

Discipline through Belonging, Cooperation, and Self-Control

Authoritative Input

- Linda Albert / *Cooperative Discipline*
- Barbara Coloroso / *Inner Discipline*
- Jane Nelsen and Lynn Lott / *Positive Discipline*

This chapter presents the views of selected authorities who believe good discipline depends on students' attaining a sense of belonging, participating in making class decisions, and relating to others with kindness and consideration. As students acquire these attitudes and capabilities, they experience an inner sense of discipline that is manifested in self-control and responsible behavior.

Part 1. Linda Albert BELONGING AND COOPERATION

Albert's Fundamental Hypothesis

Discipline occurs best when teachers and students work together in a genuinely cooperative manner to (1) establish a classroom that is safe, orderly, and inviting; (2) provide students a sense of connectedness and belonging; and (3) turn all behavior mistakes into opportunities for learning.



About Linda Albert

Linda Albert, author and disseminator of *Cooperative Discipline*, is a counselor, syndicated columnist, university professor, and former classroom teacher who consults nationally and internationally with educators and parents. She has written a number of books, including *Cooperative Discipline* (1996) and *A Teacher's Guide to Cooperative Discipline* (2003), from which the information in this chapter was drawn.

Albert's Cooperative Discipline

Albert has found that teachers everywhere are troubled by student misbehavior, which is reducing student learning, affecting the quality of teaching, and ruining job satisfaction for teachers. She believes this picture can be reversed through classroom discipline that permits teachers to work with students in a genuinely cooperative manner. She emphasizes teachers' and students' making class decisions together, while keeping students' parents informed and involved. She has devised tactics to help students make *connections* with others, *contribute* to the class, and see themselves as *capable*. She calls connections, contributions, and capabilities the Three C's. Albert, strongly influenced by the earlier work of Rudolf Dreikurs, maintains that students urgently want to feel they "belong" in the class. When they do not obtain the desired sense of belonging, they tend to behave inappropriately by pursuing "mistaken goals" they erroneously believe will provide a sense of belonging.

Genuine and Mistaken Goals

For students to meet their need for belonging in the class, they must come to see themselves as important, worthwhile, and valued as class members. When unable to gain a sense of **belonging** (their **genuine goal**), students frequently misbehave by pursuing **mistaken goals** in an attempt to gain acceptance. These mistaken goals are typically **attention** (look at me), **power** (you can't make me), **revenge** (I'll get even), and **withdrawal** (I won't participate).

The Three C's of Cooperative Discipline

Fundamental to Albert's Cooperative Discipline are the **Three C's**, which help students see themselves as capable, connected with others, and contributing members of the class.

For the first C, capable, Albert stresses students' sense of "I can," meaning the belief they are capable of accomplishing work given them in school. Albert says teachers can increase student sense of capability by doing four things:

1. *Counter fear of mistakes.* Countering students' fear of making mistakes, which keeps some students from trying, is done by helping students understand what mistakes are, that everyone makes mistakes, that mistakes are a part of learning, and that no progress ever occurs without mistakes being involved.
2. *Build confidence.* Building students' confidence that success is possible is done by helping students see that learning is a process of improvement, not an end product. They should see, too, that people can be successful in a number of ways that do not involve written work. Teachers should look for activities that maximize the likelihood of success.
3. *Make progress tangible.* Progress can be made tangible by having students compile albums and portfolios that display their accomplishments at school. Albert also suggests talking with students about "yesterday, today, and tomorrow." For example, the teacher might say: "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."

4. *Recognize achievement.* Recognizing achievement can be done by having students acknowledge each other's accomplishments in class, at awards assemblies, at exhibits, and at presentations for parents and community.

For the second C, connected, Albert advocates emphasizing the the **Five A's of connecting**: acceptance, attention, appreciation, affirmation, and affection.

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.

Attention means making oneself available to others, by sharing time and energy with them.

Appreciation involves positive acknowledgment of others' accomplishments, through compliments given orally, in writing, or behaviorally through how we treat others. In these cases, it is important to focus on the deed, not the doer.

Affirmation refers to showing you recognize and appreciate acts of courage, cheerfulness, dedication, enthusiasm, friendliness, helpfulness, kindness, loyalty, originality, persistence, sensitivity, and thoughtfulness. Teachers can find something positive to say about all students, even those whose behavior is often undesirable: "I have noticed your thoughtfulness" or "Your kindness is always evident."

Affection shows closeness and caring. It is quite different from reward, which comes when students behave in a desired way. Affection is freely given, with nothing required in return.

For the third C, contributing, students need to see that they can make school better for everyone when they contribute to it and to each other. Some of Albert's suggestions for doing so are as follows:

1. *Encourage student input in class matters.* Ask their opinions and preferences about class requirements, routines, and how the class might be improved. Sincerely indicate you appreciate their contributions.
2. *Encourage student contributions to the school.* Albert suggests creating a **Three C Committee** to think of ways to help all students feel more capable, connected, and contributing. Students can play an active role in performing class duties, beautifying classrooms, and keeping the grounds neat, which help build a sense of pride in the school.
3. *Encourage student contributions to the community.* This can be done through such things such as performing random acts of kindness and helpfulness, volunteering in libraries and sporting activities, and contributing to community drives.
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 peer tutoring, peer counseling, and 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.

Class Code of Conduct

From the first contact with students, teachers should involve students cooperatively in developing a **class code of conduct**. This code stipulates behavior expected of everyone in the class. As part of the process, teachers and students jointly decide on **consequences** to be invoked when students transgress the class code. When students participate in developing consequences to be applied when misbehavior occurs, they become much more likely to consider those consequences reasonable and abide by them. Even so, conflict will sometimes occur between teacher and students. When that happens, the teacher should remain calm and relaxed, listen to the students, and attempt to address their concerns. They should adopt a businesslike attitude and use a calm, firm tone of voice. Always, teachers should remember that **encouragement** is their most powerful teaching tool.

Types of Misbehavior

Albert identifies four types of classroom misbehavior, associated with the mistaken goals that students pursue in a vain attempt to gain a sense of belonging. They are attention seeking, power seeking, revenge seeking, and avoidance of failure.

Attention-Seeking Behavior

When students do not receive the positive attention they desire, they frequently seek it, actively and passively. Active attention seeking involves **attention-getting mechanisms (AGMs)**, such as pencil tapping, showing off, calling out, and asking irrelevant questions. Passive attention seeking is evident when students dawdle, lag behind, and are slow to comply—tactics they use 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 would provide abundant recognition when they behave properly. If attention seeking becomes excessive, teachers can use the numerous intervention techniques Albert provides. Two examples are standing near the student or saying, "I find it difficult to keep my train of thought when talking is occurring."

Power-Seeking Behavior

When attention seeking doesn't work, students sometimes resort to power-seeking behavior. Through words and actions they try to show that they cannot be controlled by the teacher. 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 teacher requests.

When students engage in power seeking behavior, teachers often feel angry and frustrated. They worry they will lose face or lose control of the class. Albert says that power seeking also has its silver lining, in that many students who behave in this manner show good verbal skills and leadership ability, as well as assertiveness and independent thinking. Keeping the silver lining in mind, teachers can give students options from which to

choose (e.g., You may do this work alone or with a partner), delegate responsibilities, and grant them legitimate power when appropriate. Once teachers find themselves engaged in a power struggle with a student, they should look for what Albert calls a graceful exit, described in the section on dealing with more 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 often happens when teachers deal forcefully with students, and sometimes when students are angry at parents or others. Revenge seeking usually takes the form of verbal attacks, such as, "You really stink as a teacher!" At times it may involve destruction of materials or room environment or physical attacks on teachers or other students. Strategies effective with power-seeking behavior are also effective when students seek revenge. (These matters are addressed in sections titled "Avoiding and Defusing Confrontations" and "Dealing with Severe Confrontations.")

Avoidance-of-Failure Behavior

Many students dread failure. A few, especially when assignments are difficult, withdraw and quit trying, preferring to appear lazy rather than stupid. Albert tells teachers to counter withdrawal by altering assignments and providing plentiful encouragement. Specific suggestions include (1) using concrete learning materials that students can see, feel, and manipulate; (2) teaching students to accomplish one step at a time so they enjoy small successes; and (3) teaching to the various intelligences that allows students to use special talents they might have in different areas (see Gardner, 1983). Special individual help can be provided by the teacher, adult volunteers, and peer tutors. Withdrawn students should constantly be encouraged to try. The teacher must show belief in them and help remove their negative beliefs about their ability to succeed.

Albert's Plethora of Strategies

Albert suggests many strategies teachers can employ at "the moment of misbehavior," so they are never at a loss for what to do when a student misbehaves. Because space within this chapter does not permit presentation of the numerous strategies she presents, readers are directed to the appendixes of her book, *Cooperative Discipline* (1996), especially Appendix C which provides a summary chart of the numerous interventions she advocates.

Avoiding and Defusing Confrontations

Direct confrontations between teacher and students sometimes occur. Although they worry teachers a great deal, they can be handled effectively. It is well to think through and practice how you will conduct yourself when students challenge you through power or revenge behaviors. Albert suggests the following:

1. *Focus on the behavior, not the student.* Describe aloud the behavior that is occurring without evaluating it. Use objective terms, while avoiding subjective words such as *bad*, *wrong*, or *stupid*. Deal with the moment, talking only about what is happening now, not what happened yesterday or last week. Be firm but friendly. Indicate that the behavior must stop, but at the same time show continuing concern for the student's well-being.
2. *Take charge of your negative emotions.* Even when you feel angry, frustrated, or hurt, you can still respond calmly, objectively, and noncombatively. Doing so reduces student antagonism and helps everyone calm down.
3. *Discuss the misbehavior with the student later.* Wait an hour or until the next day when both of you have cooled down.
4. *Allow the student to save face.* Students know you have the ultimate power in confrontations, so eventually they comply with your 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. It is best to overlook those face-saving behaviors rather than confront the student anew.

Dealing with More Severe Confrontations

Suppose that a very upset student is having a real tantrum, yelling and throwing things. What do you 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. First, acknowledge the student's power, 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." Then, move away from the student and table the matter. You might say, "Let's talk about it later" or "I am not willing to talk with you about this right now." If the defiance persists, call the student's bluff and deliver a closing statement: "Let me get this straight. I asked you to complete your assignment and you are refusing. Is this correct?" Stand with a pencil and clipboard and write down what the student says. You may wish to say, "You've mistaken me for someone who wants to fight. I don't." If you see that the student will not calm down, have the student take time-out in the classroom or a designated room.

Implementing Consequences

If a student seriously or repeatedly violates the classroom code of conduct, you should invoke consequences in keeping with previous agreements. Think of consequences as tools for helping students learn to make better behavior choices. Talk with your class about four categories of consequences: (1) loss or delay of privileges, such as a favorite activity; (2) loss of freedom of interaction, such as talking with other students; (3) restitution, such as return, repair, or replacement of objects, doing school service, or helping students that

have been offended; and (4) relearning appropriate behavior, such as practicing correct behavior for given situations.

Albert says to remember the **Four R's of consequences**—related, reasonable, respectful, and reliably enforced. *Related* means the consequence calls on students to do something related directly to their misbehavior. If Courtney continues to talk disruptively, her consequence is to sit in the back of the room where she can't talk to others. *Reasonable* means the consequence is proportional to the misbehavior. We use consequences to teach students, not to punish them. If Juan fails to turn in an assignment, the consequence should be to redo the assignment. *Respectful* means the consequence is invoked in a friendly but firm manner, with no blaming, shaming, or preaching. *Reliably enforced* means teachers invoke consequences and follow through in a consistent manner.

Resolution of more serious misbehavior or repeated violations 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.

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.

Part 2. Barbara Coloroso INNER SELF-CONTROL

Coloroso's Fundamental Hypothesis

Discipline occurs best when teachers help students acquire an inner sense of self-control, which is developed through earning trust, assuming responsibility, and acquiring the power to make decisions.

Coloroso's Inner Discipline

Coloroso's approach to discipline emphasizes helping students develop self-control. Her plan urges teachers to establish classrooms that provide a climate of trust and responsibility, in which students are given power to make decisions about their problems and are required to manage the outcomes of those decisions. She says classrooms are ideal places to learn the process of responsible decision making, but teachers and students must work