

# **Pastoring Different Personality Types**

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In a school of supernatural ministry, differences in students' personalities can sometimes create friction and disconnection within a group. In fact, you may come across a student with a personality trait or behavioral tendency that seems to oppose your efforts to create a sense of community amongst students. If you have one of those students in your school, don't be alarmed! Through some specific strategies rooted in love, you can invite this student into the process of developing greater levels of connection within your school.

Below are some tips to pastor several personality types that you may come across: the silent observer, the dominator, the person who always has a problem, and the opposer. While these personality types are common, remember that you cannot put a student in a personality "box!" They will all carry different traits and qualities. As you get to know your students, we encourage you to always approach them and pastor with a heart full of love.

May the Holy Spirit grant you eyes of faith to see your students according to their destinies, not their behavior, as well as wisdom to speak truth into their lives. As you invite Him to lead you, you will see abundant fruit in the lives of your students!

## The Silent Observer

A common personality type you could come across within a group is one we call the “silent observer.” This student is often quiet, not as eager to express himself/herself, and tends to hide when there is opportunity to take risk and be activated in the supernatural.

While it is okay for a person to have a reserved personality, such reservation should not come at the expense of the group not being able to receive from his/her anointing, gifting, and experience. True community is created when everyone contributes because we are designed to receive edification and encouragement from one another.

### Discover the Why

Before we jump into how to interact with a “silent observer,” it is important to become aware of some reasons why this student may not feel comfortable sharing openly or participating in the context of a group. We will call a student with this personality type, “Lauren.”

- *Lauren may not know how to express herself.* Perhaps she just needs to see an example of what it looks like or getting more practice sharing in front of a group.
- *She may not trust leadership and/or the group.* Perhaps she experienced rejection or hurt from leaders or peers and needs healing from the past.
- *She may be afraid of what others think.* Again, Lauren may need healing and to experience acceptance and love from leaders and peers.

### Build Trust

The key to help this student overcome any of these or other internal challenges is to first build trust! This student needs to know that she is valued, accepted, and loved by you and others. As you convey to the student that she is an important member of your school community, you can create a greater sense of belonging for this student as well as others who need to experience inclusion.

### Draw in the Silent Observer

Here are some ideas about how you can draw Lauren, the “silent observer,” into a contributing role within a group:

- *Ask the group to prophesy over Lauren.* Call out the greatness in Lauren, which creates trust, value and belief in her relationships within your school.
- *Connect with her one-on-one.* Find out how Lauren is doing and ask open-ended questions about her school experience. For example, “How is school going for you? How is connecting with our group? What can I do to help you grow this year?” This will help the student feel known and valued.

- *Invite the her to share her testimony with the group and impart breakthrough.* You can also ask students to share positive feedback by having them highlight what parts of Lauren's testimony impacted them the most. This will create a greater level of ownership for the student and again, help her feel known and valued (Note: Make sure to ask the student prior to a meeting and give her ample time to prepare).

### **More Important Keys**

When pastoring a "silent observer," it is also important that you:

- *Don't become discouraged or frustrated.* Lauren may need to go at a slower pace to build comfortability in a group setting. We encourage you to look for and celebrate the students' areas of growth!
- *Avoid shaming, threatening, or forcing her to take risk too quickly.* This will take away from the students' feeling of safety and trust.
- *Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit is leading.* As you lead, invite the Holy Spirit to help Lauren build greater levels of connection and take risks in group setting. As you remain open and responsive to what the Holy Spirit reveals to you, you open up the opportunity for her to step into greater measures of growth!
- *Invite Lauren to participate.* Make sure you invite the student into an opportunity versus telling her to participate. In fact, you can start the conversation by saying, "I felt the Holy Spirit share [xyz] with me. Is that something you want to do?"

As you pastor a "silent observer," or any student for that matter, remember, fear or punishment should not be the driving force behind creating a community within your school! Students should support and receive from one another because they are aware of the perfect love of God that accepts them and fuels them to love one another. They will experience a sense of family when they are accepted, celebrated, and loved for the authenticity of who they are and what they add the group.

## The Dominator

While there is nothing wrong with a student being eager to share, participate, or lead in a school environment, a student with a dominating personality can sometimes tend to take away opportunities from other students. In fact, this personality can knowingly or unknowingly decrease the sense of inclusion and connection within a group. This happens when a “dominator” is allowed too much room to share, is forceful with words and behavior, or perhaps overly opinionated.

### Create Healthy Boundaries

To pastor this personality type, create healthy boundaries for participation that will protect a sense of inclusion for the group and for the “dominator.” We will call a student with this personality type, “John.” Here are two steps you can take to create those boundaries for John:

- *Communicate guidelines.* It’s important to communicate your expectations for group meetings and other forms of connection in your school. Tell the entire group that each student is valuable and should have the opportunity to contribute. Also, tell them that if a student is sharing too much, you will ask to move onto the next person out of consideration for the other students. This can especially help John, the “dominator,” become aware of communication boundaries within the group that he/she needs to honor.
- *Take advantage of the pause.* When John is not aware that he is taking too much time to share during a group meeting, as soon as he pauses, you can say something like, “Sorry to interrupt. That’s great what you are sharing, but I wanted to make sure that we give others the opportunity to contribute. Who else has something to share?”

### Encourage the Dominator to Adapt and Include

As you pastor John, help him develop the desire and tools to include and build others up during his group interactions. Like others with this personality type, John can often be so focused on accomplishing an end goal that he becomes less mindful of others’ needs. It’s important not to shut him down! Instead, funnel his personality to support connection and development within a group by encouraging him to become a champion of others.

You can support John by helping him develop vision and skills to include and encourage others to take risks as well as the discernment to recognize when he can capitalize on opportunities to shine. As a result, he can be a strong influencer and catalyst in your school environment!

Also, it is crucial that you do not assume that John is aware of how his actions are affecting others! In fact, the student probably just needs help to become mindful of how others are experiencing him. If John does not abide by the meeting guidelines you create (tries to dominate a conversation or activity), here are some steps you can take to help the student adapt and grow:

- *Explain to John how you and others experienced him.* Invite the student to share what was in his heart in those moments when he wants to dominate. For example, you can begin your conversation by saying, “When you did [BLANK], it felt like [BLANK]. What was going on in your heart in that moment?” Seek to understand John and avoid accusing him of having a wrong intention, which could cause him to become defensive. In fact, if you ask the student an open-ended question, you can discover John’s heart posture that instigated his action. Often times, negative, dominating behavior is triggered by fear. Creating this space to discuss the student’s behavior will allow you to address any lies or fears he may be believing that drove his negative actions.
- *Invite the student to become an influencer and connector within the group.* As previously shared, you can encourage John to positively influence others to contribute to the group. Convey to the student that he can encourage others to step out in new ways or new levels of risk. Also, help John develop discernment to understand how the Holy Spirit is moving during a group meeting and what individuals He is highlighting.
- *If needed, ask the student to take a break.* If you discover that John does not want to change or honor the needs of the group, ask the student to take a break from the group in order to heal. A group will be negatively affected if John does not try to change his negative behavior. It’s important to remove the student from the group and ask him to seek inner healing. If John does not want to receive such support and does not demonstrate a teachable heart, you may need to let him leave your school.

We have a saying at BSSM: “We don’t work harder on your problems than you do.” A student will change as much as he/she wants to change; it cannot be forced. If you experience this scenario with a “dominator,” it is important to let the student remove himself/herself from your school environment to protect a sense of community amongst your students.

It’s important to remember that a student’s experience at your school is a chapter in his/her life. It’s not the entire book! If you invite a student to experience greater levels of transformation and do not see immediate fruit in his/her life, trust that the Holy Spirit will nurture the seeds you planted. He is faithful to complete what He ultimately started (Philippians 1:6)!

## The Student Who Always Has a Problem

While pastoring your students, you may come across “the person who always has a problem.” Within a group setting, this student always seeks to be the center of attention by over sharing his/her problems. To help this student overcome potential feelings of victimization, he/she needs your support to learn how to draw encouragement, truth, and love from the Holy Spirit.

### Support and Empower

We will call a student with this personality type, “Jamie.” While the student’s behavior is rooted in neediness, she needs to be empowered with the truth that she is powerful and has full access to God, who is the true source of provision for all her needs. When you encounter Jamie, you can help her overcome unhealthy mindsets by activating her to an encourager and minister of truth and love. In fact, we encourage you to use discernment to invite her to encourage others through the gifts of the Spirit. It will bring empowerment to her life.

While leading groups, it is important not to allow Jamie to take away from the group setting. In fact, she needs your support to learn that a group is a place for her to share and get support, not a place for her to solve her problems. Here are some tips to help you facilitate group meetings with Jamie, “the person who always has a problem,” and support her growth journey:

- *Direct questions to other members of the group.* It’s best not to ignore Jamie completely if she has a tendency to overshare her problems. However, it is important to protect the group setting by not presenting every opportunity to share to her.
- *Stop Jamie if she is oversharing.* If Jamie is seeking attention and taking away from the group, you can stop her by saying, “Thank you for sharing. Let me talk to you more and pray with you after our meeting.”
- *Talk to Jamie privately about her need for attention.* Jamie may not be aware of how others are experiencing her or the guidelines for communication in the group. Take time to talk to Jamie about her needy tendencies. Jamie’s actions reveal that she has a legitimate need for attention and support, but needs to discover how to get those met outside of the group setting.
- *Direct Jamie to sources of support.* Find out if she is feeling disconnected from the Lord or from community. If Jamie needs more consistent support to overcome her neediness, direct her to extra pastoral, counseling, or coaching support that will help her heal from any past hurt, get needs met in healthy ways, and develop the mindset of an overcomer.
- *Empower Jamie to encourage others.* As previously shared, it is important to help this student develop a powerful mindset and lifestyle by teaching and empowering her to operate in truth and love. Help Jamie develop strong spiritual muscles in her life by supporting her to bring strength and encouragement to others.

## The Opposer

Another personality type you may come across as you lead your school is one we call the “opposer.” This student likes to “rock the boat” by asserting an opposite opinion or idea. While different outlooks are great and healthy to cultivate an empowering environment, the attitude and actions of an “opposer” does not bring life to a school environment.

### Confront the Opposer

We will call the student who likes to oppose, “Billy.” In a group setting, Billy will often share an opinion from a poor heart attitude that seeks to disrupt the flow of a group or undermine authority, rather than add to the group or support leadership. It is crucial to protect your school’s environment by addressing Billy’s behavior.

The key to confronting Billy or any student that demonstrates desire and action to oppose you, others students, or your school, is to communicate that they need to take ownership for their heart posture. Here are some practical tips on how to confront Billy, the “opposer” student:

- *Talk to Billy about how you and others are experiencing him.* Create a space for Billy to share by asking about his school experience. Communicate how you and the group are experiencing his actions. Also, invite him to share what is going on in his heart while opposing others.
- *Look for repentance.* See if Billy is repentant for his actions that are opposing your leadership and school. If he demonstrates a repentant and teachable heart, give him keys to be successful in your school environment. Also, take time to check-in with Billy to continue to support his growth.
- *Protect your school environment.* If Billy does not have an immediate change of heart, it is important to determine if he can remain in your school. Lack of honor towards authority will undermine your school’s purpose and environment. It’s important to protect your school environment and the journeys of your students by removing a student who does not seek to change. While it can be heartbreaking and difficult to let a Billy go, you cannot help him change if he is not seeking it. The best thing you can do for Billy is to share the truth in love, release him to choose to receive it, and trust the Holy Spirit to bring him breakthrough.

As you lead your school, you will encounter differences in students’ personalities, experiences, ages, and other unique facets of who they are that have the potential to create disconnection within a group. However, when you invite the spirit of love and truth into your meetings with students, discord and division cannot stand! Lean into Holy Spirit to guide you as you pastor and lead your students into the fullness of life God has for them.