

ADD, ADHD: Classroom Management Tools That Stop Talk Outs, Off-Task Behavior And Misconduct

By Ruth Wells

"They're yelling." "They're disrespectful." "They're rude." "They're inattentive." "They're off task." "They're side-talking." Does that describe your class or group? If it does, you're not alone. Those are the nonstop complaints we've been hearing at our workshops and at Live Expert Help on our web site (link below.) The classroom management issues are serious, frequent and dominant, but we're here to help.

Here's the answer to the misbehavior. You have to teach the behaviors before you can expect them. This does not mean restating the expectations. This means that you actually teach the specific skills that you want to see in your classroom or group room. This means that you teach each aspect of the target behavior, just as you must teach all elements of spelling or riding a bike, in order to ensure mastery. So, you have to teach all the skills for acting in a respectful manner, talking one at a time, hand raising, focusing, and so on.

Although we won't include any here, be sure that you use lots of our popular motivation-makers so your youngsters value your site and service. (There is a sampling of our dynamic motivation-makers on our site, link below.) The more students value your service, the more their behavior will reflect that. Similarly, the less they value your service, the more their behavior will reflect that too.

Here are some ways to teach "mouth control", but don't forget to cover all the other behaviors that youth and children need to act acceptably in your setting:

Give Me Five

This is a fun intervention for younger students. Have the child give you a "high five" slap while saying: "High Five! 2 ears listening. 2 eyes watching. 1 mouth shut."

Do the Wave

This is an incredibly fun intervention that doesn't come alive at all in writing; you simply have to give it a try to appreciate how wonderful it is. This intervention can be used with any age group. Raise your hand, then teach your group to fall silent while rhythmically clapping to this beat: 1-2, 1-2-3 (two slow claps and then three fast.) Most classes quickly learn to instantly transform from rowdy to silent. The effect of the sudden clapping is similar to a crowd doing the wave at a basketball game. Allow students to take turns performing the job of raising a hand to initiate the clapping. You end up with a very quiet room-- with no work required on your part to achieve it.

The Mouth Goes Shut

This device is fun with any age group, and it's quick and simple. You simply raise your hand and teach your class: "When the hand goes up, the mouth goes shut." If you wish, a student can perform the raising the hand

part of this intervention for you.

Dragnet Helps

This device generates instant quiet. Sing the theme of the TV show, Dragnet: dun da-dun dun, dun da-dun dun. Teach students to be quiet in time to sing the last note with you. (The entire tune: dun da-dun dun, dun da-dun dun, dun!)

Classroom Behavior Barometer

Craft a barometer out of poster board and show green, yellow and red areas on the barometer. Label the green area as "Go," the yellow as "Caution," and the red as "Stop." Affix a moveable pointer and move it as necessary to alert the class to how well they are controlling their verbal behavior. You may use a traffic light signal instead of a barometer, if you prefer.

How Often to Talk

This intervention is so simple, yet so often overlooked. Ideally, every teacher or counselor would offer this help to their group at first contact. Kids do not magically know how often to talk during your class or group. Some talk nonstop while others never speak at all. Have your class establish a recommended number of times to talk per hour. You can even create a chart to show each group member how they are doing. But it's important to remember that you must give specific, quantifiable goals to students prior to expecting them to conform. Without a specific number, many children will be unable to discern what is a "reasonable number of times to talk." If you have problems with talk-outs, test out this suggestion. You may be very surprised.

The Talk Thing

Younger children, youth with ADHD, and many other populations, can have trouble maintaining proper "mouth control." If you don't like to require hand raising, or you have found it ineffective, then consider using a "talk thing." "What's that?" you wonder. A talk thing is any item that you designate, but prior to talking, the youngster must be holding the talk thing. You can use a tennis ball, a pen, or any item that your group selects. You are simply substituting external structure for that lack of internal control. Many youngsters find the talk thing to be silly and fun, and may comply more readily. For youth who impulsively speak out a lot, the talk thing can provide brakes.

About the Author

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Ruth Wells MS is the director of Youth Change, <http://www.youthchg.com>. Get free samples and see 100s more of her problem-stopping interventions at Youth Changes web site. Ruth is the author of dozens of books and ebooks, and conducts professional development workshops.

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