
Behavior Management of Students

It is important to prepare ahead of time how you, as a student leader, will manage behavior and potential conflict within a group of teenagers. First, be sure to first familiarize yourself with your church's child protection policy and discipline procedures. Identify safe behaviors between leaders and students within the context of your church and stay up to date with any changes to the policy or procedures.

Acknowledging that conflict could potentially arise among a group of adolescents within your group is a realistic expectation. It is important to keep in mind that adolescents' brains have not developed to the point where they can effectively weigh the risks of some behaviors. They also have an innate desire for independence. For those reasons, some of their actions may not be ill-intended and may just be a limit of their stage of development. Recognizing where the student is in their development may allow you, as a leader, to better aid them in managing conflict.

Understand that by keeping students engaged in learning and activities will lessen the opportunity for problems to arise within your group. However, it doesn't mean you won't have to correct a student or stop other conversations from happening. At the beginning of your time together, set fair and simple limits that are consistently enforced. And make sure that the same expectations apply to everyone in your group.

If conflict arises, be sure to actively listen to the adolescent's perspective and only speak once he or she has finished. At that point, only address the behavior itself rather than generalizing actions that the adolescent did. Generalizing may push the student away since they are more inclined to evaluate based on their emotions and they may become defensive if you lump the student into a group of behaviors of which they have never even thought. Be open about your own feelings, providing the student with reasons for why you are addressing the behavior in an effective way that they understand while also displaying an appropriate example of how conflict should be approached.

Finally, attempt to negotiate and compromise when you can and when it is appropriate to do so. This allows the student an opportunity to practice making good decisions. It also helps them grow in their problem-solving skills as they are guided by an adult who may think of some consequences that the teenager's brain does not immediately recognize.

Be sure to report any serious or ongoing concerns to your student minister or church staff.

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