

**CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES
DEALING WITH THE
DEPENDENT CHILD**

**NICHOLAS MILLER, EFES COUNSELOR
LPC., ED.S., NCC., NCSC.**

DEALING WITH THE DEPENDENT CHILD

- Dependency can create a problem for both teacher and student. The dependent child can command so much of your attention that you have little time left for other students. But the time you spend with a dependent child is not always helpful. Indeed, his excessive reliance on you and others can stifle his social development by limiting his involvement with peers and thus minimizing opportunities to develop essential social skills.
- The dependent student has a problem with trust, but the person he has trouble trusting is himself. He is reluctant to think for himself, make decisions for himself, even talk for himself. Instead of looking inward for answers, he may look to you for support and assistance at every turn, so much so that he may become your constant companion. He may spend more time at your desk than his own, as he bombards you with a blizzard of questions or just clings to your side.
- Your goal in working with a dependent student is to help him become more self-reliant and more trusting in his own judgment. This requires that you communicate your expectations to him and set firm limits on your interaction, giving him attention in ways that foster his independence and avoiding interacting with him in ways that foster his dependence.

DEALING WITH THE DEPENDENT CHILD

What Can You Do?

- I. Encourage the student to trust his own judgments. Try to lessen his reliance on others by building confidence in his own judgment and ability to solve problems. Avoid doing for him things that he is able to do on his own. If he asks you a question, ask him for his ideas and then find a way to support what he says. If he struggles to answer a question, give him some hints and lead him along encourage him to figure out the answer. If he is having a conflict with another student, you might tell them that they are going to have to solve it by themselves.

DEALING WITH THE DEPENDENT CHILD

What Can You Do?

2. Identify what's behind the student's clinginess. Some children may be temperamentally shy and clingy while others may be acting that way in reaction to something. If you have noticed a child becoming more dependent on you, you will want to talk with him as well as his parents to see if something is upsetting him.

DEALING WITH THE DEPENDENT CHILD

What Can You Do?

3. Discourage the student's questions. Children who are insecure in their abilities often look for reassurance by questioning their teacher at every turn. Here are some ways to reduce their questions to a reasonable number, which you may want to use with your entire class:
 - Tell the student “Ask three, then me.” Explain to him that this means that if he has a question he is to ask three classmates before he can come to you.
 - Tell the student that he must work for five minutes on a task before he asking you a question. If he has a question during this period he needs to try to figure out the answer on his own or by asking a classmate.
 - Limit the student to a set number of questions per day, perhaps giving him that number of poker chips every day and requiring him to give you a chip every time he asks a question. If he has used his chips for the day, he is not allowed to ask you any more questions.

DEALING WITH THE DEPENDENT CHILD

What Can You Do?

4. Try to ignore clingy behavior. While this may not be easy if he is grasping your arm, do not look at or talk with him and try to move away, if necessary by gently undoing his grasp. Continue with your lesson and give attention and praise to students who are behaving appropriately. The idea is to help the student understand that appropriate behavior will be responded to and clingy behavior will be ignored. You want to respond to him so that he gains more attention when he behaves independently than when he behaves dependently.

DEALING WITH THE DEPENDENT CHILD

What Can You Do?

5. Assign the student a classroom buddy. If you have a student who is excessively reliant on you, pair him up with a mature, responsible classmate and tell the student to see his buddy when he is confused about directions or needs help.

- Adapted from:

Shore, K. (2020, September 17). *Dealing with the Dependent Child*. Ken Shore.

<http://drkennethshore.nprinc.com/for-teachers/>