



Behavior Management of Preschoolers

It is important to prepare ahead of time how you as a preschool leader will manage behavior within a group of preschoolers. Preschoolers rely on safe and secure relationships with people whom they consistently encounter in their life. It is essential that you, as their leader, foster trust with the preschoolers in your care as you navigate both desirable and undesirable behaviors.

First, familiarize yourself with your church's child protection policy and discipline procedures. Identify safe behaviors between leaders and preschoolers. Stay up to date with any changes to policies or procedures while you lead a group of preschoolers, or children of any age. Teach your church's behavior management guidelines to every person who leads, teaches, or assists in Mission Friends classrooms. Post copies of your church's behavior management plan for quick reference.

Promote Positive Behavior

Planning engaging activities for preschoolers will often effectively hold their attention and help avoid undesired behaviors. During your time together, teach and model consistently enforced fair and simple classroom guidelines. This allows preschoolers to understand the expectations you have for them. This also allows them to become familiar with the structure of the environment over time without becoming overwhelmed.

Focusing on good behavior and emphasizing what preschoolers should be doing reinforces their understanding of expectations for them. Offering praise and encouragement allows their understanding of good behavior to expand and grow over time. Giving preschoolers positive attention, through a smile or showing interest in the child's interests, activities, and achievements, further builds security in their relationship with you. Demonstrate kind behaviors, which preschoolers will often seek to imitate.

Behavior Concerns

Preschoolers may exhibit a variety of behaviors of concern to leaders. Become familiar with behaviors that are associated with the developmental stages of preschoolers. When behaviors arise that must be addressed, use logical consequences and talk through the consequences with the preschooler, especially if he or she is four or five years old. For younger preschoolers, redirect the child's attention to another activity. It is important to maintain the fair and simple limits that you put in place ahead of time and that are expected within your group.

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Never use physical means of punishment in any situation. This includes hitting, spanking, slapping, shaking, pinching, biting, and so on. Use time out sparingly, as a chance for the preschooler to calm down. Consider implementing a calm down corner for preschoolers who need a place to decompress. Encourage preschoolers to visit the calm down corner whenever they feel overwhelmed.

With difficult or ongoing discipline issues, talk with parents or guardians about strategies used at home that could also be used at church. Take into account any diagnoses which might affect behavior, such as autism, ADHD, or ADD. If necessary, meet with parents to put together a specific plan of strategies for their child.

Above all, be an example of God's loving patience and forgiveness by treating preschoolers with kindness and respect, even at times when firmness is needed.

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