



## How To Repair A Broken Relationship With Your Students

So you lost your cool.

You raised your voice. You put your students in their place. You stomped around in a huff and behaved in a manner you're not proud of. You said things you wish you could take back.

And now as the school day draws to a close, guilt gnaws at your conscience.

You smile sweetly and bid your students goodbye as they file out of the room. But it's clear something in them has changed – like an innocence lost or a disappointment found.

They leave without looking back.

You close the door and lock it. You find your way to your desk and slump into your chair. You cradle your head in your hands. *What have I done? Did I just ruin everything?*

Breaking your students' trust and damaging the rapport you've worked so hard to establish may indeed feel like the end of the world.

But students are remarkably forgiving. And with the right approach, you can always draw them back into your circle of influence.

Here's how:

### **Wait until tomorrow.**

It's best to wait until the next morning before addressing the incident that precipitated your outburst. Give yourself and your students a fresh start, a chance to view each other through the lens of a brand new day.

### **Admit your mistake.**

As soon as your students are settled, tackle the situation head-on. Say simply, "Yesterday I was unhappy with the way you behaved during math, and I handled it poorly. I lost my cool and I'm sorry."

*Note:* Apologizing is as much for you as for them. It also provides a model for your students and is the quickest way to right the ship.

### **Let it sink in.**

After your brief but direct apology, give your students a moment to let it sink in. A pause will also keep you from going on and on and diluting the impact of your words. The idea is to make amends quickly, impressionably, and without fuss.

### **Don't let them off the hook.**

Now is your opportunity to do what you should have done instead of losing your cool. Hold your students accountable for the previous days'

behavior by having them redo whatever it is that caused your, ahem, moment of weakness.

### **Avoid fun and games.**

Resist the urge to try to win them back with a fun afternoon, a silly game, or an easing of your behavior standards. These methods are manipulative. They hold no meaning for students and will cheapen your relationship with them.

### **Take it slow.**

Trust is built over time with your consistent behavior. It's an hour-by-hour, day-by-day sameness that restores rapport and influence. Be pleasant, don't try too hard, and respond to every act of misbehavior with calm accountability. You'll win them back before you know it.

### **Learn from it.**

We all make mistakes. It's what you do with them that matters and makes the difference in the teacher you become. Resolve to use yours as an opportunity to learn and to get better and to leapfrog into greater understanding.

## **Keeping Cool**

One of the keys to keeping your cool is to never let behavior reach the point where it gets under your skin.

If *ever* you see something you don't like, either stop your class in their tracks, show them what you expect, and then make them do it again . . . or, in the case of individual students, simply follow your classroom management plan.

Far too many teachers accept a little pushing here, a little side-talking there, allowing their students to only *sort of* follow their classroom rules and directives.

Sure, they'll remind and warn and complain until their throat hurts, but they never actually do anything about it.

They just endure it – which, over time, is bound to get the best of them, bound to cause them to do or say something they'll regret. Maybe even every day.

Setting the bar where you *really* want it, though, and then holding students accountable for reaching it, not only keeps you cool and happy under the collar . . .

But it allows you to maintain the kind of influential relationships with your students that are critical to your – and their – success.