

## Chapter Twenty

# Building Cooperation

### Teachers Need Cooperation

#### *Starting vs. Stopping Behavior*

Behavior management is conceptually simple. There are only two things you can do with a behavior. You can *increase* it, or you can *decrease* it. If you consistently increase the behaviors you want and consistently decrease the behaviors you do not want, sooner or later you will be left with what you want.

Getting students to *stop* disrupting, therefore, is only half of discipline management. Getting students to *start* doing what they *should* be doing is the other half.

This section of the book will focus on getting students to do what they *should* be

doing. How do you train the class to be in their seats ready to go when the bell rings – to hustle rather than dawdle during lesson transitions – to do what you ask the first time you ask for it? How do you build cooperation?

#### *Teachers Need Cooperation Often*

Imagine that you want all of the students in your class to:

- Show up on time
- Walk as they enter your classroom
- Bring pencils and paper
- Bring books and lab manuals
- Be in their seats when the bell rings
- Be working when the bell rings

### Preview

- A teacher needs cooperation many times a day from every student in the class. Whenever students fail to cooperate, the teacher's job is made more difficult.
- Cooperation is voluntary – a gift. Before students will give the teacher all of the cooperation that is required during a school day, the teacher must repeatedly answer one simple question, "Why should I?"
- The answer to the question, "Why should I?" is called an incentive. Teachers will need incentives that teach the entire class to be responsible – even the oppositional and highly irresponsible students.
- This incentive system must increase learning time while costing the teacher almost nothing in terms of time and effort.
- This incentive system is called Responsibility Training.

You have just made six requests for *cooperation* from thirty students, and the class period has barely begun.

Imagine that you are a high school teacher with thirty students in each of five instructional periods. Before beginning instruction in all of these periods on a single day, you will have made *nine hundred* requests for cooperation. By the time these class periods end, you will have made *thousands* of additional requests for cooperation.

#### ***Teachers Need Cooperation from Everyone***

You need cooperation from *every* student in the class, not from just the few difficult students. Even the nicest kid in your class can be far from perfect when it comes to being responsible.

Sometimes good kids are just a little flaky. Maybe when they were in the third grade and they forgot their lunch money, a parent ran it to school. And when they were in the fifth grade and forgot their homework, a parent ran it to school. They are nice kids, but they often show up without homework or lab manuals or pencils. These students collectively can cause you just as much stress and extra work as Larry.

#### ***Teachers Need Perfection***

Simply *improving* the level of cooperation from students is a hollow victory. Let's imagine that you have four students who repeatedly forget to bring pencils. Let's imagine that you institute a management program that reduces the problem by 50 percent. You could publish that result in any journal.

So what! You still have to hassle with pencils at the beginning of every class period. But, now you have an extra management program to operate. As a result of the intervention, your workload has *increased*. At a practical level your life does not get any better until the problem goes away.

Consequently, in the building of cooperative behavior, I am not much interested in *improvement*. Rather, I am interested in *solving the problem* so that the problem disappears. I am interested in *every* student in the class being responsible *all of the time*.

### **Remedial Child Rearing**

#### ***Consider the Starting Point***

To gain a perspective on the scope of your job in training the class to be responsible, take a quick mental survey. Before your students came to school this morning, how many of them, do you think, did the following?

- Made their beds as soon as they got up
- Hung up their pajamas
- Helped set the breakfast table
- Cleaned up their breakfast dishes
- Hustled getting ready for school so they would not make themselves or their parents late

After your students get home this evening, how many of them, do you think, will do the following?

- Hang up their jackets
- Do chores without having to be reminded
- Help set and clean up the dinner table
- Start their homework without an argument
- Head up to bed on time
- Put their dirty clothes in the hamper

#### ***Let's See You Do Any Better***

Here is a depressing statistic – *half of the human race is below average*. Not surprisingly, this statistic applies to the *parenting skills* of the parents of the students in your class. Some parents are *one* standard deviation below average.



Some parents are *two* standard deviations below average. And Larry's parents are *way* below average. They can't get Larry to the dinner table in a timely fashion without nagging, even though the kid is already hungry and the parents are using food as a reinforcer.

On the first day of school, members of the community will bring all of their accumulated childrearing problems into your class, dump them on your desk and say, in effect,

"Let's see if *you* can get that kid to do some work. I can't even get him to make his bed!"

With your class of thirty students, you will be expected to get more cooperation out of them every day than their parents can get under the best of circumstances. And you will want it for the asking.

### The Joys of Irresponsibility

#### *Cooperation Is a Gift*

If students do something as simple as showing up to your class on time, do not take it for granted. They have cut short several pleasurable activities in order to do it. They have cut short joking around in the lavatory. They have cut short talking with their friends at their lockers. They have cut short saying goodbye to their boyfriends or girlfriends for the fourth time today.

They have cut short all of these innocent pleasures so that they could show up to your class on time where you will *put them to work*. You should be grateful.

### Is Virtue Its Own Reward?

In the classroom goofing off is its own reward. Goofing off is always the easy, pleasurable alternative to being "on the ball."

The difficult thing about managing cooperation is that cooperation is *voluntary*. It is a gift. You cannot *force* someone to cooperate. If you tried, you would get *coercion*, the opposite of cooperation.

Cooperation requires a *decision* to cooperate on the part of the student. The management of cooperation in the classroom, therefore, focuses on supplying the students with a good reason to make that decision.

#### *Is Virtue Its Own Reward?*

Are you familiar with the saying, "*Virtue is its own reward*?" I simply want to impress upon you the fact that this statement *does not apply to classroom management*.

Quite the opposite is true. *Goofing off* is its own reward. Goofing off is always the easy, pleasurable alternative to being "on the ball."

Consider the problems that teachers face in getting students to do something as simple as bringing pencils to class. Put yourself in the students' shoes.

Remember on the first day of the semester when your English teacher said,

"Class, we write almost every day in this class, and I do not want a constant stream of students going to the pencil sharpener. One of my basic expectations is that you bring *three sharpened pencils* to class each day."

Now it is the second day of class, and the teacher says,

"Class, let's all get out pencil and paper."

A hand immediately goes up.

"Yes?"

"I don't have a pencil."

"Do you remember yesterday when I asked you to bring three sharpened pencils to class every day?"

"I forgot."

"Well...here. You can borrow mine, but I want it back at the end of the period."

Is this teacher ever going to see that pencil again? The teacher may as well kiss it good-bye before giving it to the student.

However, supplying pencils is *nothing* compared to the management of pencil *sharpening*. Imagine Larry sitting in first period on his first day of high school. Larry knows what he has gotten into. At the welcoming assembly the principal made some remarks that were interpreted by Larry as follows:

"Freshmen, let me explain high school to you. We expect you to sit in your seats for the next four years and pay attention to everything that is said because it might be on the test."

Larry has been sitting in first period for *twenty minutes*, and he is already *suffering*. Larry suffers from multiple quasi-neurological deficits like "ants in the pants." Larry looks at the clock and says to himself,

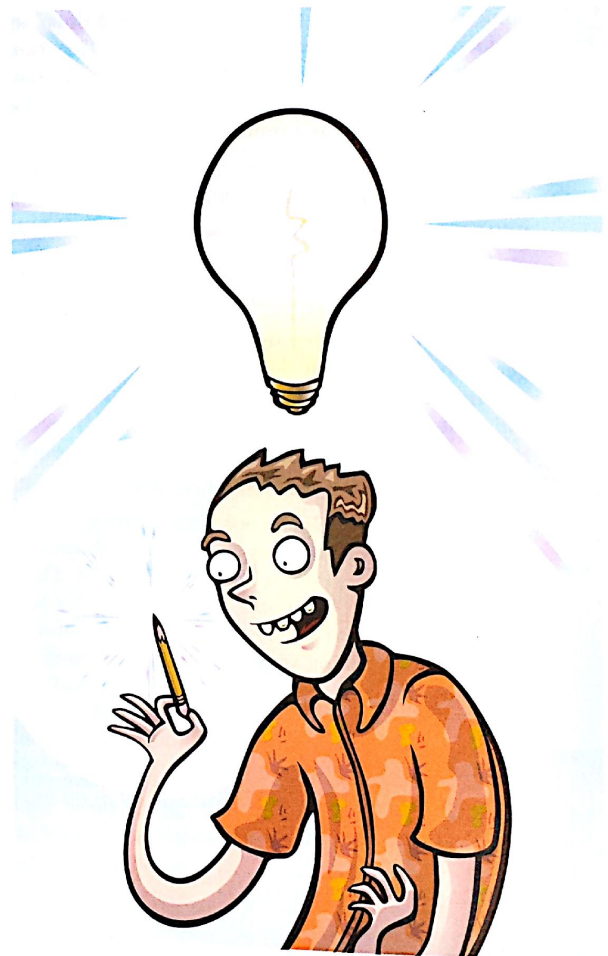
*"I won't make it. I need to move. I have to move! I have 3 years, 179 days, 5 hours and 40 minutes to go. I need to move now! How can I get out of my seat and move without getting into trouble?"*

Larry casts his eyes upon the lead of his pencil, and a light goes on. Larry snaps his lead as his hand raises.

"May I please sharpen my pencil?"

The teacher responds,

"Use one of your other pencils."



*Larry casts his eyes upon the lead of his pencil, and a light goes on.*



Larry responds,

"I don't have another pencil."

The teacher says, pointing to the pencil sharpener,

"Well then, hurry!"

This is not looking good. On the first day of school the teacher was *telling* the students to bring three sharpened pencils to class. It is only the second day of school, and the teacher is already *begging* students to hurry.

Does Larry hurry? It is a comedy routine.

Larry may have the state record in the 100 meters, but the speed with which he moves toward the pencil sharpener is known in Hollywood as "slow-mo." On his way to the pencil sharpener, Larry forgets his goal in life and stops to whisper to a friend.

"Larry, would you please leave him alone and simply get your pencil sharpened and get back to your seat?"

"What?"

Have you ever looked at the work kids turn in these days and wondered, "*What will happen to this country in the next 50 years?*"

When you watch Larry sharpen his pencil, you know that the future is in good hands. It's inspirational.

He cranks the handle and then holds the pencil up to the light to check the point. He

sharpens it some more. He checks it again. Larry is working to tolerances of 1/1000th of an inch. He could go to work building jet engines tomorrow.

When the pencil lead finally passes rigid quality control standards, Larry heads back to his seat – by the most circuitous route imaginable.

"Larry! Would you get away from the window and return to your seat?"

"What?"

When Larry finally takes his seat, watch how long it takes him to get going. The shoulders need to be stretched. Every knuckle needs to be cracked. The writing hand makes several passes over the paper as though on a reconnaissance mission. Finally, he begins to write. It has been *five minutes* since Larry asked to sharpen his pencil.

Now ask yourself, why would Larry bring three sharpened pencils to class if it meant that he would no longer have an excuse to stretch his legs whenever he felt like it? Larry may not be a whiz in school, but he is not *stupid*.

#### **Why Should I?**

If Larry and all of his classmates are to give you all of the cooperation that you need class period after class period, day after day, you must answer one simple question. That question is: "*Why should I?*" As you may remember from chapter 9, "Creating Motivation," the answer to the question, "Why should I?" is called an *incentive*.

In the classroom, you will need incentives for work productivity, and you will need incentives for rule following. Chapter 9 dealt with incentives for *work productivity*. This section will deal with incentives for *rule following*. (Since the fundamentals for both are the same, this would be a good time to reread chapter 9.)

### **He's Not Stupid**

Why would Larry bring three sharpened pencils to class if it meant that he would no longer have an excuse to stretch his legs whenever he felt like it? Larry may not be a whiz in school, but he is not stupid.

Incentive systems that you would currently find in classrooms have changed very little since the 1970s. These management programs typically represent a lot of work for the teacher while accomplishing only limited objectives.

If we want to answer the question, “Why should I?” for the *entire class* throughout the *entire school day*, we must become far more sophisticated in the design and implementation of classroom incentive systems. These incentive systems must accomplish *multiple objectives* simultaneously, and they must be *cheap*. The entire program must represent a *reduction* of the teacher’s workload.

To achieve this level of cost-effectiveness, we will need to break new ground in the design of classroom incentive systems. In order to gain a fresh perspective, let’s think for a moment about raising responsible teenagers.

### A Model for Building Responsibility

#### *Learning to Be Responsible with Money*

Imagine that you have a teenage son, and you want him to be responsible with money. After all, soon he will have to manage his own affairs. What is the first thing that your teenager must have before he can learn to be responsible with money? When I ask this question to a roomful of teachers, they respond in unison,

“Money.”

Indeed, in order to learn money management, you must have money to manage.

Where does the teenager get the money? In fact, that is the *least* critical aspect of the incentive system. Your



*Traditional classroom incentive systems typically represent a lot of work for the teacher while accomplishing only limited objectives.*

teenager can work after school, or you can give him money in the form of an allowance. Both will work just fine if critical aspects of the incentive system are in place.

My parents gave me an allowance when I was in high school. I remember the lecture.

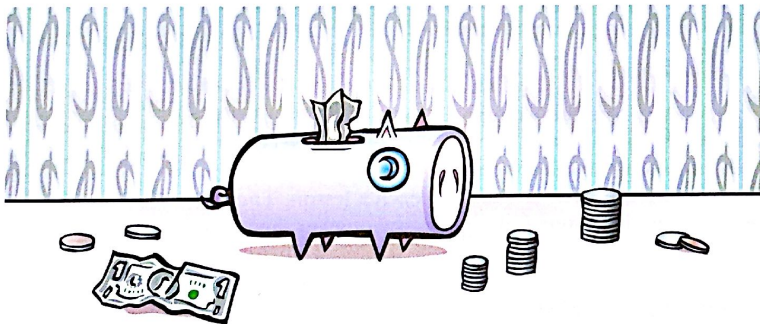


"Your job is going to school. With your extracurricular activities, you barely have enough time for homework as it is. We will give you an allowance. Payday will be Sunday. You will have to pay for school lunches, dates, burgers with your buddies, and tux rental for your winter and spring formals."

When my wife, Jo Lynne, and I had teenage sons, we used the same system. It worked fairly well, but not without a few glitches. Imagine the following scene. One Friday after dinner our older son Patrick approached me with a proposition.

"Dad, can I have ten bucks until Sunday? I'm just a little short this week. I'll pay you back, I promise. You can just take it out of next week's allowance."

To the uninitiated, this sounds like a reasonable proposition. My son was shocked at my response.



*To learn money management, you will first need money.*

"I'm sorry son, but I don't lend money. I *give* you money, but I don't *lend* money."

With apparent disbelief and imploring hand gestures, Patrick said,

"But, Dad, you don't understand. It's only until Sunday."

A teenager's first assumption at times like this is that you must be stupid.

"I *do* understand, son. But I still don't lend money."

"But, Dad, there's a party at Tracy's house after the game Saturday, and he just told me about it today. I need to help with food."

What's a poor guy supposed to do when things come up at the last minute?

"Sorry, son. I don't *lend* money."

"Aw, Dad...Then what am I supposed to do?"

A teenager's desperation tactic is to get you to prescribe the solution to the problem. Then you become responsible for how things turn out.

"I have no idea."

"Aw, man! I can't talk to you about anything."

Now I am a clinical psychologist with a communication problem.

"Yes, son. You *can* talk to me about anything. For example, you just asked me about a short-term loan, and you learned that the answer is, 'No.'"

As you might imagine, we shared a rather grumpy weekend with our son. "Grumpiness" is often a by-product of confronting an inconvenient reality.



***Incentives Teach Lessons***

Before we attempt to train a roomful of young people to be responsible, we must be clear about how to train *one* young person to be responsible. To begin with, the only thing that young people take seriously is *reality*.

You can preach, you can teach, you can beg or cajole. You can share your personal experiences or the wisdom of the ages. It will be met with a roll of the eyes that says, "Yeah, right." Before young people will take it upon themselves to act responsibly, they must confront a reality that demands responsible behavior.

Effective parents and teachers do not leave this reality to chance. It is possible for us to construct a somewhat artificial reality that teaches responsibility quickly and efficiently. This somewhat artificial reality is called an *incentive system*. It can teach teenagers to be responsible with small bills during high school, for example, rather than having them learn the same lesson with thousands of dollars worth of credit card debt years later.

***Learning to Manage Impulses***

Let's return to my son and the learning of money management during high school. In addition to understanding the pitfalls of lending, I also knew a thing or two about Patrick's spending habits.

My son's high school had an "open campus." Many students would leave campus for lunch. My son and his buddies were spending their money at "Jack's Burger Shack" rather than slumming it in the far more economical school cafeteria. To my son's youthful mind, taking out a loan to subsidize "Jack's Burger Shack" seemed reasonable.

Only when this line of reasoning "hit the wall" was my son forced to develop a new plan. The following week when his buddies said, "Hey, Pat, let's go to Jack's," my son had to consider more factors than he had the week

before, not the least of which was tux rental for the upcoming winter formal.

What is crucial in money management is learning to live within a *budget*. We all want more than we can afford. The key is learning to say "no" to things we want. But impulse control requires practice. To work at it, we need a reason that is at least as strong as the impulse.

***We Are All Incentive Managers***

Almost everything you do as a parent or teacher creates some kind of incentive. The example of my son hitting me up for a loan is a case in point. If I say "yes," I create one set of incentives. If I say "no," I create another set of incentives.

If, for example, I had given Patrick an extra ten bucks on Friday, I would have:

- spared him from experiencing any new "mind-altering" reality that might lead to long-term planning.
- paid him for running out of money early as a means of increasing the money supply.

I may have a soft heart, but I don't have a soft head.

As you see from this example, we can exploit incentives to do two things at once. The *first* is to supply the children with something that they need and which, in our opinion, they should have. The *second* is to teach a lesson. The better the incentive system is designed, the quicker the lesson is learned.

**Classroom Objectives*****Students Waste Time***

Students are expert time-wasters. They waste time all day long. They stroll into class at the last minute rather than being in their seats when the bell rings. They sharpen pencils during class time rather than sharpening them

during the break. They use hall passes rather than going to the bathroom between classes. They make stretching a lesson transition into an art form.

Students could easily save enough time during a day to allow you to teach an extra lesson by doing two things:

- being in their seats with proper materials ready to begin when the bell rings instead of “settling in.”
- reducing the duration of lesson transitions from five minutes to one minute.

But students have no vested interest in saving time. If they were to save you enough time to teach an extra lesson, they would get an extra lesson.

#### **Teaching Time Management**

What is the first thing that students must have in order to learn to manage time? Using money management as our analogy, the answer is, of course, *time*. The students in your class cannot learn time management until they have *time to manage*.

We must, however, teach time management to the *entire* class. Any one student can waste time for the group. It is hard to get started, for example, until everyone is seated.

Consequently, we must devise a system of *group management*. Furthermore, it must have sophisticated fail-safe mechanisms that give *every* student a reason to cooperate, *especially* Larry. We will name this system of group management *Responsibility Training*.

#### **Preferred Activity Time**

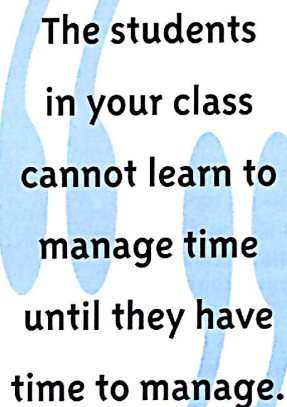
##### ***We Give an “Allowance” of Time***

In order for the class to have time to manage, we must give the class an “allowance” of time. As with money management, the purpose of this allowance is to teach a lesson. If we structure the incentive system properly, we will be able to teach time management quickly and efficiently.

Our incentive will, of course, be built around a reinforcer – something that the students want. The time that we give them must be desired or “preferred” by the students so that, as a group, they will work for it. The only type of reinforcer that fills time is an *activity*. The allowance of time that we give to the class will, therefore, be referred to as “Preferred Activity Time” or PAT.

One question that is always asked by someone in a workshop at this point is, “What do the students have to do in order to *earn* PAT?” This question is conditioned by decades of classroom incentives that are built around Grandma’s Rule: *You have to finish your dinner before you get your dessert*. It seems wrong to give the “dessert” without first seeing some work.

We have used the analogy of teaching a teenager to be responsible with money in order to get enough distance from Grandma’s Rule to allow us to see incentive management through new eyes. In the design of an incentive system, sometimes you *give* in order to *get*.



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in your class  
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I *gave* my son his allowance. He did not earn the allowance by being paid, for example, for doing chores around the house. I did not want to train him to think, "What will you pay me?" every time I asked for a little help. Chores were handled separately from the allowance.

The allowance was given for two reasons: *first*, teenagers need money, and *second*, I could exploit that need to teach money management. But the money itself was a *gift*. It was a gift with an educational purpose – as is PAT.

#### ***PAT Increases Learning Time***

I have no intention of losing learning time as the price of supplying the students with PAT. Quite the opposite, I am supplying the students with a PAT in order to *increase* learning time.

As I mentioned, you can gain nearly a full instructional period during the day by simply training the class to manage two routines more responsibly: starting class on time and hustling during lesson transitions. You can gain additional instructional time during the day by eliminating traditional forms of foolishness such as showing up without pencils or sharpening pencils during class. There are many additional chores and routines during a school day that can increase learning time and reduce teacher stress if done quickly and responsibly by the group.

All of the time that you set aside for PAT, therefore, is "found time." You will *not* relinquish *one minute* of time from your instructional program. Quite the contrary, if you do not *give* the class PAT in order to teach them time management, they will *waste* the time as usual, and you will have *nothing to show for it*.

There is a second dividend to be gained from giving PAT, lest you think that this program will cost you anything. The PAT itself will *not* be time *away from* learning. Rather, you will use PAT *for* learning.

In subsequent chapters you will find that you can teach any lesson as a PAT – from skill drill to test review to vocabulary. In addition, since I cannot give you an extra planning period, it must require no extra planning time.

#### ***The Time Frame for PAT***

How much time does your class need for PAT? To put it simply, you need enough time in order to do something worthwhile. Teachers might begin with 10 to 30 minutes depending on *how often* they have PAT during the week.

How often *should* you have PAT? Let's begin by defining a *time frame* for Responsibility Training. The time frame for the program runs from the *beginning* of one PAT to the *beginning* of the next PAT. Consequently, the students are always on the program, even during PAT.

The time frame for students of a given age is keyed to the amount of time that they can *delay gratification* and *exert impulse control*. It is, therefore, a function of *social maturity* rather than *chronological age*. Consequently, the following norms should be thought of as general guidelines that you may need to tailor to the social maturity of your particular students.

- **Kindergarten:** Kindergarten students usually have to get up and move every 15 to 20 minutes, and their level of impulse control is nothing to write home

In the design of an incentive system, sometimes you have to give in order to get.



about. Consequently, a kindergarten teacher may want to have PAT every 15 or 20 minutes.

The very notion of having PAT that often would be overwhelming if PAT required much planning and effort. It is apparent from the outset that PAT must be cheap and easy for the teacher to implement.

- **First Grade:** To be conservative, you would probably want to start the first grade year with three PATs in the morning and two PATs in the afternoon. However, by midyear most first grade classes only need three a day – mid-morning, end of morning, and end of afternoon. Do not attempt to get by with only one in the morning before lunch, or you will find that the students “lose it” after 10:30.
- **Second and Third Grades:** At some time during second or third grade, most classes can go to two PATs a day – one before lunch and one at the end of the day. Fading the schedule of PATs, however, is always a judgment call. You can tell if you have been premature in thinning the schedule if you find the students “losing it” during the hour prior to PAT.
- **Fourth and Fifth Grades:** At some point during fourth or fifth grade, most classes can go to a single PAT at the end of the day. While PATs become less frequent as the students

become less frequent as the students mature, it would be inaccurate to think that we are attempting to reduce the amount of PAT.

As PATs become less frequent, they become longer. While a first grade teacher might set aside 10 minutes for each PAT three times a

day, a fifth grade teacher might set aside 20 or 30 minutes for a single PAT at the end of the day.

- **Middle and High School:** While sixth grade often retains the same pattern as fifth grade, sometime before high school most classrooms go to one PAT per week. As an interim pattern, teachers may have PAT twice a week, on Wednesday and Friday.

An alternative pattern in departmentalized settings is to have 5 to 10 minutes of PAT at the end of each class period. As such, it is typically an integral part of that day's lesson. Often, students play a learning game to review what was just taught.

### Learning to Be Considerate of Others

Cooperation is a gift. In order to learn cooperation, children must be taught to give. A teacher cannot teach giving except through giving.

To say that children tend to be self-absorbed is something of an understatement. For children to consider the needs of others, they must be taught to consider the needs of others. Maturity does not come from the simple passage of time.

Responsibility Training teaches students to be considerate of others. When students waste time, they not only make the teacher's job more difficult, but they also take time from their classmates, most of whom are just sitting and waiting for activities to begin.

As teachers, some of the most important lessons we teach are lessons about life. If we understand how to design incentive systems, these lessons about life can be learned reasonably quickly and with a sense of joy. The following chapter will focus on the nuts and bolts of the design of Responsibility Training.

### Found Time

If you did not give the class PAT in order to teach them time management, they would waste the time, and you would have nothing to show for it.