

## RESOURCE SHEET



Most children want to please the adults in their lives. However, classroom management is one of the top issues faced by kids' ministry leaders today. If we are going to raise our standard, we need to look at the root of the problem.

### THE WHYS OF POOR BEHAVIOR

Understanding the "why" behind misbehavior can help us discover systems to put in place that allow kids to be successful and thus prevent poor behavior. Wouldn't you rather work to prevent poor behavior than deal with it. Why is the child acting out? What is the cause of consistent misbehavior?

**NEED FOR MORE ATTENTION:** There are a variety of reasons that some children need more attention than others. At times they will do whatever it takes to get what they need. Purposefully giving extra attention to these children can prevent outbursts and actions that fill their needs in negative ways.

**MASKING INSECURITY:** The class clown may prefer to be laughed with than laughed at. Be careful not to create situations where this child chooses to hide his lack of knowledge or his lack of ability to share knowledge by acting out. Look past the actions and look for the cause.

**FULL OF ENERGY:** It's the way God created them and is part of His plan to help them develop. Unfortunately, many teachers ignore that fact and attempt to suppress their energy instead of joining God in His plan. Look for opportunities to include movement in your sessions. Remember that a child has an approximate one-minute attention span for every year of age. Asking a four-year-old to sit still and listen for ten minutes goes against how she was created.

**TO BE IN CONTROL:** Some kids feel more secure when they are in control. They want to be the teacher and they look for ways to fulfill that desire, even if it means disrupting the teacher's plans. Look past the arrogance of their behavior and choose to foster their leadership potential. The thing that irritates you most about these children may be the very thing God wants to use for their success.

**STRUGGLE TO MANAGE THEIR ANGER:** Kids who "blow up" and are quick to "fight" may not have the skills to avoid these outbursts. Watch for opportunities to head off their poor behavior and give a child the chance to cool down and self-correct.

**BOREDOM:** When a child gets bored (or thinks he's bored) he starts looking for something to do. Most of the time it doesn't include the teaching aim. Some kids get bored easier than others and teachers need to be ready. Plan sessions that consider the children, their preferences, and their abilities.

### PREVENTION IS THE PREFERRED STRATEGY

We need strategies for fostering positive behavior and for setting appropriate expectations. These are tweaks we can make not necessarily trying to change the kids. After all, it's our actions that we're responsible for.

**START WITH PRAYER!** Prayer is not the last resort. It should be our starting place. Pray for each of your kids and spend a little extra time with the Lord for those who are your challenges.

## PREVENTION IS THE PREFERRED STRATEGY

**COMMUNICATE YOUR EXCITEMENT** about being with them. Remind kids often of what a privilege you consider it to be to get to be their leader. Thank God in their presence for the opportunity and ask for His help in teaching them His Word. Use your smile. It activates mirror neurons in their brain, and they want to smile back. Be aware of your face and attitude.

**USE THEIR NAME** as much as possible. This is a relationship builder. It lets kids know that you know them and are personally connected. It also does something physically in the brain. When your name is used in a respectful way, the blood flow increases to the area of the brain that processes self-perception.

**GIVE LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES.** This is for those kids who especially want to engage in the power play game and make you feel like they know more than you do. It may be that God has wired them for leadership and they want to stretch those muscles. Give them a small assignment and ask for their assistance/leadership in the coming week(s). You're building a relationship, and as that relationship grows you may discover their disrespect going away.

**MAKE BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS UNDERSTOOD.** Often, kids don't live up to our expectations because they don't know what we expect. If you have kids who don't understand their behavior is wrong, they won't know how to prevent poor behavior. Make your boundaries clear and then hold fast to them. Follow through with the consequences the first time. They want to know how far they are allowed to go; it gives them security. Don't make a mile-long list of rules but share that respect for each other is mandatory.

**CHOOSE KIDS RANDOMLY.** Kids like to confuse leaders about whose turn it is or imply that you're playing favorites. Whether you use an app to pick randomly or craft sticks, create ways to choose helpers, leaders, and teams so that it's obvious you're not personally showing preferences.

**USE PROXIMITY CONTROL.** Place yourself strategically so you can correct kids as quietly as possible. Sometimes just sitting down next to them fixes the problem. It helps kids to "save face" when you don't call them out in front of the class or correct them from across the room. In a large group setting, place volunteers strategically so they can take care of the proximity control while you're teaching the whole group.

**SEAT KIDS DURING INSTRUCTIONS.** While kids are seated, tell them what they should do and how it should be done. Keep it simple and concise, don't go through all the "if-this-happens" scenarios. After all the instructions have been presented, pass out any needed supplies and/or position the kids. For games play one round, if they didn't completely follow the directions, then pause to correct the course and start again.

**BE PREPARED!** Being prepared frees you up and enables relationship-building time, which is your best tool for classroom management. When that first child arrives, your room should be set up and you should be ready to engage with them on a personal level.

Go through each game, activity, seating arrangement, piece of equipment ... and try to imagine the unexpected. What can you check? What can you rearrange? What will you need more of? What can you move? What will you need in case something spills or breaks? More often than not, behavior issues can be connected to the sessions we plan or fail to plan!

**BE PROACTIVE.** Teaching in a proactive manner means you think of the well-being of the child and how you can help them be a better person by the way you correct them. It means you think before you do.

But a reactive approach to teaching usually ends up using punishment, rather than being discipline. Punishment stems from being impatient, angry or frustrated. Kids quickly sense which you are and react accordingly.

**At the end of the day, behavior is all about knowing and understanding the kids you teach. Read and study age level characteristics and learning styles. Try to learn as much as you can about the kids you will be teaching. Then implement systems that will allow kids to succeed. Consider the why and then create a solution.**

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