

Behavior Management and Positive Discipline

A behavior management system is a good idea for all groups of children. A behavior management system consists of group behavior expectations (or rules) for the whole group and consequences for misbehavior. The goal is to establish limits and plan for how to respond to misbehavior so that the program focus is on having fun instead of worrying and stressing about ongoing behavior problems.

The “A,B, C’s” of a good behavior plan include:

At the beginning, make the rules and expectations clear to all children

Brief and positive rules are best: e.g. 1) Safety first. 2) Respect others. 3) Clean up after yourself; 4) Walk – don’t run

Children should help write the rules and decide on the consequences*

Desired behaviors are positively reinforced. Praise and reward all children whenever things are going well.

Enforcement of rules is made clear to all the children and administered consistently.

Respect and Consistency

The rules and consequences will vary from group to group depending on the ages of the children and your situation. Consequences should be “logical”. That is, they should relate to the misbehavior. If a child hits other children, then a logical consequence would be to remove him/her from contact with the other children for a short time period. It is not logical to take away snack in response to hitting. However, if a child throws food at another child, then it would be logical to take away the snack.

The first principle of a successful behavior management system is that it is based on *mutual respect*. You should show respect for the children, even when they misbehave.

A second crucial element for success is consistency. It doesn't matter how good the behavior management system is; if you do not consistently and fairly enforce the rules established by the group, the children will not believe in the system and they may be more likely to misbehave.

Tips for Helping Children Who Often Misbehave

- *Plenty of positive attention.* Rather than wait for misbehavior to occur, recognize and reward positive behaviors. If possible, ignore undesirable behavior and find something positive to say.
- *Inclusion in a group.* Often children misbehave because of their need to feel wanted and to be part of a group. Teach all students the necessary skills for participating in a group.
- *Avoid power struggles.* When appropriate, let the children make choices about which activities to do and when to do them.
- *Build self-confidence.* Sometimes children believe it is impossible to succeed so they give up trying. Use every strategy you can think of to develop every child's confidence in his/her ability to succeed. Children who are truly confident and self-assured are more willing to undertake challenges, try harder, and behave better.

In summary, prevention and advanced preparation are the secrets to behavior management for all groups of children. Do everything you can to set yourself and your children up for success. Let mutual respect and consistency guide you.

*note: consequences should never be physical or demeaning.