive teacher:

- Ignores minor infractions
- Uses proximity rather than calling out names
- Sometimes uses humor to dissolve tension or power struggles
- Keeps students purposefully engaged and motivated
- Expects students to have a variety of needs and makes every effort to meet those needs.
- Doesn't take students' misbehavior personally
- Acknowledges the willingness and effort of students to improve behavior
- Offers encouragement and incentives as needed
- Understand that one method doesn't always fits all students
- Understands that parents are allies and not adversaries
- Does not use blame, shame, or shaming words like “should” to control students
- Is consistent, firm and understands that “fair” does not mean that everyone gets the SAME thing, but that instead everybody gets what they NEED.

A strong behavior management program engages the students in a discussion regarding the purpose, goals, and expectations that should be in the classroom. A true behaviorist uses a four step process for changing behavior.

Four Steps for Changing Behavior



1. Reflection

Observe student behavior with objective ears and eyes. Ask yourself:

- **When** does the behavior occur most often?
- **Where?**
- What **benefit or payoff** does the student get from the behavior?
- What **circumstances** in the student's life may be contributing?
- Is there a **physical or mental health condition** that may be contributing?

2. Communication

Set up a meeting with the student and ask friendly questions before giving advice or making requests. Ask:

- **What** do you need to do your best work?
- Are you **willing and able** to honor the class rule regarding....
- What **support** do you need from me?

3. Supportive Action

- Focus on changing **one behavior** at a time
- Begin by implementing whatever support the student requested if feasible
- **Engage** parent or counselor support as needed
- Make seating changes as needed
- **Modify** activities or expectations as needed
- Assign a buddy or mentor for support

4. Follow Up

- Meet with student to **discuss** progress
- Determine if additional supportive action is required
- Modify action as needed