

# Most Typical Difficult Behaviors in Class and Psychologist's Advice on Managing Them

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Hi! I'm Jorezza Antonio, an elementary teacher and licensed psychometrician. I have taught children from kindergarten to fifth graders, including those with special needs, and have been practicing Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) for managing students' behaviors.

Throughout my years of teaching, I have encountered different behaviors in class, some were easy to manage but there were times that these behaviors really tested my patience and even challenged my self-perception as a teacher. From defiance to distraction and to instances of showing disrespect to teachers and classmates, these are just some of the challenging behaviors we had to navigate.

A classroom is a whirlwind of different experiences; only a teacher knows how difficult and draining it is to maintain order while ensuring a positive learning environment for the students.

"Behind every difficult behavior is an opportunity to connect with the student and to get a deeper understanding of their needs".

We are not just there to be a teacher but also a parent and a friend—balancing discipline and empathy. By identifying the root causes of these behaviors, we can implement effective strategies and potentially transform difficult situations into teachable moments, thereby creating a safe environment for our students.

What are the typical difficult behaviors in class and how to manage them?

## 1. Ignoring the Teacher



In my years of teaching, I have often experienced being ignored by one of my students while I was asking them a question. Instead of getting frustrated with the student, it is important to consider that the child doesn't have any underlying needs affecting their ability to focus and listen.

- It's essential not to assume they are deliberately ignoring you.

- To engage the student, try calling their name and asking for their thoughts. You may come up with questions that they're interested in talking about.
- If the student continues to ignore you, address the issue privately after class. Express your concern about their lack of response and focus in class. Let them know you care about the reason behind their behavior. This could be an excellent opportunity to build a stronger relationship with the student.

## 2. Acting Out



Some students may struggle to [control their emotions](#) in certain situations. Each child reacts differently to situations. They may throw tantrums over minor issues, which may disrupt the whole class.

["...for most children, controlling emotions can be a challenging task".](#)

This kind of situation often occurs in class; luckily, most often there are other teachers available to help. If you need assistance, do not be shy to ask your colleagues for help!

- If a student is acting out, bring the student outside the classroom to continue with the class with the help of a different teacher. It is important to prevent this issue from disrupting the class and to ensure that the student doesn't feel reprimanded in front of their classmates.

- Take the time to talk to the student and ask what happened and what may have triggered the behavior. Some children might express that they couldn't control it, and the best you can do is to understand that for most children, controlling emotions can be a challenging task.
- Teach them [various ways to cope with emotions](#) for when they feel overwhelmed or when they need or want something.
- This is a great opportunity to discuss the situation with the other students. Teach empathy and that these emotions are normal and we are here to support one another in feeling better.

### 3. Being Disrespectful



Disrespect happens not only towards teachers but also among students. It can manifest as yelling, ignoring, or mocking others. Children often engage in this behavior to get reactions and attention from other people. I get this a lot in class too! But at the end of the day, I choose to show respect and love to my students. It is easy to get frustrated, but you should know that they are still children and we are here to teach them to be better.

"Use positive reinforcement to encourage students to manifest respectful behavior. Praise good behavior immediately after it occurs".

- When the student shows disrespect, ask the student what's causing the behavior, "Did I do anything that might have offended you?" or "Are you feeling okay today?" This will let them know that you are concerned with what's happening and they might put their defense down.
- Teach the importance of being respectful, you might be surprised to find that some students don't realize that their actions can come across as disrespectful, especially if these behaviors are seen and common in their home environment. Take a moment to talk about [good manners in class](#).
- Use positive reinforcement to encourage students to manifest respectful behavior. Praise good behavior immediately after it occurs.
- You can discuss emotions and behaviors in class. How one's behavior can elicit certain emotions in others and affects them.
- Teach positive behavior and model behavior you expect. Always answer with respect even when the student shows disrespect.
- If the student continues to show disrespect, let them know that there are consequences such as conversation with their parents etc.

## 4. Disrupting the Class



Disruptive behaviors in class can take many forms such as, making noises, not listening, talking to other students, or getting up and making different gestures. These behaviors can easily disrupt a class and hinder their learning experience. Here are some strategies that you can use when a student disrupts the class:

- Before starting the class, have a quick recap on what the rules are in the classroom. Ask why rules are important and why we need them.
- Do not give attention to behaviors you do not want to reinforce, as some do these behaviors to get attention.
- Instead of saying “Stop making noises” or “Stop standing up,” be firm and use positive instructions like, “Please remain silent” or “Please stay seated.”
- Provide positive reinforcement for good behaviors, such as, “Great job for staying seated!” or “Thank you for being quiet!”
- If the reason behind disruptive behaviors is boredom, you may prepare different activities for the class. With this, you may interject game based learning like charades that’s about your lesson or even a game show.

“...focus on the behavior and not the student”.

It’s essential to understand the factors that lead to certain behaviors in students. We must ensure that they feel heard and valued without making quick judgments. Behavior serves as a form of communication, and comprehending it is crucial for effective teaching and classroom management.

A classroom is a child’s second home, a place where they learn and adapt based on their experiences. As teachers, it is our responsibility to create a safe space where students feel comfortable showing genuine emotions. Always remember to address these behavioral issues privately and actively listen to the student’s perspective, and to focus on the behavior and not the student. Communicate these behaviors to the parents for them to have a better understanding on what their child is like in school and what they can do at home to better help their child. Open communication within a classroom contributes to a better learning experience.



Each child is unique; strategies that work for one student may not be effective for another. Do not beat yourself up! Remember that there are many ways in managing difficult behaviors in the classroom. If you notice persistent issues with certain behaviors in a student, do not hesitate to seek advice from a professional as this can better support your student's needs.

## References:

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