



**88 Activities
to Engage Your
Students**

**IMPACT
TECHNIQUES
IN THE CLASSROOM**

Danie Beaulieu PhD

Danie Beaulieu, PhD

I M P A C T T E C H N I Q U E S
.....
IN THE
CLASSROOM



Crown House Publishing Limited
www.crownhouse.co.uk

First published as *Techniques d'Impact en classe* by Éditions Académie Impact in 2001.

English paperback edition published by

Crown House Publishing Ltd
Crown Buildings, Bancyfelin, Carmarthen, Wales, SA33 5ND, UK
www.crownhouse.co.uk

and

Crown House Publishing Company LLC
4 Berkeley Street, 1st Floor, Norwalk, CT 06850, USA
www.CHPUS.com

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Illustrations © Nadia Berghella
Publication design © Marianne Tremblay

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First published 2004.
Reprinted 2006.

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British Library of Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue entry for this book is available
from the British Library.

10 Digit ISBN 1904424554
13 Digit ISBN 978-190442455-0

Library of Congress Control Number
2004111431

Printed and bound in the UK by
Gomer Press
Llandysul

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INTRODUCTION

You teach. Therefore, at one time or another, you have wished with all your heart that your students would suddenly develop a spontaneous, automatic, and lasting ability to record everything you teach them: instructions, the principles of living with others, and the subject matter that you teach. Often, upon reflection, it's not so much the lectures on the subject matter that you find yourself repeating again and again, but rather everything relating to the exhausting and never-ending task of classroom management. You remain continuously on the lookout to ensure discipline within the group and watch even more closely certain students who need to be regularly—and so often!—told to be quiet or whose attention needs to be re-activated at regular intervals. You have also developed a hypervigilance to channel the effervescent energy of certain “free electrons” who must constantly be brought back to order—who move, talk, giggle, get up, and walk around ...

In short, many teachers have admitted to me that they feel that they spend the majority of the lesson time doing anything and everything but teaching. With *Impact Techniques in the Classroom*, I offer you a variety of activities to be done as a group or on a one-on-one basis (and a few with the help of the parents) that will allow you to devote more time to teaching, all the while saving your energy and quickly capturing the attention of your students.

Impact Techniques will allow you to make progress toward these objectives through simple and easily applicable activities. They've been designed to exploit and apply the current knowledge about how the brain and memory function. Using an Impact Technique is like giving your teaching efforts a sort of learning amplifier, which multiplies the anchors in the students' minds, allowing them to integrate new knowledge (whether intellectual or emotional) more quickly, more deeply, and with greater intensity. The effectiveness of Impact Techniques—which, as you will see, is immediately noticeable in the classroom—is a result of a combination of many factors. The underlying principle is that, because these techniques are not limited to verbal language and because they appeal to many senses, the information that they transmit lodges in several areas of the brain and thus constitutes a global message that is loaded with possibilities for recall.

In addition, by using objects, images, and movements, these techniques target the student's implicit memory—the form of memory that decodes information through intuition and experience. This form of memory functions outside of the person's conscious control, as demonstrated in a recent experiment involving subjects who had undergone a resection of the

corpus callosum, the thoroughfare that assures communication between the two cerebral hemispheres (a procedure that is usually performed to control severe epilepsy).¹ With the aid of an apparatus that projects an image to only one hemisphere, the researchers were able to observe that, in fact, as expected, an image perceived by the left hemisphere—which dominates on the verbal level—can be clearly described by the patient. On the other hand, and rather more surprisingly, images presented to and perceived by the right hemisphere—that of musical language, images, and emotions—pass unnoticed. The right brain isn't able to verbally translate that which it has nevertheless registered. Since it is the left brain that responds, the patient would even affirm that he has not seen the image! However, when asked to point with his left hand (which is controlled by the right brain) to an object that represents the projected image, his fingers are lead in the right direction, to the great surprise of the left brain, which has no idea at all why he is making that gesture!

These results indicate that people possess many different channels of learning and that, to obtain the best possible results in a student, all of his faculties must be recruited, as much to the process of assimilation of information as to its expression. Too often, our classroom teaching exploits principally, if not uniquely, the verbal zone of the brain. Some teachers feel as though they have tried everything ... when they have *said* everything. However, Bessel van der Kolk, an American psychiatrist and researcher specializing in memory, maintains that only a small percentage of our learning is based on explicit memory, either through language or rational thought.²

This book, then, offers tools to develop the implicit dimension of your teaching and thus expand your efficiency by soliciting the maximum from your students' cerebral radars. Let's have a look at this in a bit more detail.



From the known toward the unknown

It has been shown that the memory more easily retains new information that contains elements that are already known, as opposed to material that is completely unconnected to the person's stock of knowledge. For example, if you possess no rudimentary knowledge in the field, a speech given by an enthusiastically passionate astrophysicist on the powers of quantum physics would give you a feeling of wandering in a dense fog. Similarly, it's vital to allow the mind of the student to rely on what he already knows if you would like him to understand what you are explaining. Consequently, many Impact Techniques use objects that serve as recognizable aid to thought and discussion.

Thus, using a lamp and a light bulb, you will be able to help your students to create favorable conditions for better attention and concentration by themselves. Rather than simply repeating

or imploring, “Now please concentrate”, direct this exercise by asking them to comment on the following different stages (it is particularly important to simultaneously do all the actions described in front of the class): What happens if the bulb is not screwed into the lamp? And what if the lamp isn’t plugged into the electrical outlet? When the switch is in the off position? Even if the bulb possesses all the potential energy to provide a source of light, it cannot do so if one of these conditions has not been met. Next, draw a parallel between the electric bulb and the student’s mental “light bulb”—the one that lights up inside each student to help him or her understand what is being taught in class. Like the electric light bulb, the comprehension process is sometimes interrupted by small problems. For example, despite all its capacity, that internal light bulb can’t light up if the student’s mind is not plugged into what the teacher is saying, when the student’s motivation is in the “off” position, or when the method for doing the assignment is not appropriate for what is requested (in other words, the internal light bulb is not screwed in properly). Encourage each student to ask himself if one or more of these problems is preventing him from “lighting up” on what is being taught. Then you need to guide the student in his search for solutions so that his intellectual light bulb may—from then on—provide optimal light. However, a significant part of this solution is already sensed, as the student *knows* how to make the bulb work.

In an exercise of this nature, the demonstration—using the object selected to support the deductions of the student—is directly responsible for the impact that the comparison to his own behavior will have on the student. The principles that he observes in action will appear just as valid when he applies them to his own case, because he has discovered that the two situations are analogous. Furthermore, by firmly anchoring a new piece of information to already acquired knowledge, you will be recruiting the student’s competence and making it more likely that the new information will be remembered.

Let’s take the number 911 as an example, the number that is already known as the number to dial in emergencies. If I told you that you could reach a new service at 119, which has the opposite role of the former, that is, to take nonurgent calls for help, you would remember this new code immediately and for some time. The more the first piece of knowledge is integrated and mastered, the better and quicker the second can be integrated and mastered.

When you teach, you have the choice of using one of the two receptacles in the minds of your students: one that contains known and mastered information and another for knowledge to be acquired. When you deposit a new piece of information in the first receptacle, it is retained because it catches on other similar information as it goes by. But when you pour new information into the receptacle of the unknown, many, many repetitions are needed to record and integrate that new information with the student’s retrievable knowledge.

HEADPHONES

PURPOSE

Depending on the system the headphones are connected to, the listener will hear what is being emitted from the system: it is not the headphones that diffuse the information.

CLASS

The teacher presents to the group several types of headphone and asks those who wish to share with the others the experiences that they have had with this type of equipment. This part of the exercise is important, insofar as the more the memory of the experience is revived in the mind, the more receptive the students will be to the process of reflection that this exercise initiates. The teacher asks each student to question himself as to what kind of system he connects himself to when he is in class: to what the teacher is saying, to the activities of the night before or the next evening, to the discussions during recess, to the events of lunchtime. Is it the most profitable system? One that would help him achieve better results and greater satisfaction? What percentage of time is he tuned into listening during class? And to personal experiences and daydreaming? Evidently, a biological factor brought to light by Ernest Rossi must be taken into account (see Bibliography). He noticed that our diurnal and nocturnal cycles cause a brief moment of “switching-off” about every ninety minutes, during which our mind moves away from external preoccupation toward daydreaming—probably to recuperate physiologically. Consequently, it is necessary to ensure that periods of full attention in each cycle are maximized, devoting them especially to important activities (learning or work) and not squandering them on mental wanderings. The act of showing the headphones to the group allows you to remind them of this information without having to repeat it and will immediately reconnect the students to the contents of the lesson.

YOU WILL NEED

Headphones of different types, like the ones inserted into the ear or the headset type that completely cover the outer ear.



CURTAINS, BLINDS, OR DRAPES

PURPOSE

This technique can reactivate the attention of students and actively encourage their participation, particularly at the end of the day, when tiredness or low interest levels prompt them to remain withdrawn.

YOU WILL NEED

Use what you have in your classroom, depending on whether the windows are dressed with curtains, blinds, or drapes.

● INDIVIDUAL ●●● CLASS

Completely close all the curtains, emphasizing to your students that it is now completely impossible to see outside; when you open them, they will again have access to the view of the schoolyard or on to the road. Then explain to the students that, in the same way, some of them attend class with the blinds shut. In that state, they don't understand anything the others say, much less the teacher, because their vision of the world outside themselves is obstructed. How can they open their internal curtains to see once again what is around them, to better perceive the actions and reactions of others, to be ready to receive and integrate new knowledge? Also point out that when the curtains of the classroom are drawn, those who are on the outside cannot see in. In the same way, when a student keeps his internal blinds lowered, no communication or exchange with others is possible.

CUT FLOWER

PURPOSE

This technique will serve as a point of departure to incite the student to reflect upon his attitudes toward school or his interpersonal relationships.



● INDIVIDUAL ●●● CLASS

Point out to the students that as soon as the flower's stem is cut—even if the flower is perfectly lovely now, and despite any care we may provide (regularly giving it fresh water, sprinkling nutrients into the vase etc.) it is bound to wither and die. Similarly, when students “cut themselves off” from school by being absent—occasionally at first, and then more and more frequently until they drop out of school completely—their interest is bound to decline, or even to disappear. By maintaining contact with the school environment and staying connected to that reality, they preserve part of their interest in school.

● INDIVIDUAL ●●● CLASS

The effect of radically cutting off interpersonal relationships—which frequently occurs among youngsters who suddenly decide to stop having any contact with one another—is that it leaves a problem unresolved. In so doing, each of them misses an opportunity to learn and to grow, just like a living flower on its stem, which can weather storms—and sometimes even deepens its colors under adverse conditions.

CARDBOARD

PURPOSE

This technique uses an experience that, by transposing a tense mental attitude into an uncomfortable posture, allows the student to physically experience—on a physical level, which makes more of an impact—the actual cost of his obsession.



YOU WILL NEED
A piece of cardboard and
a black felt marker.

INDIVIDUAL

The problem of obsession can take several forms in a young person's environment. An obsession may be indirect, and stem, for example, from a parent who is convinced that you are asking far too much of his child, or who believes that the direction taken by the school is not in the students' best interests. The child himself may be obsessed by harsh comments made to him by a classmate or an acquaintance during recess, and therefore be haunted by the fear of having to stand up to the other child. The teenager may be obsessed by drugs, alcohol, sex, or other temptations of adolescence.

Whatever form the obsession may take, it always prevents the individual who is experiencing it from making his best efforts and from applying his skills—intellectually as well as socially. In order to help make the child (or his parent) aware of how much of an impact his obsession has on his life, write the object of the obsession on a piece of cardboard, using a black felt marker: failure, injustice, divorce, fear of ridicule, fear of not being able to do things, or another concise description. Ask the student to hold the cardboard right in front of his eyes, so close that this is the only thing he can see, even if he has to squint to see the problem written on it. You can help him to understand that by staring only at the cardboard, and focusing all of his energy on the problem, he cannot see anything else. He is thereby cutting himself off from many aspects of his life—the more constructive and positive ones—which he cannot be aware of as long as he pays no attention to them. To demonstrate this, show him certain tools (paper clip, pencil, pencil case) and place them at his eye level, but behind the cardboard. Point out to him that, since he is keeping his nose glued to his problem, it is



hard for him to see what you are offering him. Draw a parallel to the learning aids that you present to him in class, which he does not use because he is still focusing too much on his problem. Finally, ask him to move the cardboard a few inches away from his face, and then offer him the same objects that you did previously. This time they fall within his field of vision, because he has now distanced himself somewhat from his problem. Stress the fact that he can now see many more objects than he did before, and that his situation is less painful. In fact, holding a piece of cardboard with both hands in front of the eyes eventually gets tiring and uncomfortable—and may even induce anxiety. Finally, make him realize that such discomfort can be easily lessened, because he has the power to push away the cardboard or to let it fall. He is partially responsible for his obsession and can therefore choose to focus his attention on other aspects of life and invest his energy elsewhere.



"I recommend it to teachers and therapists alike. It explains the workings of the mind and offers simple guidelines for playing games with specific learning goals. The more books I read, the fewer impress me. This one impressed me."

Betty Rudd, Education Chartered Psychologist

"I have not only read this book but have already used many of the techniques recommended. What more can a practitioner ask from any resource?"

Rob Long, Chartered Educational Psychologist, Rob Long's Education Works

Teachers admit to feeling they spend the majority of lesson time doing anything and everything but teaching. *Impact Techniques in the Classroom* offers a variety of quick and simple activities to help engage, motivate and focus students, freeing up the teacher to concentrate on teaching rather than class management.

The techniques have been designed to exploit and apply current knowledge about how the brain and memory function. Using language, objects, images and movements, these techniques target the student's implicit memory, the form of memory that decodes information through intuition and experience and is outside the student's conscious control. Students are able to integrate new knowledge (whether intellectual or emotional) more quickly, more deeply and with greater intensity.

This book offers 88 tools and activities for developing emotional intelligence, identifying learning styles, enhancing memory skills and increasing cooperation and engagement. These can be used as class exercises or on a one-on-one basis.

Dr Danie Beaulieu studied for her PhD at the University of Montreal and has been in private practice as a psychologist since 1992. She is a much sought after speaker and lecturer at symposia all over the world. Danie publishes her own books and guides on Impact Therapy and related techniques in the French language via Éditions Académie Impact.

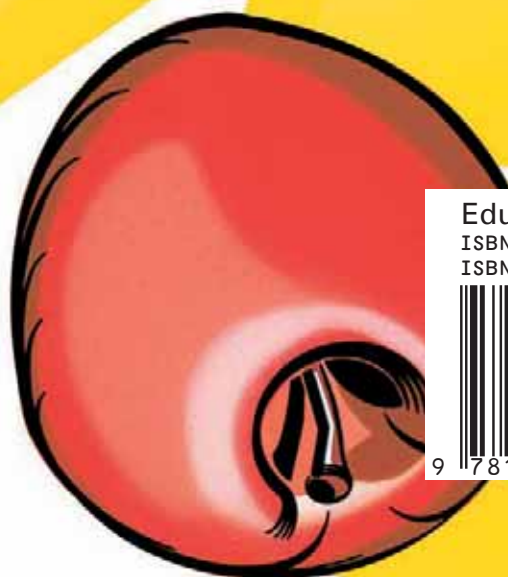
"... this book will be particularly invaluable for those educators who are seeking to overcome challenges in students' ability to learn effectively as well as bring to the classroom a host of different methods of ensuring that all students understand the information and concepts therein. A wonderful book for educators."

Kathleen Ginn, Rapid Sensory Learning



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Cover design Thomas Fitton



Education

ISBN 190442455-4

ISBN 978-190442455-X



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9 781904 424550