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## Are You All Right?

### A Point to Ponder



“Are you all right?” Those four words say “I care about you.” What feels better, for any of us, than to know that someone cares about us? What student wouldn’t behave better if he felt that his teacher cared about him? Conversely, what student would be motivated to behave well in the classroom of a teacher who didn’t care?

### Recipe for Good Behavior

Take a misbehaving student, plus a cup of aggravation  
Then add a protruding vein in your neck and a sigh of sheer  
frustration  
Then mix it all together, boiling it ‘til it bubbles  
And within a few seconds it’s done, and you have multiplied your  
troubles

And if it does not taste good to you, there is an antidote  
A recipe for getting the better behavior you’re trying to promote:

Take a misbehaving student, and ask him if he’s all right  
And convince him that you believe in him and you care with all  
your might  
When he sees you’re not out to get him, believing that you are  
sincere  
You’ll be tasting better behavior for the duration of the year!

## Classroom Solution/Strategy



The “Are You All Right” technique is simple, is effective, and is based on the premise that **students who believe you actually care about them are much more apt to behave better.** Here’s what you do: The next time a student is behaving inappropriately in your classroom, take him outside of the classroom and ask, in a very sincere tone, “Are you all right?” (It is vitally important that you appear genuine and concerned.) You may see a surprised look on the student’s face. But almost always, the student will answer, “Yes.” Then follow this by saying, “Well, the reason I’m asking is that the way you were behaving in class was inappropriate and not at all like you.” (Okay, so maybe you’re stretching the truth a little, as this particular behavior was very typical of that student, but we think you can see where we’re going with this....) “And so I knew that for you to be acting that way, something had to be bothering you. And I just wanted you to know that if you need to talk about what’s bothering you, I’m here for you.” That’s it. Now you simply go back into the classroom.

Have you dealt with the misbehavior? Yes. You made it clear that the behavior was inappropriate. Will the student’s behavior improve? Almost always!

Please note that what you did *not* do was also very important. You did not dare him to do it again, you did not act personally offended, you did not threaten him, and you did not belittle him. You expressed nothing but caring and concern about his inappropriate behavior.

A high school teacher shared this story with us.

I heard you talking about the “Are You All Right” technique, and I honestly did not believe it would work. I teach at-risk students, and their behavior is some of the worst I’ve ever seen. I had a student return to school after the Christmas holidays, and for three straight days, he did absolutely no work in class. For the most part, he kept his head on his desk and slept. I was getting more angry and frustrated by the minute, so I decided to try the “Are You All Right” technique, believing, of course, that it would not work. I took him out into the hallway and asked, “Are you all right?” The student began to cry and said, “No, I’m not. I have cancer. It was diagnosed over the holidays, and it’s a very aggressive type of cancer. They started my chemotherapy, and it’s making me really sleepy. But I really want to be here because I don’t know how much time I have left.” (Tears fell from this teacher’s face as he shared his story.) The teacher continued, “I asked him, ‘Why didn’t you tell me?’ And the student answered, ‘I didn’t know you cared.’”

Now did this teacher care? Of course he did. We later learned that he began taking this student to his chemotherapy treatments whenever possible. But the fact is that just because you care doesn't mean the students automatically know that. Many students come to us assuming that we don't care. So it is our job to convince them that we do.

## Bottom Line



The fact that some students assume that their teachers don't care about them often leads to the following:

- ◆ Misbehavior
- ◆ Indignant attitudes
- ◆ Disrespect
  
- ◆ Apathy
- ◆ Lack of motivation

The fact that some teachers know how to show their students that they care often leads to the following:

- ◆ Good behavior
- ◆ Positive attitudes
- ◆ Respect
- ◆ Interest
- ◆ Motivation

Which would you prefer? You decide!