



## Series II – Step 5

# How Teacher Personality and Style Affects the Growth of Self Confidence

Adapted from the book, *Creating Confident Children in the Classroom: The Use of Positive Restructuring*.

Pierangelo/Giuliani: Research Press

## Introduction

More and more, teachers are becoming a primary influence in children's lives, and in some cases they may be the openly healthy adults some children encounter during the day. Twenty five years ago family structures were different, and teachers did not require the depth and variety of social/emotional skills that are required of today's teachers. Teachers today are not only educators, but therapists, parent substitutes, mentors, advocates, and more.

Therefore, it stands to reason that a teacher's personality and teaching style can have a profound impact on children's academic performance and general development. While the emphasis in the last four parts has focused on the student, this part will focus on the importance of teaching style in creating a positive environment in which student confidence is fostered. It will be very important to step back and evaluate how you are defined as a teacher, your goals in teaching, and the manner in which you present yourself to students. Does your teaching style allow for an environment where confidence can really be reinforced or an environment that may actually impede the growth of confidence?

No single aspect of a teacher's personality may be responsible for improving or impeding the growth of confidence in a student. For example, a very strict teacher who is fair, kind, genuine, logical, and nurturing may facilitate the growth of self confidence despite being very strict. On the other hand, a teacher who is funny but unstructured and disorganized may not facilitate children's self confidence. Despite the fact that the children love the teacher, they may not gain confidence if the teacher cannot provide the real-life success experiences necessary for the growth of self confidence.

# Positive Teaching Characteristics

## Genuineness

**This quality is exhibited by teachers who:**

- Create a student-centered classroom environment
- Go beyond what is expected of them to promote student' well being
- Are easily approachable
- Are honest and up-front with students
- Follow through on what they say
- Are consistent in their methods
- Are not fake or hypocritical

## Fairness

**Teachers with this quality:**

- Can admit to making a mistake
- Give assignments that take into account student' needs and levels of ability
- Give assignments that are reasonable in length with the main goal being feelings of success and accomplishment
- Give tests that stick to what has been taught
- Take a commonsense approach to grading homework and essays
- Give helpful comments for improvement
- Give students advance notice of quizzes and tests
- Do not seek to "get" children by giving unfairly difficult assignments and tests

## Organization

**Teachers who have this characteristic will:**

- Maintain order and routine in their classroom
- Provide students with structure and logical rules that apply equally to all
- Teach student to organize their materials, desks and lockers
- Have well-planned lessons with logical presentations and relevant follow-up assignments
- Hand back tests, essays, and classwork in a reasonable amount of time

## Logic and Common Sense

**This quality is expressed by teachers who:**

- Recognize that students, like adults, have good and bad days
- Understand that forces outside the classroom may be affecting a student's performance
- Know the classroom is not the center of the universe
- Know the difference between symptoms and problems and look for the root of the symptoms rather than label them in negative terms

- Knows and believes that no child wants to fail in school and that failure is a symptom that needs to be investigated

## Ability to Set Clear Boundaries

### Teachers with this ability will:

- Take a stand to promote fairness and enforce classroom rules, even if it makes them unpopular
- Set clear and fair boundaries for students who may be out of control
- Run the classroom with a sense of conviction rather than by fear and intimidation

## Sense of Humor or Lightheartedness

### This quality is exhibited by teachers who:

- Place priority on important issues and understand that to err is human
- Allow students to explore their “child” side without admonishing them to grow up
- Are able to laugh at themselves when they make a mistake
- Understand the difference between telling jokes and making fun of or belittling students
- Know that no child should be the focus of a joke

## Ability to Give Compliments

### Teachers who possess this quality will:

- Spontaneously compliment students for their achievements and for trying their best
- Find positive things to tell students before making suggestions on how to improve something
- Make constructive comments on tests and essays without devaluing students' efforts
- Provide students with small notes and cards recognizing a good job, a commonsense decision, assistance to another student, and so forth

## Ability to Admit Mistakes

### Teachers who possess this quality will:

- Admit their mistakes to let students see that mistakes present a learning opportunity
- Not be afraid to show students how to correct a decision that is obviously wrong
- Are solution oriented rather than blame oriented

## Willingness to Listen

### Teachers who can listen:

- Put aside time to sit down with students who need to say something
- Understand that reaching out to an adult is a difficult step for many students, especially for those who have no one to listen to them at home
- Teach students that being listened to does not always mean that someone will agree or be able to do what they ask

## Approachability

### Teachers with this quality:

- Have the ability to make students feel at ease when they come to ask a question
- Have a high approachability factor and students never hesitate to approach them for any reason
- Exhibit a sense of warmth and comfort
- Cultivate an atmosphere in which children do not fear negative reactions
- Command respect, do not demand respect

## Negative Teacher Characteristics

Now let us take a look at some personality characteristics and teaching styles that increase the chance of children developing negative self esteem or low self worth.

## Ego Teaching

### Teachers with this quality:

- Have unrealistically high standards that create intense stress in their students
- Give excessively long homework assignments designed to impress parents how good a job he/she is doing
- Give difficult tests that require children to learn minutiae
- Have grading systems that create numerous failures
- Demand respect by frightening and intimidating students

## Excessive Criticism

### This characteristic is exhibited by teachers who:

- Criticize children in public
- Criticize more often than compliment
- Believe that compliments and rewards reduce his/her authority
- Use sarcasm as a means of motivation
- Are quick to blame a child's lack of progress or poor grades on the student rather than analyzing the situation for possible teaching problems

## Unreasonability

**This characteristic is exhibited when teachers:**

- Refuse to listen to a child's explanation
- Make demands without giving reasons
- Provide work and experiences that are too difficult for children to finish without parental help

## Narcissism

**This aspect of a personality is reflected when teachers:**

- Use children to keep the spotlight on themselves
- Give a great deal of work but rarely hand it back or hand it back with few or no comments
- Focus attention on themselves rather than the needs of the students
- Take it out on students if they have a bad day
- Are always the victim, always complain the most, and always brag that they have the most difficult class

## Rigidity

**This quality is expressed by teachers who:**

- Take everything seriously
- Are unwilling to change their minds
- Are unwilling to admit mistakes
- Will stick with something even if it makes little sense or has little educational value

## Punishment Orientation

**Teachers with this mentality:**

- Punish students for relatively small infractions
- Make a public spectacle of students
- Hold students' behavior or performance up to their peers for ridicule
- Always see students' explanations as excuses or attempts to control the situation
- Enforce rules with harsh, unrealistic consequences

## Disorganization

### Teachers with this quality tend to:

- Change the rules frequently, thus creating confusion in students
- Give tests or quizzes without letting students know in advance
- Frequently lose students' work
- Appear to be “winging it” with no real plan or structure

## Unpredictability

### Teachers with this quality will:

- Change rules without informing students, sometimes until they break them
- Have different rules for different students
- Be nice to a student one day and not another, for no apparent reason

## Lack of Control

### Teachers who exhibit this quality:

- Have no set classroom rules for discipline or opportunities for reward
- Always seem to be yelling and screaming
- Make extreme threats that rarely are enforced
- Let the students “run the show”

## Create Anxiety in Students

### Teachers who do this:

- Say things to scare children (for instance, “You’ll be lucky if you get a 65 on tomorrow’s test”)
- Never offer reassurance before or after tests
- Constantly inform students of how much trouble they will be in if they don’t do well on this test or assignment
- Create self-doubt in students

## “Gotcha” Mentality

### Teachers who have this characteristic:

- Hope to catch students making mistakes
- Always correct students for breaking rules, no matter how minor
- Will seize any opportunity to exhibit power over students
- Will publicly broadcast what they uncover about students’ infractions

## Overreactivity

### Teachers who exhibit this quality will:

- Turn minor events into major crises
- Enforce punishments inappropriate to the situation
- Scream and yell at students for minor infractions

Although successful experiences are the most critical factor in building confidence, a positive teacher with a constructive teaching style can go a long way toward breaking down initial resistance barriers. Positive or negative, a teacher's personality and teaching style, even for one year, can directly affect a student for the rest of his/her life.