

# The 'S to Guiding Children's Behavior

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One of the most challenging aspects of children's ministry can be dealing with children's behavior. For some children, their behavior is never an issue. They come in, sit down, participate and do everything you, the worship leader, ask them to do. Did you realize you guided their behavior? The sad fact is many people only recognize a child's behavior when the child is not doing what the teacher "feels" the child should be doing. To assist you in guiding the behavior of the children in your ministry, try the following:

**Always model Christ's love for children and adults.** Children learn Jesus loves them as they sense the adults in their lives love them. Children need to know they are loved and accepted for who they are, not for what they do or how they behave.

**Be an example.** If you want children to do as you say, then do what you say. If you want children to actively participate, then participate with them. Children will follow your actions more than your words.

**Consistency is key.** Work with the other children's ministry leaders in your church in regard to what is expected of the children. What is expected in one ministry should be the same for others. Children are easily confused when there are different standards with different ministries.

**Do not expect too much.** Children are not little adults; they are children, and they need time to be children.

**Explain activities before giving out resources.** It is difficult for children to listen to the rules of a game while holding the equipment. Explain the rules before handing out the equipment.

**Find time to know what is going on in a child's world.**

**Give choices when possible, but make sure the choices are ones you are willing to accept.**

**Hold children accountable for their actions.** Children need to learn there are results to their actions, and they may need help accepting the consequences of their behavior. This means both positive and negative consequences.

**Involve men in your ministry.** Children's behavior tends to be different when there is a positive male role model in the room. Enlist men to serve in your Worship KidStyle ministry. Children need positive male role models in their lives.

**Judge what is misbehaving and what are simply childhood characteristics.** It is important to separate the child's behavior from the child and understand what are normal childhood developmental characteristics, attitudes and abilities.

**Know the children's likes, dislikes, hobbies, interests and so forth.** Select activities that fulfill their likes.

**Love each child.** Children need to know there are adults who love them and want the best for them. No child should be made to feel unloved when she is at church.

**M**eeet the needs of the children. Make sure the physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual needs of the children are met. If any one of these needs is not being met, it will affect the child's behavior.

**N**otice children's "good" behavior. Catch children doing things the way you would like for them to do things. Reinforce their positive behavior.

**O**bserve what the child's home life is like. Children act out what they see and experience at home. Visit children in their homes, and discover what their home lives are like.

**P**ray, pray and pray. This should be your first step in dealing with any behavioral issues. Pray before, during and after the session for each child and leader by name. Pray for yourself that God will give you the peace and patience to deal with any situation that may arise.

**Q**uickly deal with any unsafe situation.

**R**espect the rights of the children. Children do have rights. No child deserves to have his self-esteem destroyed because of his behavior. When it is necessary to redirect a child, make sure it is done in a manner that will not destroy the child's self-esteem.

**S**tate what is expected. Children will live up to your expectations. Let the children know what is expected of them.

**T**ake the initiative to participate with the children. Children need to see you learning with them, playing games with them and enjoying the session.

**U**tilize additional adults when dealing with behavioral situations that may arise.

**A**void calling down every negative action a child does. It is OK to overlook some stuff.

**W**ork with other adults. Make sure the teacher/child ratio is maintained.

**X** marks the spot. Be in your spot, prepared and ready when the first child arrives.

**Y**elling accomplishes nothing. Lower your voice, and the child will lower his.

Be **Z**ealous for children. Stand up for them, and be their voice. When they know you are on their side, they are more likely to do what you ask them to do.