

Pearl Nitsche

# **NONVERBAL CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT**

## **Group Strategies**

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# What do teachers say?

Excerpts from  
seminar feedback sheets  
Pedagogical Institute (PI) Vienna, Austria:

“Crystal clear!  
Specialized knowledge conveyed in an easily understood way. ”

“A wealth of professional competence and practical examples  
learned by working in school with real-life students!”

“The unconscious became conscious.  
Techniques which I had formerly used intuitively and at random  
are now dependable tools in my teacher’s toolbox.”

“What a shame the seminar lasted only three days.  
I wanted more!”

“I will be able to use what I learned every single day in the classroom!  
Absolutely the BEST seminar I have ever attended.”

“An enormous range of new and exciting possibilities.  
Thank you for making me aware of so many opportunities and choices  
in the classroom which I never knew existed.”

“I have never experienced a facilitator  
who was so enthusiastic and involved in her subject matter.  
Totally authentic. She lives and breathes what she teaches.”

“Her teaching skills kept me on the edge of my chair!”

“This seminar is an absolute MUST for every teacher!”

# The Author

Pearl Nitsche, an American who has lived for the past 30 years in Vienna, Austria, is an enthusiastic teacher, teacher trainer, foreign language teacher, and communication facilitator, as well as an international conference speaker.

She founded SLL Institute in 1984 and has trained thousands of teachers throughout Austria and the rest of Europe, from Russia to Istanbul, as well as in North and South America. In addition to foreign language courses, SLL Institute specializes in communication skills and teaching with brain friendly learning techniques such as Superlearning, Accelerated Learning, Suggestopedia, NLP (Neurolinguistic Programming), and other related techniques.

She has taught all age groups from kindergarten to university level, has worked as a facilitator in adult education for more than 25 years and, until recently, taught 10- to 14-year-olds at a bilingual middle school in Vienna, Austria.

One of her most popular seminars is

Nonverbal Classroom Management

the topic of this book.

Further seminars that she offers for teachers and trainers as well as for the corporate world are:

- Nonverbal Communication Techniques
- Nonverbal Presentation Techniques
- Motivation for Teachers and Students
- Motivation & Empowerment
- Creative Teaching Techniques
- Internationally certified “Accelerated Learning / Suggestopedia / Superlearning Training Courses
- “Perfect Customer Service!!”

She loves her job!

“Do what you love and love what you’re doing, and you’ll never work another day in your life.”

*Mark Twain*





# Table of Contents

Introduction..... 1

Part I - THE BASICS

Chapter 1 NLP: A Short Overview .....7

Chapter 2 The Principles of Nonverbal Communication ..... 13

Part II - ANCHORS IN THE CLASSROOM

Chapter 3 What is an Anchor? ..... 27

Chapter 4 The Characteristics of a Good Anchor.....35

Chapter 5 The Learning Environment and Space Anchors..... 41

Part III - THE PHASES OF A LESSON

Chapter 6 Getting (& Keeping!) the Group’s Attention at the Beginning of the Lesson.....49

Chapter 7 Getting the Group’s Attention During the Lesson..... 71

Chapter 8 Getting the Attention of Individual Pupils..... 81

Chapter 9 The Teaching Phase .....87

Chapter 10 Elegant Transitions & Seatwork..... 105

Part IV - DISCIPLINING

Chapter 11: Pro-active Measures.....113

Chapter 12: Discipline Anchor.....131

Chapter 13: Avoiding the Burnout Syndrome..... 153

Part V - RITUALS IN THE CLASSROOM

Chapter 14: Daily Rituals..... 173

Chapter 15: Stories ..... 189

Bibliography .....191

Contact Information..... 193

# Introduction

Welcome to “Nonverbal Classroom Management” – a book for teachers, written by a (very enthusiastic!) teacher:

*Imagine that your lesson has just begun. When you entered the classroom, the students were excited and restless – they had had a test during the previous period. With the help of your aura of positive, natural authority and only a few words, you won their attention and then calmed them with a short centering exercise.*

*Now they are physically and mentally present and they are prepared to listen to you and your lesson. You hear interested and curious voices. You see students who are fully involved in the topic at hand. They are focused, leaning forward in their seats in anticipation, and raising their hands to take part. A feeling of cooperation and joyful learning fills the room. Look into the eyes of your students, hear their words and feel the positive attitude to learning which fills the room.*

*You are filled with a feeling of joy and you think to yourself, “What a wonderful and important profession I have chosen!”*

Perhaps this is a description of your classroom as it is now. Or perhaps it is a dream. A vision that will soon become reality.

Because no matter what the atmosphere in your classroom is like at the moment, you are holding this book in your hands and you are reading these words. That means being a good teacher is important to you, and that you are interested in discovering what you could do even better in the future.

The techniques that I will introduce to you in this book are the topics covered in my “Nonverbal Classroom Management” seminars. They are solutions based upon NLP that I have either used successfully while teaching 10- to 14-year-olds at a Bilingual Middle School or earlier at a Commercial Academy for 14- to 19-year-olds, or they are techniques that were introduced to me by teachers and trainers of all school levels and for all subjects – from kindergarten teachers to university lecturers and adult education trainers – who have attended my seminars. You will find some theory in this book, but most importantly you will find hundreds of practical classroom

management tools that will give you more time to do what you actually became a teacher to do – to teach!

For the past 10 years, teachers in my seminars have been encouraging me to write a book. (It is amazing how long it is possible to procrastinate on a good idea!) And now I have done it!

This is not an “academic” treatise. I can (if it is absolutely necessary!) lose myself in theory. But in my heart of hearts I am a practitioner. This is a book for the practice. Consider it to be a conversation between colleagues. You can use the tips and techniques in your classroom tomorrow, usually exactly as they stand here in the book.

I have worked as a teacher trainer on several continents and I am constantly amazed at how much teachers, despite geographical borders, have in common. It makes no difference if I am working in Vienna or Buenos Aires or Moscow – the challenges that teachers face around the world are the same. After experiencing the enthusiastic welcome that this book has received in the German-speaking world (the first edition was sold out within 2 months!), I decided that it would be an important contribution to make it available to English-speaking teachers as well. Yes, there are a great number of similarities between these cultures. But there are also differences. And for this reason, I would like to thank Cyril Maguire, friend and secondary English teacher in Derry, Northern Ireland, and Matt Depew, elementary school teacher in the U.S. for helping me to adapt the contents of this book to their respective teaching cultures.

Actually, looking back, it was easy! Now the fire of enthusiasm has been lit within my breast – and I give you my solemn promise: you won’t have to wait so long for the next book!

## Why use nonverbal management techniques?

We talk and talk and talk ... and very often we are frustrated by the feeling that our students simply aren’t listening or aren’t taking our verbal instructions seriously. It has been proven that over 82% of a teacher’s communication with his or her students in the classroom is NONVERBAL.

Why should we waste our breath on the teaching process rather than use it for our content? Especially when nonverbal management techniques are so much more effective.

The focus of this book will be placed upon the process level and the group dynamics in the classroom. In other words, we will be dealing

with the foundation and with the structure upon which learning takes place. It is not of importance WHAT is being taught but rather HOW it is being taught. For this reason, the contents of this book are suitable for every subject and age group including adult education.

I considered it very important to include a great number of anchors, techniques, and rituals in this book. Different situations, different classes, different age groups and grades require different techniques. Some of them will be suitable for your present situation. Others won't.

Therefore I would like to invite all of my readers to a nonverbal management techniques "Buffet." Help yourself and fill up your plate with the delicacies that you fancy and need at this moment. Enjoy them and use them to achieve a more efficient and effective classroom atmosphere! And, hopefully, you will pack up the leftovers and put them in the freezer for another day and another situation:

I wish you

*Bon Appetit!*

*Enjoy your meal!*

In closing this introduction, I would like to add these words:

I believe in you.

As a teacher and as your colleague, I understand the challenges you are facing today: crowded classrooms, more students each year with behavioral problems, plus economic measures designed to save the government money but which hinder us in doing top quality teaching.

Ours is a noble profession. Our children are our future. The work which we do today will determine the state of tomorrow's world. I have written this book to accompany you on your professional journey, to enhance the joy that your work brings you, and to enable you to more easily realize the tremendous potential that rests within you and your students. Let us work together – that each of us can do his or her small part to make our world a better and a happier place to live in.

Pearl Nitsche

And now – On to new  
adventures!

Part I –  
THE BASICS



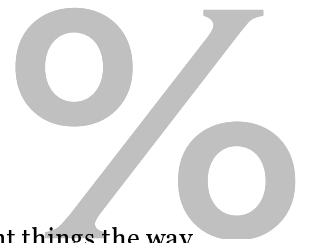
# 1

## NLP : A Short Overview

The theory and the techniques introduced in this book are based upon the tenets of NLP – Neurolinguistic Programming. NLP is a collection of techniques, patterns, and strategies that assist us in effective communication, personal growth, and learning. NLP enables us to better understand our own thinking processes and our interaction with others.

The “N”, Neuro, stands for our five senses, which are also called modalities. They are our doors to reality, and the strength of each individual modality varies from one person to the next. The way we perceive what is happening around us and the way we interpret this in our minds determine our own very personal picture of “reality.” This modality preference, as well as the age of a child, determine his learning or communication style.

- There are, for example, pupils who exhibit a visual learning style. They hold their bodies straight and motionless and they learn with their eyes. Their motivation to attend school is to learn. (At times we may wonder why there are so few of them ∩ .) They like



“I paint things the way they are in my mind, not in the way I see them.”

– Pablo Picasso

to philosophize and they are often perfectionists. The visual development phase in a child's development, according to Michael Grinder, begins around the age of 14.

- Students who exhibit a strong auditory learning or communication style learn through speaking and listening. Their body movement is rhythmical and symmetrical. They are very sociable and they love to talk! Their main motivation for going to school is relationships – relationships with other students and with you. The auditory developmental stage takes place between the ages of 10 and 14.
- Students who are kinesthetic learners are little bundles of energy. They are constantly in movement and they touch everything. Their movements are asymmetrical and away from the torso. They have strong physical and emotional reactions and are easily distracted from the task at hand. They go to school because of relationships. They are lovely people – but strenuous!! The kinesthetic developmental stage, according to Michael Grinder, takes place from birth to around the age of 10.



“All that is,  
is the result of what  
we have thought.”

– *Buddha*

The “L” of Linguistic stands for the words with which we choose to represent our own personal reality in our speech as well as in our thoughts. The words we choose give an indication of our preferred modality, our beliefs, and our picture of the world. Change and personal growth take place when we alter our thought and speech patterns.

The “P” stands for Programming. These are our strategies, our programmed ways of thinking with which – if we choose- we can change ourselves in order to fulfill our dreams, our goals, and our potential.

#### \* **A Note from Michael Grinder**

“My latest findings are that most students enter school being kinesthetic-oriented. Most students develop auditory and then finally their visual abilities. The sooner one is visual the easier school is. That is why a precocious visual-oriented student who is placed in a ‘gifted and talented’ program (because he seems ‘above average’) may end up being ‘average’ and removed from the program as his classmates mature into their visual ability.

Statistically, females will reach their visual capacity by 6<sup>th</sup> grade; males by 9<sup>th</sup> grade. According to Dr. Rita Dunn, a person's modality preference is set sometime between 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade.”

## The common thread

One of the most important techniques which NLP and nonverbal classroom management share is the principle of

Mirroring ⇨ RAPPOR T ⇨ Pacing ⇨ Leading

After having determined the preferred modality –visual, auditory, or kinesthetic- of a student, we can then mirror this modality and establish rapport. Rapport means that we are on the same wavelength as another person. We dip, shortly, into his or her world. Each of us feels at one or in rapport with others who are similar to us. When two people are in rapport, good communication can take place. Rapport gives us the permission to accompany our students on their learning journey. With it we can build bridges that enable the student to cross over into our world. Because the student’s world expands and encompasses new situations, these bridges enable him to transport and apply what he has learned in new situations. Developing rapport and relationships with our students is the key to learning success. In addition, it often is the solution to disciplinary problems in the classroom.

Sometimes we are automatically in rapport with the person we are speaking to. If not, we can establish rapport by mirroring, i.e. by matching that person’s posture, word choice, voice, or breathing.

The next step is pacing, or moving along with the student for a while at the same speed, before you begin leading. By doing this the teacher can lead the student to a point or state where he can learn better and more easily.

The following story, told to me by Ursula, a participant in an Accelerated Learning training course, is an excellent illustration of this process. One day Ursula, who worked as a corporate trainer in banks and companies along with her husband, came to me and said,

*“I want you to know, Pearl, that I have told my husband everything I have learned in this course. But there is one thing I will NEVER tell him!”*

*This statement made me quite curious!  
“What do you mean?” I asked.*

*“This rapport technique!”*

*It’s like this: I love to go hiking. And my husband loves to hike too. BUT I hate it when we hike*



“Man is troubled not by events themselves, but by the view he takes of them.”

– Epictetus

*together – because he walks so fast! We have been discussing this for 25 years! Every Sunday when we are at home, we drive to the mountains near Vienna. And every Sunday we have the same discussion in the car. Despite these lengthy conversations, as soon as we get out of the car I have to run along behind him, trying to keep up!*

*Last week you told us about rapport and I thought to myself, “I’m going to try that out next Sunday! So I did. And it worked!*

*We got into the car, and on our way to the mountains I didn’t even mention our usual topic. Instead of discussing it, I concentrated on conserving my strength!*

*When we arrived, we were both in a good mood. We got out of the car and started our hike. At the beginning I did my best to walk at his speed. But as I felt myself getting tired, I very gradually started to slow down. And what a surprise! He did too!*

*It was the nicest walk we had been on for 25 years!*

*And the reason I won’t tell him about it is because I want to enjoy more of these lovely hikes in the future!”*



“There are flowers everywhere for those who want to see them.”

– *Henri Matisse*

I could never have found a better description of rapport and leading! Thank you, Ursula!

It pays off if you establish rapport with your classes and with your students – especially the liveliest and most difficult ones!

Rapport opens the doors to their world. And in classrooms where there is an atmosphere of rapport, the time and the effort expended on classroom management are greatly reduced. Students and teachers set a tone and work in an atmosphere that is respectful as well as more efficient. Power struggles disappear and are replaced with productive communication. Teachers employ influence rather than power, and their aura of positive, natural authority results in the entire group working harmoniously toward common goals. The “I” has been replaced with “we”.

## My suggestion to you:

Take the time during the first week of a new school year to establish rapport and atmosphere with your class. Teach them the principles of teamwork, of treating one another with respect, and establish a feeling of safety in the classroom right from the start. Show your students: Learning new material is important, but treating others with respect is even more important.

I can guarantee that the time you “sacrifice” during this week will bring you a multitude of advantages during the school year. You will easily make up that “lost” time by disciplining, warning, and reviewing less the rest of the year. Simply because you set the tone during the first week.

## How did it begin?

The NLP approach was developed by John Grinder and Richard Bandler during the 70s and, in the meantime, has established itself throughout the world. Michael Grinder, John’s brother and an excellent teacher and trainer, expanded and further developed the approach within the fields of education and business. During the early 90s I attended several of Michael’s seminars. I was fascinated by the clarity and, in my opinion, the genius of the teaching techniques and theories he presented. Basic truths and knowledge, which every teacher has intuitively experienced, have been placed within a clear and transparent structure. The unconscious becomes conscious. What had been intuition becomes a tool. And teachers’ daily lives are not only simplified but become a (even greater) source of joy and pleasure! Michael encouraged me to pass this knowledge on to other teachers. I did exactly that for many years in my seminars. And now I would like to present this material to you in book form.



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# 2

## The Principles of Nonverbal Communication

Professor Albert Mehrabian, a pioneer since the 60s in communication research, determined during a communications project for the University of California that there are 3 factors that influence the effect a conversation has. These are:

7% verbal	=	the words which are spoken
38% vocal	=	how these words sound, and
55% visual	=	how you look when you say them.

That comes to 7% verbal and 93% nonverbal!

Other more conservative studies estimate that the nonverbal part of communication comes to about 82%. An impressive percentage - one which teachers, who want to have success while teaching, should definitely take into account!

In other words:

More than 82% of your communication is NONVERBAL

therefore:

It's not as important WHAT you say,  
but rather HOW you say it!

Not only that, but it stands to reason then that, if over 82% of communication is nonverbal, we are constantly communicating – whether we are speaking or not. It is simply impossible NOT to communicate.

Very often though we are not aware of the nonverbal signals we send. We are sending messages that do not conform to our own expectations or that result in incorrect expectations in our students. Then we are surprised or disappointed when our students do not follow our directions or react in expected ways.

How often we overhear statements in the teachers' room such as, "I've told him so many times. He just doesn't listen!" Nonverbal messages are much stronger than verbal ones. Our students tend to "listen" and to react to our nonverbal "statements" and not to hear our words. These nonverbal messages, which are being expressed on an unconscious level, are much "louder" than words. If a verbal and a nonverbal message are in conflict, the student will ALWAYS react to the nonverbal message – and then we are angry because he has not listened to our words.

The goal of this book is to:

**MAKE THE UNCONSCIOUS CONSCIOUS!**

This means making what we now do right intuitively  
into an effective tool!

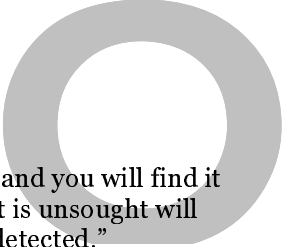
Many of the techniques that I present in this book will be familiar to you. You will often catch yourself thinking, "Yes! Exactly! I do that all the time!"

I often get feedback from the participants in my courses such as, "One of the nicest realizations that I had was that many of the techniques I am using intuitively were acknowledged. Now I have a label for what I am doing. And I know that I am on the right track."

“Intuitively” is the key word here.

Each of us knows intuitively how to teach effectively. And we generally do that, too. But because we are teaching according to the way it “feels right,” we often do not use this intuitive knowledge systematically. The result: Sometimes it works. Sometimes it doesn’t. We leave our success up to chance.

It is only when we understand WHY it works – when our unconscious behavior becomes conscious – that we have gained a dependable tool that we can use consciously and systematically in the classroom.



“Look and you will find it  
– what is unsought will  
go undetected.”

– Sophocles

## Congruency versus Incongruency

*Just imagine that I am standing before you.  
My posture is tense.  
My arms are crossed in front of my chest.  
I have a grim frown upon my face.  
My voice is dripping with sarcasm  
as I say the following words:*

*“I’m glad that you are reading this  
book.”*

Do you believe my words?  
Probably not!

*And now imagine that I am standing in front of  
you and my posture is relaxed and open. My  
hands are stretched out in front of me. They are  
held parallel to the floor and the palms are  
facing upward.*

*I am smiling at you and I say in a warm and  
friendly voice,  
“I’m glad that you are reading this  
book.”*

That was better, wasn’t it?

The first time I was **incongruent**.

My nonverbal message contradicted my verbal one. Therefore, my words, although well-meant, were not credible. The communication –

for which I, as the sender, am responsible- was not successful. The result: the exact opposite of what I actually wanted to express!

The second time I was **congruent**.

My verbal and my nonverbal messages corresponded. Therefore I got my message across and you believed my words.

*Imagine that I want my students to write an essay. We have discussed all the details and I have listed them on the board. All of the important questions have been answered and I would like my students to start writing.*

*My verbal message:*

*"Now we will begin.*

*No more questions, please."*

Quite clear, isn't it? Or perhaps it isn't?

The words are unambiguous.

But whether my directions are followed or not is a question of my nonverbal messages and whether my words and my nonverbals correspond. It is a question of congruency.

How is my posture? My facial expression? What does my voice sound like? Those are important factors that determine whether my directions will be followed or not, how others react or interpret my intentions. A major source of misunderstandings at school (and elsewhere!) can be explained as follows:

Nonverbal messages are  
ALWAYS stronger than verbal ones.

If the two messages conflict,  
the verbal message will be ignored  
and the nonverbal one followed.

## Credible or inviting?

In the above examples there are two voices that I can choose between: the **CREDIBLE VOICE** and the **INVITING VOICE**.

Both of them are very useful – in the correct situation. What is important is choosing the right voice for the right situation.

The first voice is called the **CREDIBLE VOICE**

This is the voice I use in the classroom when I discipline, when I have a serious conversation with my students, or when I want to get their attention. This voice carries the message, “Do what I say. And no contradictions!”

The second voice is known as the **INVITING VOICE**.

This is the voice I use when I want to talk about something with my students, when a discussion, suggestions, and ideas are welcome. This voice encourages conversation and an exchange of ideas.

My posture and my body movement determine which voice I produce.

When I speak with a **CREDIBLE VOICE** I hold my body straight and still. My feet are in a parallel position with the toes pointing forward. My chin is tilted down slightly. Because my body is still, my head is also still. The way I hold my head has direct influence on my voice. When my head is still, my voice is monotone and it often goes down at the end of a sentence or statement.

Those who naturally have a credible voice tend to be assertive and get their own way. When they talk, others listen. And then go into action. The disadvantage of this voice lies in the quality as well as the quantity of communication. Although these people often want to communicate, they very often have problems starting and conducting productive conversations.

Those who speak with an **INVITING VOICE** tend to move their bodies while speaking. The movement is rhythmical and symmetrical. They generally move their arms and hands slightly in the same rhythm. The arms are held close to the body. These speakers occasionally show the palms of their hands while speaking. The head and therefore the voice move up and down in rhythm with the body movement. And the voice tends to go up at the end of a statement – as it does at the end of a question.

People who have an inviting voice are sociable masters of communication. They can talk on almost any topic and bring out the best in those to whom they are speaking. The disadvantage of using this voice is that it is difficult to be assertive. Statements made with an inviting voice are regularly challenged and discussed. The discussions are lengthy – and in the end nothing actually happens.

You need to choose the right voice for the right situation.

We need BOTH voices:

the “credible” voice  
AND  
the “inviting” voice

Upon hearing this, some teachers respond,  
“But then I won’t be authentic. I won’t be myself.”

Possibly that is true. But as a teacher you cannot always allow yourself to be totally authentic. We have a job to do. This job is to lead a class. And if for a moment you take a step back to better observe yourself and your class’ behavior, you will notice that the class is a mirror in which you can observe yourself.

The class reflects the teacher’s behavior.

That means that when you are lively, your class is lively.  
When you are calm, they are calm.  
When you talk a lot, you will have a talkative group.

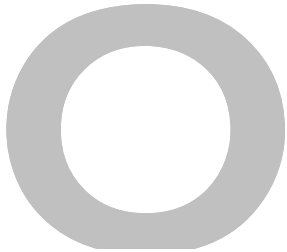
If you notice that a class behaves differently when you are teaching it than when your colleagues are, ask yourself the question, “Is the class mirroring me?”

As long as the class’ behavior is congruent with your goals in the classroom, this is fine. But if this is not the case, you need to change your own behavior to match the results you would like to achieve. You set the tone. The class mirrors you. In order to be yourself in the classroom, it is first necessary to create an environment in which this is possible.

I personally consider this to be an extension of the term “congruency”:

Congruency in the classroom is  
when my verbal and my nonverbal messages match  
  
and ALSO  
  
when my behavior matches my goals in the classroom.

An example:



“Be the change you want  
to see in the world”

– *Mahatma Gandhi*

I personally have a quite lively personality and this is often reflected in my teaching. Under normal circumstances this could be called my authentic behavior, which is reflected in my lesson design and in my students. But there are situations at school where this behavior is not beneficial.

The most boring times during the school year for me are the days on which the students have exams. They are all sitting there, as they should be, working diligently and silently. And I get bored. There is no action! But of course I do not allow myself to act “authentically” because the result of my behavior would be bad grades for the students.

Or I assign an essay that the students should write during the lesson. They are all quiet and busy writing. And suddenly I remember something that I absolutely need to tell the class IMMEDIATELY. Or I begin to speak quietly with one pupil. And what happens? Within minutes the entire class is talking with me or with each other. And then I have to quiet them down again so that they can complete their work.

And whose fault was it that the class wasn't quiet? It is not the pupils' fault but mine! Because I did not demonstrate the behavior which I wanted the students to display – and they mirrored mine.

Does that mean that we can never be ourselves in the classroom?

No, it doesn't. We can be authentic – but at the right time.

If I come into the classroom and I want the students to be quiet, I have to be quiet myself. Before I can move on to my own authentic behavior, I need to set the scene and create the necessary atmosphere.

That means:

A good teacher is an actor or an actress!

Every teacher needs a rich palette of techniques to deal with all of the challenges that a typical school day presents. Some of these techniques will automatically feel natural and “right.” Others won't – and they must be practiced until they become a part of you and your repertoire.

We are living in a society today that often says, “If it feels good, then it must be right.” I personally do not agree with this statement.

I grew up in Pennsylvania. When I was 16, I took my driver's exam. It was deepest winter and one afternoon, shortly after passing the exam, I was driving slowly down an icy, narrow road and had to step on the

brakes. The car started to slide. In driving school I had learned that the correct technique in such a case was to steer in the direction of the skid. But I did the opposite – because it felt right. So I did what felt right and promptly slid into a car.

Luckily, because I was driving slowly there was very little damage. But my uncle took the incident seriously and took it upon himself to teach me how to drive on ice.

It was an icy cold winter and a lake in our town was frozen solid. We drove the car out onto the lake. My uncle kept calling out, “Brake!” I would brake the car and then, automatically, steer in the opposite direction to our slide. Simply because it felt right, I did it wrong. Again. And again. Until I finally did it right. Brake – and steer in the direction of the skid. Brake – and steer in the direction of the skid. We continued this way until it became automatic behavior and a part of me.

The same principle applies to the techniques in this book. They work best when they have become spontaneous and automatic responses. They need to be executed precisely. Don’t try to use all of them immediately. Choose one or two techniques. And practice, practice, practice! Practice until you don’t need time to think about what you are doing. And then begin with the next technique.

Too many words result  
in resistance!!

*Imagine:*

*You are a student.*

*Two minutes ago the bell rang. The class period has – theoretically – begun. But the teacher is not in the room. You and your friends are taking advantage of these few extra minutes to finish playing a game that you started during the break.*

*I, the teacher, rush into the room and begin to shout loudly and with a sharp voice,*

*“It’s always the same!  
How many times do I have to tell  
you?! At the beginning of the lesson*

*I expect you to be sitting in your seats and quiet! And where are the things you need for the math lesson? Why aren't they on your desks? Now we will lose even more time while you go out to your lockers to get them. I talk and talk and talk and nobody listens ..."*

*... and so on and so forth!*

How easy it is for us – despite our best intentions – to slip into these patterns of speech!

And what good do they do?

None whatsoever!

As you were imagining this scene and hearing my nagging, complaining voice, what did you feel inside? Anger? Indifference? Fear? Were you perhaps thinking, “Why me?” Or perhaps you simply closed your ears?

All of these reactions, as well as innumerable others, belong to the category of “resistance”.

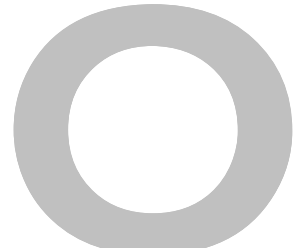
Inner resistance builds a barrier that must be overcome before learning can take place.

Our students already have so many learning barriers. Sentences and beliefs such as, “*I can't do that.*” or “*I'll never be able to learn that!*” are our daily bread at school. Our students can only learn if these barriers are removed. That's hard work! If we speak to our students with the nagging words in the example above, we are simply creating new barriers. And we are unnecessarily making our own job more difficult.

The same principle applies in the classroom as in physics:

For every action there is an opposite reaction.  
Force calls forth force.  
  
(and words are force!)

Yes, words are force. And they can also hurt others. On the unconscious level they are often experienced as a form of power. And very often, especially in the age groups with which we as teachers are



President Dwight D. Eisenhower used to demonstrate the art of leadership with a simple piece of string. He would put it on the table and say, “Pull it, and it will follow anywhere you wish. Push it and it will go nowhere at all.”

## *Nonverbal Classroom Management*

dealing, the use of power automatically calls forth resistance in our students. The pupil rebels. And we are faced with a new challenge.

Nonverbal messages, which are perceived on the unconscious level, are influence. They are more gentle. They do not embarrass the student and therefore they are more respectful. They give us time – which offers us the opportunity to “cool down”, to gain perspective, and to deal with the problem more effectively. They are “secret signals” that students can experience as a common class ritual or even not notice if they are perceived on the unconscious level.

We all know it is not always possible to stay on the level of influence. Sometimes we have no choice but to use power.

It is our job to manage our classroom efficiently and to achieve the learning goals we have determined for our class. We need to set limits, to insure that the classroom is a safe place, and to create a positive atmosphere for learning. If gentle influence is not enough to achieve these goals, then we have no choice but to move into power and to use disciplinary measures.

The best way – for our students as well as for us – is to nip the problem in the bud. This is influence. When I use influence in the classroom, I have the class under control. I work pro-actively. I solve small problems before they escalate into full-scale problems. And if I do it in an ingenious and subtle enough way, the student(s) won't even notice. This contributes in turn to my aura of positive, natural authority.

The moment, however, I must discipline and therefore move into the sphere of power, I am endangering my position of authority. It could be that taking this position will work. But perhaps it won't. If I say to a student, “And now change seats!” it could be the case that he will do as I have commanded. But it could be that he will answer with a rebellious “No!” And then I need to do some quick thinking about what I will do next!

For this reason, the following is a very basic principle in every area of classroom management:

Influence is always  
–as long as it is possible–  
preferable to power!

## What is meant by “nonverbal”?

It is important at this point to more clearly define the term “nonverbal” so that you, dear reader, and I know that we are talking about the same thing in the following chapters.

It is quite common to limit the term “nonverbal” to the areas of facial expressions and gesture. But in this case, in classroom management, when I use the term “nonverbal” I will be referring to one or more of the following:

- **Facial Expressions and Gestures**
- **Posture**
- the form of **Movement**
- the **Voice**
- the **Location**. For example, where you are standing or sitting in the classroom.
- **Peripheral Information** within the room. This information can be visual, auditory, kinesthetic, olfactory (smell) or gustatory (taste). For example, when a student enters your classroom for the very first time, he is receiving a multitude of information – before a single word has been spoken – about your attitude to learning and to school.

If you utilize these elements in a systematic and well-considered way, they can provide your students with information and signals that symbolize for them what they should do and how they should react to your input. They give the students a feeling of safety and create a productive atmosphere for learning. They are also the basis of your aura of positive, natural authority, which is the key ingredient required for successful classroom management.



# Contact & Order Information

I hope you have enjoyed reading this excerpt from my book and that you have found lots of techniques to put into practice in your own classroom!

Would you like to continue reading? We are presently taking pre-orders. The book will be available as of the beginning of June 2006 and we will process your order at that time. The cost of the book is **19,99 GB Pounds including postage**. You can pre-order using the following e-mail address:

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