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How to Improve Education: Don't Get Tough; Just Get Connected

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Does everyone really realize how students are being victimized by the educational methods currently being used by teachers throughout many of our nation's classrooms? Does anyone know how we might reverse these negative effects on students? Well, to begin with, Basic, Balaz, Uzelac, and Jugovac (1997) reported that students in the first four grades often placed great value in their school, but in later grades the importance of school was found to greatly diminish. Concurrently, school drop-out rates and gang memberships—among older youth—have been increasing, particularly in larger urban areas. Hence, students are gradually withdrawing from, or abandoning, their respective classrooms, even though some might actually remain there, but why is this so?

That teachers are effectively conveying the 3 Rs (i.e., reading, [w]riting, & [a]rithmetic) may not be the problem. Rather, it appears that they may simply be using external control psychology improperly, and therefore failing to fulfill their students' various needs, as well as their own needs too. This occurs when teachers don't consider (or are unaware) that as they PUNISH students through the use of **external operant conditioning**, they are also associating themselves (their classrooms, their schools, & what they teach) with the punitive actions' negative feelings via **external classical conditioning**. Thus, as teachers engage in punitive acts two things generally happen:

1. Connectedness with their students is destroyed;
2. Disconnectedness with them ensues.

Somehow teachers who engage in these educational practices need to realize that they are often ineffective since they are not truly meeting anyone's needs (not even their own), and seek to engage in more need-fulfilling actions instead. To accomplish this end, it has been found that teachers need to be perceived by their students as highly credible, very powerful, and/or very loving. As teachers manage to become so need-fulfilling for their students, their students, in turn, will likewise seek to please their teachers too. That this can happen is very possible, as long as teachers and students alike generally find overlap between the five worlds they live in (Parish, 1992; see Figure 1 in Appendix). In particular, connectedness is most readily fostered when students and teachers discover that their "Quality Worlds" or their "All-They-Want-Worlds," and their "All-They-Don't Want-Worlds" greatly overlap, rather than being "worlds apart" instead.

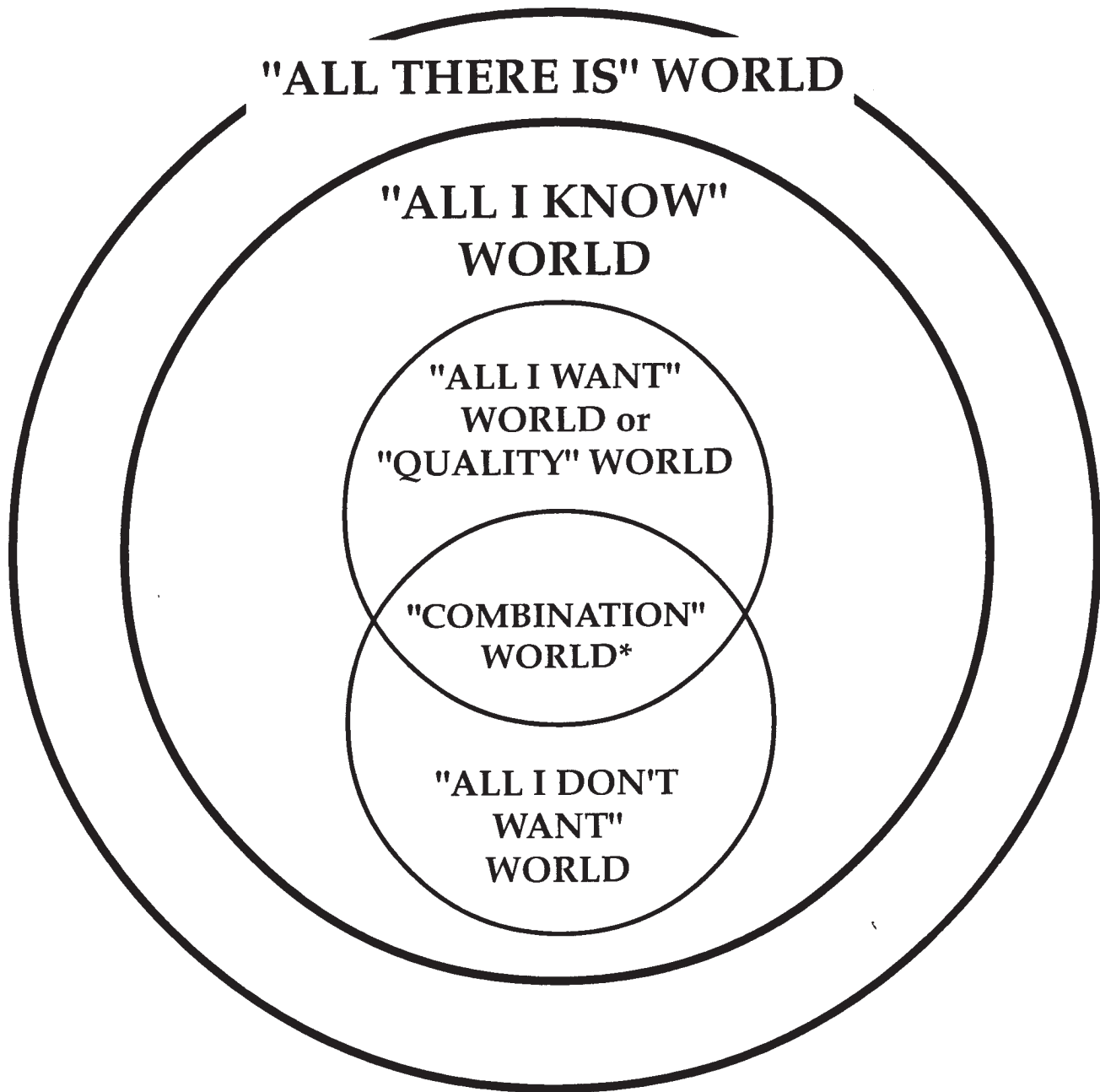
To foster such an overlap between students' and teachers' "worlds" requires everyone to follow some important "do's" and "don'ts." For instance, Allport (1985) urges that antilocutions (i.e., "hurtful words."), avoidance, exclusion, and psychological or physical violence be strictly avoided because they usually foster disconnectedness between all concerned. Instead, we must all seek to simply be each other's friend. A friend, of course, is someone who helps another to like himself or herself. According to Maya Pines (1979), everyone needs a friend, particularly the students who are thought to be "at-risk" of school failure. In order to be such a friend, the following suggestions are offered (Parish, 1996, 1998; see Figures 2 & 3 in Appendix), which if used properly, should foster substantial positive affect and promote connectedness between all involved parties.

To determine if teachers are actually succeeding in connecting with their students, and possibly gaining entry into their students' "Quality Worlds," the Teacher Effectiveness Questionnaire (Parish and Stallings, 1992; see Figure 4 in Appendix) is highly recommended for those teachers who really wish to know how they are doing, and/or what areas they might need to improve upon, if greater connectedness with their students is desired.

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THE FIVE WORLDS WE LIVE IN



*Has both positive and negative values.

Figure 1. The Five Worlds We Live In. (Parish, 1992)

Examining the Basic Principles of Friendship

What is a true friend? Who are our real friends? This paper will seek to provide insight/answers regarding these questions and much more.

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|---|--|
| <p>Friends are the ultimate form of social security.</p> <p>The only thing better than aged steaks is old friends.</p> <p>Don't just count your friends. Rather, figure out which friends you can count on.</p> <p>The best present you can receive from a friend is a <i>smile</i>.</p> <p>A friend is someone who helps you to like yourself.</p> <p>A friend is someone who sees you the way you wish to be seen.</p> <p>The most valuable gift you can <i>get</i> is a friend.</p> <p>The most valuable gift you can <i>give</i> is to be a friend to someone in need of one.</p> <p>Friends are people who choose to be by you, even when they would rather be somewhere else.</p> <p>Good friends are usually great listeners.</p> <p>Friendship is like mortar that binds people together.</p> <p>Friends generally avoid asking questions, and try not to make judgments.</p> <p>Good friends look for the good in you, and then tell others when they find it.</p> <p>The difference between our friends and our enemies, is that the former leave us feeling <i>better</i>, while the latter leave us feeling <i>bitter</i>.</p> <p>When a friend takes you to dinner make sure to buy him/her a mint. After all, isn't s/he worth that much to you?</p> <p>True friends expect the best from us, and we try our best not to disappoint them.</p> <p>Friends are our memories' greatest treasures.</p> <p>Real friends provide us with the best form of "No-Fault" insurance.</p> | <p>Friends try to keep you on your toes, but never treat you like a heel.</p> <p>Friends are our finest gift from God!</p> <p>Unlike most things that we have today, friends will often last for a lifetime.</p> <p>Friends are often visually impaired when it comes to seeing our faults and shortcomings.</p> <p>Friends never laugh <i>at</i> you. Rather, they always laugh <i>with</i> you.</p> <p>When you walk with a friend, it's usually easier to smell the daisies.</p> <p>Friends rarely give advice, but often give a helping hand.</p> <p>Friends try to avoid being hardheaded and hardhearted.</p> <p>Friends are our most priceless treasure.</p> <p>Does that make cents?</p> <p>Friends are like the sunshine that chase the clouds away.</p> <p>People who won't say anything nice about their friends, soon discover that they don't have any.</p> <p>Friends generally realize that the best sermon is a good example.</p> <p>Friends usually have the last word . . . when they say "I love you."</p> <p>Shouldn't we all be friends? Shouldn't we all be willing to go the extra mile like friends always do? Maybe this paper may nudge you or someone else in that direction. If so, it has served its purpose, for the world will be a better place as we consider our friends first, and strangers (who will be our friends someday) not very far behind.</p> |
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Figure 2. Examining the Basic Principles of Friendship. (Parish, 1996)

Teacher Effectiveness Questionnaire

In your estimation, is your teacher:	Yes	No
1. deeply interested in the subject matter?	___	___
2. deeply interested in his/her students	___	___
3. likely to conduct class discussions rather than straight lectures?	___	___
4. able to relate to students by teaching on their level?	___	___
5. able to comfortably interact with students?	___	___
6. unlikely to threaten and/or punish?	___	___
7. able to inject humor, variety, and/or drama into his/her lessons?	___	___
8. likely to ask students to do things that feel good?	___	___
9. likely to treat students with kindness and courtesy?	___	___
10. likely to seek input from the class regarding possible courses of action?	___	___

Note: The more "yeses" checked, the more likely the student will allow their teacher(s) into his/her "Quality World."

Figure 4. The Teacher Effectiveness Checklist. (Parish and Stallings, 1992)

The Friendly Alphabet

Friends . . .

Accept you for who you really are, and who you want to be.

Believe in you, and see you the way you wish to be seen.

Count on you, because that's what friends should always do.

Demand nothing, but give to you more than you could ever ask of them.

Encourage you when others shrug, 'cause they know you need a great big hug.

Feel joy, from the beginning 'til the end, that's what makes them good ol' friends.

Go the extra mile, and then ten more after that.

Help you when you are down, and never look at you with a frown.

Ignore others' negative remarks, and insist that you're cool to everyone at work or school.

Just hang in there for you, like no one else would ever do.

Keept you in mind, and make sure that you're doing fine.

Love you like few others do, and always strive to do their very best for you.

Move mountains for you, and yet help you smell the daisies too.

Never give up; they just won't stop until they drop, or until you meet them at the top.

Openly tell others what good things you do, and never complain like silly ol' fools.

Please you by what they say and do, for the beneficiary of their efforts is always you.

Quickly seek to determine what you need, and try to help with utmost speed.

Rise on any occasion to protect your name, and feel confident you would do the same.

Save the biggest and the best for you, because they love you through and through.

Trust in you, which is a great strength. For this reason, they will go to any length.

Understand your wants, needs, and fears, as they look at you through their very own tears!

Value you and all that you do, and help you to like yourself, at least as a general rule.

Welcome you with a great big smile, and let you know that you have "real style."

Xplain the facts about what you do, yet love you still, and always will.

You can't easily replace, that's for sure, as they strive to keep the faith and always endure.

Zealously endeavor to be our biggest fan (regardless of who we are), as though we're like some renowned movie star!

Figure 3. The Friendly Alphabet. (Parish, 1998)