

Discipline Procedures

Discipline Procedures Guidelines

- Set expectations for behavior which are appropriate for each age group.
- Have a policy that harsh discipline is never used.
- Notify parents of discipline guidelines in writing.

What has been the approach to discipline in your church?

Tips for Redirecting Attention

- Model or demonstrate, encourage the child to imitate the behavior.
- Give the child responsibility.
- Put your hand on the shoulder of a child.
- Ask the class to remind you of the rules.
- Be sure that your lesson has enough variety to attract the attention of each type of learner.

Offering Choices

Begin with assurance and the phrases

You are welcome...

Would you prefer...

- to play with this toy, or that toy?
- to hold my hand while we pray, or fold your hands?
- to work on your craft at this table, or at that table?
- to read, or pick someone else to read?

When Not to Offer Choices

- Physical violence
- Physical pestering
- Verbal abuse
- Teasing or put downs

Creating a Positive Environment

In preparation for each gathering, write down ten ways you will affirm the children under your care. Write down another 4-5 ways you will affirm a specific child who regularly struggles with behavioral issues. For a child in grade school who falls within this category, write down an additional one or two ways you can specifically involve or give him or her responsibility.

Developing Guidelines

Although each church should develop a policy guideline, when establishing behavior guidelines in a ministry setting the children can actually be your best advocates. Most grade school children know what appropriate guidelines should be. At the beginning of the year, have them tell you what the guidelines should be, and why each is important. Post the guidelines in the room. Whenever the class is having a significant struggle with the guidelines, remind them that these were guidelines which they set for themselves.

Partnering With Parents

Communicate Expectations

- Purpose of children's ministry
- Parents as spiritual mentors
- Behavioral expectations
- Procedures: Drop off and pick up times / sign-in sign out

Ways to Communicate

- Greet parents as they bring their children to class.
- Give a pamphlet of expectations and daily papers.
- Give a calendar of ministry and special events.
- Send out letters of encouragement.

Discipline Tips for Home and Church

Here are discipline strategies that can be applied by parents at home and children's ministry staff at church:

- Determine behavioral expectations ahead of time.
- Deal with the behavioral situation immediately.
- Be united in your approach.
- Say what you mean and follow through.
- Do not threaten a consequence you cannot follow through on.
- Offer choices, if appropriate
- Affirm
- Model forgiveness, care, and grace.

Addressing Unwanted Behavior

What Not to Do:

- Use physical violence
- Yell
- Disrespect or demean a child

What to Do:

- Stay Calm
- Describe the child's behavior
- Clearly explain the expectation
- Offer choices

When Should We Let Something Go?

- No danger to child or others
- No disrespect to others
- No agreed upon responsibility involved
- Sincere attempt
- Child is not experiencing significant frustration

When Should We Exercise Control to Correct?

- To safeguard
- As a consequence for inappropriate behavior
- As a consequence for not fulfilling an agreed upon responsibility.

When Should We Guide?

- To teach: show/tell/model
 - What they must know
 - How they must behave
- Beliefs, values, attitudes, tasks

Positive Consequences to Change Behavior

- Verbal praise for positive behavior
- Attention: smiles; winks; high fives; gentle touch on the arm or hand
- Give responsibility
- Fun activities
- Reinstatement of privileges

Negative Consequences to Change Behavior

- Take away minutes
- Time out
- Take a child to parents

Talking to Parents About an Inappropriate Behavior

- Stay calm
- Describe the child's behavior
- Clearly explain the expectation

Conflict Resolution (CAT)

- Calm Down
- Ask yourself what happened and how it made you feel.
- Talk about a positive plan of action which includes empathy, respect & fairness

Moral Dimension of Faith Formation:

Christian formation involves a moral dimension as we are transformed into the likeness of Christ which manifests itself through...

- God's Word
- Relationships
- Obedient Living
- Worship

Fruit of the Spirit

This is something you can use within or in addition to your overall policy.

A positive approach: Galatians 5:22-23

- Love
- Joy
- Peace
- Patience
- Kindness
- Generosity
- Faithfulness
- Gentleness
- Self-control

- Explain each fruit to the children.
- Have the children illustrate each fruit
- Post Galatians 5:22-23 in each group setting

When behavior is observed that is contrary to Gal. 5:22-23, point it out and have students review how God calls us to live.