

ELIMINATE THE PROBLEM, SAVE THE STAFF!

Many times we avoid addressing staff problems until they become too big to ignore. However, if you do not say anything, most people will lie to themselves and think, "It must not be a problem that I leave my class out of ratio for a few minutes to go microwave my lunch every day, because no one ever says anything." Meanwhile you're thinking, "She knows this is against policy and she must know how unfair this is to her co-workers. When is she going to get her act together?"

- *Immediately addressing problems prevents bad habits and performance issues from taking root.*
- *Confrontation does not have to be angry or negative. Sit on the same side of the desk and say, "We need to talk about _____," tardiness, attendance, gossip, dress code, leaving class out of ratio, or specific teaching problems in the classroom such as transitions, circle time, handwriting, incorrect worksheets, parent interaction, not enough singing, take home papers, whatever.*
- *Remember that your goal is to maintain or enhance her self-esteem while eliminating the problem behavior.*
- *Compliment her on something she does well.*
- *Describe the problem in a friendly, factual manner.*
- *Discuss causes and the effect the poor work habit is having on the team.*
- *Ask for the employee's suggestions for solving the problem.*
- *Listen.*
- *Offer your own suggestion if necessary.*
- *Identify and write down the solution the employee agrees with along with any specific actions required by each of you.*
- *Agree on a specific follow-up date.*
- *Both of you sign the paper.*
- *Ask the employee if she would like a copy.*

I knew a wonderful, mature teacher, Ms. Gina, who was 10 minutes late for work every day. She was so fabulous with the babies and their parents, and she was never absent so her supervisor was reluctant to address her only poor work habit - the tardiness. After four months, she finally spoke to Ms. Gina about her tardiness and discovered that it was Gina's passive-aggressive answer to a new vacation policy that the owners had put in place four months prior! Addressing her tardiness allowed her to vent about the new policy. She felt "heard" and the tardiness stopped. She was "acting out" in order to get attention and have a conversation, but her supervisor was avoiding addressing the problem with her!

There are some wonderful books available to give you the words you need to make this easier: Perfect Phrases for Managers & Supervisors by M. Runion and How To Say It Performance Reviews by M. Runion and J. Brittain. Perfect Phrases for Dealing With Difficult People by S. Benjamin is great also.