

Teachers, Please Be Nice

Rules Without Relationships Part 3

By Barrington H. Brennen

Question: Dear Sir: You have been writing about how we could help our children become less violent, and how parents should be kind to their children. But what about the teachers who are mean and rough? Shouldn't teachers also be nice?

Answer: You are correct, dear reader. Teachers are to be kind to their pupils. Unfortunately, there are too many teachers who are not nice in the classroom. Before I pursue with the naughty teacher, let me commend all the kind, compassionate, and progressive teachers in our public and private school systems. These dedicated teachers go to sleep and wake up with their students on their minds. They sacrifice sometimes their own personal health for the betterment of their students.

DOUBLE TROUBLE

However, far too many of our teachers are just in it for the ride. In previous articles I stressed that parents are really the primary educators of their children. Parents provide the first environment for physical, social, spiritual and mental growth. They provide the ethos for passionate learning. I also stressed that rules without relationships in a home breed rebellion. Doubly so, when we have parents who cannot lovingly train their children. When these children go to school where teachers cannot lovingly teach, we now have double trouble. That is really a catastrophe. When a child is living in an environment where there are drunkards, emotional or physical abuse, drug abuse, neglect, lack of affection, etc., it becomes even more important for teachers be kind and understanding to their students, although this might be hard to do.

It is true that some students are so angry and bitter that being nice won't make much difference. But the teachers' duty is to try. They must not add fuel to fire by being unkind. Many of our nation's great leaders credit their success to a caring and companionate teacher who was not just concerned about the subject matter they were teaching, but they were concerned about the learners. In other words, they were student-centered. In reality teachers are surrogate parents who spend more time with the children than the parents do.

Children spend an average of thirty-five hours a week in interactive contact with teachers. On the other hand, many parents spend much less than five hours a week interacting with their children. Yes parents might be at home longer with their children, but not interacting with them. Therefore, teachers can, and do make a big difference in the lives of our nation's youth.

TYPES OF TEACHERS

There are at least three types of teachers in our nation's classroom. Which one of them do you want to be?

- 1. The bully teacher.** This is the teacher who walks into the classroom to take control of things. She walks with a stick during recess and into the classroom, not to point to directions, but to hit students for the slightest mistake made. Primary school children are afraid of this type of teacher. Secondary school students are just waiting for her to "get on their nerves" so they could give her "a piece of their

minds." The bully teacher tries to coerce respect by flexing her muscles. This teacher makes enemies of students, but boasts to her colleagues how committed and concerned she is about the well-being of her students. When this type of teacher meets a bully student, we have war, not love.

2. **The passive teacher.** This is the teacher who does not really care much about the students and who refuses to get involved in their lives. She is only there to draw a pay check and complains about everything, but refuses to be proactive, or move on with her life. This is the type of teacher who is careless about the growth of her students. She refuses to learn new skills to reach her students or to incorporate new techniques that could make a difference in the classroom. The passive teacher is a textbook-centered teacher--focusing more on dispensing information rather than encouraging critical evaluation and thinking. A passive teacher produces passive learners.
3. **The proactive-friendly teacher.** This is the teacher that enjoys teaching and does everything to make his classroom a haven of learning. He is constantly upgrading himself intellectually, and joyfully shares his knowledge with his students. We do know that enthusiasm breeds enthusiasm. Thus, when we have an enthusiastic teacher, the students will also exude a level of enthusiasm. The proactive-friendly teacher is the kind teacher. His classroom teaching method is not textbook-centered, but student-centered. Hence, there is a greater chance of the outcome being a developed, happy, whole person, than a miserable, "want-to-get-out-of-this-mess-student."

We do need more proactive-friendly teachers. I believe that they are one chain link in the chain to help build a nation of positive thinking, productive young people. Teachers, would you please be nice in the classroom.

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