

**Practical
Classroom
Management
Strategies**

Third Edition

The Tough Kid[®] Book

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Introduction

What This Book Will Do For You

Major reasons that teachers leave teaching are the problems they encounter with difficult students and loss of control in their classrooms. Aggression, arguing, tantrums, and poor academic progress, coupled with difficult interactions with parents, make teachers feel like failures. These problems are compounded by excessive time demands imposed by difficult students. A teacher can spend from 20% to 30% of class time trying to manage these students. This time drain leaves many teachers with a sense of powerlessness and little time to actually teach. Loss of classroom control, not enough time to instruct, and problematic students with severe classroom behaviors have a dramatic impact on teachers' job satisfaction and confidence.

This book will help teachers manage the Tough Kid. A Tough Kid is a student who is generally not covered in most college courses in education. It is estimated that approximately 2% to 5% of all students meet our definition of a Tough Kid. This is enough to ensure that all classrooms will have at least one or two tough students every year. Often the number is higher.



We would like to note that this book is part of The Tough Kid Series, available from Ancora Publishing (ancorapublishing.com). The Tough Kid Series includes:

- *The Tough Kid Tool Box*
- *The Tough Kid Social Skills Book*
- *The Tough Kid New Teacher Book*
- *The Tough Kid Bully Blocker Book*
- *The Tough Kid Bully Blocker Shorts DVD*
- *Parenting Through Tough Kid Moments*
- *The Tough Kid Principal's Briefcase*
- *The Tough Kid: Teachers and Parents as Partners*
- *The Tough Kid Electronic Home Notes*
- *The Tough Kid On-Task in a Box*

All of the books build and expand on the basic information covered in this book. The techniques and interventions included in this book, like other books in The Tough Kid Series, are based on research-proven, evidence-based practices.

Research and Evidence-Based Practice: The Tough Kid Commitment

The term *evidence-based practice* (EBP) means that the techniques or interventions have been evaluated for their effectiveness through a rigorous research process. This validation process includes using acceptable research designs and appropriate data analysis techniques to demonstrate effectiveness. The results are generally published in peer-reviewed journals and presented at national professional conferences.

The Tough Kid Series uses only intervention procedures that are well researched and evidence based. We are committed to recommending practices that are well supported in the research literature, backed by multiple studies that meet evidence-based practice standards from the American Psychological Association (APA) and the What Works Clearinghouse of the U.S. Office Department of Education.

See Appendix A for additional information regarding the standards for evidence-based practice on which The Tough Kid Series is based. You can also download a list of supporting evidence-based research studies and presentations that demonstrate the effectiveness of suggested Tough Kid techniques and related techniques. See page 7 for download directions.





Grammar Notes

In deference to individuals who identify as gender nonbinary, this text uses the following format concerning pronouns. When referring to individuals referenced in general terms—for example, a teacher or a student—we use the singular *they/them/their*. For named individuals, we use both gender-specific pronouns and the singular *they* pronouns.

Many students live in one-parent households, in foster care, with grandparents, or in other circumstances. It is often inaccurate to refer to “the student’s parents,” but it is cumbersome to refer to “the student’s parent(s), grandparent(s), or guardian(s).” Therefore, we will use *parents* or *families* to refer to a student’s primary caregiver or caregivers.

Who This Book Is For

This book provides helpful information and strategies for general and special education teachers and instructional assistants. Many of the strategies can also be used by other educators who work with Tough Kids or who provide support to teachers in designing and implementing classroom-based plans for students with behavior problems (e.g., administrators, counselors, social workers, behavior specialists, coaches). While the strategies in this book are essential for working with Tough Kids, many can also be used to work with students with less severe or chronic behavior problems but who sometimes test the limits and behave inappropriately.

The purpose of this book is to provide practical techniques for managing difficult students—techniques that can be implemented without great cost in materials, time, or money. However, nothing is free. You should view the time required to implement the suggested techniques as a wise investment. Though some initial teacher time and planning are needed, in the long run the techniques will provide educational dividends that clearly outweigh your initial investments.

The PBIS and MTSS Picture

The Tough Kid techniques and interventions also work very well with the current emphasis in many public schools on the positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS) and the multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) models. PBIS and MTSS emphasize a triangular model, with 80% of a school’s student body fitting into the base of the triangle (Tier 1). These students are generally managed very well by a school’s basic discipline and management procedures and pose few

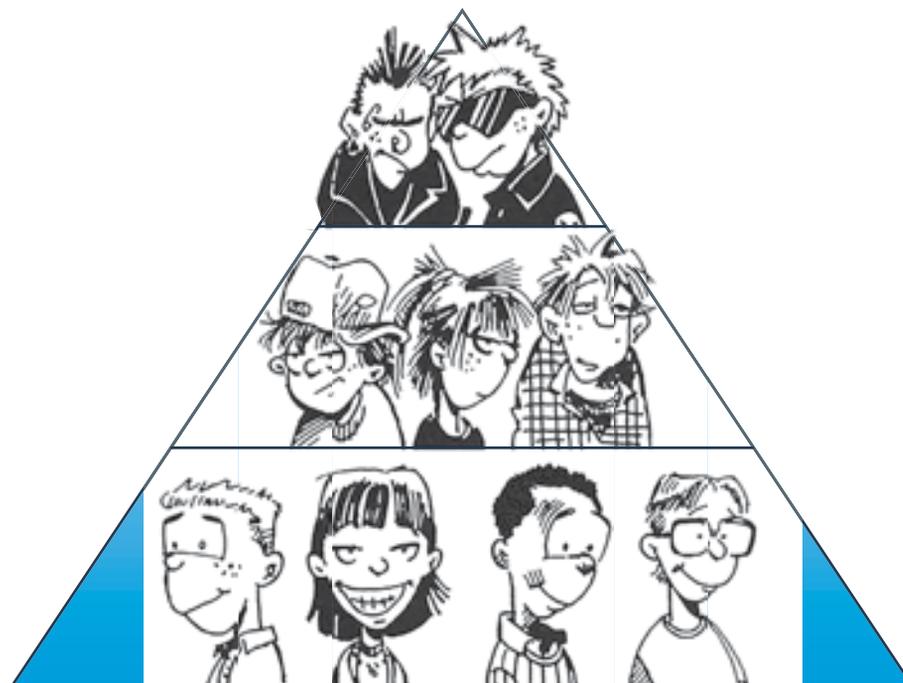
problems. These Tier 1 strategies are often referred to as *universal strategies* and include such Tough Kid interventions as designing effective classroom rules, the What If? Chart, and self-monitoring rule following.

The middle part of the triangle represents students “at-risk” for behavior problems, who make up approximately 15% of a school’s student body. These students have had several office discipline referrals (ODRs) for problematic behavior and are viewed as on the verge of being a serious discipline problem. *The Tough Kid Book* offers several **targeted** interventions for struggling groups of Tier 2 students, including the Chance Jars program, Teacher Pleaser Social Skills program, and teaching self-management skills.

The very top part of the triangle includes the 2% to 5% of students identified as having severe problem behaviors. These students have had multiple discipline referrals and are generally failing both academically and socially. They are the tip of the triangle, and they are the school’s Tough Kids (see Figure i-1). Many of the **individual** student strategies presented in this book can be used directly with the students whose needs and challenges place them at the top of the triangle. These strategies include learning a “Sure I Will” response for noncompliance, a Check-In/Check-Out program, and individual behavioral contracting.

Similarly, the Tough Kid approach fits and works with well-established classroom management programs such as the Safe & Civil Schools CHAMPS program (Sprick, 2009) and all-school discipline programs such as Foundations

Figure i-1. Student Intervention Needs Triangle



(Sprick, Isaacs, Booher, Sprick, & Rich, 2014). Top-of-the-triangle Tough Kids are often the most difficult and challenging students for schools that follow a PBIS model. When techniques from the PBIS model prove ineffective, the Tough Kid approach offers a wealth of additional strategies and techniques for the toughest students.

In This Book

This book is divided into five basic chapters. Each contains practical information about managing Tough Kids in classrooms and schools. The first chapter is a getting-started chapter, “What Does a Tough Kid Look Like?” It defines the Tough Kid and helps educators understand why behavior problems occur. It also covers the realistic assessment of difficult students and proactive ways to set up a classroom.

The second chapter, “Unique Positive Procedures,” focuses on interventions that can be used to reward students for coming to school, following classroom procedures, and performing academically. It is critical to use positive procedures with Tough Kids before using reductive procedures (those that stop behaviors) because:

- The majority of Tough Kids have a long history of punishment to which they have grown immune.
- They have a high risk for school dropout (estimated to be 65%) and will not stay in environments that are not positive.
- In the long run, lasting behavior changes are maintained only by positive procedures.

If punishment-oriented reductive techniques are the most frequently used techniques in a classroom, Tough Kids will act out even more or simply stop coming to school. This book, however, does not espouse a totally reward-based approach. We recognize that some reductive techniques are needed to quickly manage such behaviors as aggression, noncompliance, arguing, and tantrums.

The third chapter, “Practical Reductive Techniques for the Classroom,” reviews realistic techniques that you can use to stop problem behaviors. Behavior-reducing techniques are important in stopping the cycle of noncompliance in which Tough Kids frequently engage. If these techniques are not carefully monitored, however, they are likely to be improperly or excessively used by untrained classroom staff.

The fourth chapter is titled “Advanced Systems for Tough Kids” because these techniques are more complex in nature. Techniques covered as advanced procedures include social skills training, instructional techniques, programs

to improve on-task behavior, parent training information, and more. The more advanced techniques are viewed as finishing procedures that allow you to develop skills beyond the basic procedures presented in the first three chapters of the book.

The fifth chapter is called “Getting Tough Kids Back to General Education Settings.” Tough Kids have great difficulty returning to the regular classroom because of their past behaviors and inability to cope with the academic and social challenges of an inclusive environment. If Tough Kids are returned to regular school settings without adequate preparation, many of them will revert to their old behavior excesses of aggression and noncompliance. They do this to escape an inclusive environment in which they are not successful and which they find punishing. This chapter offers several approaches to the inclusion of Tough Kids into regular school settings:

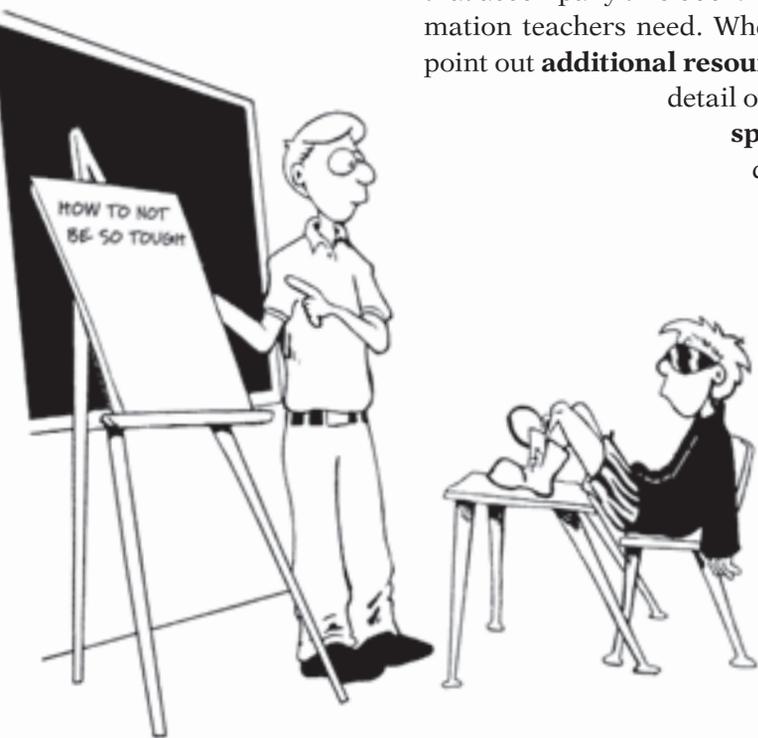
- Teaching self-management strategies
- Encouraging development of social skills through the Tough Kid Teacher Pleaser Social Skills Program
- Addressing the classroom behavior expectations of the Tough Kid’s future general education teacher
- Assessing common classroom stimuli in the regular school environment
- Using Lucky Charms as a generalization strategy

Each chapter contains boxes, figures, and references to reproducible forms that accompany this book. No single book can cover all the techniques and information teachers need. Where appropriate, we have included some boxes that point out **additional resources** if you are interested in pursuing a topic in more

detail or want specific classroom materials. Other boxes give **specific examples and step-by-step instructions** for designing and implementing a particular technique (e.g., how to design a school-home note or implement a program such as “Sure I Will”).

Each chapter also includes filled-out examples of reproducible forms. A Download icon indicates that a blank version of the form is available for download (along with other materials such as the Evidence Base document and directions for the Meeting Individual Teacher’s Expectations program).

Educators who purchase the book have permission to reproduce any form labeled “Reproducible” solely for their own use. Further





How to Download the Reproducible Files

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Each book and its reproducibles should be used for only one classroom or by one professional in their work. The reproducible forms are provided in PDF format. They can be printed and filled out by hand. Where appropriate, they are also enabled so they can be filled out on your computer and saved electronically when you open them in Adobe Reader v11 or above. See the “Using the Files” document provided in the download for more detailed instructions on how to fill out forms using Adobe Reader.

Note that some of the examples shown are not provided for download but are instead available in the companion book, *The Tough Kid Tool Box* (see Box i-1 below).

Pointer Box i-1

aka Resources



The Tough Kid Tool Box

Many of the examples shown in this book are taken from *The Tough Kid Tool Box*, a companion volume that features ready-to-use materials for implementing behavior management strategies with Tough Kids. This book comes with reproducible tools in both English and Spanish, along with detailed directions for using them. *The Tough Kid Tool Box* provides everything you need to implement Mystery Motivators, Spinners, Lotteries/Raffles, and more. Contact Ancora Publishing, ancorapublishing.com, for more information about *The Tough Kid Tool Box*.