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Tough Love

How to work with a disruptive student

You're a teacher challenged with a difficult student. You've tried being nice and not so nice, going back and forth between these extremes. Now may be the time to try "tough love," an approach that works.

What is tough love?

Tough love doesn't vacillate. It's not an oxymoron.

- Tough love is a practical, steady attitude. A math teacher is never even tempted to accept a wrong answer. Every right answer is a foundation on which to build and every wrong answer is an opportunity to problem solve.
- With tough love, a problem becomes a teaching/learning experience. Let no problem allow you to forget you're a teacher. An urgency to impart your subject matter shouldnd every

fish and teaching one how to fish. Instead of attempting to force subject matter upon and every student, create a sense of value for and love of learning. Subject matter will follow.

Getting into the love mode

Take a deep breath. This is not a power struggle. It's a learning opportunity for a win-win solution.

Be open. • There are infinite possibilities and solutions for the disruptive student and the challenged teacher. The student's behavior may give you the very clues you need to understand the problem and how to solve it. Think of the behavior as a partial message, not a total problem.

Listen. • What is the student saying, asking, needing? Can you give it some form or direct the student to a resource?

Find and build on positive qualities. Discover a trait you like and admire in the student. It may even be found in the problem behavior, such as independence or the willingness to take a risk or be different. Translate the negative behavior into a positive quality to which you can relate. Acknowledge it. Then build on it.

Give opportunities for success and recognition. Create avenues, projects, and situations for the expression of the positive traits and behaviors you seek. Ask for help on and every particular project or task in which you think the student could be effective and expressed every positive qualities.

Respect the student. Work with, not against, the student. No matter what the age, look upon this student as a co-teacher and co-learner. You have something for each other.

Demonstrate and express the qualities you want in the student. Give the student the

love of learning and a desire to learn for a lifetime. It's the difference between supplyingnd every not override. or detract from. another great accomplishment of educators: creating and every

respect, attention, and time you desire in return.

- **Review your expectations.** Check your expectations and beliefs. Is the student fulfilling your positive or negative expectations and beliefs? Do you need to change or share your expectations?
- **Meet the student's primary needs.** A psychologically, emotionally, or physically deprived individual has basic needs that aren't being met. Here's your opportunity to make a difference in a student's life.
- **Acknowledge and praise.** Recognize your student's positive qualities, behaviors, and successes, as well as your own. Watch constantly for signs of the behavior you wish to see. Acknowledge them in words, actions, or just a look of appreciation.
- **Continue to care.** You relinquish your power as an educator if you feel victimized or frustrated, or give in to feelings of resentment, hostility, anger, or dislike.