

Robinson states:

"As Training Teachers, we learn from a range of disciplines when looking for techniques that could be applied to behaviour management in the classroom. Ideas ranging from the disciplines of Social Psychology, Sociology, Neuro-physiology, Management, Interior Design and Architecture" (2019: 42).

This indicates that there is no singular approach towards successful behaviour management and learner engagement, as all teachers are operating under different classroom conditions.

Therefore as a Training Teacher, observation of other educators is essential to developing successful behaviour management practices. These observed techniques can be honed towards learner engagement in your subject area and befitting your sensibilities as an educator. Robinson summarises, "as well as being informed of the range of behaviour management approaches available to choose from, teachers need to learn the skills and habits of improvising behaviour management and to develop these habits based on the values they wish to promote" (2019: 51). This instinctive and therefore adaptive approach to behaviour management has the potential to connect across different classes. This in turn personalises the teaching, promising greater learner engagement.

The term 'behaviour management' infers that learners are disruptive. The discipline involved in contemporary schooling is explicitly conservative, intent on challenging potentially disruptive energy into 'shoulder to the wheel' conformity. This begs the question: should we be managing our students into becoming conformist?

"On the one hand, students need a comfortable and ordered environment to be able to hear the teacher, and they need it to be healthy and safe so they can practise the skills learned without injury to themselves or others. On the other hand, learning is about being able to take risks, being able to push the boundaries of established knowledge and to stretch our own abilities as learners. If we do not try new activities, ask new questions and take new risks, we are condemning students to becoming people who are trained to follow instructions, repeat back given information without necessarily understanding it and to be continuously reliant on teachers" (Robinson, 2019: 41).

The outlook of the teacher determines whether certain behaviours are regarded as challenging. A liberal education approach to teaching and learning requires a certain amount of risk-taking to take place. A risk-averse and controlling approach to behaviour management may stifle the development of creative learners, who are able to think autonomously and cooperate effectively with others.

Behaviours can be useful indicators as to the degree of learner engagement; "...students' disruptive behaviour helps us to better understand...it can act as a map and guide for teachers" (Robinson, 2019: 76 (Berry 2008: 31)). The teacher interprets this feedback; choosing either to view it as a valuable signpost for new things to be learned or as derailling the learning. When we focus on controlling behaviour rather than first understanding it, we lose sight of the aim of education which should be to draw out a love of learning for its own sake and to encourage questions as well as answers. Controlling challenging behaviour without first understanding it, can also escalate the situation and perpetuate the disruptive behaviour.

Feedback in the form of behaviours, can be used to shape the learning experience, allowing the teacher to adapt their approach towards the same topic to suit diverse groups of students. This tailoring will maintain student engagement and increase progress. It follows then, that if all the learners are engaged and making progress then it is an inclusive classroom.

The cornerstone of effective classroom engagement lies within the teacher/student relationship. "Teacher/student relationships...can reduce disruptions by 31%" (Robinson, 2019: 89). There is much to be said for establishing democratic classrooms. Fewer behavioural problems correspondingly occur, as students are proven to feel more valued for their contributions and responsible for their learning. This in turn results in higher learner application and engagement. However, an egalitarian classroom also presents its own challenges in that it may encourage an atmosphere of permissiveness, which adversely affects learner engagement - resulting in the deterioration of classroom behaviour.

Robinson cites the ideal student/teacher relationship as one comprising of the two interacting dimensions of cooperation and dominance. Successful behaviour management and learner engagement, lies in the relationship's ability to adjust over time as a result of the teacher shifting their position in terms of cooperation and dominance. Marzano claims that the optimal teacher/student relationship ratio displays "Modern to high dominance and moderate to high cooperation" (Robinson, 2019: 8).

Robinson discusses the 'Teachers' Mental Set' (2019: 79), as a vital tool in effective behaviour management and learner engagement. Robinson describes two elements of mental set. The first being, 'withitness', categorised as inactive awareness and monitoring of the multiple relationships that exist within the classroom. Robinson claims that 'withitness' can reduce disruption by 42% (2019: 79) Teachers remain 'with it' by continuously scanning the classroom, even when working with small groups or individuals. This allows the teacher to spot the beginnings of disruptive behaviour and offer a whole-class reminder about focusing on their work if the teacher is unsure about who is behind a disruption. The challenge of this technique, is that 'withitness' is not our typical frame of mind. It is a skill and sense that can only be honed by experience. Furthermore, not all lessons operate within traditional classroom layouts, which challenges the teacher's ability to observe all students at all times and manage behaviours accordingly.

The second dimension necessary within a teacher's mental set is 'Emotional Objectivity'. Emotional Objectivity enables the teacher to address disruptive behaviour in a removed way. Teachers who personalise the disruption may react in ways that can damage the teacher-student relationship, and threaten their authority within the classroom.

Establishing objective ground rules (negotiated with students during the opening session) aids the teacher to create a safe place for all learners and to reinforce behavioural expectations. If democratically agreed and placed either on an easily available PowerPoint or classroom wall, then the teacher can point to the rule and go from there. Clearly defined rules and routines, can lead to increased behavioural expectations, which in turn leads to the expectation of excellence from the students. High behavioural expectations are linked to high achievement expectations.

Ground rules serve as a clear outline of purpose. Identifying the purpose of the lesson is crucial and relates to motivational factors for learners. Standard 3 (2017, PVA) states: "Inspire, motivate and raise aspirations through enthusiasm and knowledge". Explaining the purpose of both an individual lesson and the course, and repeating those messages at regular and opportune moments, creates links to the work in the lesson, to the aims of the course and makes connections to the futures of the students. A clear set of behavioural expectations, reduces the 'unknown' for the students, and can help alleviate the stress and anxiety which may result in undesirable behaviours.

Demystifying the unknown for your students could be enacted through sharing your plan of the year or scheme of work with students so they are aware of what their progress should look like and how the course will be covered. Furthermore, speaking positively to students who demonstrate problematic behaviour before lessons and explaining what will be contained within them can have a positive impact on their behaviour. There are students who need help in seeing the purpose of some tasks. Their reticence may be linked to self esteem and confidence. There is a significant chance that they may misbehave to avoid embarrassment or failure. The importance of creating a safe learning environment in which learners must feel safe to ask questions and to try things without fear of ridicule. The creation of this safe environment is the responsibility of the teacher, and there are three ways to achieve it:

- "- Be consistent
- Be fair
- Follow through on the things that you say you will do."

(Robinson, 2019: 134).

Whatever method of behaviour management is selected, consistency is key. You must be someone that the learners can rely on - someone who cares about their future - they will then care about you and what you do and say, and behave accordingly.

The challenges when implementing behaviour management strategies within Arts education are many. Rebelliousness and 'breaking the mould' behaviour is encouraged with Drama Schools. It is impossible and undesirable to constrain an Arts student who is experimenting with their creativity. It is debatable if an Arts education should be achievement/degree-centred, and if the teaching and learning on such courses should be managed in accordance with this.

As a young woman teaching students across a span of ages, my management is regularly challenged by unhelpful behaviours. It can be difficult to sustain an objective response, when the misbehaviour is clearly personally motivated. Furthermore, as a peripatetic lecturer it can prove challenging to establish effective and consistent behaviour management strategies across multiple universities and classes, all of whom I visit so infrequently.

Fundamentally, better Drama School enrolment processes could help to avoid disruptive behaviour at a later stage as much disruption comes from the fact that students often undertake the subject for which they may have the aptitude, but not the necessary application to forge a career in the Arts.

I observed LS during Technical Rehearsal Week with the BA3 (Honours) Acting students. The specific interaction under discussion occurred when LS approached a student (DP) about their consistent failure to complete the tasks set for them and their growing lack of focus. LS informed me that she had originally approached DP with 'kind words of concern' for how he was managing his recent ADHD diagnosis. When DP's work continued to deteriorate, she extended DP's deadlines in an effort to engage him. DP's behaviour is now affecting the success of others.

DP requested a 'quiet word', outside of the rehearsal room, with LS and myself. DP had many excuses as to why he had been disengaged. These reasons included tiredness, heavy workload and a difficult family situation. However, LS knew that DP regularly gamed until the early hours, and visited the pub every evening after rehearsals.

LS was calm, articulate and incisive in her questioning. Nancy Kline states that, "The quality of your attention determines the quality of other people's thinking" (Kline, 1999: 36). LS's total but gentle focus allowed DP to think calmly and express himself coherently. I previously taught DP, and know first-hand the escalation possible in his unwanted behaviour, which is prompted by losing confidence in his ability to express himself well. LS's provision of good attention allies with Kline's assertion that "Giving good attention to people makes them more intelligent. Poor attention makes them stumble over their words and seem stupid. Your attention, your listening is that important" (Kline, 1999: 37). DP was completely engaged once he knew that he had LS's undivided support and attention.

DP began blaming others for his failings. LS allowed DP to talk. It became clear as DP continued, that he could hear himself talking and was dissatisfied with what he was saying. In allowing DP to hear himself, LS invited DP to self-reflect. As Kline (1999: 59) suggests, this technique prompted DP to recognise and manage his own behaviour. This strategy encourages the student to develop objectivity when entering the world of work. Relatedly, when DP began to talk more honestly, LS listened and responded sympathetically, but practically. LS later relayed that she had elected to take this emotionally removed - and hence more objective - approach, as she did not want to escalate DP's upset.

It is a misapprehension, argues Kline (1999: 38), that "Helping people always means giving them your ideas". However in this case, LS did present DP with options. DP (given his diagnosis with ADHD), can often become overwhelmed and confused in situations where emotions are involved. LS simplified the situation for him through clarifying his options, and therefore empowering him to make his own decision.

I found out later that LS did not agree with DP's decision. However, LS recognises the importance of allowing students to access their own ideas first:

"Usually the brain that contains the problem also contains the solution - often the best one" (Kline, 1999: 39).

This technique instills in her students the tools for self-reflection and improvement.

LS knows her students. She tailored her behaviour management approach so as not to escalate DP's behaviours, but to help him to take responsibility for his failings and set goals for the future. LS cares deeply about her students' success, and as they are representations of her teaching when they enter the Theatre Industry, their behaviour reflects upon her. Therefore, it would have been all too easy to get frustrated and

remonstrate with DP, as his actions were jeopardising his own success and the success of his peers. However, "Receiving a cargo of criticism does not build character and discipline. It builds a core of self-doubt and in some people it builds a determination to retaliate" (Kline, 1999: 215). LS displayed great behaviour management which tackled the problem at hand - without provoking defensive retaliation from DP - whilst also implementing preventative strategies. With greater experience, I hope to hone the emotional restraint and diplomacy that LS possesses.

I observed SA during Technical Rehearsal Week with the BA3 (Honours) Design and Production students. I observed SA managing the students across Stage Management, Lighting Design, Costume Design, Scenic Arts and Construction departments.

During the technical rehearsals, KP became overwhelmed with her role as Stage Manager (a position that she had never filled before). SA launched into offering advice. I recognise that this stemmed from an instinct to help. However, I could see KP becoming more stressed. KP's behaviour and engagement in the task continued to deteriorate, which lead SA to become more frustrated and offer even more advice. It appeared as if SA "equated talking with looking professional" (Kline, 1999: 37.) Her relentless advice-offering, served to confuse the room as everyone tried to distill the relevant information from what she was saying.

In this case, I would have asked KP if she wanted to step outside. I would allow KP the time necessary to reflect and identify what she needed to do to proceed with her role successfully. I would ask what she required to support her in pursuing her goals. I would encourage KP to view this challenge as a productive learning experience, which offers her the opportunity to strengthen her practice, and engage in the process more deeply.

SA is a parent, and embraces a correspondingly nurturing management approach. However, this results in the infantilisation of her students. Kline summarises this unhelpful behaviour as "Deciding for them what is best, directing them, assuming we know better than they do, worrying about them, taking care of them" (Kline, 1999: 47). When the third student in a row declined to do a particular task, SA did not reprimand or question them, but undertook the task herself - despite its completion being part of the students' assessment. This permissiveness imparts on the students that they do not have to engage with tasks that they find challenging, and indicates that SA thinks them incapable of tackling challenging tasks. Furthermore, this teaching style does not set the students in good stead for the uncompromisingly demanding theatre industry. Kline (1999: 47) claims that "You infantilize when you want the well being of another person intensely but you also want to be seen as expert, indispensable and brilliant." I feel that this is unfortunately true for SA. It is a lesson that I am learning myself; to care what my students think of me, but to not need them to like me in order to effectively prepare them for the industry.

SA's demeanour when talking to the students was patronising. SA addressed the group in a manner which inferred that she expected them to struggle with the tasks set, and possibly fail. I wonder if this treatment invited a self-fulfilling prophecy (Merton 1948), as the students noticeably began to disengage with the task and deteriorate in their behaviour. As Kline (1999: 211) states,

"...respect for the student as a thinker...as a full human being, the student as responsible, loving, intellectually adroit, academically grounded young adult, committed to making a positive difference in the world, will encourage the student to view themselves as such, and behaviour to an according standard."

My behaviour management approach stems from the opinion that you should treat students as the students - and professionals - that they have the potential to become.

I endeavour to build a democratic learning space. It is my hope that the students engage in the work as they feel that they have a voice in the room and valued input to offer. I enacted this with the BA3 Acting students through asking them to offer a piece of useful feedforward for themselves, alongside praise for a peer's work. Kline asserts that effective learner engagement is rooted within successful classroom relationships, built partly through "each student [being] concretely appreciated by one of their peers at least once a month" (1999: 212). Through encouraging positive classroom relationships, a safe and fertile learning space is created. Furthermore, through engaging with the work and each other in this positive way, the students are "learning how to give real attention to each other without judgement or embarrassment, how to find what is genuinely good in something and say it, how to treat others the way they would like to be treated, how not to interrupt and how to ensure everyone gets a turn" (Kline, 1999: 213.) These are essential skills both for life, and success as a creative collaborator in the theatre industry.

## REFERENCES

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## ACTION PLAN

1. “Appreciation of a person needs to be genuine, succinct and concrete.”  
(Kline, 2019: 63.)

“Too much criticism drains the mind and the body of the desire to move forward.”  
(Kline, 2019: 66.)

I must practice and develop my praise-giving technique (both written and oral), so as to cement an encouraging teacher/student relationship, whilst offering developmental feedback. In so doing, criticising in a positive context.

I must strike the balance between offering critique and encouraging progress. I must regularly check-in with if what I am saying is purposeful, and concise.

1a. Occasionally, I shy away from telling the students that I think they are incorrect, and instead save the feedback until their written feedback. This lack of developmental feedback during the working process, robs the student of the opportunity to refine/correct their practice as they proceed.

2. I must continue to maintain objectivity in my teaching. I struggle to not gravitate towards the enthusiastic students. I will make greater use of 1:1 sessions with all students, to check in with where they are at on their learning journeys, and gather feedback as to how I could alter my teaching practice to encourage wider student engagement.

2a. I must continue to remain professionally distant. When teaching students who are your creative contemporaries, age-wise, it can be difficult not to descend into over-familiarity (even though it seems to encourage learner engagement). I will ensure this delineation through not taking my breaks with the students, and avoiding friend requests on social media.

3. I must find a way not to get fatigued, when faced with the prospect of constantly adapting my behaviour management practice and strategies for engaging learners. I will focus on my experiences of how rewarding it feels to observe a student excel as a result of your having found an effective way to engage them in the learning.

4. When working 1:1 with students, I must work to consider the quality of attention that I am giving to them: Where are we talking? Is it a space un-pressured by time and un-interrupted by other students? Am I listening to understand, rather than to respond? Am I asking incisive questions?

## Teacher Observation Form



|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                      |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Teacher                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | LS                                   |
| Date                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | 16/05/2022                           |
| Group                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | BA3 (Acting)                         |
| Topic/Context                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Rehearsals and Tech Week Preparation |
| <b>Notes on the lesson:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                      |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- LS began the day with a 'check-in' with the whole class collectively, and as individuals.</li><li>- When it came to DP's turn to feed back how they were feeling, they asked if they could speak to us both outside for a moment.</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                      |
| <b>What I have learned:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                      |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- LS gave DP their undivided attention. The made DP feel seen and heard, and de-escalated the high stakes of the situation.</li><li>- LS did not rush DP at all, and progressed the conversation at DP's pace.</li><li>- LS asked open and incisive questions.</li><li>- LS was generous and patient, allowing DP to talk through and work out what they were feeling.</li><li>- LS listened acutely. On occasion, repeating back key phrase to DP to clarify his meaning, concerns and intentions further.</li><li>- LS did not take DP's upset and behaviour personally. LS also did not allow their personal feelings towards DP to cloud the issue, or affect their ability to deal with DP objectively.</li><li>- LS dealt with the similar situation of BM's behaviour, completely differently. This demonstrates to me that they tailors their approach towards behaviour management, depending on the student they are working with.</li></ul> |                                      |
| <b>Targets to improve my own practice (mapped to professional standards where appropriate):</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                      |

- Consider the quality of attention that I am giving to a student: Where are we talking? Is it a space un-pressured by time and un-interrupted by other students? Am I listening to understand, rather than to respond? Am I asking incisive questions?
- The students are adults. They are able, and should be, making decisions and judgement calls for themselves. I must work on not offering 'what I think is best for you' advice, but instead helping them to reach their own conclusions, and supporting them in their subsequent actions.
- To work on finding the balance between caring deeply for the job, but finding professional distance and not allow the reactions/opinions of students to personally affect me.
- To find the balance between tailoring my managerial approach to suit each individual students, whilst also maintaining a fairness (no preferential treatment or what could be viewed as preferential treatment) in my dealings across the whole cohort.
- To become more adept at finding pockets of time to talk to each student individually, and to grow those personalised relationships.

## Teacher Observation Form



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|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Teacher                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | SA                                                                  |
| Date                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | 17/05/2022                                                          |
| Group                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | BA3 (Acting)                                                        |
| Topic/Context                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Technical Rehearsal Day: LX, SFX and A/V Plotting Session included. |
| <b>Notes on the lesson:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                     |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- SA had been working for two full days, prior to our Company's Tech Session and had plotted another show yesterday. SJ had probably worked 32 out of the past 48 Hours.</li><li>- SA was observing and mentoring their Design and Production Students through the Technical Rehearsal.</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                     |
| <b>What I have learned:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                     |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- SA appeared to find it difficult to allow the students to find their own way through challenges, and was inclined to offer a continuous stream of advice.</li><li>- SA also seemed overly aware that I was observing them, which seemed at points to distract them from their work.</li><li>- SA was unable to monitor/control their facial expressions. As their students often looked to them for reactions as to how they were progressing, the students were often thrown off/deflated by the reaction that SA gave them.</li><li>- SA was overly-eager to explain to me the difficulties that they had had with particular students throughout the degree.</li><li>- SA expressed to me how hurt/affected they had been by certain students feeding back to them their displeasure as to how the course had been run.</li><li>- SA stepped in at certain points, to make seemingly executive decisions.</li><li>- SA often interrupted work-related conversations amongst the students, and monopolised the conversation with their own opinions as to what should be done next.</li></ul> |                                                                     |
| <b>Targets to improve my own practice (mapped to professional standards where appropriate):</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                     |

- The Teacher's voice should not be the loudest/most-often-heard voice in the room. Teaching is an ego-less position. I should regularly check-in with if what I am saying is purposeful, and concise.
- The students that I teach are the same age as me. I need to consider if I am establishing enough of a position of authority, whilst also maintaining a democratic learning environment.
- Do not allow my personal feeling towards a student affect my dealings with them - either in a positive or negative capacity.
- I must work on not being 'afraid of the silence'. I must allow the student the time (free from interjection) to reflect and think on how they would like to proceed. Teaching is empowering students to find their own conclusions, not offering them solutions automatically.
- I must work on not being 'too closed a book' when actively listening to students. Occasionally, I shy away from telling the students that I think they are incorrect, and instead, save the feedback until their written feedback. This lack of developmental feedback during the working process, robs the student of the opportunity to refine/correct their practice as they proceed.
- To ensure that I have a professional outlet for expressing my frustrations with students (Should they arise), so as not to burden/prejudice other staff members towards the cohort, through telling them about my personal dealings with the students.