



The CALM Management Program



Think of disruptive behavior as an opportunity. It's a chance to enhance and strengthen relationships.

How I Got From There to Here

I need to write letters of apology to all of my students, parents, and colleagues from my first year of teaching. I need to write letters because my voice was exhausted from all of the aggressive prompting I had to do to get students to listen to me. Whatever strategy I tried fell on deaf ears. But the problem was not my students' hearing; it was my lesson plans. My lesson plans were so well written and detailed they could have taught a cactus how to survive in the rainforest. But they weren't connecting with the students. As soon as I began delivering my lessons, I found some students bored, some wired. Where was I going wrong?

On the last day of school at 3:00 p.m. I marched down to my principal's office, shut the door, and began to cry. It was a frustrated, heavy-breathing,

messy cry. I couldn't catch my breath and thought, "This is it—I'm going to die in my principal's office."

My principal was gracious with her time and a bit amused as I kept going on about how I was a damn good teacher. I'm not sure who I was trying to convince more—her or myself. I blamed the temperature in my room, the cafeteria ladies, and the president of the United States (POTUS). The POTUS was my principal's breaking point. To my surprise, I saw her eyes well with tears—not of anger or sorrow, but laughter. I couldn't believe it. As she wiped her tears, she smiled and calmly stated that I would just have to come back next year and start over. She politely pointed out that I had two and a half months to get myself together, and with that, she showed me the door.

Taking my principal's advice, I spent that summer conducting a task analysis on my teaching. It was brutal at times, but necessary. In order to start anew, I had to learn from the past, leave it in the past, and move forward. First, I wrote down everything that went wrong in my classroom, from failed lesson plans to the failed interactions between me and the students. I then made two lists; one list consisted of what I didn't want to see or hear in my classroom, and the other consisted of what I did want to see and hear. I then identified specific behaviors that would trigger a negative response from me and behaviors that would trigger negative responses from the students.

The deeper I got into my task analysis, the more it became clear to me that my first year of teaching lacked communication, assessment, leadership, and motivation.

Reflecting on the poor communication in my classroom, I realized several things: (a) I hadn't gotten to know my students (lack of relationship building); (b) I didn't understand why my students hesitated to share their ideas (lack of trust building); (c) words and actions did not reflect kindness (lack of respect); and (d) my lessons lacked direction and clear expectations (lack of clarity).

Relationships. Relationships are the cornerstone of a well-managed classroom. Had I paid more attention to relationship building, I could have circumvented a lot of chaos.

Trust. If I didn't have a relationship with my students, how could I expect them to trust me? Trust and relationships go hand in hand.

Respect. I found that my students and I had different views and experiences regarding respect. Often, the interpretation of the meaning of respect was one of the most disguised causes of disputes in the classroom. Teachers and students need to build a working definition of respect together through ongoing dialogue.

Clarity. Lesson directions were unclear. I assumed the students understood what I expected of them, even though I hadn't communicated the learning intentions and success criteria.

In addition, I realized that in order to successfully build relationships, gain trust, and maintain a respectful classroom, my demeanor needed to remain CALM. Students will respond and mirror the teacher's demeanor. If they sense your anxiety, they will feel anxiety as well.

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A lot of good came from this task-analysis exercise. Most significant, it made me determined to become a better teacher. I resolved to take the time to get to know my students. I would be a better colleague. I would strive to be a role model whom students would try to emulate. I resolved not to let a young child get the best of me. I would devise a plan that would enable me to be in control without being the center of action. I wanted the students to be the center of action. I would be on the side, encouraging them to make good choices.

Teach Content *and* Behavior

I decided I was going to approach behavior as I would content. Just as it would not be appropriate to write the quadratic formula on the whiteboard

and expect students to know how to use it to solve a problem, so too it was not appropriate to ask students to “behave,” “pay attention,” “cooperate,” and “participate” without breaking down what that means and showing what it looks like. Like content, lessons in classroom behavioral norms and participation need to be reiterated and reinforced over time. Not all students learn at the same pace. Some students will be able to display appropriate behaviors without a lot of prompting; others may take more re-teaching.

I knew that I had to earn students’ trust before they would be willing to follow me. I strove to teach with love, kindness, and respect. My goal was to create an inclusive environment with a strong sense of community. The fun part of teaching was getting to learn about my students and, in turn, about other countries and cultures.

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My disastrous first year of teaching is a common story. First-year teachers experience a lot of failure, only to find themselves at the beginning of the second year a much more wise and fit teacher. My goal with this book is to make the first-year rite of passage as painless as possible for other new teachers. Ideally, after reading this book, new teachers will be able to apply these strategies so that their classroom will be calm and peaceful. Classrooms should provide an experience students look forward to having every day, where teachers enjoy teaching and students enjoy learning. A place full of laughter and joy. A place full of positive relationships, trust, respect, clear expectations, and high expectations.

As you begin the year or semester, you can incorporate behavior expectations during instruction. It is a matter of supporting, prompting, and reinforcing the behavior expectations throughout each lesson. As the students become more proficient in achieving the behavior expectations, the teacher will gradually progress to concentrating on instruction. It is designed to progress to expand the learning environment.

CALM Management

CALM Management is an inclusive, community approach to behavior focused on building relationships, community, behavior skills, and academic achievement. It offers skills and strategies based on defining respect that teachers can implement immediately. CALM is focused on being relaxed, not letting fear block you from being the best version of you. “CALM” itself is an acronym for four key approaches to behavior management:

- Communication
- Accountability
- Leadership
- Motivation

We’ll discuss each of these briefly here, and then in more depth in Parts I–IV of the book.

Communication

There are many variables that go into having a well-managed classroom. There are engaging lesson plans, transitions, collaborative working groups, independent and partner work, procedures, consequences, and much more. But the one variable that is often overlooked is communication.

CALM provides teachers with communication models that are proactive, teaching students respect by defining it through words and actions. The Voice-Movement-Task Model (VMT) addresses specific areas that pose the greatest barrier to productive work groups. It presents behavior expectations prior to an activity as well as how to communicate clear and concise directions for completing the group work.

Communication has the potential to bridge the gap between a well-disciplined, productive classroom and a classroom that uses punitive measures to expel

students without regard to teaching how to monitor their self-regulation. The art of communication involves clear, concise verbal and nonverbal expressions. Effective teacher communication can improve students' ability to synthesize and process information at a high level. In order to maintain a productive, safe learning environment for all learners it is essential to address best practices in communication.

Verbal Communication

Verbal communication is vital for enhancing relationships and plays a key role in the development of the whole child. Positive reinforcement can come in a multitude of forms such as: verbal reinforcers, effective praise, clear directions, simple requests, empathy, corrective feedback, and casual conversations. Verbal communication may involve words, spoken or written. We use verbal communication to inform or impart knowledge. Clarity is a key component of successful communication. Often, this is the area in which we as educators need to reflect on our practices in articulating our thoughts in a more clear and concise manner.

Nonverbal Communication

Teacher–student communication is much more than explicit directions; it involves implicit directives, which are expressed through nonverbal interactions. Nonverbal messages reinforce what your words convey. They transmit your emotions, define relationships, and provide feedback. Being aware of the feedback you are giving students is critical in building their confidence to take academic risks in your classroom. In some cases, our nonverbal communication can be more important than the words we speak. Nonverbal messages are usually perceived as being less controlled than our verbal messages and therefore more reflective of our true feelings. In other words, actions speak louder than words.

Nonverbal communication may include:

- *Body movement:* head nod, hand gestures, arms crossed, hands on hips, proximity, shaking head in disapproval

- *Posture*: standing tall, shoulders back, slouched, inward bend
- *Eye contact*: trusting, kind, defensive staring, rolling eyes
- *Facial expressions*: smile, frown

Tone of Voice

In addition to practicing supportive verbal and nonverbal communication skills, teachers should be conscious of their tone of voice. Voice tone involves the inflection, rhythm, pitch, and rate of speech. It is not so much the words we say, but the manner in how we say them. Voice tone consists of energy and expressive speech. As adults, we have all been on the receiving end of a positive or negative voice tone from our parents, a former teacher, or even a stranger on the street. Just think about how you reacted to someone's voice tone when it was positive and when it was negative. When redirecting student behavior, your tone should convey empathy and understanding as well as assertiveness. *Remain CALM.*

It is unrealistic to think that teachers will never become angry. It is a natural, normal emotion that everyone experiences. While difficult to accomplish, being able to acquire a CALM demeanor is a worthy endeavor. A CALM demeanor enables you to remain in control over your reactions and responses and helps you to stay focused on the specific behavior you need to address. Remaining CALM allows you to teach and guide, and it does not follow the escalating cycles of anger and erratic behavior.

Maintaining a calm demeanor is a skill and an attitude that can be developed. You have to consciously choose to embrace the change. As with any change, it will take time and practice. Remember, a student's behavior is not a reflection of you; you cannot take their behavior personally. Remaining CALM places you in a position of control, and you are less likely to become vulnerable to argument or be manipulated by the student.

Practice the following to develop a calm disposition:

- *Pleasant tone*. Use a pleasant tone as often as possible.
- *Deep breath*. Take a few deep breaths to help calm yourself.

- *Honesty.* Let the student know you are upset right now: “I need a few minutes to gather my thoughts and we’ll talk about this in a few minutes.” You are modeling how to regain control of your emotions before having a conversation.
- *Rationale.* The Redirect Behavior Model (see Chapter 3) implicitly requires you to address the rationale. It also gives everyone a little time to calm their emotions. It provides the “why” for the situation.
- *Time.* Take a moment before you address the behavior. Do not be rushed.

Accountability

Accountability is at the heart of CALM Management. The idea is to promote students’ awareness to display appropriate behavior, develop respectful behavior skills, and empower them through choice. When students are given choices, they are aware of the outcomes of both positive and negative choices. Their choices are reinforced with the idea that for every action there is a reaction; whether there is a positive or negative outcome depends on their decision.

The CALM Management methods of Positive Behavior Expectations (PBEs) and the Redirect Behavior Model (RBM) reinforce and strengthen accountability. They empower students to make the right choices and increase their ability to self-monitor their behavior. This accountability lays the foundation for productive collaborative work groups. We will explore how to create efficient and effective collaborative work groups and cultivate an environment of accountability in Chapter 5.

Leadership

The Leadership section focuses on developing teachers and students as leaders. You will find methods for assertively promoting your overall health and wellness. There will also be guided reflections to help you take a close look at teacher dispositions and how biases might affect your teaching practice.

The ultimate goal is to teach students to become independent thinkers. The Small-Group Interaction Model (discussed in Chapter 5) fosters an environment for students to collaborate in a supportive manner.

Students as leaders will learn how to communicate in a calm, assertive manner. Through participation in the Community Council (discussed in Chapter 8), students will hone their leadership skills by learning how to monitor the behavior and academics of their peers.

As a teacher leader in the classroom, you are going to be working hard, but that does not mean your students are going to be told what and how to do things all of the time. You are going to teach and lead students to make good choices and hold themselves accountable for their actions. This takes time and a ton of work. But in the end it is well worth the effort. Once you have established the culture of community in the classroom and teamwork, that's when the fun begins. You are going to teach them life skills to be able to work for one another and have a culture of responsibility and a strong work ethic.

Motivation

Once you have established a calm classroom where respect is the expectation and appropriate behavior is the norm, you will be able to try new strategies that inspire students to achieve. It is very common for teachers to have difficulty with the disengaged student. You will find methods for devising creative ideas that will jumpstart student motivation.

The CALM program is not a quick fix. It will take time to develop relationships and to build trust and respect between the teacher and students. But the time is well worth the effort. If you spend a considerable amount of time using the CALM methods during the first month of class, you will be able to be the guide on the side with confidence midway through your first semester. Keep in mind that if you approach behavior as you do content, each student will be able to display the key skills at their own pace.

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Here are some additional considerations/strategies to implement along with CALM Management.

Proactive Measures

As a teacher I have attended many hours of professional development, some of them helpful. The best professional development sessions provided us with strategies linked to a strong rationale that we could implement immediately. Some sounded good, but they did not offer implementation guidance. For example, we had a series of sessions that addressed the need to empower our students, let them be in control of their learning. I walked away thinking, this sounds great, but they didn't tell us how. Do I go into my classroom and announce, "Today I am going to empower you to make good choices"? I knew that in order to empower my students I needed to implement proactive strategies to prepare them to become independent thinkers. This is when I began to develop strategies to gradually release the power from teacher to student.

Positive Reinforcements

I am a big believer in positively reinforcing appropriate behavior. Positive energy will compound over time with encouraging words and actions. I encourage my students as well as myself to be aware of their word choices. Positive words and actions have an impact that reaches far beyond the classroom walls. Positive energy is contagious. Making a conscientious effort to develop a positive work environment will aid in positive student interactions and help to develop a trusting, safe environment, which is crucial in developing strong relationships in the classroom.

Pacing

It is important to note that these strategies build upon one another. Pacing will be key to your success. All of the methods presented will not be able to be implemented immediately. Yes, there are strategies that can be implemented the next day, but the CALM method is a progression. As the book introduces new strategies, it is necessary for the educator to evaluate their students' behavior. Are they able to handle working with partners? Small groups? How do they conduct themselves during independent work time?

Start small and build upon your successes. Introduce partner work, progress to cooperative learning groups, and eventually you will be able to transition to a project-based learning approach. These methods take time to implement and time for students to understand the expectations and be able to display the appropriate behavior according to the classroom expectations. It's a progression in which the educator will need to be cognizant of gradually implementing all of the CALM methods. It takes time to establish the culture of your classroom, and all of these methods will work in unison to help establish a supportive community in your classroom and school.

Mastery of the CALM methods is a process. Pacing is also important in incorporating these methods. Novice teachers may not incorporate all the methods until their second year of teaching. The novice teacher within the first year should concentrate on mastering the Positive Behavior Expectations (PBEs), employing the Redirect Behavior Model (RBM) in a conversational style, and implementing the Voice-Movement-Task Model (VMT). These are the cornerstones of creating a calm, productive classroom. Year Two, the novice teacher may begin to employ the other methods discussed in the book, such as the Community Council (CC) and the Student Communication Model (SCM).

Learning Goals

The main objective for establishing a well-managed classroom is to provide an environment for students to enhance their academic skills. Learning

goals are as much a part of classroom management as behavior goals. Learning goals can only begin to be achieved once the behavior goals have been established. Learning goals are what every teacher envisions. Once the students understand and are able to follow the behavior expectations, then the teacher is able to expand the learning environment and engage students in analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating their progress. Well-managed classrooms provide a stable, supportive working community in which students can excel academically. Learning goals and behavior goals work together in unison to communicate the expectations necessary for students to achieve at their highest level.

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Behavior Goals

Behavior goals will help to support the learning goals by providing a foundation for having a well-managed classroom. Teachers need to provide behavior goals in conjunction with learning goals and communicate these in a clear and concise manner. The goals will increase student success by creating a culture of high expectations and accountability. Academic and behavior goals create an orderly environment. Behavior goals will assist in paving the way for high-quality instruction to take place.

Summary

The CALM Management method is a comprehensive system. Mastery is a progression, so pace yourself and concentrate on establishing the Positive Behavior Expectations (PBEs) and the Redirect Behavior Model (RBM) within the first couple of months of the semester. It is a model that can establish behavior and content concurrently.

- *Communication*: inform students of behavior and academic expectations
- *Accountability*: create a culture of accountability shared by the teacher and students

- *Leadership*: teachers and students both have opportunities to lead students to success
- *Motivation*: innovative methods that are easily implemented to engage students

All of these components build upon one another; however, the major tenets of the CALM methods are based on a culture of developing relationships, respect, trust, and a unifying purpose of student success.

Reflection Questions

- As you begin to think about your classroom, what are your biggest concerns regarding behavior management?
- If you have been in the classroom for more than one year, what were your successes? What were your biggest challenges?

Quick Wins

This is a comprehensive system that can be implemented in the classroom or a schoolwide initiative. Part of starting small and building upon successes is finding your quick wins. Quick wins are the small-scale wins to achieve the big win. For example, if a student is resistant to working with a group, start small and build upon each win. Begin by having the student sit with the group. This is a quick win. Next time, have them take notes while they are with their group. Another quick win. Next, have the student share one idea with the group. Continue to build upon each quick win. The long-term goal would be to have the student participate fully within each cooperative learning group activity. We will be noting the quick wins as we progress through each strategy.