



How Do I Deal with Challenging Behavior?

Tips for Using Connection, Respect, and Grace with Kids

You can show kids they are known and loved by Jesus in Konnect instead of feeling worn down from correcting them. Use these tips to deal with challenging behavior consistently and effectively.

Focus on Firsts

The first time a leader talks with a kid, make it a positive experience instead of a corrective one.

- **First Welcome:** When a kid walks in, a leader should approach them right away to welcome them and introduce themselves. Find out the kid's name and what grade they're in.
- **First connection:** Once a kid is welcomed, lead them to their small group leader to get them connected. The small group leader can introduce themselves and let the kid know they'll be there the whole time to take care of them.
- **First activity:** The small group leader can then invite the kid to join in an activity with them, or help them find an alternative appropriate activity so the kid knows what to do during free time.

Keep Konnect Safe

- **Help kids understand boundaries.** When you see games of tag, wrestling, racing, throwing things, etc., have a respectful conversation with the kids to end the inappropriate game and get them busy with something appropriate.
- **Help leaders understand boundaries.** Even the best leaders can forget! If leaders break boundaries by picking kids up, spinning them, tickling them, letting them sit in their lap, chasing them, or starting unsafe games, respectfully help them lead kids to something appropriate.
- **Get help.** If kids continue to choose inappropriate activities or another leader continues to break boundaries, talk with another leader, your coach, or a LifeKids staff member to get help.

Ways to Deal with Distractions

When other kids are tattling on someone, a kid keeps bothering others, kids look uncomfortable, or a kid is starting a lot of off-topic conversation, find out what's going on and try these strategies.

- **Reset:** When your whole group is off course, stop what you're doing. Have everyone put their hand on their chest to focus on their heartbeat, take a few deep breaths, and start over.
- **Praise:** Sometimes, giving a specific compliment to a kid in your small group who is making great choices can help other kids understand what appropriate behavior looks like.
- **Proximity:** If your group is extra chatty or having a wrestling match on one side, sit on that side. Just moving nearby is often enough to help kids refocus.

- **Quiet Redirection:** Silently get the attention of kids who are talking out of turn or off topic and hold a finger over your mouth to remind them to be quiet.
- **Clear Direction:** Ask kids to stop the behavior and give clear direction of what to do instead.
- **Separation:** Separate kids who feed off each other so they are able to focus. They can sit on opposite sides of your group, or one can be relocated to another group if necessary.
- **Remind:** Be as patient as possible and keep reminding kids to make wise choices.

When Behaviors Become a Bigger Deal

When you've reminded over and over, and behaviors become actual defiance, aggression, noncompliance, or disrespectful behavior, try these strategies.

Note: *If you are running a small Konnect experience, confirm you have access to a walkie talkie to call in help. A coach, LifeKids staff member, or LifeKids Buddy should be available to help you out.*

- **Be neutral and calm.** When you respond in fear or anger, you're escalating the situation instead of bringing it back where it needs to be. Pray, and ask God to help you be as neutral as you can in your words, your body language, and facial expressions.
- **Don't trap kids.** Sit next to the kid instead of in front of them. Don't stand over them, get in their face, or make them feel cornered or trapped.
- **Avoid restraint.** If a kid is ignoring you or becoming aggressive, don't respond physically in any way. Restraining kids, picking them up, or moving them can be dangerous or threatening to kids.
- **Ask for help, and use "Time In."** If you can't calm down or you are at a loss of what to do, ask for help. A kid can take a "Time In" with another leader like the emcee, coach, or tech. They can spend time with the child so they receive the attention and direction they need.
- **Let it go.** After a kid takes a "Time In," let go of hard feelings and give them a fresh start.

When Behavior Is Consistently Unsafe or Very Disruptive

- **What to look for:** A kid who has the same struggle every week, tries to hurt themselves or others, has frequent yelling outbursts, is overly sensitive to sound, light, or other stimuli, or otherwise has a barrier to connecting with a small group.
- **Reach out to LifeKids staff right away.**
 - They can follow up with the kid's parents to get advice on what works at home.
 - They can give you further strategies to try.
 - They may suggest pairing the kid with a LifeKids Buddy. A Buddy can work with the kid one on one each week to give them the extra support they need for as long as they need it.

Final Note: If your room feels chaotic or parts of the experience fall apart, ask for feedback from your LifeKids staff. See what your Konnect team can do to bring consistency and excellence. A few weeks of consistent expectations and positive behavior management can turn it around.

Talk It Over

1. What's a consistent challenge you face with behavior in your Konnect experience?
2. Which strategy mentioned above do you think might help with that challenge?
3. Who can you reach out to when behavior becomes more than you can handle?
4. What additional strategies have you found to be effective in dealing with challenging behavior?