

# Children's Ministry Behavior Guide

As helpers in children's ministries, we are not the primary disciplinarians, the parents are. Our job is to be the hands and feet of Jesus to the children entrusted to our care. We don't know what struggles and hurts a child has on any given day, so instead of viewing their behaviors as something that needs immediate discipline, we should be viewing those behaviors as an opportunity to demonstrate love and grace through gentle redirection and correction.

Children, especially those from hard places, sometimes have trouble self-regulating, and need us to help them regulate. Often the methods we use actually increase the poor behavior instead of helping to deescalate it.

We need to stay CALM, CONSISTENT and CONTROLLED!  
Our approach should say, "I want to help you do this right!"

## The I-D-E-A-L Approach

**I** Respond **IMMEDIATELY**-within 3 seconds of misbehavior

**D** Respond **DIRECTLY** to the child by making eye contact, giving undivided attention, and bringing the child nearer to you in order to better teach and guide. Never give a time out, but when needed, offer a **time-in** where you are present with the child while they receive a needed break from the activity.

**E** The response is **EFFICIENT** and measured. Use the least amount of firmness and corrective effort necessary. Use the least amount of words possible to make the point clear. Vocal delivery is more assertive and firm than usual. Volume is a degree or two louder and pitch is lower than usual. Speak more slowly and distinctly, with FEW WORDS!

**A** The response is **ACTION-BASED**. Actively redirect the child to a better behavior. Playfully lead him through a real-life do-over, so that this time he can get right what he had earlier done wrong. Praise the successful re-do! This encourages positive motor memory! Offer choices. ("Timmy, we don't want to be a distraction, so we need to be quiet. Would you like to throw away that candy wrapper or would you like me to?")

**L** **LEVEL** the response at the behavior, not at the child. A child should never feel rejected, even when the behavior is rejected. ("Hitting isn't a nice way to use our hands. Let's give Callan a fist bump to show him he is our friend.").