



Dr. B's 12 Tips for Educators

1. **Classroom Tip #1:** Having warm, trusting relationships is the key to supporting healthy development. For students to feel safe at school, it's crucial that they can place trust in the adults around them. Establishing trust involves cultivating relationships that foster a sense of safety. Developing healthy connections with students holds significance, especially as they may not encounter such relationships beyond the school environment.
2. **Classroom Tip #2:** Mindfulness techniques - This is single focusing and can be done in a variety of ways. My favorite is to have learners count something. Once they are done demonstrating diaphragmatic breathing, I will then ask them to count the light fixtures or the number of plants, etc.
3. **Classroom Tip #3:** Add self-soothing if they need it: If a student needs the lights off while they complete a task, shut them off! If they regulate themselves by humming, encourage them to keep humming or hum along if they don't mind it (remember that this is student specific as some may not be able to tolerate the noise outside of themselves). If they work better standing, give them the space to stand!
4. **Classroom Tip #4:** Movement: participating in high intensity exercise even for a few moments can push more oxygen into the brain and the larger amino acids into the muscles, which allows individuals to have greater access to the prefrontal cortex. In the school setting, this can be done by having a student deliver things upstairs. It may not be practical for an entire class to participate in this task together, but those with higher fitness levels can participate in the deliveries while other students could possibly move their desks and chairs for an activity.
5. **Classroom Tip #5:** Create opportunities for success. Don't wait for it to happen, construct scenarios that force it to happen. For instance, drop items on the floor

near the student so they can assist with picking the items up, save jobs you know the student will be likely to say yes to.

6. **Classroom Tip #6 :** Giving students recognition when they behave in a positive manner can redirect their attention into the now and give them a sense of worth. Acknowledge small changes in behavior consistently.
7. **Classroom Tip #7:** Take time with individual students to ask them what they have been doing in their time outside of school, asking simple questions that encourage them to share their feelings.
8. **Classroom Tip #8:** Pay attention to your body positioning, specifically how you hold your hands, how wide your eyes are opened, and how you hold your mouth. Body stance and positioning can assist students in obtaining feelings of safety. To display a Stance of Safety, you should stand with your feet shoulder width apart, your hands in front of your stomach and lower rib cage with thumbs pointed up, shoulders back and down, and your head slightly tilted to the left.
9. **Classroom Tip #9:** Encourage students to find something about school that interests them. It doesn't need to be directly academic and in many cases non-academics will gain more traction. They could help the buildings and grounds crews, work in the kitchen, join a club, provide data entry in the office, design bulletin boards, assist in a class they have already participated in where they excelled, or help in the library. They may even be able to achieve extended learning opportunities for this.
10. **Classroom Tip #10:** Ask a student who is showing stress behavior to do a simple task like collecting the books, fill a water bottle, sharpen a pencil - the vibrations from the pencil sharpener are very regulating for many students.
11. **Classroom Tip #11:** When an inappropriate behavior occurs, point it out immediately. The sooner it's mentioned, the sooner it can be addressed! Offer short phrases with no value attached.

“Sally, we don’t touch other people’s bodies without asking their permission. I’m not angry with you. Let’s talk about what an appropriate way to touch might be. Perhaps you could ask to give a high five when you feel you need a physical connection.”

12. **Classroom Tip #12:** De-escalate challenging behaviors with humor. Laughter releases endorphins. What do endorphins do? They dull pain; emotional,

physical and psychological. When this happens the brain is primed for social bonding and increases feelings of safety.



You will find simple and empowering strategies like these in my upcoming book release of *Ease the Pain in the Classroom*. Learn more about the book here: <https://bit.ly/m/EaseThePain>

Dr. Bethany Bilodeau, Dr. B, sensory expert, with fresh approaches and action steps to resolve behavior issues in the classroom. Dr. B also offers The Behavior Bootcamp: A Path to Positive Change, an online training program. You can learn more about it here:

<https://www.thebehaviorbootcamp.com/>

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