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### Proven Strategies for Managing Disruptive Student Behavior

Wednesday, December 01, 2010

Presented by:

**Dr. Gerald Amada**

**Dr. Gerald Amada** is the author of *Coping with the Disruptive College Student: A Practical Model*, *Coping with Misconduct in the College Classroom: A Practical Model*, and *Mental Health and Student Conduct Issues on the College Campus: A Reading*. He was a co-founder of the Mental Health Program at the City College of San Francisco. He has presented at more than 100 colleges and universities throughout the United States and Canada on the subject of the disruptive college student for more than 20 years. He is now retired after a 30-year career at the City College of San Francisco. He currently serves on the Education Committee of the Marin County, California, Human Rights Commission. He has also recently retired from a 35-year private psychotherapy practice. He received B.A. and M.S.W. degrees at Rutgers University and a Ph.D. in social and clinical psychology at the Wright Institute, Berkeley, California. He has published nine books and over eighty articles and book reviews on the subjects of mental health, psychotherapy, and disruptive college student issues.

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# Proven Strategies for Managing Disruptive Student Behavior



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Proven Strategies for Managing  
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**Our presenter**



Dr. Gerald Amada was a co-founder of the Mental Health Program at the City College of San Francisco. He has published nine books on the subjects of mental health, psychotherapy, and disruptive college student issues.

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**Overview**

- Define disruptive behavior
- Addressing behavioral trends on today's campuses
- Disciplinary systems
- Role of the instructor

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**Endless Suffering and Punishment**

- Disrespectful students
  - Chewing gum
  - Sleeping
  - Chronic lateness
  - Rude disruptiveness
  - Plagiarism
  - And on and on and on

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### Photo of disruptive student?

- Perhaps a montage of disruptive students? Or maybe just one or two?

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### Prevention

- Detect, monitor & hopefully deter minor incidents from becoming violent tragedies
- Most seriously disruptive students caused considerable concern before major incidents
- Deal with them thoroughly at outset

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### Ordinary offensive misconduct

- Can, if ignored, spread & escalate.
- Can poison classroom climate, creating environment that makes teaching & learning untenable.

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### “Packing Up”

- At first, one student starts loading her backpack a few minutes before class ends. It starts happening earlier. Then a few other students notice and they begin getting ready to leave class early, too. What do you do?

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### Poll

- a. Ignore it. It’s not that big of a deal.
- b. Tell the students to pay attention.
- c. Announce critical information during that time.
- d. Talk with the offending students after class.
- e. Handle this as policy in the syllabus and review your expectations during first class.

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### “Packing Up”

- Rude
- Unnecessary
- So why permit it?

Insert photo of students packing up backpack

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### Solution to "Packing Up"

- State that you don't permit it at beginning of semester
- Majority will comply

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### Sleeping in Class

- Rude and inappropriate
  - Should be prohibited
- Insert photo of student sleeping in class

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### Solution to Sleeping in Class

- Speak with student after class
- It's unacceptable. The student will be asked to leave class immediately if it happens again
- Documented medical reasons may allow for extenuations

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## Odoriferous Students

- Speak with student privately
- Be diplomatic and respectful
- Ask student to take care of personal hygiene
- Failure to do so might result in exclusion from class

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## Tardiness

- Disruptive to other students
- Rude to instructor

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## Suggestions

- Document lateness of students
- Three absences = one unexcused absence
- Three unexcused absences = lowered grade

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### Caveat

- Some states & districts don't allow attendance to be a factor in grading. Be sure of rules before you implement.
- Exceptions – family emergencies & illnesses. Require written documentation.

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### An excellent place to start ...

- Ask tardy students to say, "Excuse me" when they pass in front of you while you're speaking.
- You respond with, "Thank you."

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### Beepers and Pagers

- Distracting and rude
- Ask students to make other arrangements for emergency calls during class

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## Distractions in Class

- Provocative dress
- Gum chewing
- Meet in your office for informal talk
- Explain that it's inappropriate and distracting
- Refer to administrator if necessary

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## Cheating

- Consider honor codes
- Remind students of consequences
- Define cheating – some aren't aware of what constitutes plagiarism

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## Responses

- Use good will and humor
  - They are likely to respond in kind
- Ignore and resent behavior
  - You're likely to overreact

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## Role of Instructor

- Model civility
- Be respectful and professional
- Avoid humiliating student

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## What is misconduct?

- Is it prohibited in student code of conduct?
- Does it interfere with classroom or campus activities?

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## Discipline

- Teaching and instruction
- Not punishment
- Educating students about importance of civility

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## Steps for resolving disruptive incidents

- Reprimand
- Warning
- Suspension
- Expulsion

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## Reprimand

- Also known as admonition
- First step in disciplinary system

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## Warning

- Used when reprimand doesn't work
- You need to enforce warning
- If this provokes confrontation, you may need to dismiss class & document incident
- This may lead to interim suspension & investigation

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## Suspension

- Excludes student for specified period of time
- Not usually done by instructors
- Administrators may suspend for gross misconduct

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## Expulsion

- Most severe disciplinary measure
- Exclusion from college for indefinite period
- Usually requires ratification by Board of Trustees

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## Instructor responsibility

- Legal, bureaucratic & moral responsibility
- Passive & silent instructor sends message about ethics
- Passivity perceived as permission & approval
- Other students perceive instructor is passive, unwilling or indifferent
- Misconduct becomes contagious

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### Respectful majority

- Some will quietly resent disruptive students
- They see violation of their educational rights
- They resent instructor for allowing it to continue

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### Expect More From Students

- The best college teachers expect much more from students academically

“What the Best College Teachers Do” by Ken Bain

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### What the Best College Teachers Do

- Expect & maintain civility in classrooms through effective pedagogical practices & disciplinary procedures
  - Be respectful & considerate
  - Not authoritarian or punitive

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“Always do right. It will please some people and astonish the rest.”

Mark Twain

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Thank you

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