

QUESTIONS THAT ENCOURAGE CHILDREN TO TAKE CHARGE OF THEIR BEHAVIOUR

When dealing with inappropriate behaviour, be it between individuals or the words and actions of a student or those of a group, the first assumption I make is that emotions are significantly more in charge of what's being said and done than thinking and reason.

Irrespective of the degree to which their emotions are inflamed and in charge, the first step is to take them from the "feeling state" to the "thinking state." To do this, I ask a closed question that entices the student to consider two directly opposing options and decide which of the two describes the situation best.

The moment the student enters the process of deciding they begin the move from emotionally motivated actions to rationally controlled behaviour.

The more emotional the student the more closed questions I ask, thereby keeping the student in the "thinking state" for long enough to diffuse the "feeling state."

If I think the situation needs further exploration, I do this when I have clear facial, vocal and body signals that tell me the student has regained control of their emotions and can stay in the "thinking state."

At this point I enter into open questions that encourage discussion, reflection, acceptance, repair and restitution.

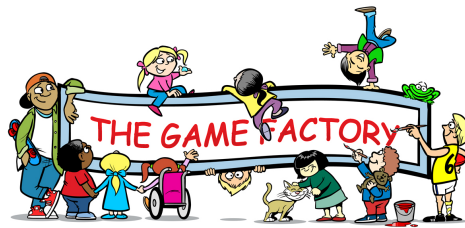
Frequently one or two closed questions, followed by a request for the student to follow through and take charge of their own behaviour is all that is necessary to put things back on track.

1. Is that the right thing or wrong thing to do?

"We do the right thing because the right thing is the best thing to do."

2. Are you having a strong moment or a weak moment?

"It takes great strength to be sensible."



3. Are you ready to be your own boss or are you inviting me to be your boss?

“Though often we must, of necessity make children do the right things, we should never lose sight of the need to raise children who can make themselves do the right thing, even when they don't want to.”

4. Are you running away from the problem or are you dealing with it?

“Problems, much like monsters, are only satisfied when they have devoured you. Give them no such satisfaction. Tackle them head on and refuse to be eaten. Stare them in the eye, understand them for what they are, and with courage battle them until they are defeated. With success, will come greater strength. With greater strength, will come the confidence to beat even larger monsters.”

5. Am I trying to help you or hurt you?

“Wise adults accept that the feelings of children are sometimes hurt when the help given was needed but not wanted.”

6. Are your feelings in charge of your actions or is your thinking in charge? Are you a master or victim of your feelings?

“Feelings like nothing more than to take charge of actions. Don't let them. They are, and are meant to be, the servants of thought. As servants they reward our lives with a multitude of experiences. As masters they lead us to ruin.”

(All quotes taken from By Wisdom Not By Force by Wilson McCaskill)