

# **SUSPENSION LEARNING PACKET #2**

## ***INSUBORDINATION***

### ***INTRODUCTION***

This is a Suspension Learning Packet. It consists of several pages of text and a Response sheet. Your assignment is to read the text and answer the questions on the Response sheet. The text includes three stories about students who broke a school rule. The Response sheet asks questions about what the people in the stories did that got them into trouble. Reading the text and answering the questions on the Response sheet will help you understand what you have done wrong and how to avoid doing it again. Read the text first and try to remember what you've read. Then read the Response Sheet and write answers to the questions.

### ***WHAT YOU DID***

Insubordination means not obeying a reasonable request or order given by a person in a position of authority, such as a teacher or principal. You were suspended because you were insubordinate toward someone in authority.

Insubordination can take many forms. Usually, it's as simple as refusing a request by a teacher ("Take your feet off your desk, Sam," or "Remove your hat, Tom"). Refusing such a request, either by word or action, is being disobedient or insubordinate.

### ***WHAT'S WRONG WITH INSUBORDINATION***

Anyplace we go--school, a classroom, a workplace--we need to be able to work smoothly with other people. That usually means that someone is in charge and that other people listen to him or her and show respect for his or her position. There's usually a good reason for the request the person in charge makes. These are ways in which the person in authority assures that everything runs in an orderly fashion.

All persons, whether they are students or teachers, want to be treated with respect. When they have ideas or suggestions, they like to be listened to and obeyed. To refuse to follow suggestions (or orders) or "wise off" at someone in authority is a way of putting down that person. Actually, it reflects poorly on the person who failed to show respect.

If students don't cooperate by following the rules of the school or the classroom, life at school becomes chaotic. Little work gets done. Not only is the life of the person who disobeyed disrupted; the lives of the other students and the teacher are disrupted as well.

Many pre-teens and teens feel that they are "getting away" with something when they defy authority. Actually, they are simply showing their immaturity and lack of self-control. At other times, they act disrespectful because they simply haven't learned how to get along with others. They haven't discovered that being grown-up means knowing how to act in different situations. The truly mature person will fit comfortably into many settings and will know how to act properly in each of them.

Sometimes, teens just like to "show off" before their friends. Talking back to a teacher or to the principal looks like great fun when you can do it before a group of other students. It's not nearly so much fun when you confront the person alone.

At other times, students are trying to work through personal problems. Students with such problems may become defiant and angry at school in frustration over a situation at home or elsewhere. They may not mean to be disrespectful but they act in such a manner as a way to cope with their personal problems.

Students with these special problems need extra help. They need to realize that showing disrespect for authority makes bad situations worse. They need to learn alternative ways to handle such problems. Unfortunately, talking back or refusing to cooperate with an adult in authority is usually a bad way to handle a situation.

## ***THREE STORIES ABOUT INSUBORDINATION***

### **TOM TALKS BACK**

Tom is a seventh-grade student. He is bright and should do well in school, but lately, his grades have been dropping.

Tom has had a year of problems. Last fall, his parents were divorced. Tom stayed with his mother and younger sister, while his two older brothers went to live with the father. Tom misses his father and his two brothers. He has to leave school early two days a week to babysit with Sandy, his little sister. His mother works to help support the family. On weekends, he has to help with the housework.

Tom's mother works late and has trouble disciplining Tom. Tom often tells her "I'll do what I want, so don't bother telling me what you think I ought to do!"

Tom feels lonely and bored at home. His best friend has moved out of town. Another good friend has become friendly with a group of students who use drugs and alcohol. Tom feels lost and confused and often thinks that he has no one to turn to for help.

Tom is having a hard time with his classes. They are all difficult, and Tom can't seem to concentrate on his studies. All his teachers are men except for one, his math teacher, Ms. Stanton. She is new to the school and younger than many of the other teachers.

Tom doesn't like math. He didn't do well in math in grade school and failed to learn some of the basics. As a result, he is lost much of the time in math class.

Tom often comes to class late. He always wears his baseball cap, which is against the school rules. When Ms. Stanton tells him to take it off, most of the time he ignores her. One time he said "Try to make me!" The

other students laughed and waited to see what would happen. That was the first time that Tom was sent to the principal's office.

Last week, Ms. Stanton gave a test. Tom was unprepared. He came in late and started whispering to Michael, trying to find out what was going on in class. Ms. Stanton had already asked the class not to talk once the tests were handed out, so Michael wouldn't answer Tom.

Ms. Stanton handed a test sheet to Tom. Tom took one look at it and burst out laughing. "You expect me to answer these dumb questions?" he said. "Somebody must be joking! I'm not taking this test."

Tom started to leave the room but Ms. Stanton called him back. "Tom," she said, "come back and sit down. You're not going anywhere until the test is over."

Tom came back and sat at his desk, but he didn't take the test. He stretched his feet out into the aisle and gave a big sigh. Then he took his test sheet and drew Mickey Mouse faces all over it. When he filled up the sheet, he took his cap out of his book bag, pulled it down over his eyes and went to sleep. Now Tom has been suspended. He is trying to learn his math lesson from last week.

## **POLLY AND THE PURPLE POP**

Polly likes soft drinks. Polly especially likes grape pop. Every day she has one for lunch and another when she comes home from school.

It's against the rules at Polly's school to drink anything in class. But Polly has figured out a way to have her grape pop during history class. She bought an insulated lunch bag and a big plastic mug to keep her pop cold. Polly pours herself a grape pop and hides it in her book bag. Then she sits in the back row and sips it while Ms. Dickerson, the history teacher, talks about the American Revolution.

One day Ms. Dickerson noticed what Polly was doing. "Polly, please put your drink away until after class," Ms. Dickerson said. "You know it's against the rules to drink or eat during class."

Polly just laughed at the teacher. "Come on! Lighten up!" she said. "It's just a grape pop. Here--want some?" She held the half-full mug out and splashed some on the floor. Everybody laughed and looked at Polly. "Wow! She's got nerve. I'd never talk to a teacher like that," her best friend said to another student.

Ms. Dickerson didn't think Polly was brave at all. The first time, Polly was sent to the principal's office. The second time, she was sent to detention. The third time she broke the rules, Polly was suspended.

## **HAROLD FORGETS HIS HALL PASS**

Harold just entered a new junior high school. It has different rules. Instead of being able to go out into the hall with the teacher's permission, students in his new school need to get a hall pass if they are going to leave the classroom or study hall.

Harold thinks the new school's rules are "dumb." "I'm not going to let any hall monitor tell me what I can and can't do," Harold brags to his friends. "I'll go anywhere I want to go. Just watch me!"

The first week of school, Harold was stopped by a hall monitor. He didn't have a hall pass, so the monitor gave him a break since he was new. The next time he went out without a pass, no one was on duty, so Harold didn't get stopped.

By this time Harold was feeling pretty sure of himself. Everyone else needed hall passes but he didn't. He was a special case! So Harold tried to come and go as he pleased. He would slip out the back of study hall and down the stairs to the vending machines next to the cafeteria. Sometimes he would even slip out the back door into the school yard.

The next time Harold got caught, it wasn't by a monitor but by the assistant principal. Harold happened to pass his office as he was strolling along, eating a candy bar and tossing an empty soda can in the air.

When the assistant principal asked him where he was going, Harold shrugged his shoulders. "Who wants to know?" he laughed, and kept on walking. The assistant principal ran after him. Harold claimed he had a hall pass, but it finally became clear he didn't.

Now Harold is suspended, learning all about hall passes and other rules of his new school.

### ***REASONS FOR INSUBORDINATION***

Let's sum up some of the reasons why students may disobey or show disrespect for authority. Some of these reasons may apply to the students in the three stories you just read. Some may apply to you. See if any of these reasons remind you of Tom, Polly or Harold:

1. A student may be insubordinate or disrespectful because he or she doesn't yet know how to handle himself/herself in an unfamiliar situation. Sometimes he or she may feel overwhelmed by all the new rules and regulations. This student may not try to adjust or learn to get along in the new school. Instead, he or she will refuse to cooperate or will act as if the rules don't apply to him or her.

Most people disapprove of such actions. A student who behaves this way may feel that he or she is winning the approval and respect of his/her friends. Actually, he/she is just acting immature and silly. Students like this need to learn how to behave correctly in many different situations. Sometimes this may mean giving up a certain amount of control or admitting that others know more than we do. That, too, is a sign of maturity.

2. Sometimes, a student likes to show off at the expense of others. He or she likes the feeling of having "put someone down" or "showed someone up," especially if that someone is a teacher, principal, or parent. Sometimes, it's a bid for attention--a way to be better liked.

A person who disobeys or is disrespectful for this reason wants to be noticed. But he or she is going about it in the wrong way. Being looked up to for your ability in sports, your sense of humor, your willingness to help people, or your good grades is a better way to make sure that people remember you.

3. Some students have problems outside school that bother them--problems with parents, brothers or sisters, relations with friends, drugs or alcohol. Any one of these things can get in the way of learning in school. Talking rudely or disrespectfully to someone in authority is often a sign that something deeper is wrong. We say that such a person is "acting out." Sometimes such actions are a signal that the person needs help.

A student who is facing any one (or several) of these problems should feel free to seek help. A school counselor, school nurse, teacher or principal will have a list of places where the student can find help. So can the pastor or youth minister at your church. Remember: no one has to suffer alone. There is always someone who can help. But first you have to ask for the help you need. Just do it!

4. Finally, some teens may feel that adults don't give them respect or listen to them. When young people think they are treated in a rude or demeaning way, they often will treat others that way. Ask yourself if you are being given the respect you feel you deserve. If not, ask why. You have the right to be treated respectfully, just as others do.

If you feel that someone in authority is treating you badly or is picking on you, talk the problem over with the person or with the school counselor. Don't create further problems for yourself and others by being rude.

## ***CONSEQUENCES OF INSUBORDINATION***

Most people do not think well of a person who is disrespectful and insubordinate. People may laugh and look at you for a little while, but you quickly get the reputation of being hard to get along with.

Giving people the wrong message through rudeness or insubordination may cause others to stay away from you. You may end up with few (or no) friends. It also does little to impress future employers or college officials. To hold a job or go to college, you need to be able to get along with all types of people. This is also true of families, the military, and almost any group. The ability to get along with others is key to success in any area of life.

### ***HOW TO SOLVE PROBLEMS WITHOUT INSUBORDINATION***

Often, it's not so much what is said as the way it is said that causes a problem. In each of our stories, the students could have expressed their anger and frustration in more acceptable ways. You CAN express anger and frustration in ways that don't offend. Simply saying that you are upset and stating the reasons will get the attention of others. You don't need to be rude and disrespectful; that only makes the problem worse.

If you are upset with your teacher or feel that his/her demands are unreasonable, you don't have to engage in a power struggle. Stepping beyond your bounds as a student will get you nowhere. The teacher will feel that he or she has to defend his or her position in public. A better way to handle the situation is to make an appointment with the teacher and talk through your feelings. Explain how you feel and why you think you may have been treated unfairly. Most teachers will be glad to talk with you and perhaps even work out a compromise.

If you're trying to get attention by not cooperating, try concentrating on some of the areas in which you may have talents--sports, theater, writing, music, hobbies, friends or recreational activities. As a result, you will feel better and you will get the attention you seek. But now it will all be positive attention, not negative!

# STUDENT RESPONSE PACKET # 2.1

## *INSUBORDINATION*

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

GRADE \_\_ HOMEROOM \_\_\_\_\_

### *WHAT TO DO*

Below are some questions about what you just read. These questions will help you learn why what you did was wrong and how you can avoid such problems in the future. Your teacher, a counselor, the principal, or your parents may read your answers. Your answers will not be graded.

For most of the questions, there are no "right" or "wrong" answers. The answers depend on you. Be honest with yourself as you write the answers. Take time to think before you write. The work you do on these Response Packets reflects your willingness to improve your behavior and attitude.

Write your answers in the spaces below the questions. If there is not enough room, write on the backs of these sheets. Be neat, spell correctly, use good grammar, and write in complete sentences.

1. This first set of questions involves role playing. Look back at the story of Tom and his teacher. Now pretend that you are Ms. Stanton. You are going to talk with Tom. What would you tell Tom? How would you discipline him? What would you say to him about your own feelings?

2. Now pretend that you are Tom. Write a few sentences explaining what you would say to each of the following people in your life:

Your mom:

The school counselor:

Ms. Stanton:

The school principal:

3. Now think about Tom's classmates. Imagine that you are someone in Tom's class. Write a few sentences describing how you see Tom and how his being in your class affects your ability to learn math.
4. Why do you think Tom acted the way he did?
5. Why do students like Tom need to be removed from the class?

6. Explain the following statement: Tom's personal problems should not create problems for everyone.
  
7. Was Tom being insubordinate when he talked back to Ms. Stanton? Why or why not?
  
8. Do you have any suggestions to help Tom improve the way he behaves in math class?
  
9. Was your behavior similar to Tom's? Describe why you were suspended.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
10. Why do teachers and principals need the respect and cooperation of students?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
11. Now look at the second story. Imagine that you are Polly. Write what you would say if Ms. Dickerson called you in for a conference.

12. Imagine that you are Ms. Dickerson. What would you say to Polly in that conference?
  
13. How might Polly's friends and the other students in her class feel about her?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
14. Why does Harold think the rules do not apply to him?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
15. Write a definition of "insubordination."
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
16. Write a definition of "respect."
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
17. List and explain four reasons why students are sometimes insubordinate or disrespectful.

18. What can happen if you disobey a teacher or principal? Make sure you mention something about what can happen to such a person's reputation.

# STUDENT RESPONSE PACKET # 2.2

## *INSUBORDINATION*

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

GRADE \_\_ HOMEROOM \_\_\_\_\_

### *WHAT TO DO*

Below are some questions about what you just read. These questions will help you learn why what you did was wrong and how you can avoid such problems in the future. Your teacher, a counselor, the principal, or your parents may read your answers. Your answers will not be graded.

For most of the questions, there are no "right" or "wrong" answers. The answers depend on you. Be honest with yourself as you write the answers. Take time to think before you write. The work you do on these Response Packets reflects your willingness to improve your behavior and attitude.

Write your answers in the spaces below the questions. If there is not enough room, write on the backs of these sheets. Be neat, spell correctly, use good grammar, and write in complete sentences.

1. Look back at the story about Harold. Why do you think Harold had so much difficulty adjusting to the rules of his new school?
  
2. Imagine that the assistant principal sends Harold to the school counselor. What might he or she say to Harold?

3. Now imagine that you're Harold in the conversation with the counselor. What would you say to help him/her understand your point of view?
  
4. If you were the school principal, how would you discipline Harold?
  
5. Do you think that other students should stay away from an insubordinate or disrespectful person? Explain.
  
6. This question deals with how you feel about being insubordinate. Instead of writing out why you were suspended, try to free-associate with certain words. For example, if the word is "anger," write as many words as you can think of that you associate with being angry. Try to write at least three or four words for each one listed below. There are no right or wrong answers; it is just a chance for you to express yourself and your feelings about not obeying.

Anger:

Defiant (refusing to obey):

Authority:

Temper:

Cooperative:

Respect:

Disrespectful:

Attention:

7. What does it mean when we say that someone "steps beyond his/her boundaries as a student"?
8. What is a power struggle? Have you ever been involved in a power struggle with someone?
9. Could you have done anything differently to avoid being suspended for not obeying?
10. Why do teachers need to have the cooperation of every student?
11. Why are insubordinate students often considered rude and uncooperative?
12. Why are successful people often the same people who respect the rights of others?

13. What is meant by the sentence "insubordination gets you nowhere?"
  
14. How do colleges feel about admitting students with a history of not cooperating and other discipline problems?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
15. How do employers feel about hiring someone with a record of suspensions for not obeying authority?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
16. Are there other ways you might have acted to avoid this suspension?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
17. Write two goals for yourself that will remind you to cooperate with people in authority.

18. What can help you be more cooperative? Can you change the way you act on your own? If not, where can you go for help?