

Bringing Order to the Chaos: Kidmin Discipline

Jenny Funderburke

Session 1: Developing a Culture that Promotes Better Behavior

I. Introductions

- a. Welcome and introduce self
- b. Ask group as a whole how they serve in the church: on staff, area leaders, classroom volunteers etc...
- c. Have tables introduce themselves to each other, sharing where they are from and either the discipline issue that makes them the craziest OR their most outrageous/funny discipline story
- d. Groups share out loud some of the issues and if there were any great stories.

II. Defining discipline

- a. large group share: words that come to mind when you think about discipline
- b. How does God feel about discipline?
 - i. Word is used 50 times
 - ii. He is a big fan of discipline, both in administering as needed and in His people learning from it
 - iii. Teaching toward life?
 1. For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light, and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life Prov. 6:23
 2. Matt. 7:13-15 narrow way... In your ministry and in each child's walk with Christ, this story is such a great description. In a lot of ways, it is easier to have no rules, free for all. We might think that will keep kids around. Consistent and effective discipline is hard. It might not be popular or easy. But it is the way of life.
 3. Proverbs 19:18 Discipline your son, for there is hope; do not set your heart on putting him to death.
 - iv. Discipline is an expression of God's love. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives
- c. root of the word "discipline" is "disciple. Bottom line: The purpose of discipline is to help kids grow closer to Jesus. We are called to make disciples and part of that process is discipline.
- d. Ask: how does discipline in the kidmin environment lead to developing disciples?
- e. It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are

left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but **he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.** (Hebrews 12:7-11 ESV)

- f. Our goal is to create kidmin environments where all kids are safe to learn and free to connect with God so that they can become disciples
- e. Group share: Knowing all of this, why is it a challenge in kidmin? Tables discuss and share top two reasons

III. Misconceptions about discipline

- a. Discipline = mean, harsh, strict
 - story: *Girl in Alabama who died being forced to run*
- b. Kids don't like rules.
- c. We can't discipline at church.
- d. If we discipline kids won't like us.
- e. The goal is perfectly still and silent kids
- f. A disciplined environment is no fun.

IV. Reasons for misbehavior:

- unmet needs
 - hierarchy of needs
 - *Two very different examples: Belize kids from one year to the next. Kids in celebration who didn't have recess anymore.*
- unrealistic expectations
 - o age appropriateness
 - o attention span
 - o irrelevance to their culture
- unreached learning styles leads to boredom
 - o interpersonal
 - o intrapersonal
 - o kinesthetic
 - o verbal
 - o visual
- ignorance of the rules
- they are kids! (folly is bound up in the heart of a child. Prov. 22:15)
- we all sin... That's the gospel at work in your classroom

- Large Group Share: What would you add to this list?

The good news is that knowing these helps you as a leader to be proactive in creating environments that eliminate as many of these as possible.

V. Ministry wide

a. REAL learning experience:

- a. Give each table instructions to build the tallest tower they can. All groups have a deck of cards but one group has big Legos.
- b. what happened? How did it feel working with the cards. Legos? Which was more stressful?
- c. What determined the success of one group over another? The leader totally set you up for success. I created an environment where the task was much easier. In the same way if you are the ministry leader in your church, the foundational pieces of your ministry, the environment which you place your volunteers in, greatly determines their success in many facets, but especially in regards to discipline.
- d. How are the towers different? Some ppl may get a tower of cards built but it is harder and it is much more unstable. You have volunteers who can create discipline out of chaos
- e. Is Lego tower 100% stable? Even providing a great environment doesn't guarantee perfect behavior, so not every problem is our fault. :).
- f. We can not proactively overcome every discipline issue, but as leaders of the ministry there are things we can do to provide an environment that promotes better behavior.

b. What overall behavior culture am I creating in my ministry?

- a. volunteers: we set up our volunteers for failure when we are consistently understaffed.
- b. curriculum: is it engaging, is it age appropriate, does it fit the time frame, is it relevant to the kids
- c. schedule/flow: do kids have too much downtime? Is everything too high energy? Are they still too long?
- d. Environment: if it is constant flash and loud and jumpy, kids are going to be wild.
- e. consistency: are the rules the same from class to class, teacher to teacher?
- f. Group share: Grade yourself on each of these... also what other areas would you add?

c. Developing a discipline plan

- a. Principles
 - a. Reminder: Our purpose is to *disciple*.
 - b. Consistent throughout the ministry.
 - c. Well-communicated
- b. Step 1: Determine the Rules
 - a. Just 3-4
 - b. Keep them more general than specific.
 - c. Make them memorable.
 - d. Post them everywhere
 - e. Example: Show love for God. Show love for others. Show love for self. (based off of Luke 10:7)
- c. Step 2: Determine Consequences
 - a. Clear
 - b. Progressive
 - c. Define when parents will be involved and by whom
- d. Step 3: Communicating the plan
 - a. To volunteers
 - b. To parents
 - c. To kids
- e. Step 4: Stick with it
 - a. Cultures don't change overnight
 - b. Kids will test limits.
 - c. Consistency and love win.
- f. Group share: Answer these questions:
 - a. Does your ministry have a discipline plan?
 - b. Does anyone know about it?
 - c. Is it enforced?
 - d. What is your next step?

VI. In the classroom

- a. Before Class Strategies:
 - a. Know your lesson well
 - b. Have everything ready
 - c. Think through any potential problems/transitions
 - d. Invest in relationship
 - e. Pray
- b. During Class Strategies:
 - a. Give your full attention to the task at hand.
 - b. Acknowledge each child.
 - c. Withitness
 - d. Smooth transitions
 - e. Steady momentum
 - f. Get kids out of chairs
 - g. Add variety & fun
 - h. Routine
 - i. Surprises

- j. Choose your battles
- k. Correct behavior without disrupting class
- c. Evaluate:
 - a. After every lesson ask:
 - i. What worked?
 - ii. What didn't?
 - iii. When did I lose them?
 - iv. What caused problems?

VII. Partnering with parents

- 1) why is it important?
 - a) We say all the time that we want parents to partner with us, but we are scared to have a tough conversation. We are not truly partners if we are just afraid of making them upset.
 - b) we run the risk of losing trust when we don't share issues with parents
- 2) - determine who speaks to the parents about significant issues In our church it is staff or high level leaders because we know what we are going to say.
 - a) balance of honesty and grace
 - b) communicate relationship
 - c) how can we work thru this together? What have you learned at home or school that helps that we can utilize here
- 3) what if parent is not receptive? It will happen. Keep communicating relationship. Decide your line. Err on the side of partnership Err on the side of relationship without sacrificing anyone's safety

In this session, we will develop potential solutions for at least 26 real life, recurring kidmin discipline problems.

- I. Introductions
- II. REAL Experience: *** still fleshing this out, but idea will be showing that it is easier to maintain good behavior than to correct routine bad behavior
- III. Proactive Classroom Management
 - a. Rules vs procedures
 - Procedures for: gaining attention, going to restroom, transitions
 - b. Briefly review from session before "During Class Strategies":
 - i. Be prepared/think through any potential problems
 - ii. Give your full attention to the task at hand.
 - iii. Acknowledge each child.
 - iv. Withitness
 - v. Smooth transitions
 - vi. Steady momentum
 - vii. Get kids out of chairs
 - viii. Add variety & fun
 - ix. Routine
- IV. basic problem handling principles
 - a. Everything we do is with mind of pointing them to Christ
 - b. Relationship (1 Peter 4:8... Love covers a multitude of sins)
 - c. never shame, never revenge, never showing who's boss
 - d. continuum of ignore to address immediately and tough
 - e. Check your own
 - f. Major on the majors.
 - g. avoid power struggles
 - h. Clear and consistent expectations
 - i. Honor the child
 - j. Different kids, different solutions
 - k. There is often an unmet need
 - l. Behavior be example
 - m. Logical consequences
 - n. Common teaching tips:
 - i. Proximity
 - ii. Change voice volume
 - iii. Drop names
 - iv. Acknowledge appropriate behaviors.
- V. Divide 26 common problems up among the tables. Have tables work together and brainstorm and prepare to provide:

1. Sample scenario of the problem
2. Can it be a discipleship opportunity?
3. What could be done proactively?
4. What can be done/shouldn't be done when it happens?

Table groups will take ten minutes to talk through their 2-3 scenarios and prepare to share their thoughts with the whole group. Also someone from each group will email their notes so that all tips/ideas will be available online later on.

- VI. Walk through groups adding commentary and direction as needed. Aim for 2 mins per topic. It will be fast but will cover many. Whole can decide together to spend more time on a couple

Topics (and additional notes/commentary)

ADHD

- give something to fiddle with
- make sure lessons are varied and interactive
- remember they are learning even if they don't look like it
- be cautious ab labeling
- constant verbal correction loses effectiveness quickly
- draw class' attentions
- meet w parents and learn what works.

Biting

- usually don't know how to handle frustrations or other emotions
- handle immediately w consequence
- meet w parents and inform the bitten.
- provide youth or adult to supervise closer for a little while
- don't bite the biter
- usually a result of fight over toy. Duplicate popular toys

Bullying.

- zero tolerance
- explain why behavior is a big deal
- involve parents

Cell phones

- define guidelines
- communicate guidelines w parents

Clean up

- make it part of the routine
- consistent
- make it fun: song, game
- label shelves and bins w pictures

- fun timer
- choices: would you like to clean up blocks or crayons

Disruptive.

- Positive reinforcement plan for repeat offenders
- give him/her a job within the classroom
- don't let your frustration take over
- extra grace required: let each child know they are valued and let them know boundaries

Excluding others

- assign partners or make groups where no one is left out
- private conversations with those excluding. Don't make a spectacle

Friendship drama

- Matthew verses ab handling conflict

Gross

Hitting.

- zero tolerance
- talk ab alternatives
- reinforce positive
- kids respond better to positive statements: we use our hands to help not hit

Inappropriate behavior

- physical: set boundaries with all kids in how they interact with each other and with adults
- don't assume kids have issues , may just want attention, but pay attention to red flags
- communicate what conversations are not appropriate for church and why.
- always have a female in the room

Jealousy.

- don't compare kids... Ever
- help child identify what they are feeling and why
- discipleship moment: life is not always "fair" - but God is always good

Kinesthetic - cant keep still

- keep them busy! keep activities varied

Late

- make first activity super fun
- recognize kids don't drive themselves. Don't punish the kid

- tell kid that you will catch him up rather than restarting but don't leave him out long

Mouthy (disrespectful)

- don't take too personally or over react
- not everything is meant to be disrespectful.
- point out to kids how and why what they said was not ok
- demonstrate respect by treating them and others respectfully

Nametags (won't wear, playing with, etc)

- consider random, occasional rewards for those who wear them correctly
- tell kids of the why and at pick up ask moms and dads to talk about it at home
- figure out a way to make nametags Part of lesson "if you have a green sticker on your tag, stand up"
- leaders wear tags
- don't be inconsistent

Oppositional/defiant

disobedience w attitude

- offer specific choices that still result in what you want them to do
- repeat instructions short and sweet and respectfully
- warn and then enforce consequence. Empty threats will make it worse
- don't hold a grudge. Mercies are new every day
- don't have so many limits that you are setting kids up to fail

Parents:

- sign "kick before entering"
- nicely communicate with parents how interrupting can be disruptive
- don't make parents feel unwelcome

Prayer:

- remember prayer doesn't always have to be still and quiet. Incorporate multiple methods
- teach on the power of prayer
- keep prayers brief
- encourage respectfulness of God but don't turn prayer time into mean and mad

Questions, off topic/ distracting/ disruptive

- have a set time for questions.
- set number of questions
- free yourself from feeling that you have to answer every question. It's ok to say we can discuss that later or that's unrelated
- some "random" questions are God ordained moments
- continually guide discussion back.
- ask lots of open ended questions yourself to give kids opportunity to interact

- older kids: question jar

Rude.

- Discuss why manners matter
- demonstrate appropriate manners; don't assume kids know them

Stealing.

- confront and assess intention
- avoid overreacting and accusation
- review why it is wrong.
- require return. Or reparation

Tattling.

- kids intent: get others in trouble, get attention, gain control
- teach kids to think thru how to solve the problem themselves
- teach that tattling and reporting behaviors that can cause harm are different

Uncooperative

- relationship is key
- make sure that there is some cool, or at least make it seem super cool and they are missing out
- ignore but don't allow disrespect.

Visits to the restroom.

- set a procedure or when and how to ask
- encourage/ train parents to take them before.

Whining.

- top reason kids whine is to gain attention. It works because we give in to make it stop,
- zero tolerance. Cannot let a kid think it works
- "I can't listen to whining voices"
- if whining continues, remove from activity

Xenophobic.

- embrace diversity in the ministry
- emphasize similarities
- refuse to allow discriminatory comments or stereotypes

Yelling

- have a cue to demonstrate when to quiet down
- demonstrate inside voices
- don't yell at them to quit yelling

Zzzz

- are you having enough fun?
- ask if there is a deeper need going on?
- gently wake him up
- contact parents if you think child is sick, and talk to them later
- if really needs to sleep, find him a spot, butte direct kids so they aren't distracted

Bringing Order to the Chaos: Kidmin Discipline

Session 1: Developing a Culture that Promotes Better Behavior

Session 2: What-to-Do-If's: A to Z

Discipline is a universal challenge in children's ministry and often leads to frustrated volunteers. This workshop will identify ways that our leadership can impact kids' behavior. What can you do as a ministry leader to set volunteers up for success in the area of discipline? What can be done proactively in the classroom to stop problem behaviors before they start? How do we handle those recurring discipline issues? From big picture ideas to weekly real life situations, this workshop will explore practical, Biblical ways to promote healthy discipline in kidmin environments so that kids can learn about Jesus.