**Mental Set**

-Exhibiting Withitness

-Exhibiting Emotional Objectivity

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**Reflect on your current beliefs and practices –**

*“In terms of classroom management, why is a teacher’s mental set important?”*

A teacher’s mental set is really a teacher keeping their cool and not letting distractions in life or that day, their mood, and feelings underneath, get in the way of being a good educator. Teachers are supposed to be role models and guides. As such it’s imperative to put our best foot forward with each and every child. That’s an ideal, and it’s a good one even if we can’t perfectly follow that every moment of every day.

The way to best stay on top of our mental set is focusing on being goal oriented. Having a good mental set is crucial in order to manage the classroom correctly. As the section introduction states, a teacher off their game might make mistakes in handling classroom management that do not reflect the rules they set in place at the start of the school year. Kids will pick up on this fast and push that weakened boundary of “acceptable” behavior. A flustered and disoriented teacher may struggle to get through a lesson, forget what they were going to say, or forget the lesson altogether. Our mental set affects how we feel about our teaching.

**Section main ideas with subsections/modules (2-3 pages)-**

1. **(Module 16): Exhibiting Withitness**

Main Idea – Withitness is being highly vigilant for and reactive to misbehavior in the classroom. Not only does a teacher utilizing “Withitness” need to be reactive but proactive as well, meaning disabling misbehavior before it can happen. There are four behaviors the test states that indicate withitness, occupying the entire room, noticing potential problems, using a series of graduated actions, and forecasting problems.

* **Occupying the Entire Room –** This is about creating presence. This can be done physically and visually. For example I could be at the front of the room giving a lecture or delivering a power point; in this situation I am the focal point and will see whether someone is looking at me and paying attention. Another route of occupying the room is working through the room in quadrants to give bodily presence wherever I go.
* **Noticing Potential Problems –** The text lists several ways to identify if problems are occurring in the classroom. One or more students have not been engaged with the classwork for an extended period of time, a group of students keep looking at one another and smiling, members of the class are all looking at one specific part of the classroom, students giggle or smile when you walk to a particular part of the classroom, and when your back is turned you repeatedly hear scuffling, whispering, or noises from a particular part of the classroom.
* **Using a Series of Graduated Actions -** “In short, your goal is to return the students’ attention to class without allowing the incident to escalate.” Some measures to take would be, look at the suspected students, move in the direction of the students, address the students in question; try to keep the incident from escalating, stop the class and let everyone know that an intervention is required.
* **Forecasting Problems –** There are a number of ways to forecast problems which include, knowing your students personalities, being mindful of something going on in the students’ day like a problem during lunch, or maybe a big activity going on at school that may be disruptive and require special attention.

1. **(Module 17): Exhibiting Emotional Objectivity**

Main Idea – Being emotionally objective is making decisions about students outside of our feelings about them. Just because we like one student more or less than the other doesn’t mean we can or should treat them any differently. The recommendations for classroom practice are, recognizing that you are an emotional being, monitoring your thoughts and emotions, reframing, maintaining a cool exterior, taking care of yourself, and preventing and recuperating from burnout.

* **Recognizing That You Are an Emotional Being –** We all have emotions and our views of people and behaviors are shaped by our past experiences which we cannot abolish. However we need to set those experiences aside show care and concern for each and every student.
* **Monitoring Your Thoughts and Emotions –** Simply put, be mindful of how you feel about students, why you feel that way about said student, and how you’re going to remain equitable with them.
* **Reframing –** This is about looking at student misbehavior through an appropriate light, which means examining an action from as many perspectives as possible to remove the bias of former experiences or initial impulse.
* **Maintaining a Cool Exterior –** This is about keeping reactions equal and appropriate between all students, particularly when handling punishment and correcting behavior. Do not point your finger at students, raise your voice, squint your eyes, or hover over students. Instead speak directly and calmly, don’t glare, maintain appropriate distance, and be conscious of the look on your face.While it is not valid to nonverbally show anger with students, sometimes showing it verbally is correct as long as it is done with a calm and even voice and you explain what you are angry about specifically without dramatizing or overemphasizing.
* **Taking Care of Yourself –** It’s important after experiencing a rough day or event at school to take a moment to relax so that you can come back and give the students your all the next day. Some recommendations are, controlled-breathing, guided imagery, funny movies/tv shows, and special treats.
* **Preventing and Recuperating from Burnout –** characteristics of burnout include depersonalization, reduction in accomplishments, apathy, forgetfulness, emotional exhaustion, gastrointestinal problems, changes in appetite, sleep disturbance, strained eyes, back and shoulders. Also, quickness to anger, feeling overwhelmed, cynicism, preoccupation with work, and changes in behavior such as increased alcohol or drug consumption. Recovery from burnout may include, positive self-talk, mild exercise, good nutrition, make time for hobbies, realistic goals, and surround yourself with positive people.

**Check for Understanding (HCMW) –**

*“Your class is immersed in a project on whales. The groups have been working together intently and appropriately, and they appear to be having fun, too. But your “antennae are up” because one group’s “fun” seems to be escalating, and you hear whale sounds coming from that part of the room. You don’t want to squelch their enthusiasm, but you have the sense that their behavior could soon have a negative effect on everyone else. What are some strategies you might use?”*

I should have forecast that this problem might have arose and been mindful of my quadrants from the start of class, giving presence to all areas of the room. From this point I can place myself in their quadrant and hope they settle down with my presence. If that doesn’t do the trick I can put my eye on them and ask them questions about the work they’re doing to try and help reengage them.

If the noises and silliness persists I’ll stop by and quietly let their group know that their gusto is appreciated but they need to keep their volume down so that others can get their work done and they need to continue to be goal oriented. If this behavior STILL continues I will warn them that the continued behavior will result in increasing punishments. I may need to split the group up, and divvy the members up between other groups, or take some other action that separates the instigators but best allows everyone to get work done.

**Bibliography**

Marzano, R., Gaddy, B., Foseid, M., Foseid, M., & Marzano, J. (2005). *A Handbook for Classroom Management That Works*. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.