

8 Notes on Haim Ginott's Theory of Congruent Communication

A. Haim Ginott's Theory of Congruent Communication (Charles, 1999; Manning & Bucher, 2003; Taylor, 2004)

Haim Ginott believes that effective classroom management depends a lot on the way in which the teacher interacts with students. It is believed that the teacher is a decisive element in the classroom, who can shape students in anyway depending on the teacher's behaviour. Ginott promotes the use of congruent messages and to respect students as they are for effective classroom management.

- **Basic Assumptions/Philosophies**

1. Communication can foster desirable relationship between teachers and the students.
2. Teacher is very influential and sets the stage for students' positive behaviour, a teacher's personal approach creates the atmosphere that contributes to students' behaviour, both positive and negative. Therefore, it is a teacher's responsibility to create conditions that contribute to student's proper behaviour.
3. The essence of discipline lies in finding effective alternatives to punishment.

- **Key Concepts**

1. Use congruent communication
 - a) a style of speaking that does not attack others, but remained harmonious with the feelings being experienced
 - b) addresses the situations rather than the student's character or personality
2. Send sane messages to students
 - a) sanity depends on people's ability to trust their own perceptions of reality
 - b) to guide students to move away from self-defeating behavior towards appropriate and lasting behaviors
3. Promote self-discipline
4. Accept and acknowledge students and comment on the situation/behavior without belittling the students
5. Emphasizes the strong linkage between the exchange of interactions between teachers and students

B. Application in Classroom

- **Teachers are the decisive element in classroom**
 1. Most powerful
 2. Can humanize or dehumanize students
 3. Teacher's self-discipline is most important for improving classroom behaviour

- **What teachers should do in classroom**
 1. Provide an environment conducive to learning
 2. Use proper and clear communication
 - a) helps establish and maintain a secure, humane, productive environment for learning
 - b) invites students' cooperation and positive behavior
 - c) give students alternatives
 3. Avoid insane messages
 - a) includes blames, preaches, commands, accuses, belittling and threats
 4. Remain sensitive to the needs of students and to communicate to students with sensitivity
 5. Show concern for student's feelings and recognize their comments
 - a) address the situation but not the students' character or personality
 - b) confer dignity by putting aside the student's past history and concern only the immediate situation
 6. Handle own anger properly and express anger using I-messages
 - a) should give students a warning for anger
 - b) you-messages attack student's personality and character, which becomes a personal attack
 7. Provide appreciative praise instead of evaluative praise
 - a) appreciative praise directs attention to student's effort and is productive
 - b) evaluative praise focuses on student's character and places burden on the students
 8. Use laconic language
 - a) to strive for brevity and be solution-oriented
 - b) to focus on solving the problem rather than dwelling on philosophies and responsibilities
 9. Use guidance rather than criticism
 - a) criticisms attacks students' personality and easily lead to demeaning of students

- **True discipline**

1. is student's self-discipline
2. is a series of little victories that over time helps students acquire self-direction, responsibility and concern for others
3. occurs overtime in a series of small steps that produce genuine changes within the hearts of student

C. A Famous Quotation of Haim Ginott

“I have come to a frightening conclusion. I am the decisive element in the classroom. It is my personal approach that creates the climate. It is my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher I possess tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal. In all situations it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated, and a child humanized or de-humanized.” (Ginott, 1972, p.13)

References

1. Charles, C.M. (1999). *Building classroom discipline*. New York: Longman.
2. Ginott, H.G. (1972). *Teacher and child: A book for parents and teachers*. New York, NY: Macmillan.
3. Manning, M.L. & Bucher, K.T. (2003). *Classroom management: Models, applications and cases*. N.J.: Merrill.
4. Taylor, G.R. (2004). The Ginott Model. In G.R. Taylor (Ed.), *Practical application of classroom management theories into strategies* (pp.33-38). Lanham, Md.: University Press of America.