

## Appendix A: Question and Answer

Most of the teachers at my school are 4-Style (with a few who use 2-Style). I would love to incorporate transformative practices at the school, but I have no support. I feel that I would need to be at a different school before I could do what is in TCM.

You are in a challenging situation. Teaching can be a lonely job in a school like that. Often the actions of other teachers (consciously or unconsciously) push you to give in and take on an attitude that resembles theirs. It can feel sometimes as though you cannot win in this environment. If you give in, though, you will feel like you have betrayed your mission as a teacher. At first it may seem that if you take on a different style you will miss the benefits of being part of the collective. In some situations there is an initial resistance to new ideas and leadership. Approach the situation with a mindset that there are no enemies, just challenges. It is okay to listen and be present and respectful to your peers while maintaining your own boundaries and ideas. It is very important that you communicate with your principal and help him or her understand what you are trying to accomplish and how it fits into the goals of the school. And it will really help if you can start by finding at least one other member of the faculty with whom you can share your experiences.

This all sounds good, but aren't there some students who just need a 4-Style teacher?

No. While some students are challenging and it is tempting to give in to a tendency to become reactive when we run out of positive ideas, reactivity (power struggles) will just make things worse. It is true that some students have been raised on a model of 4-Style adult relationships, so they may be used to them. They may seem to initially respond most obviously to the 4-Style. It may "work" on some basic level to keep them in line. However, it is not healthy and will not lead to their positive growth and development. It will never lead to true discipline or higher levels of function in the long-term. It may be useful to compare continuing 4-Style teaching practices because students are accustomed to them as you might give an addict their usual drug. It may temporarily halt the withdrawal symptoms, but it will not improve the situation in the end.

I teach Special Education. Can I use TCM ideas in my class?

Yes, but you will need to be realistic and selective. Our teaching goal should be to lead all students to the level of self-direction and self-responsibility to which they are capable. In many cases, it is most realistic and sensible to incorporate a greater amount of behavioral conditioning techniques when teaching students with moderate to severe developmental disabilities. Issues of safety, control and appropriate social skill development typically require a great deal of direct instruction followed by clear rewards and/or consequences. However, all students will learn best and make the most progress in an environment that is free of "pain-based logic" and encourages the highest levels of self-discipline and self-esteem.

I went to a teacher training workshop and they showed us how to use the colored card system and how to use a reward system for promoting desirable student behavior. They said these strategies work. It seems that they contradict what is in this book, Transformative Classroom Management.

These strategies are very popular. In some cases, whole districts have adopted them, which means people have concluded that they “work.” I would encourage you to look more deeply at each idea. Chapter 19, related to colored card systems, and Chapter 6, related to the use of rewards, should be a good beginning. Also it may be helpful to read people’s testimonials online (a simple Google search for “colored card systems” or “token economy” will lead to you to them) of all the teachers who have tried these strategies. What we find stated is that for a while they appear to “work,” and then teachers either: a) realize these strategies are just making things worse; or b) they begin to rationalize that they are “working” despite evidence to the contrary. The book provides the rationale, but these teachers’ stories of awakening are very compelling.

**Isn’t it true that people all just have their own individual personality? Isn’t it all relative? Shouldn’t teachers just do what works for them and their personality?**

Yes, and sort of. We will need to feel that what we do as teachers fits with who we are and what we are about. But we need to keep in mind that we are operating in a world where the physical laws are fixed. We cannot change gravity or even ignore it if we do not like the concept. It is true that we can adopt any set of beliefs we choose, but this does not mean those beliefs are based in reality. Consider this idea within the context of the sport of golf. We can *want* the ball to go far and straight each time. We can use a style that we *feel* is most comfortable for us. We can *believe* what we know how best to hit a ball. But none of that makes any difference to the ball. It only behaves in relation to the forces that act upon it. No belief, desire, style or personality will have any effect directly. The only thing that makes any difference is what happens when the club hits the ball. Likewise, as teachers we can believe that some things are good for our students or act in a manner that suits us, but that which is affecting our students will be consistent with the cause-and-effect that exists in the natural law. In fact, everything we do has an effect on our students. Similar actions will have similar effects. Above all we need to ask ourselves, who is this about -- us or the students? Teaching should not force us to become someone that we are not, but holding to the belief that the natural laws that govern human behavior will at some point conform to our personal tastes will only lead to frustration and ineffectiveness. Our journey will be a great deal more effective if we become a student of those natural laws.

**I am substitute teaching right now. Can I use the ideas from TCM to help me?**

Yes and no. The ideas in TCM can be useful in a substitute teaching context. Being aware and intentional and using clear and positive language with students will make you more effective in any situation. Likewise, understanding how to promote healthy boundaries and deal with students who want to hook us into power struggles will be helpful. However, much of TCM is built on the principle that what we do today is setting the stage for a better next day. In most substitute teaching situations we are only placed for day or more. It is therefore difficult to build relationships and a foundation of cause-and-effect. We can learn a great deal about developing a “teacher presence” as a substitute and gain an understanding of the students, but our thinking should be very different if and when we do end up teaching in a full-time situation.