



Behavioral Manual

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1.0 Purpose of Manual

The purpose of this manual is to help you (Directors) equip and enable your small group leaders to lead well and with love in their small group. It is important that our leaders know how to handle behavioral situations that could disrupt the environment of the room. Because we want kids to feel like they belong, we want to ensure all kids feel safe and loved. This manual provides very practical tips and policies in order to foster a great room environment in hopes that our kids would come to believe in Jesus and become more like Him.

Within this manual, there are very practical resources, scripts, and guides on how to handle behavioral situations.

2.0 Vision of FG Kids

It's our hope that every child comes to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and that their lives will be changed through their relationships with Him.

a. Belong, Believe, Become

BELONG

We want every child to feel welcomed and loved. Our goal is to create opportunities for meaningful relationships not only with the children but with their parents as well. We believe this is best accomplished by creating safe, fun environments where leaders serve on a weekly basis and friendships are rooted in trust and unconditional acceptance can flourish.

BELIEVE

As noted above, our prayer is that every child comes to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the source of life and only

through him can we have a relationship with God. Our hope is that as kids gain a sense of belonging through relationships with their leader, they will be able to hear the truth of the Gospel and step into a life of faith.

BECOME

Not only do we want every child to believe in the saving grace of Jesus, but we also want them to be transformed to become more like Jesus. We want to cultivate a desire in their hearts to pursue Jesus in the everyday stuff of life, that they might flourish spiritually and be salt and light in their community. We strive for these ends through practical, engaging Bible teaching and life-impacting relationships that foster the next generation of disciples.

b. Authentic Faith

The Next Gen team at Fellowship Greenville desires for all children to walk away one day with a faith that is not defined by what they do, but instead is determined by who they love. Our priority is to teach them to have authentic faith, trusting Jesus in a way that transforms how you love God, yourself, and others. Our desire is that staff and volunteers help children feel welcomed and loved (Belong). This feeling of belonging then opens the door to lead them to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ (Believe). Finally, through intentionality, every child will be transformed to live like Jesus (Become). These three goals are a pathway for them to develop authentic faith. They will love God in such a way that He transforms all that they do.

3.0 Foundations of Leading Children

3.1 Volunteer Expectations

Be sure that all volunteers know the information in the 'Fellowship Greenville Kids Training Manual.' The guidelines, requirements, and policies in that manual should be read each year and a couple of times throughout the year. It is important that each volunteer knows this information.

a. Guidelines and Procedures in FG Kids Training Manual

In the training manual in Section 3.13, Behavioral Procedure, a small amount of general instructions concerning behavior is written. As a reminder, the following points are made:

- Behavior issues will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.
- Hitting/hurting other children needs to be reported to Director, and the Director will report to parents.
- We do not need to keep a running account of everything a child has done wrong. Besides physical injury of another child, we need to point out the positives of that child when reporting to parents. It can be discouraging to parents and children if every time he/she is picked up we list off bad behavior.

b. Accident Report vs Incident Report

We have two forms that need to be completed by volunteers when either an accident or an incident occurs. These two forms can be found in each room notebook under the tab, 'Accident Reports.' It is important to remember that whoever is with the child(ren) when the accident/incident occurs is responsible for filling out the form.

An Accident Report is filled out whenever anyone is injured, whether they have to go to the hospital or not. We never know if it will cause later issues, so we need to have a report on file for insurance purposes.

An Incident Report is filled out when a child exhibits an aggressive or unsafe behavior. We want to be able to track this type of behavior just in case support is needed or parents need awareness. Examples include (yelling at others, bullying, disruptive behavior, etc)

Both reports need to be completed and handed to the Director the day it occurs. After the report is completed, the volunteer gives it to the Director, who gives it to an FG Kids staff member. [\[See examples in the 'Resources' section of this manual.\]](#)

c. What is Not Expected of You:

- To handle any problem by yourself. Remember, we are a team!
- To manage aggressive behaviors
- To continue leading a consistently challenging child
- To confront a parent with a difficult conversation

3.2 Small Group Expectations

As you arrive in your small group room each Sunday, you need to be prepared for the lesson. A prepared leader usually has the ability to keep the lesson flowing, which does not lead to an opportunity for the children to misbehave. So be sure to read the lesson at least 2 times before Sunday morning.

Pray each week for the Holy Spirit to speak to the hearts of the children. Take 1 or 2 names off your role sheet and pray for the children and their families.

Greet each child by name with a smile as he/she enters the room. If it was one of the families you specifically prayed for that week, share that with the child and parents.

Stay positive when you are with your small group. Frame all behaviors in the context of who they are in Christ, reminding them that they are made in the image of God and designed for a specific purpose.

Find ways to verbally praise each child. Be descriptive of what you are praising. Examples are as follows: "Great listening in large group Susan!" "Awesome thinking Paul." "I love the way you are sitting Alex."

Because we want everyone to feel that they belong, it is key that you build relationships with the children. Greeting them with a smile and verbally praising them is a great start. But they also need to know you care about them and are invested in them. Create a space for them to have a safe place to talk, with no ridicule or judging. Give them many opportunities to speak so that they have a voice. Send birthday cards or personalized notes through the mail, support them in sports by going to see a game, attend their baptism, and speak positively to the parents in front of them, and hold them accountable for being a part of your small group community. (You can even come up with a fun group name.) Show personal interest in each of them. Belonging leads to believing, and that's our goal in FG Kids.

Remember that all children are different. Get to know each child's uniqueness and do your best to meet their individual needs. Create a loving environment where children are accepted "just the way they are." If you need suggestions, talk to other volunteers, the Director, or a staff member.

Last, lead by example. Model the behaviors you would like the children to display. Be open to the fact that you make mistakes and be humble enough to admit them to your group. Remember that respect is reciprocal, so be sure to show respect to children if you expect to be respected in return.

Preventative Techniques

Establish Routines

It is important to establish routines for everything you would like your children to do. You need to be explicit about everything, and even show them how you would like things done. Group time needs to be predictable for children to feel safe and to develop optimally. Here are some routines you may want to consider establishing:

Transitioning between activities [[See 'Transitioning' in Resources section.](#)]

- Lining up to go to large group
- Walking to and from areas
- Sitting during the lesson (where and how)
- Listening when others are talking

Use Proximity

One of the BEST techniques to use is proximity. Proximity is being close to something, and in this case, the problem. If you see something that could lead to a problem, stand beside or between the children. Here are some examples:

A child continues to turn around during large group and make faces at others. You simply move the child to sit beside you on the back row.

Two children are talking and playing. You move and sit between them.

Week after week, one child is disruptive. Intentionally place yourself beside him/her each week.

Institute an Attention-Getting Signal

Another valuable routine to establish is having an attention-getting signal. You can let the children be involved in deciding what signal to use if you wish. [See 'Attention-Getting Signals' in [Resources section.](#)] Because we want to always use a firm but loving voice, refrain from yelling to get attention. Instead, at the beginning of the year, pick a signal you would like to use and practice it with your group. Throughout the year, consistently use the signal to get the children's attention when needed.

Use Levels of Engagement

There are three levels of engagement: playful engagement, structured engagement, and calming engagement. All of these levels of engagement should be utilized in your small group each Sunday morning. These levels of engagement do not always have to be done in the same order each week, as it depends greatly on the lesson you are following. But always before having structured engagement, use a calming engagement. As you may not have time for all of the activities on Sunday morning, be sure to pick an activity where they are able to have fun and move around, an activity that will be calming, and a structured activity where they need to be sitting, listening, and sharing.

Be a Safe Adult

Dr. David and Jayne Schooler, Back2Back trainers specializing in care for traumatized children, states, "Behavior is the language of children who have no voice." Frustration can trigger aggression if there is no other means to release the frustration. When children have no voice, they are unable to release it in a safe way and the frustration can easily turn into aggression.

The most important thing you can do is to be a safe adult. It is the foundation needed for children to develop into the optimal children

God made them to be. Our brain has two functions: 1) to keep us safe and 2) to develop us. The brain can only do one of these two things at a time and it always starts with number 1, to keep us safe. If a child does not feel safe, he/she will never develop optimally.

To be a safe adult for your group (or at home), you must do the following:

- Make the day predictable
- Make it safe to talk
- Prepare children for transitions
- Recognize hot spots
- Use safe touches
- Utilize 'The Safety Script' [\[See Below.\]](#)

The Safety Script

"This is a safe place, and I won't let anyone _____ you, so I can't let you _____ because this is a safe place."

Example: "This is a safe place, and I won't let anyone hit you, so I can't let you hit because this is a safe place."

Behavior Support

Behavior 101

Every behavior has meaning behind it. Behavior is communication and is defined as the way in which someone conducts him/herself in response to the environment. Behavior can signal many things: frustration that has turned to aggression, anxiety, selfish desires, overstimulation, understimulation, unresolved trauma, etc. Most of the time, it is difficult to know the exact trigger, but there are many things you can do to help prevent the behavior. Below are such tips:

- Be proactive, always aware for the beginning of a potential trigger, and seek to resolve it before it turns into an undesirable behavior. [Example: Address others using the *Safety Script* who are making fun/laughing at others and stand behind the child who is getting upset.]
- Remind small group of expectations frequently.
- When giving reminders, be positive and specific. [Instead of saying, "Don't run." say, "Walk."]
- Use *Life Value Scripts* constantly in small group. *Life Value Scripts* are short, straight-forward phrases used to redirect a child's misbehavior. [See 'Wording to Use' in [Resources section.](#)]
- Always be consistent, firm, and fair.
- Don't react to what a child says or does. Instead, talk the child through it quietly and privately.
- If you think the behavior is caused by a sensory issue, remember that something needs to be changed in the environment. Contact your Director to utilize items in the

Sensory Kit. Also, review Section IV.D., "Working with Children with Sensory Issues," for immediate assistance.

- Give attention to children doing what they are asked to do by focusing on their positive behavior. For example, if Chris gets up and starts running around the room, refrain from saying anything to him. Instead, say, "Kaden, Mary, and Jose, I love the way you are sitting on the rug." This technique avoids giving attention to the child displaying inappropriate behavior and gives positive reinforcement to the ones following the directions.

Steps to Handle Non-threatening Behavior

Remember, you must always use an immediate, consistent, and calm response when dealing with any behavior.

Steps to Guide Handle Non-threatening Behavior

Step 1: Immediately move beside the child (between children if more than one) to stop the disruption.

Step 2: Point back to the posted 'Expectations' as soon as possible.

Example: A child calls another child a name. Say, "Let's look back at our expectations and read them."
[Point to posters and let the group read them. Say,] "The second one says to show kindness to each other. Is calling someone a name showing kindness? [After they respond, encourage the group to use words to help others, not hurt.]

Step 3: Focus on positive behavior of others.

Example: "Thank you Aidyn for coming in the room and sitting down so quickly."

Step 4: After the lesson, address the child/children privately. In order to help the child/ren and not hurt, it is essential to frame the behavior in the context of who they are in Christ (He/She is made in the image of God and designed for a specific purpose.) Use wording of Safety Script and encourage the child to apologize to the other child.

Important Notes:

- [These steps are included in the *Resources* section.](#)
- If this is a 1st time offense or rare behavior (non-threatening) and you have successfully handled it, there is no need to tell the parent.
- If the behavior is repetitive, continue to follow the steps as before. However, the Director should now be notified. The Director should remove the child from the class and have a firm conversation with the child. The parents also need to be made aware of the child's behavior. When talking to parents, do so in a loving way that shows love and support. We do not want to make any parent feel as if their child is a burden. Once parents are informed, an "Incident Report" should be filled out by the leader and turned into the Director.
- When 2 children are disruptive repeatedly, talk to each privately and then together. Explain that because they continue to make the choice to talk when others are teaching/answering questions/sharing, they will be separated for a few Sundays. Be sure you do separate them for about 3 Sundays in both large and small groups. Then, when you are ready to let them sit together again, remind them beforehand that they need to be quiet and listen when others are talking. Using these steps is actually guiding them to make good

choices because they are made in the image of God. Also, remember to frequently call positive attention to instances when children are engaging in expectations.

Steps to Handle Threatening or Unsafe Behavior

Threatening and unsafe behaviors include bullying, hitting, kicking, pushing, threatening, etc. Because our Vision is to provide a safe, nurturing environment where children learn about Jesus and the life he has for us, we can and should address these behaviors.

Step 1: Calmly but firmly, say, "*[Child's name]*, stop."

Step 2: Immediately, separate child from others and get the Director *[The Director will remove the child from the room and call the Special Needs Director.]*

Step 3: Ask the other child if he/she was hurt. *[If so, you will need to fill out an Accident Report for him/her. Do not put other child's name in the report. Tell the parent when they pick up that the child was hurt by another child. Again, do not give the parent the name of other child.]*

Step 4: Fill out an "FG Kids Incident Report." *[It is only done for the child doing the threatening or unsafe behavior.]* Before leaving for the morning, give the Incident Report to the Director. *[The Special Needs Director will keep the child until parents pick-up.]*

Note: These steps are included in the [Resources](#) section.

Working with Children Having Sensory Deficits

Most of our children with Special Needs have sensory deficits. When diagnosed, they are said to be 'on *the Spectrum*.' This term is associated with Autism, a disorder characterized by difficulties in social interaction and communication. It also includes limited and repetitive patterns of thought or behaviors.

Unfortunately, there is not a 'list of steps' as behaviors can range from talking back to aggression. However, there are many tips to help communicate and manage behavior. These tips are listed in the next section.

Handling inappropriate behavior of a child with a diagnosed or undiagnosed sensory issue can be challenging, because even though the behavior looks like aggression, it is usually signaling something totally different. It is important for you to remember that rude or aggressive behavior is usually unrelated to you, so do not take it personally. Typically, the child will show 1 of two kinds of behavior: a meltdown or a shutdown. Meltdowns involve behaviors that look like temper-tantrums and can be characterized by hitting, kicking, pushing, slamming things, and/or head-banging. The child is unable to control what they are doing. On the other hand, shutdowns are characterized by not talking, not moving, lethargy, becoming limp, and staring. Both are types of inappropriate behavior and need to be addressed in different manners by adjusting the environment with sensory changes.

Useful Tips for Leading Children with Sensory Deficits

1. Engage with the children during small group. Play with them, read with them, talk to them, listen to them, and love them. They know you care when you give them time, which gives them a feeling of belonging.
2. Stay within close proximity of child.
3. Wording is extremely important when communicating with a child having sensory issues. Below are the most effective ways to communicate.
 - Always refrain from using the word, "No."
 - Use "First/Then" statements. [Example: Child asks to play during Bible story. Say, "*First, Bible Story. Then, play.*"] This technique works well for all children.
 - Keep words simple. If you need his/her attention, say, "[Child's name, eyes."] Other examples include, "*Let's try again.*" and "*Use your words.*" [See '[Wording to Use](#)' in [Resources](#) section.]
 - Use small sentences or phrases to give specific directions. [See '[Wording to Use](#)' in [Resources](#) section.]
 - Give fewer choices. [Example: When playing, get two toys and ask, "*Do you want to play with the truck or the phone?*"]
 - If a child asks to do something that cannot be done, give him/her a choice of two other options. [Example: Child asks, "Playground?" Say, "*You can play with the puzzle or the ball.*" Be sure to answer about the playground.
4. Use transitioning routines every Sunday before changing activity. [See '[Transitioning](#)' in [Resources](#) section.]

5. Utilize items in the Sensory Bin. [If a child needs movement, give him/her a choice of 2 sensory toys. If a child is bothered by loudness, offer him/her sound reduction earphones.] Just request these things from the Director in your area.
6. Play soft music to set a calming atmosphere.
7. Protect the child from being teased by others.
8. For any unwanted behavior to stop, you must replace that behavior with another behavior. [Example: Replace child taking a toy from others with getting child to ask others if he/she can play with the toy.]

Handling a Meltdown

If a child is in a meltdown, he/she will be uncontrollable. Trying to reason or talk the child out of the behavior will not work. Do the following instead:

1. Stay calm and move slowly. (Quick movement can add to the meltdown.)
2. Do not talk to the child. It is best to stay silent.
3. Keep child away from other children. Do not restrain child as you may be kicked, hit, or bit. Just block them from moving towards others using your body to get between child and group.
4. Call Director immediately for support. [If child will listen to Director, Director will move him/her to a room or area away from others and call Thrive Director. If the child will not move, line the other children up and let them walk to another area with volunteers. Director stays with child until help arrives.]
5. After child having meltdown is removed from group, help other children understand that we all are made differently. Teach compassion by reminding them that many children are born with sensory problems and that their reactions many times look

hateful, but are not meant that way. Help them to see the heart and not the behavior.

Always remember that our goal is to guide all children to live more like Jesus. The first step in this process is Belonging, feeling welcomed and loved. Belonging leads to Believing, hearing the truths of the Gospel and a life of faith. Only then will children experience Becoming, being transformed in how they love God, themselves, and others and ultimately, living more like Jesus. For children with sensory issues, attaining this goal will most likely be a long journey, but it is achievable.

Resources

The following pages include information from this manual that you will share with your volunteers. Many of the pages have simplified versions of the information given you in this manual. You can copy the following pages as you train your volunteers. The resources are as follows:

- Accident Report Example
- Attention-getting Signals
- Behavior 101
- Handling a Meltdown
- Incident Report Example
- Preventative Techniques
- Steps to Handle Non-threatening Behavior
- Steps to Handle Threatening or Unsafe Behavior
- Transitioning
- Useful Tips for Leading Children with Sensory Deficits
- Wording to Use



ACCIDENT REPORT

Name of injured Paula Pringle Age 7
Person Reporting Accident Angel Flemmer
Event Paula fell and hit her head on wall
Accident Date 9/25/19 Time 10 AM PM
Name of First Responder Angel Flemmer
If minor, name of parent _____
Phone _____ Address _____

Circle appropriate list items below:

PLACE OF ACCIDENT

- Classroom
- Entrance
- Auditorium 1 or 2
- Hallway
- Playground
- Restroom
- Parking Lot, Sidewalk
- Other _____

NATURE OF ACCIDENT

- Abrasion
- Cut
- Burn
- Severe asthma attack
- Sprain or strain
- Possible fracture
- Other _____

SITE OF INJURY

- Head/Neck
- Mouth
- Eye
- Teeth
- Hand/Finger
- Wrist
- Arm
- Back
- Knee
- Ankle/Leg
- Foot/Toe
- Other _____

Description of accident (draw picture and use back of page if needed)

Paula was running and tripped and fell. She bumped her head on the wall and got a cut on her forehead.

Description of injury

Small cut on right side of head. Not bleeding just red.

Were parents notified? Yes No If no, why not _____

Treatment Ice pack was given

How and with whom did the injured person leave your care? parents checked her out of care.

Follow-up information None

Time injured person left your care 11:15 AM PM

[Signature]
Signature of Caregiver

[Signature] 9/25/19
Signature of Supervisor Date

**Please return to HR Office
Copy in Department Files**

Attention-Getting Signals

Decide on an attention-getting signal for the class. Letting the children be involved in this decision gives them a feeling of belonging. If you want to do as a class, pick 2 or 3 of the ones you like and then let them choose. Practice it a couple of times and then consistently use the signal during small group time to get attention when needed.

5-Finger Countdown

Hold up your hand and countdown from 5 to 1. As you count down, put down a finger. Be sure to count at a quick pace. You can adjust the pace as they learn it. (Note: Many people fall into a trap on this one. Be sure not to add to it)

1, 2, 3

You will need to explain what each number means. 1(stop), 2 (look), 3(listen). You simply count 1, 2, 3. They should be looking and listening when you get to 3.

Clap/Snap a Pattern

You snap a quick pattern [example: (clap-clap) (pause) (clap) (pause) (clap-clap)]. The kids clap it back to you.

1,2,3 Eyes on Me!

This is a popular one used with early elementary grades in schools- Simply say 1, 2, 3 eyes on me!

Freeze, Please!

Good to use during an active game. The leader can say both words. Or the leader can say, "Freeze." The children say, "Please."

Peanut Butter and Jelly Sandwich

Leader says, "Peanut Butter."

Children say, "Jelly"

Everyone claps one time and says, "Sandwich."

Behavior 101

Every behavior has meaning behind it. Behavior is communication and is defined as the way in which someone conducts him/herself in response to the environment. Behavior can signal many things: frustration that has turned to aggression, anxiety, selfish desires, overstimulation, understimulation, unresolved trauma, etc. Most of the time, it is difficult to know the exact trigger, but there are many things you can do to help prevent the behavior. Below are such tips:

- Be proactive, always aware for the beginning of a potential trigger, and seek to resolve it before it turns into an undesirable behavior. [Example: Address others using the *Safety Script* who are making fun/laughing at others and stand behind the child who is getting upset.]
- Remind small group of expectations frequently.
- When giving reminders, be positive and specific. [Instead of saying, "Don't run." say, "Walk."]
- Use *Life Value Scripts* constantly in small group. *Life Value Scripts* are short, straight-forward phrases used to redirect a child's misbehavior.
- Always be consistent, firm, and fair.
- Don't react to what a child says or does. Instead, talk the child through it quietly and privately.
- If you think the behavior is caused by a sensory issue, remember that something needs to be changed in the environment. Contact your Director to utilize items in the Sensory Kit. Also, review Section IV.D., "Working with Children with Sensory Issues," for immediate assistance.

- Give attention to children doing what they are asked to do by focusing on their positive behavior. For example, if Chris gets up and starts running around the room, refrain from saying anything to him. Instead, say, "Kaden, Mary, and Jose, I love the way you are sitting on the rug." This technique avoids giving attention to the child displaying inappropriate behavior and gives positive reinforcement to the ones following the directions.

Handling a Meltdown

If a child is in a meltdown, he/she will be uncontrollable. Trying to reason or talk the child out of the behavior will not work. Do the following instead:

1. Stay calm and move slowly. (Quick movement can add to the meltdown.)
2. Do not talk to the child. It is best to stay silent.
3. Keep child away from other children. Do not restrain child as you may be kicked, hit, or bit. Just block them from moving towards others using your body to get between child and group.
4. Call Director immediately for support. [If child will listen to Director, Director will move him/her to a room or area away from others and call Thrive Director. If the child will not move, line the other children up and let them walk to another area with volunteers. Director stays with child until help arrives.]
5. After child having meltdown is removed from group, help other children understand that we all are made differently. Teach compassion by reminding them that many children are born with sensory problems and that their reactions many times look hateful, but are not meant that way. Help them to see the heart and not the behavior.

FG Kids Incident Report

Child's Name: Paula Pringle Date: 9/25/19

Grade/Class: 1st Service: 9AM 11AM or Event Name: _____

Leader: Angel Flemmer Time: 11am

Details (explain how, what, when, where): Paula was teasing Timmy and was asked to stop. Paula continued to bully Timmy and so the Director helped me address the issue by pulling Paula out into hallway, and talking with her.

Action taken (1 - Leader spoke with child, 2 - Director spoke with child, 3 - Staff was called, 4 - Parent was called): _____

Parent(s) Contacted: Yes No Who: Dad Mom

Follow-Up Recommended: Yes No

Leader/Staff signature: Angel Flemmer

Tips for Room Management

1. Pray for each child.
2. Be prepared to teach your lesson. A prepared lesson is the best deterrent to discipline problems.
3. Create a loving atmosphere where your children feel accepted "just the way they are".
4. Decide on an attention-getting signal for the class. For example: 1 (stop), 2 (look), 3 (listen) or give me five (use fingers and countdown). Let them be involved in deciding what signal to use.
5. Work as a team with your other leaders. One can stand beside a "talker" or repeat offender. The closeness of the leader to the child will usually stop the behavior. A light touch on the shoulder along with your close, physical presence is a good "be still" or "be silent" signal.
6. Keep the rules clear, simple and few. Review the Expectation Posters frequently.
Suggestions:
 - Only one person talks at a time.
 - Raise your hand when you want to speak.
 - Treat others the way you want to be treated.
 - Always listen to and respect your teacher.
7. Make sure the children know what the consequences will be for their actions. (Don't threaten; give reminders of consequences.) Be fair and consistent in applying the consequences. Always follow through with the consequences.
8. Ask the child to tell you why you're correcting them. Ask "What happened?" instead of "Why did you do that?" Attach behavior and correction to an Expectation.
9. Always find ways to praise each child.

Preventative Techniques

Establish Routines

It is important to establish routines for everything you would like your children to do. Your words need to be clear. You also need to show them how you would like things done. Consider the following:

- Transitioning between activities (Preschool should use a Transition Chart.)
- Lining up to go to large group
- Walking to and from areas
- Sitting (where/how) and listening during the lesson

Use Proximity

One of the BEST techniques to use is proximity. Proximity is being close to something, and in this case, the problem. If you see something that could lead to a problem, stand beside or between the children.

Institute an Attention-Getting Signal

Another valuable routine to establish is having an attention-getting signal. Because we want to always use a firm but loving voice, refrain from yelling to get attention. Instead, at the beginning of the year, pick a signal you would like to use and practice it with your group. Throughout the year, consistently use the signal to get the children's attention when needed.

Use Levels of Engagement

There are three levels of engagement: playful engagement, structured engagement, and calming engagement. All of these levels of engagement should be utilized in your small group each Sunday morning. These levels of engagement do not always have to

be done in the same order each week, as it depends greatly on the lesson you are following. But always before having structured engagement, use a calming engagement. As you may not have time for all of the activities on Sunday morning, be sure to pick an activity where they are able to have fun and move around, an activity that will be calming, and a structured activity where they need to be sitting, listening, and sharing.

Be a Safe Adult

The most important thing you can do is to be a safe adult. Our brain has two functions: 1) to keep us safe and 2) to develop us. The brain can only do one of these two things at a time and it always starts with number 1, to keep us safe. If a child does not feel safe, he/she will never develop optimally.

To be a safe adult for your group (or at home), you must do the following:

- Make the day predictable
- Make it safe to talk
- Prepare children for transitions
- Recognize hot spots
- Use safe touches
- Utilize 'The Safety Script' [\[Next Page\]](#)

The Safety Script

"This is a safe place, and I won't let anyone _____ you, so I can't let you _____ because this is a safe place."

Example: "This is a safe place, and I won't let anyone hit you, so I can't let you hit because this is a safe place."

Steps to Handle Non-threatening Behavior

Remember, you must always use an immediate, consistent, and calm response when dealing with any behavior.

Step 1: Immediately move beside the child (between children if it is two) to stop the disruption.

Step 2: Point back to the Expectations as soon as possible.

Example: A child calls another child a name. Say, "Let's look back at our expectations and read them." *[Point to posters and let the group read them. Say,] "The first one says to show kindness to others. Is calling someone a name showing kindness? [After they respond, encourage the group to use words to help others, not hurt.]*

Step 3: After the lesson, address the child/children privately. It is essential to frame the behavior in the context of who they are in Christ (He/She is made in the image of God and designed for a specific purpose.) That purpose is to help others, not hurt them. Encourage the child to apologize to the other child.

Important Notes:

- If this is a 1st time offense or rare behavior (non-threatening) and you have successfully handled it, there is no need to tell the parent.
- If the behavior is repetitive, continue to follow the steps as before. However, the Director should now be notified. The Director should remove the child from the class and have a firm conversation with the child. The parents also need to be made aware of the child's behavior. Once parents are informed, an "Incident Report" should be filled out by the leader and turned into the Director.
- When 2 children are disruptive repeatedly, talk to them privately. Explain that because they continue to make the choice to talk when others are teaching/answering questions/sharing, they will be

separated for a few Sundays. Be sure you do separate them for about 3 Sundays in both large and small groups. Then, when you are ready to let them sit together again, remind them beforehand that they need to be quiet and listen when others are talking. Using these steps is actually guiding them in making good choices because they are made in the image of God.

Steps to Handle Threatening or Unsafe Behavior

Threatening and unsafe behaviors include bullying, hitting, kicking, pushing, threatening, etc. Because our Vision is to provide a safe, nurturing environment where children learn about Jesus and the life he has for us, we can and should address these behaviors.

Step 1: Calmly but firmly, say, "[Child's name], stop."

Step 2: Immediately, separate child from others and get the Director *[The Director will remove the child from the room and call the Special Needs Director.]*

Step 3: Ask the other child if he/she was hurt. *[If so, you will need to fill out an Accident Report for him/her. Do not put other child's name in the report. Tell the parent when they pick up that the child was hurt by another child. Again, do not give the parent the name of other child.]*

Step 4: Fill out an "FG Kids Incident Report." *[It is only done for the child doing the threatening or unsafe behavior.]* Before leaving for the morning, give the Incident Report to the Director. *[The Special Needs Director will keep the child until parents pick-up.]*

Transitioning

Following are ways to help your group transition from one activity to another.

1. Utilize the transition chart in your small group area. [Preschool]
2. Give 5-minute warnings before transitioning to another activity. (Example: "In 5 minutes, we will line up to go to large group.) Also, after the 5-minute warning, give a 3-minute and a 1-minute until it's time to transition. [At that time, use the transition chart to signal moving to next activity.]
3. Tell group expectations before going to large group.

[Preschool Example]

"Boys and girls, we are going to walk in a line to the Clubhouse. When we go in the door, look for our group color. Get a sit spot and sit on it. While we are in the clubhouse, stay on your sit spot. Is everyone ready?"

[Elementary Example]

"Boys and girls, we are going to walk to large group. When you get to the large group room, sit in our area. Remember our 'Expectations' in large group - we worship, we give our best to God, and we listen."

4. Use a transitioning object or toy from sensory bin.
5. Sing a song.
6. Use the art of distraction by making it fun. You can 'fly' to large group, 'hop' to the table, see who can sit the fastest, etc.

Useful Tips for Leading Children with Sensory Deficits

1. Engage with the children during small group. Play with them, read with them, talk to them, listen to them, and love them. They know you care when you give them time, which gives them a feeling of belonging.
2. Stay within close proximity of child.
3. Wording is extremely important when communicating with a child having sensory issues. Below are the most effective ways to communicate.
 - Always refrain from using the word, "No."
 - Use "First/Then" statements. [Example: Child asks to play during Bible story. Say, "*First, Bible Story. Then, play.*"] This technique works well for all children.
 - Keep words simple. If you need his/her attention, say, "[Child's name], eyes." Other examples include, "*Let's try again.*" and "*Use your words.*"
 - Use small sentences or phrases to give specific directions.
 - Give fewer choices. [Example: When playing, get two toys and ask, "*Do you want to play with the truck or the phone?*"]
 - If a child asks to do something that cannot be done, give him/her a choice of two other options. [Example: Child asks, "Playground?" Say, "*You can play with the puzzle or the ball.*" Be sure to answer about the playground.
4. Use transitioning routines every Sunday before changing activity.

5. Utilize items in the Sensory Bin. [If a child needs movement, give him/her a choice of 2 sensory toys. If a child is bothered by loudness, offer him/her sound reduction earphones.] Just request these things from the Director in your area.
6. Play soft music to set a calming atmosphere.
7. Protect the child from being teased by others.
8. For any unwanted behavior to stop, you must replace that behavior with another behavior. [Example: Replace child taking a toy from others with getting child to ask others if he/she can play with the toy.]

Wording to Use

Wording is extremely important when communicating with any child. Short, descriptive phrases are best to use. Following are examples to use in 2 different situations.

Life Value Scripts

Life Value Scripts are short, straight-forward phrases used to redirect a child's misbehavior. Below are specific examples.

1. No hits, no hurts.
2. Be kind and gentle.
3. Ask permission.
4. Listen and obey.
5. Obey the first time.
6. Show respect.
7. Asking or telling?
8. Say again with respect.
9. Help one another.
10. Stick together.
11. Keep your promise.
12. Wait to speak. I will listen.
13. Use your inside voice.
14. Use your words.

Wording for Children with Sensory Deficits

Below are short sentences with a description of when to use.

<u>Script</u>	<u>When to Use</u>
"[<i>Child's name</i>], eyes."	[to get attention]
"Let's try again."	[when doing something incorrectly]
"Use your words."	[when pointing to get something]
"Pick one."	[when giving choice between 2 things]
"Hands down."	[when child is trying to hit]
"First, _____. Then, _____"	[when wanting to do something else]
"Ask first."	[when taking item from someone]
[Ask a yes/no question.]	[when child has communication delay]

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