

HOW TO TEACH AFFECTIVE SKILLS

As with most things there are many ways to do these things, the two best ways I know of are experientially and explicitly. Experientially by setting up challenging experiences for students where affective skills will manifest and can be noticed and reinforced and learned by doing. Explicitly in a classroom environment where each skill is explored, analysed, demonstrated, broken down into component parts, taught deliberately and practiced often.

Explicitly

This first exercise can be used for every affective skill by every teacher and is probably the most powerful and the most useful exercise but may also be the hardest to do well.

- A) Pick any affective skill (strategy, technique) that you would like the class to focus on for the class or the day (eg within Mindfulness you might pick on concentration)
- B) Get some analytical discussion going in the class as to what the parameters of this skill are:
- what does concentration mean?
 - what are some of the characteristics of concentration?
 - what are some examples of times when you are concentrating well?
 - how can you tell when you are concentrating?
 - how could you tell if someone else was concentrating well?
 - what would be an objective measure of concentration?

And get agreement within the class so everyone is very clear about how to recognise and measure performance of the skill.

- C) Take the students through the following 5 steps (as said to a class, any age, for the development of any affective skill). Take a few moments contemplation at each step, whatever length of time feels appropriate:
1. remember a time when you were...(concentrating, being persistent, controlling your anger, thinking positively etc. etc..)
 2. close your eyes, remember that incident in detail, what happened before that moment, during that moment and after that moment – what can you see...hear...how did it feel?
 3. notice what was going on in your mind at the time when you were ... (concentrating etc), what were you saying to yourself, what were you imagining, what else was going on?
 4. Open your eyes and write all those things down, describe the experience clearly, precisely and analytically
 5. Now you know how you do it sometimes, practice doing all those same things deliberately when next you need to exercise that skill
- D) Give them an exercise to complete within your subject that causes them to practice the particular affective skill on your subject matter
- E) Get them to reflect on their own competence with that skill

More Explicitly:

1) Mindfulness

Jon Kabat-Zinn is credited in making this idea explicit. A good short interview with him explaining mindfulness can be found on Youtube at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gWaK2ml_rZw

There are plenty of sites which explain the concept of mindfulness and give you exercises to help. These two sites have some good ideas for teaching mindfulness, especially to junior classes:

http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/tips_for_teaching_mindfulness_to_kids/

<http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/creative-development/200902/mindfulness>

And this site contains some great ideas on incorporating mindfulness into K-12 education:

[http://www.mindfulnessinstitute.ca/Portals/15/pdf/Integrating_Mindfulness_Training_Into_K-](http://www.mindfulnessinstitute.ca/Portals/15/pdf/Integrating_Mindfulness_Training_Into_K-12_Education.pdf)

[12_Education.pdf](http://www.mindfulnessinstitute.ca/Portals/15/pdf/Integrating_Mindfulness_Training_Into_K-12_Education.pdf)

Mindfulness 2 - Practicing focus and concentration

The simplest concentration exercises are matching pairs exercises where all the cards are face down and by turning up only two cards at a time you match up all the pairs.

A digital version of this game can be found at

http://www.teach-nology.com/web_tools/games/concentration/

Gregory Mitchell has some excellent exercises for concentration at:

http://www.trans4mind.com/mind-development/course3_files/course3-chapter3.html

These involve the contemplation of any object, concept or idea and the deliberate focusing of the mind on what he calls the Five Roads or analytical paths that our thinking can take and stay focused on the subject:

1. Classification – within what group does this belong? Within what group does that group belong?
2. Examples - what are some other examples of this?
3. Parts - what parts does it break down into?
4. Qualities - what is its appearance, sensations, functions, usage, how does it manifest?
5. Connections - what goes with this?

Lumosity is a website which contains many interactive, game based exercises for children to teach a host of mental skills including concentration <http://www.lumosity.com>

It is a subscription site but the most basic exercises are free.

There is a good list of practical suggestions to help children focus on concentration in the classroom here:

<http://www.k-state.edu/counseling/topics/career/concentr.html#beherenow>

There are many games played in drama classes which work as great concentration improvement exercises for example <http://www.drama-teaching.com/games/concentration-games/>

Mindfulness 3 – Developing Mental Quiet. This often gets lumped in with meditation and exercises for one will usually produce the other. Sometimes meditation involves directly inducing mental quiet by listening and sometimes more indirectly by mentally chanting a phrase or mantra which as a consequence can produce mental calming and quiet.

The process is very simple and children usually enjoy it at all ages if they can see a point to it.

A good guide to meditation can be found at <http://www.learntomeditate.com/> including explanations of many different types of meditation with examples for children and adults.

There are great how-to videos on meditation on this Buddhist website <http://www.how-to-meditate.org/videos/>. On an interactive whiteboard these could be streamed into your class and the meditation is done for you.

Mantra meditation also achieves higher levels of mental quiet but through an inward focus of the meditation on a sound with which your brain makes no connections. So you get to exercise a form of concentration on something which has no meaning to you which causes your mind to de-stress effectively. Find some good exercises at <http://www.pioneerthinking.com/simplemeditation.html>

2) Perseverance

I don't really think you can teach perseverance, you can only point at it. After all, perseverance just means keeping on. Just not stopping. So there is not much to learn in terms of technique. Perseverance is more about how do you get yourself to not stop when you want to stop.

The idea of perseverance makes a great topic for discussion in class with many examples available in every field. Any stories of great courage usually involve perseverance so this topic gives teachers an opportunity to talk about great heroes both real and mythical.

Get children to think about how they get themselves to keep on going or how they keep from stopping when they really want to. Perseverance is a great thing for teachers to focus on noticing and rewarding. Make perseverance one of your highest goals for students to demonstrate and you will engender more perseverance in your classroom.

Achieving a state of mind that encourages perseverance can be done through a focus on mental attributions for success and failure – see Attribution Retraining

Perseverance 2 – Practicing Delayed Gratification

Practice of this skill is as simple as setting up reward schedules. But first look at Alfie Kohn's views on 'punishing by rewards' at: <http://www.alfiekohn.org/teaching/pdf/Punished%20by%20Rewards.pdf> What we are after is not for us to reward the children but for them to learn how to reward themselves. Tell them about the 'marshmallow' experiment (from the ATL Skills students book):

At Stanford University in the 1960's a psychologist named Walter Mischel created an experiment that he ran with four year old children from the local crèche. He set up interviews between these children, one at a time, and an adult researcher. The researcher would ask each child a few questions that they could easily answer and when they were finished he would take a marshmallow out of his pocket and put it on the table in front of the child as a reward for them. He would then tell them that they could eat it straight away if they wanted to, but he was going to go out of the room for a few minutes and when he came back if they hadn't eaten it then they would get another marshmallow as well. If the marshmallow had been eaten then the child would get no more.

Then the researcher went away leaving the four year old in the room by his or her self. Just one child and one marshmallow and the thing was, the researcher didn't stay away for just a minute or two he stayed away for a long time (up to 20 minutes). Also the children did not realise it but they were being observed through all this time by psychologists behind mirrored glass.

Now of course some of the kids ate the marshmallow straight away but some of them didn't. Some of them went to great lengths to keep from eating the marshmallow - talking strictly to themselves, covering their eyes with their hands, hiding under the table or in the corner of the room. Doing whatever they could to keep themselves from eating the first marshmallow. Finally the researcher did come back and if the marshmallow was gone the child was allowed to leave, if the marshmallow was still there, untouched, the child got another marshmallow and then was allowed to leave.

So they ended up with two groups, those that grabbed and those that held out.

These two groups were then followed up for many years afterwards and they were tested every way possible and the results were compared between the two groups.

Now the results that they got were very significant because every way it was possible for them to test these kids as they grew up - the group that had held out did better.

They were more academically competent - 30% higher test results, better able to concentrate and learn, better at setting goals and achieving them and more socially competent - they handled challenges better,

they were more self-reliant, confident, trustworthy and dependable, they took the initiative and were less likely to stress, regress or give up in the face of difficulties.

Later in life these two groups were measured again and the hold-out group were found to have been much more successful in life in general and were much happier and had an income on average, double that of the other group.

The point of this story that needs to be brought out with students is that one of the best measures of our ability to create success for ourselves is whether we have learned how to put off pleasure in order to get the work done. Not to deny pleasure, but to delay it in order to get the work done. This is called delayed gratification.

Delaying gratification is something that anyone can practice. Just ask your students to try and deliberately set up something that they enjoy doing as a reward for getting their homework done that night. Something pleasurable that they were going to do anyway, just ask them to see if they can delay having that pleasure until after they have got their homework done.

And then the next day they can reflect on their success in practicing delayed gratification. Their present skill level and any need to change, improve.

3) Emotional Management

This is management, not control. Or if it is control it is control without controlling. I have worked a lot in Thailand and the Thai people have a 'way of being' they call jai-yen (cool-heart) which describes well their principle of emotional management. It is not control of emotion by means of force or will it is more the reinforcement of a state of mind which is calm, and cool – in the sense of not fierce or heated – and reflective. It is from this point of view I will deal with this topic.

Emotional Management 2- overcoming impulsiveness

We have to be very careful here to help children manage their own impulsiveness in some situations and not in others. Creativity at its heart involves some impulsiveness, acting without too much thinking and we do not want to put limits on creative thinking.

Impulsiveness is another topic that lends itself to discussion in the classroom about its parameters, characteristics, times when it might be useful and times when it is not useful. Raising awareness of impulsivity and its negative connotations can help students to analyse their own behaviours more accurately. Reflecting on the characteristics of behaviour in general and their own behaviour in particular will help students become more aware and more mindful.

From www.teachervision.fen.com/special-education/resource/5824.html one exercises for students to learn to control impulsiveness by using Think-Alouds.

The tendency to jump into a situation without thinking or making a plan of attack characterizes the impulsive child. This behavior is evident in approaching academic work and everyday life. Helping the child control impulsivity may require consistent and concerted effort from everyone concerned. Modeling rather than talking through control techniques should be used. Initial instruction may need to focus on specific situations.

Psychologist Donald Meichenbaum has developed procedures designed to assist impulsive children in controlling their own behaviour. Think Aloud assists children to "Stop! Look! and Listen!" before acting. The steps used to teach a child these self-control techniques are as follows:

- The adult performs a task while thinking out loud about what he or she should do. For example, "When I do two-column addition, I need to line my columns up straight, start adding in the ones' column and be sure to carry from the ones' to the tens' column."

- The child performs the same task under the direction of the adult following their words while doing the problem.
- The child performs the task while instructing himself out loud. The child whispers instruction to himself while doing the task.
- The child does the task while using private speech.

Meichenbaum's research concluded that impulsive children may appear impulsive because they do not understand the requirements of the task, because they do not use self-talk for self-control, and because they produce self-talk but fail to heed their own words.

All the exercises mentioned previously for mindfulness are also exercises which should produce a reduction in impulsiveness, and an increase in jai-yen.

Emotional Management 3 - overcoming anger, dealing with bullying.

These are two areas where most schools have policies, practices and counselling by trained psychologists to help students to develop these skills. I am sure these are the people you need to ask about exercises to promote these concepts in the classroom.

Emotional Management 4 - reducing anxiety.

There are many useful techniques students can learn to help reduce performance anxiety around tests, exams, stage performance etc. The most successful of which that I am familiar with is the NLP process called 'anchoring'. Anchoring involves building links between dissimilar areas of the brain using repetition of sensory-motor connections. For example, if you are a driver and you are driving and you see a set of flashing police lights in your rear vision mirror, what is the feeling that instantly goes through you? Is it guilt? Even though you are doing nothing wrong? That is anchoring – you have built up in your mind a connection between a sensory system – seeing the flashing lights – and an emotional system – generating guilty feelings. One triggers the other. <http://alanbdensky.articlealley.com/improve-concentration-and-recall--eliminate-test-anxiety-2097576.html>

The most simple anxiety reduction exercise I know of goes like this. I have successfully used this exercise with students from 6 – 76 years old.

- 1) Engage students in a discussion about anxiety, what it is, how you notice it, when do they suffer from it
- 2) Develop the connections between anxiety and performance reduction in tests, exams, stage performances
- 3) Talk about 'anchoring' eg:

"What we are going to do today is use a technique called anchoring to help you make a connection in your brain between a physical action and an emotional state. You have many such anchors established already, for example if I had arranged the desks in this room into individual rows, what feeling would that have created in you when you walked into the room? What if they had all been in a circle with no tables in front of them. What feeling would you get then?"

Do you see? External things can have emotional connections.

How would you like to feel in a test or exam or on stage? What emotion? Would it be 'confidence'?

What we are going to do today is help you make a connection in your brain between the neurons that can generate a feeling on confidence and a physical action. We are going to connect Emotion and Motion - a full Kinesthetic linkage."

So the emotion I am going to help you generate today is a feeling of confidence and the 'anchor' you are going to use to connect with that emotion is to clench your fingers in a 'fist-pumping' celebration type gesture, when I tell you to."

- 4) Get them all to think of a time from their own life or an imaginary time (it doesn't matter which) when they are feeling confident – scoring a try, winning a prize, performing on stage, learning to ride, skate, ski etc.
- 5) Get them to close their eyes, put their heads down on their desks and relax. Then read the visualization: (from the ATL Skills Students book)

First I just want you to relax.

Breathe deeply and relax your back, relax your neck, just relax.

Now what I want you to do first is to imagine a big blank TV screen in your mind, not switched on yet, nothing on the screen right now.....

Now turn the TV on and the first picture that comes up on the screen is you, in that moment when you are feeling confident, feeling great – and remember I said it could be from your own past or from your imagination. See yourself now on the TV screen in that moment, feeling confident and just pause that image for a moment, freeze the image on the screen.....and notice where you are when you are feeling so confident.....are you inside or outside..... are there other people there or are you on your own.....fill in the background on the screen and the foreground.....and now notice the colours that are present on the screen..... now take your colour control and brighten up all the colours, notice them really bright and clear.....and now you can bring up the sound too and notice what you can hear when you are feeling so confident.....and now notice what you are saying to yourself when you are feeling so confident..... and now I want you to move, I want you to move closer to the screen and notice how the picture is getting bigger..... and closer to the screen and the picture is getting bigger still until you can step right into that picture and be there, now.....and now release the freeze frame and go through that moment of feeling confident and notice how it feels to feel confident.....and when that great feeling of confidence comes up inside you I want you to take one of your hands and clench it tight into a fist and lock in that feeling.....lock in that wonderful feeling of confidence with a clenched fist.....(long pause).....and then just relax that hand again, stretch out those fingers again, let it go and open your eyes and come back to this room and stretch and welcome back!

This is a technique which if practiced once a day for about 3 weeks will result in a semi-permanent connection being established between the emotional state of mind and the physical action such that firing off the 'anchor' will result in re-generating the embedded feeling.

Self-motivation

As Alfie Kohn pointed out in the previous article, no one can ever motivate anyone else. The only true motivation is self-motivation. All we can ever hope to do as teachers is to arrange the variables that we have some influence over to help self-motivation to arise.

The strongest self motivation seems to occur when three factors are present – autonomy, mastery and purpose. See Dan Pink's TED talk on intrinsic versus extrinsic motivators:

http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/en/dan_pink_on_motivation.html

Autonomy means giving students power over their own learning and responsibility for finding their own information and creating their own understandings and applications. Teaching to the test does not produce autonomy within the student. Only by practicing independent (autonomous, self-directed, self-managed, self-regulated, lifelong) learning in the classroom will the student be able to get better at it. The key question then is how many of your lessons are set up (right now) as well constructed, well scaffolded, fully independent learning opportunities for students? If a student can show they have the skills and responsibility necessary to handle independent, autonomous learning do you have the structure in place to enable them to do that?

Mastery means achieving high competence in a set of skills, in this case the skills of good learning. By teaching all the ATL cognitive, affective and metacognitive skills mentioned in these TSMs teachers will be giving students challenges to master that are skill based and can be self-assessed. Improving their ATL skills will then impact on the efficiency and effectiveness of all their other learning creating more self confidence and self-motivation around learning school subjects. This approach requires teachers to maintain a dual focus in the classroom on both content (what the students are learning) and process (how they are learning) and to see improving the processes of learning (the ATL Skills) as being a important outcome of every lesson.

Purpose means answering the question 'Why?'. Why am I learning this? One way to develop purpose is through relevance, making the learning relevant to today's world by connecting the topic to be taught to a real world situation, problem or event. Another way is to look at the overall goal for a task, topic or subject, maybe to help a student get the qualification they want to further their education and to ultimately help them obtain the occupation or career they are after. The third option is to look at purpose through the lens of developing intrinsic operators:

- to feel satisfied, proud of yourself
- to test yourself and see what you are capable of
- to get a measure of your progress to date
- to gain knowledge and skills that will be useful to you in your life
- to develop and increase your intelligence
- to practice concentration, determination and the exercise of effort

These operators then tie in well with the development of ATL Skills in particular the affective skills.

Self-motivation 2 - attribution retraining

An excellent article explaining Attribution Retraining and its applicability for all levels of education can be found at <http://www.education.com/reference/article/attributional-retraining/>

The basic idea being that if you attribute the cause of a particular failure to something over which you have no influence (eg. the teacher, the school) you are very unlikely to think that the situation can be changed or improved upon in a future event whereas if you think the cause is something over which you have some influence (eg. effort, strategy use) then you are more likely to take steps to improve your performance.

The three dimensions of attributions are:

- 1) locus – is the cause something inside or outside of you?
- 2) stability - is the cause fixed and stable or changeable?
- 3) controllability - can you influence or control the cause?

Attribution Retraining is an intervention usually taught by a trained psychologist and which can be expected to take some time to see any effects but it has been found to be very successful in addressing motivational issues with children especially around perceived failure.

Teachers can address the same issues though simply by asking students to explain what they see as the causes for their successes and failure at academic tasks and then to be helped to analyse those causes for locus, stability and control.

What students need to be encouraged to look for are causes of both success and failure that are internal, changeable and controllable and then to be helped to take action on those causes. The best examples of causes of academic success that meet these criteria are the effort they put in and the particular learning strategies they used. Both effort and strategy use are internal and able to be changed and controlled. Students can always put in more effort or change the strategy they are using.

Students need to see that attributing any academic failure to factors outside themselves over which they have no control like the school, the teacher, the subject, other students or to attributes that they perceive of as fixed like their 'natural' ability, intelligence and talents does not provide them with any options for improvement. In order to change performance they need to first believe that the particular performance is both changeable and open to change.

If someone believes they have some control over their task outcomes they are more likely to persevere, put in effort, learn from mistakes and take action to produce the result they want.

Resilience

Resilient Learners have the following characteristics:

	Resilient students	"Helpless" students
Goals	Set learning goals – learn in order to understand	Set performance goals – learn in order to get the best grade
Tasks	Take on new tasks to test themselves, to work towards mastery	Take on new tasks to gain approval or avoid disapproval
Challenge	Actively seek out new challenges	Avoid all new challenges
To achieve success	Believe effort is more important than ability	Believe ability is more important than effort
Reaction to failure	Failing Well - take responsibility, analyse the process, make changes, have another go	Failing Badly - take no responsibility, blame others or the 'system', repeat the same process or do even less, give up
Reaction to Success	Attribute to self	Attribute to others
View of intelligence	believe intelligence is flexible, can be developed and increased	believe intelligence is fixed, unalterable with a definite limit
Performance	High achievers	Under achievers
Locus of Control	Internal	External
Future Expectations	Optimistic	Pessimistic

To help develop resilience in students teachers can:

- 1) Focus students on the meaning in their studies rather than the outcome, score or grade.

Avoid teaching to the test, teach for understanding.

Use regular reflection on content to get students to generate questions on what they don't yet understand.

Encourage feedback and questions from students like:

What I understand is

What I don't understand is

What I know about this so far is

How do I

Where I am up to in meeting my goal is

What do I have to do to

What I need to know is

The thing I just don't get is

What do you mean when you say?

- 2) Eliminate external rewards, encourage learning for mastery of skill and subject. Make academic improvement a personal thing for each student measured only against the self. Help make learning autotelic – worth doing for its own sake, for the sake of stretching yourself and finding out what you are capable of. Make effective learning contingent on attaining good learning skills and then make the mastery of good ATL skills the goal.
- 3) Make learning challenging. Set high standards and stick to them. Be very aware of the level of challenge each student can cope with and stretch them all.
- 4) Use any systems of approval/reward feedback you have in the classroom to reinforce the application of effort. Give effort grades and make them important. Use gradeless, formative assessment to focus students on the process of constructing meaning within your subject. Scale students on effort employed rather than grade achieved.
- 5) Teach students how to 'fail well'. Celebrate failure as being good feedback. Encourage analysis of any failures to find any process faults then help students develop more effective processes and make sure they try again. This is the key to failing well, reprocessing failure making changes and *having another go*. After any assessment encourage students to re-process the answers to any questions they got wrong until they have the correct answer and understand where they went wrong the first time, and then do some more examples the same until they have got it.
- 6) Develop a model of intelligence which is flexible, multi-faceted and open to change, development and improvement. Eliminate concepts of intelligence that are fixed and rigid.
- 7) Focus any learning failure on the things students have control over – effort and strategy use. Make sure students all have a wide range of learning strategies they can employ in learning any new material in your subject.
- 8) Encourage the development of optimistic future plans and the strategies of positive thinking in challenging situations.