

DISCIPLINE IN CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

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'Discipline' is one of the most frequently mentioned concerns of people in ministry with children. In response to that concern, this paper was first presented at *Back to Basics '07* — the annual Children's Ministry Training Day of the Resource Centre for Children's and Family Ministry, Uniting Church in SA.

The paper is now available for children's ministry leaders to use in training their own teams. The three parts can be presented at one time or separately. Allow a minimum of 30 minutes for each of the three main parts.

In addition to this document, presenters will also need:

- A Powerpoint document titled: ***Discipline in Children's Ministry powerpoint***
- A handout for participants titled: ***Discipline in Children's Ministry hand out.***

You can read the paper for your own information by skipping over the boxed instructions for presenters. You do not need the above two documents.

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DISCIPLINE IN CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

SLIDES

PRESENTER INSTRUCTIONS

Boxes like this one contain suggestions for the person presenting the information to a group.

As you present this subject, model some of the techniques that you are suggesting, eg:

- *Understand and practice your presentation.*
- *Create a comfortable physical atmosphere. Make sure everyone is seated where they can see you and the screen.*
- *Be prepared: distribute the handouts (and some pens or pencils) at the start of the session and have the Powerpoint presentation and projector ready to go.*
- *Use a variety of presentation techniques and vary the pace.*
- *Engage participants in activities that are achievable and clearly point toward the aim of the session.*
- *Adapt the content to the context — the specific needs of your group.*
- *Use an attention-getting method to regain participants' attention after small group discussions, eg you clap a short rhythmic pattern, participants copy the rhythm.*

- 1 Discipline in children's ministry. Have you ever heard anyone say that they never have any discipline issues? I suggest you ask if they have any children in their ministry program.

ATTENTION CUE *Explain the technique you are going to use to regain participants attention, for example:*

At times during this session there will be opportunity for group discussion or sharing with a partner. You will know the discussion time has ended and your attention needs to come back to me when I do a clapping rhythm.

When you hear me clap, you need to copy the rhythm. Let's have a practice.

Clap, clap-clap-clap, clap.

Well done.

- 2 **INTRODUCTIONS** *If participants do not know you, introduce yourself. If they do not know one another, give them an opportunity to share in small groups: their names and a short explanation of their ministry program.*
Recall them with the clapping exercise.

- 3 The aim of this session is to help you be more effective in your ministry of making disciples. To do that we will look at some basic concepts and techniques of discipline in Christian children's ministry settings.

Our three basic topics are:

1. Understanding discipline — an introduction.
2. Creating a climate for positive behaviour — what to do before you start your session.
3. Managing behaviour — what to do when you're with the children.

4

A. DEFINITION OF DISCIPLINE

What do you think of when you hear the word 'discipline'?

5

Show images of 'discipline' on the screen – sit in corner, rules, gold star, etc.

Ask participants to work in small groups to come up with a definition of 'discipline'. There is space on page 3 of their handout to write their ideas.

Use the clapping rhythm to get attention.

Share definitions with the whole group.

6

Here are some descriptions about discipline.

- The root word of discipline means 'to disciple' which is to teach, instruct or train.
- Discipline should be a positive process rather than a negative battle. (Tool Box)
- The goal of discipline is for the child to reach a level of maturity that will allow him one day to function as a responsible adult in society. (Chapman & Campbell)
- [Discipline requires] guidance by example, modelling, verbal instruction, correcting wrong behaviour, providing learning experiences and much more. (Chapman & Campbell)

7

- Discipline and punishment are not synonymous . . . punishment is a type of discipline. (Chapman & Campbell)
- Discipline should not be confused with control. Discipline focuses on the learner, while control emphasises the teacher. (Tool Box)

8

B. BASIC PRINCIPLES OF DISCIPLINE**Why do we discipline?**

Because every society has standards that are considered right and wrong, acceptable and unacceptable. These standards may differ from place to place and over time but all societies will have rules, laws and ethical understandings.

Choosing to live an immoral life harms the individual and society. As we saw in the descriptions about discipline — we discipline to train, teach and equip children to become responsible and socially accepted members of society. (Chapman & Campbell)

9 How should we discipline? A Christian approach

It's a hard question to answer because each teacher or volunteer will have different "standards" for acceptable behaviour and different methods that they believe are acceptable for disciplining children.

It's also hard to answer because we are seeking to incorporate Christian love in discipline. We want to have a safe program and some sort of order — without the structured behaviour expectations of a school.

And how should we discipline when we might only be with this group for one month a year, or we see them for only 45 minutes each week? (O'Neal)

START WITH LOVE

The best place to start, when thinking about how to discipline, is Christian love.

10 "We will discipline in the context of love". (Buckland)

Real love, including God's love, has boundaries. Children will learn that discipline can be associated with unconditional love because the children know that you care for them.

11 "Discipline without love is like trying to run a machine without oil. It may appear to be working for a while but it will end in disaster." (Campbell & Chapman, p114)**12 Love looks out for the interests of another, so does discipline. So discipline is an act of love. And the more a child feels loved, the easier it is to discipline that child. Lack of love leads to lack of respect. Practice unconditional love; then discipline.****13 IN-ATTENTION**

"There is no such thing as an inattentive child".

Invite participants to respond to the statement in small groups.

Give 2 minutes.

Use your clapping rhythm to get attention.

Use slides and read the teacher comments dramatically to demonstrate teachers' responses to apparent in-attention:

14 (sarcastic) Meg! The feathers are for gluing on the paper bird.**15 (fed up) James, stop wandering off!****16 (puzzled) Mark, what have you done to your drawing?**

- 17 (whiny) Andyyyyy, you know you're not to have gum here.
- 18 (stern) No Karen, you only went five minutes ago.
- 19 (shout) Sam, stop yelling!
- 20 (yelling) STEVE! No, I said pretend to be Samson!
- 21 (screaming) I said, "Eyes this way!"
- 22 "There is no such thing as an inattentive child"?!?

Invite small groups to share the responses they had to this statement.

Children are always being attentive to something; they just might not be attentive to what the teacher wants them to be focused on.

Does this mean we are the ones with the "discipline" issue?

"The behaviours and attitudes that we think create discipline problems are points of pressure for us in ministry. They are moments when we are not in control, when our plans are not working, or when someone is pushing against our authority."

(Buckland, p146)

23 RESPONDING TO CHALLENGES

How we respond to discipline challenges is crucial to our ministry because:

- (1) . . . we are modelling how to respond under pressure. This is significant for children, who are always watching.

We need to be modelling to children how they can choose to respond when they are feeling out of control or having someone "pushing their buttons".

- 24 (2) . . . the child's self esteem is in our hands.

A child's self image is a determining factor in his/her behaviour. We need to help children to develop healthy self-images. This means we will not use negative words (eg, dumb, stupid, clumsy) when correcting a child. Instead we will build them up to have a balanced sense of self worth by praising them when they are caring, thoughtful, helpful. (Tool Box)

- 25 (3) . . . primary age children have a highly developed sense of fairness and they will get upset if they feel someone is being treated unfairly. (Buckland; Chapman & Campbell)

26 C. CAUSES OF MISBEHAVIOUR

Invite participants individually to write a quick list of reasons they can think of for children to misbehave in their handouts on page 5.

Allow about 45 seconds.

Invite people to call out some of their responses. Then recap:

There is a great variety of causes behind misbehaviour: illness, worry, pain, low self-esteem, anger, curiosity.

If children have any type of disability, eg. developmental, physical or intellectual, then you need to consult with their parents for appropriate behaviour management strategies for those children.

- 27** In the book *The Five Love Languages of Children* (Chapman and Campbell) the authors suggest that “the main cause of misbehaviour is an empty emotional tank.” It’s like a water tank — water needs to go into the tank before any water can come out. People have “emotional tanks” and we need love poured into us so that we can love others.

So if a child has an empty emotional tank — if they feel unloved — then this will cause misbehaviour.

28 THE BIG QUESTION

So when a child misbehaves we need to ask ourselves

“What does my child need when he/she misbehaves?” rather than

“What can I do to correct his/her behaviour?”

Young children’s behaviour is often a way of pleading with us to spend time with them, to hold them, to give ourselves to them in a personal manner. We need to remember they are children and that we have the precious responsibility to fill their love tanks first, and then train them to move on in their journey.

Misbehaviour should not be condoned. However, if we deal with it wrongly — either too harshly or too permissively — we will have further problems with the child.

29 PHYSICAL PROBLEMS

What does my child need? If the child’s love tank is fine, the second most common cause of misbehaviour is physical need.

The younger the child, the more behaviour will be affected by physical needs: pain, thirst, fatigue, illness.

Problem behaviour can usually be quickly relieved if its source is physical.

CLASSROOM ATMOSPHERE/TEACHER’S ATTITUDE

If the love tank and physical condition seem OK, then there may be an issue with the child, the classroom atmosphere or in the teacher’s attitude.

- 30** *Draw participant’s attention to page 6 of their handout for a list of questions that suggest some ideas in each of these areas.*

COMPLEX CAUSES

Knowing that misbehaviour does not have any one simple trigger is a good starting point for a teacher.

“Each student has an individual personality and a set of already learned behaviours. When mixed with different children, new experiences, a new teacher, different classroom rules and new material to learn, even children themselves may be surprised by the way they act and react.” (O’Neal, p35)

Take a short stretch break before beginning Part 2.

DISCIPLINE IN CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

PART 2: CREATING A CLIMATE FOR POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR

PREVIEW

Before you even meet with the children there are a number of things that you can do to help prevent discipline issues arising.

- 31** “Many behaviour problems will be avoided if your program captivates the children. Therefore, good preparation and presentation will form the basis of a good behaviour management strategy.” (Essential Guide, p22)

You may draw participants' attention to page 7 of the handout. They can follow the following points in the handbook.

32

D. PREPARATION

Preparation is the first general area where you can create a climate for positive behaviour and minimise misbehaviour.

Preparation begins long before your session. It includes your own spiritual care and growth and your own professional development — like this training experience.

Never ever walk into a session unprepared.

KNOW WHAT YOU ARE DOING

Preparation for a session of ministry with children is about knowledge and understanding:

- Know the general characteristics of the age group and know your particular children.
- Know yourself — find methods that work well for your own individual teaching and learning style.
- Know the aims of the program — the long-term goals for the children
- Know the objectives of the specific session. What is the main concept you wish the children to learn in the session? How should the children be changed by what they do in the session?

Being clear about the aims and objectives will keep your teaching focused and keep you from being sidetracked by minor distractions.

- Know the content. Use your curriculum materials. Pay particular attention to the overviews and background information of a lesson. Research your own questions and anticipate questions that your children may have.

PRAY

‘Prayer-paration’ is essential — invite God into your preparation and planning

33 PREPARATION ON THE DAY

So far we’ve been talking about things to do well before the session. There are also some things you need to do immediately before the session.

- Arrive early enough to set up your teaching area.
- Have your session plans and notes intact.
- Have all the supplies on hand.

E. PLANNING

You may simply read through the following list of planning suggestions. Alternatively, invite participants to read through the list individually in their handout on page 7 and then ask volunteers to ask questions or tell stories of personal experiences related to the points.

- 34** The second key to creating a climate for positive behaviour is planning.
- Plan experiences that will make the learning meaningful and that are relevant to the children.
 - Be interesting. Plan ways to make your sessions thought provoking and fun.
 - Plan to use a variety of learning and teaching techniques. Offer more than one way to learn in each session, because every class will have children who learn in different ways.
Use methods that include all of the senses.
 - Plan to give children choices.
 - Try out crafts, games and activities before the session so you can anticipate difficulties and have all the materials gathered before the session.
 - Plan a sequence of activities that is appropriate to the children's schedule.
Eg. If children come out to you after sitting still in church for 20 minutes, it doesn't make sense to sit them down again and listen to a Bible story.
 - Plan a regular routine.
You may print your schedule on a poster/chalkboard so that the children know what to expect. For younger children, you might want to draw pictures.
 - Plan as a team. Decide who on the team will do which tasks or do which role for that session.
 - Plan for children with special needs — whether they are hearing impaired, have limited reading ability or behavioural issues. An extra helper may be an answer.
 - Plan for success. Plan activities that children can do successfully.
The ultimate success of your teaching — transforming the child's life — is in God's hands. Pray for it. Do your best. Then leave it to God.
 - Plan ways for all the children to be actively involved in different aspects of the session:

- 35** *Assign various activities of a typical children's ministry session (singing, story telling, application, prayer) to different small groups. Ask each group to brainstorm ways children can be actively involved.*

Use the clapping rhythm to regain their attention.

Invite groups to share their findings.

36 EVALUATION

Planning also involves evaluation. Evaluating what you did in one session will help you prepare and plan for future sessions.

Some questions you may ask yourself regularly are:

- Did we achieve the objectives of the session?
- Is the routine working?
- What are the children enjoying? Why?
- What are they not enjoying? How can this be changed?
- Are a variety of teaching techniques being used?

37 *Invite participants to take a moment to reflect on how they currently prepare and plan for sessions. They may write down, in their handout on page 8, one or two practices that they would like to begin, change, or drop in response to this discussion.*

Encourage them to talk over these proposed changes with a member of their ministry team who can help them think through the issues, encourage them and hold them accountable for the changes.

F. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

An appropriate physical environment can help minimise discipline problems.

Some aspects of the physical environment are within your control; others are in the hands of a property committee or finance committee. Try to work with these people; help them see the importance of ministry with children and how they can make decisions (and do some physical work) that will contribute positively to that ministry. In the shorter term, do what you can to make your space part of a climate for positive behaviour.

38 First and foremost the physical environment must be safe.

Try to create a welcoming, interesting physical environment.

- Have child-sized furnishings and appropriate floor coverings.
- Personalise space with children's artwork.
- Keep things you want children to see at their eye level.
- Have materials accessible and available.
- If possible have special areas for different kinds of activity —story-telling, craft, games.

Regardless of the space you are working in, attempt to minimise distractions, eg

- Screen off equipment or materials used for other activities and not relevant to your program.
- Minimize interfering noise.
- Arrange to have children facing away from distractions — other groups in the same room, windows that open onto an active road. (O'Neal)

39 *Invite participants to share with a partner some things they have done (or seen done) that create a welcoming physical environment for children's ministry. Use your clapping rhythm to regain their attention.*

G. YOU, THE TEACHER

Preparation, planning, physical environment. The last aspect of creating a climate for positive behaviour that we will look at is — you. You can create a climate for positive behaviour by the way you interact with the children.

You may simply read through the following points.

Alternatively, go 'around the circle'. Invite each participant to read out one point and comment on it, if they wish to do so.

- 40
- **Relationships.** Build relationship. Get to know your children. Care about and accept all children. Smile often.
 - **Respect.** Show respect and consideration towards the children. Allow freedom to ask any question. Listen to their ideas and feelings they express and encourage them to cooperate with each other.
Give children choices and reasons whenever possible. Let them know that you think they are responsible, capable people who can make good choices and decisions based on what they know and who they are.
 - **Humility.** Sit down with the children or bend down to their level; don't tower above them.
 - **Consistency.** Be fair and consistent. If you let children behave one way this week and next week you decide that behaviour is un-acceptable, they become confused. Be firm, fair and consistent.
 - **Boundaries.** Set a standard and maintain it. Have definite limits for behaviour.
 - **Expectations.** Let the children know what your expectations are for them. Remember, your children tend to live up (or down!) to our expectations.
 - **Attention.** It's important all children get positive attention. Pay attention to the quiet children. The disruptive ones will always get the attention they are seeking. Also if the more disruptive children see that other children are getting attention they may follow suit.
- 41
- **Language.** Take care in selecting words that your children can understand. Define or explain any words that you are not sure they understand.
Talk *with* kids, not *to* them and don't talk down to them,
Be conscious of the way your words can make a difference to a child's sense of self-worth.
Try to make non-judgmental comments that encourage the child to tell you more about his or her work or idea. For example, when looking at a child's drawing of something you can't identify, it's better to say something like "I can see that you really like red," than "What is it?"
 - **Instructions.** Give clear, concise directions.
Break tasks into smaller parts. A simple rule of thumb is to not give more than three directions at one time.
Delay giving new instructions until the current one is completed. Always check that the children have understood the instructions.

- **Special needs.** Be aware of some of the unique needs of the children in your class and offer individual directions.
- For example, if a child has a hearing loss in their right ear. Stand on their left side when giving the class instructions and then after the children begin working check with the child to be sure they understood the directions. Sometimes it helps to give written or visual (pictures) with oral directions or to model each of the directions you are giving.
- **Teacher : child ratio.** Finally, be aware of the number of leaders and the number of children.

Different organisations have different expectations but a helpful guide is that the age of the child determines the number of adults required, for example have one adult for every three three-year-olds or every ten, ten year olds.

There should always be two adults in every room, not including teenage helpers/assistants.

42 THE NEW MODEL

This discussion about the teacher creating a climate for positive behaviour probably would not have taken place three to four generations ago. The traditional model for Sunday School had the teacher at the top of a power hierarchy and children at the bottom.

Today we are working in a society where expectations of power have changed. We have a new model. It's more like a circle with values/vision in the centre and the children and teacher around in a circle.

Or we can think of a model in which the teacher and children are fellow disciples of Jesus.

Before moving to the next part, invite participants in small groups to reflect on the new model and its implications for their role in managing behaviour.

DISCIPLINE IN CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

PART 3: BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

SLIDES

43 REVIEW AND PREVIEW

So far we have looked at descriptions about discipline, why we discipline and how we should discipline.

We have discussed causes of misbehaviour and suggested some preventative strategies, including our preparation and planning, the physical environment and the ways we interact with the children.

Now, we're going to look at strategies that help us to manage behaviour right there 'at the chalk face' while we are face to face with our group of children. We'll also look at how we might respond to specific behaviour management incidents.

44 TRICKS OF THE TRADE

In her book *More than Glue and Glitter: A Classroom guide for volunteer teachers*, Debbie Trafton O'Neal says:

"There are no magic formulas . . . But there are "tricks of the trade" . . . basic, tried and true ideas that, when adapted to fit the unique needs of both you and your students, can help your classroom be one that is manageable and a joy in which to teach!" (O'Neal)

It's those 'tricks of the trade' that we're going to look at now.

45 DISCIPLINE 'INCIDENTS'

As a group, brainstorm discipline incidents that participants have had to deal with recently.

Make a list of the problems on a whiteboard or butcher paper.

Group the problems into related kinds of problems, eg

- *absences, lateness,*
- *rudeness, sullenness,*
- *rebellion/defiance, resisting*
- *disruption of group*
- *fighting, arguing*
- *bullying*
- *being "left out" or "lost".*

Keep your list so that you can refer to it later.

DISCIPLINE STRATEGIES

Now brainstorm some strategies of "what works" in dealing with the negative behaviour while training children in a positive way.

Make a list of the "solutions" on a whiteboard or butcher paper.

Group the problems into related kinds of solutions, eg

- *Appropriate consequences*
- *Deciding as a team – expectations and management strategies*
- *Working with kids – solutions "fair"*
- *Being positive – reinforce good behaviour.*

Keep your list so that you can refer to it later.

Refer to your brainstorming lists throughout the following discussion, to affirm that the group already had the 'answers'.

46

H. RULES AND EXPECTATIONS

Let's look at some of these strategies in more detail, beginning with rules and expectations.

RULES

Rules and routines offer children security because they let them know where they stand. Consistent expectations and logical consequences will make behaviour problems easier to handle.

TAILOR-FIT RULES

Rules need to be clearly stated. It's best to tailor-fit your rules for order and safety to each class or ministry program.

This can best be achieved by including children in deciding — at the start of a term or unit — what rules are needed so that everyone in the class can feel safe and learn.

Write the children's ideas on the board and discuss which rules everyone thinks are the most important.

If you, as a teacher, have any additional rules or expectations that you absolutely must have, explain these to your children. Let the children re-state your rules in their own words so that you are sure everyone understands what you expect.

Anything that is unsafe or disruptive to the learning of another child should not be allowed and becomes a "don't" rule. But try to limit the number of "don't" rules.

Try to create a positive list of expectations for the children. You can do this by turning some of the "don'ts" into "dos" eg 'Don't run inside' becomes 'Walk inside.'

And by including 'do' rules such as 'Always bring your Bible to class' or 'Be sure to share with others.'

You might include a couple of silly rules, just for fun!

47 SAMPLE RULES

Here's an example of rules for a group of older children:

"We have these rules to ensure that everyone can be safe and happy in our class:

1. we listen to whoever is talking
2. we show sensible and responsible behaviour
3. we respect other people and their property
4. we follow teacher instruction
5. we stay on task"

48 REMIND AND ENFORCE

It's important to remind children of the rules regularly. You can do this by having the rules on a poster somewhere in the room, this particularly helps when someone else is filling in for you.

It's also important to enforce your rules consistently.

Invite participants to share any rules they currently have in their ministry program.

I. ATTENTION GETTERS

Attention getters — like the clapping rhythm we have been using — are an example of a rule or practice that can be fun and effective in guiding children into positive behaviour.

49 *What are some ways to get children's attention?*

Demonstrate and practice some of the common ways of getting the attention of a group of children.

50 *Signals where the teacher does an action until all the children join in:*

- *raise your hand* ▪ *hands on head* ▪ *clapping rhythm*

Signals that the teacher gives and then waits for full attention before continuing:

- *"Freeze!" Wait for full attention before speaking.*
- *"Eyes this way!" When all of the children have made eye contact with you, you will see that you have everyone's attention.*
- *Ring a bell or a timer* ▪ *Play music*

Other techniques:

- *Vary the volume of your voice. For instance, whisper instead of raising your voice to speak above the class. When a teacher does this, the children usually begin to talk more softly too.*
- *Write instructions on the chalkboard. For example, "Take out your Bible and find Chapter 5 in Matthew. When you have found it, fold your hands on your desk."*

51 Decide on a signal to use for gaining children's attention and let children practice responding.

Also decide on a signal for children to use in gaining your attention. The most common signal in a large group setting is raising their hands. Encourage this practice by responding only to those who do this and ignoring those who don't.

52

J. MINOR DISTURBANCES

INADVERTENT DISTURBANCES

Minor disturbances, even though they may be minor, can be annoying and frustrating. They are often the ones that happen regularly.

Things like tapping pens, tapping feet, fidgeting, whispering between two children, or not giving eye contact when you are speaking, may not be wilful misbehaviour, but a habitual behaviour pattern or a simple way of releasing tension.

It is generally best to keep the program flowing by ignoring such behaviour if it does not disrupt the group. Then talk with the child concerned later.

Once you have explained privately to the child why a particular behaviour is a problem for you, you can often remind them of the issue and gain their cooperation by

- standing near the child
- establishing momentary eye contact
- looking at the child and pausing and waiting until they respond
- using a simple gesture, like shaking your head or putting your finger to your lip for silence
- removing distractions

- praising positive behaviour, eg "Johnny! Well done for sitting quietly. I can see you are listening well".

53 REQUESTS

Requests are pleasant positive ways of controlling behaviour.

Requests tell a child that you respect their feelings and opinions and that their feelings and opinions matter.

Requests also tell a child that you expect them to take responsibility for their own behaviour. Requests guide and encourage children to take responsibility. Children then feel they are in partnership with you in the moulding of their character.

Requests are also the best way of giving instructions, as they are pleasant, thoughtful and considerate.

COMMANDS

In dangerous situations, or if making a request fails, you may need to issue a forceful command.

Commands are negative means of control because they require harsher tones, which often elicit irritation, anger and resentment in the child, especially if used frequently.

Also, the nonverbal messages accompanying commands are generally negative. Commands convey that the child's feelings and opinions are not important to you and you are taking all of the responsibility on yourself for their behaviour — "I expect you to do what I say." The child has no choices or opportunity for feedback or discussion. (Chapman and Campbell)

- 54 *Invite participants in small groups to devise one short role-play that incorporates a teacher giving a request and another role-play in which the teacher gives a command.*

Use your clapping rhythm to regain attention.

Invite groups to present their role-plays.

You may ask the person who role-plays the child: 'How did you feel about that?'

55

K. MAJOR DISTURBANCES

Do not ignore intentional, attention-getting behaviour. Deal with the problem at once.

Remember to look behind the presenting problem to consider the real reason for the negative behaviour, eg rejection by friends, family disturbances, a program that is not engaging enough. Use the questions we looked at earlier: What might this child need? Is their emotional love tank full? Is it a physical problem?

- 56 Also remember to be flexible and prepared to change your program if something is not working.

No matter how well you prepare, with children you need to expect the unexpected. Children are great at getting off track and asking impossible questions, so be open to their ideas and views and be flexible and willing to adapt as needed. Look for "teachable moments." For example, if a thunderstorm starts and the children get distracted, set aside your lesson on the Lord's Prayer and talk about the wonder and power in God's creation. By being flexible you can turn what is a distraction in your original plans into a "teachable moment."

57 THREE STEPS

Here are three simple steps for correcting a child who causes major disturbances in your program.

Step 1: Warning Give the child a simple yet clearly understood warning that their behaviour is unacceptable.

If misbehaviour continues –

Step 2: Private consultation Warn the child that if the misbehaviour continues disciplinary action will occur, eg he/she will be taken home. Don't threaten disciplinary action unless you are prepared to carry it through.

If misbehaviour continues –

Step 3: Disciplinary action Carry out the disciplinary action decided upon.

58 EFFECTIVE CORRECTION: IN PRIVATE CONSULTATION:

Speak with the child alone but for safety and care reasons make sure you are not out of sight of the group. Perhaps stand just outside the doorway or on the far side of the room away from the majority of other children.

By removing the child you allow a short time to pass between the problem and discussion — allowing both the teacher and child to become objective about it.

You also remove the possibility of the child feeling embarrassed, looking to the peer group for support and defence, or even becoming a "hero", which benefits no one.

When speaking with a child make sure you talk about the negative misbehaviour and not about the child as negative. Keep the conversation concise.

Let the child tell you what he or she did wrong. Prompting may be necessary. Questions such as "What were you doing?" and "What should you be doing?" may help.

Don't ask why-questions, such as "Why did you hit Pam with your pencil?" Asking why-questions will only result in excuses and reasons. Instead have the child tell you what he or she did. If this doesn't work, tell what you saw, but still refrain from asking why.

Next, be sure the child understands why the behaviour is unacceptable and should not be repeated.

Outline the options available to the child. Place the responsibility for the child's actions on the child's shoulders, not yours. Encourage the child to make good choices.

59 Explain a positive behaviour option for the child to choose if those circumstances arise again.

This helpful tool for kids was on a poster in the office of a Christian Pastoral Support Worker (previously called school chaplains):

HIGH 5: *Ignore *Walk away *Talk friendly *Talk firmly *Report

60 LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES

Some repeated misbehaviours require a logical consequence — one that ties directly to the behaviour. Time out may be a logical consequence to an unwillingness to work cooperatively with a group.

For example: A small group is playing a game. Timothy gets upset and throws the game board.

Timothy may need to sit out of the game as a logical consequence of disrupting the

other children's game.

It can be very helpful for the children themselves to determine the logical consequence that ties with the inappropriate behaviour. Together you can define the problem and explore different alternative consequences. After all the options are discussed, involve the child in choosing the best alternative and then following through on it.

We will now look briefly at two discipline techniques that are frequently discussed and may be appropriate in special circumstances, but which are used sparingly in children's ministry situations.

61

L. PUNISHMENT

Punishment involves placing a negative element into the child's environment as a consequence of misbehaviour. It is the most negative and also the most difficult method of managing behaviour.

As difficult as punishment is to use, you must be prepared to use it appropriately. Plan ahead with your team to decide appropriate punishments for various offences. Keep in mind two old adages:

- "The punishment must fit the crime". Children are aware of fairness and will react negatively if punishment is too lenient or too severe.
- "One size does not fit all." What one child sees as a deprivation, another may see as a reward or happy release.

62

Invite participants in small groups to discuss when they might use punishment in their ministry context and what type of punishment may be appropriate.

Use your clapping rhythm to regain attention.

You can see that the issue of punishment is complex.

Why do we not use punishment as a primary way of disciplining children?

63

Apart from the legal and ethical problems of punishment when it takes physical or emotional forms . . .

- Punishment does not deal with the root problem of misbehaviour.
- Punishment may provoke anger and resentment — deepening, rather than relieving the problem.
- Punishment may leave the teacher with feelings of guilt and loss of confidence.
- While good discipline usually produces trust and love, control and punishment often produce guilt and fear.

64

M. BEHAVIOUR MODIFICATION

Behaviour modification is another technique that is used for discipline. It is similar to methods used in training animals.

Behaviour modification uses both positive reinforcement (giving a reward for good behaviour) and negative reinforcement (withdrawing privileges for inappropriate behaviour).

Invite participants to call out other examples of each of the following categories of positive reinforcement:

65 POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT

There are several categories of positive reinforcement rewards:

- **Social** positive reinforcement, eg, getting to talk quietly or sit with a friend
- **Tokens**, eg, points for good behaviour that add up and when a child gets 5 tokens/points, they receive a prize.
- **Activity**, eg, "Because you've all worked hard, we're going to play a game or have free time".
- **Tangible**, eg, stickers

Invite participants to call out other examples of each of the following categories of negative reinforcement:

66 NEGATIVE REINFORCEMENT

Call out some negative reinforcements.

Negative reinforcement (withdrawal of privileges) can be from these categories.

- **Social**, eg, being moved away from their preferred small group
- **Activity**, eg, taking away access to a computer or a game

It is not recommended that tokens given as a reward for good behaviour be removed for bad behaviour. The child may then never receive enough tokens to get to the end reward. This removes the motivation of getting the tokens which removes the motivation for good behaviour.

- 67** Behaviour modification is helpful at times, especially for specific, recurring behavioural problems for which a child shows no remorse. But, like punishment, it should be used sparingly.

Why not use behaviour modification regularly?

- While we all use occasional rewards and withdrawal of privileges as discipline techniques, full-blown behaviour modification takes time, consistency, effort and persistence. It is simply too hard to use in the ordinary children's ministry situation.
- The foundation of behaviour modification is that you get a reward only if you behave in a certain way. This does not deal with the child's feelings or emotional needs and cannot convey unconditional love.

68

L. CASE STUDIES

Invite participants, in pairs to look at the case studies on page 13 of the Handout. They can choose a few different scenarios and work out how they might respond. Use your clapping rhythm to regain attention.

DISCIPLINE IN CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

PART 4: CONCLUSION

SLIDES

RECAP

We're coming to the end of our exploration of Discipline in Children's Ministry.

- 69** Hopefully now you have a better understanding of discipline in children's ministry as a significant part of the way we train disciples.

Our discipline begins in love.

It is expressed in the way we prepare to meet with our children and the way we interact with them.

70 HANDOUT

There are a few things in your handout that we have not dealt with in this session:

- some questions to help you analyse the origins for your discipline style -page 14
- a section about a child's remorse, an adult's forgiveness -page 14
- some tips on working with overactive children -page 15.

71 RESPONSE

What will you do with all this information?

- Please don't feel overwhelmed. Take some time to review your notes and see how it all applies to you.
- Recognize the many things that you are doing well.
- If you feel that you want to make changes, don't try to take it all on board at once. Concentrate on one new approach a week (or a term).
- Ask other members of your team — and trained educators in your congregation for help and advice in sorting out what is appropriate in your own situation.

FIND JOY

And finally . . . Find joy in teaching.

- 72** Smile, be enthusiastic, share your passion, enjoy the story, exude energy and always be ready to laugh.

- 73** Love the children in your group as children of God. Affirm them, support them, pray for them, pray with them and let the Spirit guide you.

- 74** Discipline is an awesome task requiring wisdom, imagination, patience, and great amounts of love. (Chapman and Campbell, p113)

You may end your session with prayer.

DISCIPLINE IN CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

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