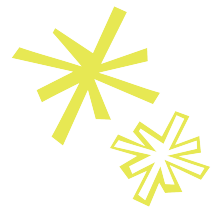


# TIPS FOR GUIDING BEHAVIOR



## PREVENTION IS THE PREFERRED STRATEGY

“An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” Work to develop strategies and cultivate ideas to meet a child’s needs and/or reasonable wants before misbehaviors occur. This not only makes your time with the children more positive, but also creates a safe, predictable environment with a common language.

## THE WHYS OF POOR BEHAVIOR

When a child misbehaves, first ask yourself why. What is causing this behavior? Understanding will help you to create systems that prevent classroom management problems. Over time, grow your list of strategies, having them at the ready to implement when needed.

- **Need for more attention**

For classroom management, *why* they need more attention doesn’t matter as much as *that* they need it. Give extra attention to these children before they use outbursts and inappropriate actions to get it. Compliment what they’re doing well, allow space for their voice,, ask for their help, etc..

- **Masking insecurity**

This child may be nervous because they’re new, don’t have a friend, or have never heard these stories. Take care not to create situations where his or her lack of knowledge will be laughed at by other children. Don’t assume the children’s knowledge or abilities, but allow them to show you. This gives you an opportunity to pile on the praises rather than unintentionally causing embarrassment.

- **Find it hard to manage their anger**

Kids who “blow up” and are quick to “fight” may not have the skills to avoid these outbursts. Watch for opportunities to head off the poor behavior and model a way to cool down and self-correct. Slow breathing, leaning back-to-wall, walking a lap, or sitting with a weighted lap blanket are examples.

- **Looking for ways to be in control**

Some kids feel more secure when they are in control, even if it means disrupting the leader’s plans. Look past your own irritation and find ways to foster their leadership abilities. Give them choices whenever possible - choose to sit here or there, to be first in line or last, to hold your hand or walk nearby, join the circle or sit at the table, etc.

- **Full of energy**

God created children with lots of energy as part of His plan to help them develop, but as adults we often want them to be still and calm. A good rule of thumb is to assume about a one-minute attention span for every year of life. Asking a four-year-old to sit still and listen for ten minutes goes against how she was created. Don’t fight it; join it! “Put your hands on your ears if you’re listening.” “Stand up if you know who our story is about.” “Let’s march around the room while we recite our memory verse.”

- **Boredom**

When a child gets bored (or thinks he’s bored) he starts looking for something to do. Plan sessions that consider the children, their preferences, and their abilities. Be ready with three more ideas than you plan to use, and then be ready to scrap all of that and go a different direction if they’re not tracking.

## MAKE BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS UNDERSTOOD

Children can’t meet classroom expectations if they don’t know and understand them. Be succinct and clear. 3-5 rules, no more than 5 words per rule, and no unexplained abstract words. (How does a 6-yr-old explain “respect”? If they can’t, then it’s not a good word to use in the rule!). Recite them often, and use those phrases in corrections and compliments.

**Classroom management is primarily about knowing and understanding the kids you teach. Pray for your students by name, and for your group as a whole. Learn about their age in general, ask family and friends about your particular student, put systems in place you think may help, and be ready to adapt.**

