

## Integrating children with behavioural problems



Children who exhibit challenging behavior want to position themselves in the best possible way. I want to affirm these kids that they matter. I want to let them shine, because I want them to be king kids.

If I engage in a children's ministry, individuals who are constantly disruptive, disregard our authority, and don't fit in with a group can dissipate our strength, joy, and good humor in an instant.

### Taking in new ones

Often I know little about a child who is new to Kids Treff. I give them a warm welcome. I am happy and let the child feel the joy. Most of the time this works wonderfully. Again and again I meet behavioral-original children, who are one challenge for me.

### Sometimes I am left shaking my head in amazement

There are those who are obviously not used to following instructions. It is their experience that there are no consequences for crossing boundaries. They are the ones who set the tone, and adults are servants.

Others are constantly disrupting. In original and many ways, they are constantly seeking to attract attention to themselves.

### Outcasts who do not stand out

Then there are the shy. Unfortunately, these are not always noticed with the attention they deserve. They are actual treasure chests that will remain locked if we fail to allow them to flourish.

### Sometimes the blood stagnates with me

There are five-year-old children who find their way to me, who strike without restraint at the slightest occasion. And there are those who immediately, without the slightest distance, sit down on my lap and seem to prefer to crawl into me. Individuals have come too close to me in my private parts.

## **Disturbing behaviour has causes**

We get annoyed by pronounced misbehaviour and are surprised when children find it difficult to integrate into our group. It is important to remember that there are reasons for this in each individual. Children experience and observe their environment and learn from it. Some see little that is beautiful, are rejected, or even experience abuse and assault. Even behind beautiful front doors, children can be emotionally neglected.

Individuals have special temperaments. Common are mild brain dysfunctions. These make it difficult for the child to perceive the environment and his own behavior. Many children permanently oscillate between self-overestimation and feelings of inferiority.

## **Recognize and remain humble**

It is important to consciously perceive children. As a basic attitude, I want this to resonate with the child, "I see you, you matter, and you are close to my heart."

But I am also aware that my options are limited. I am not her father and I have to be careful not to take on a role that I am subsequently unwilling and unable to fill. I concentrate on my role e.g. in the Jungschi. Even if I suspected bad things about the cause of the behavioural problem, I have never had enough evidence in my hand to bring a case against the environment.

## **You are important**

Consciously, I seek eye contact with each one in the lessons. I don't have a number of children, but the Simon, the Lara, the Rahel and the Amin.

I look for each individual's strengths and want to use them and let them shine in them. Some I can have clean the blackboard, others I use as extras when I "narrate". I praise a lot, build up.

I don't come in at the last minute and usually don't have to run away right after. I take my time, a lot of time.

## **Prayer**

Let us pray for "our" children. God can touch hearts and He does. He touches our hearts, too. Several times I have had to have Jesus give me love for a child. Not every child is the same to me as a type. But I can pray for all of them. God has no problem there.

## Safety

Here it is crucial that I succeed in living and conveying safety, predictability and truthfulness to the child. Since it is impossible to demand that the child take the step into the group on his own, I have to strengthen the child with my protection, with my security. If I come ill-prepared, if I have forgotten to place myself under the mighty hand of God and if I appear insecure, it will be impossible for me to do justice to a shy or difficult child.

## Who is the pack leader?

It is nice when adults are friends of children. In leadership, leaders are needed beyond that. I lead prudently. My "sheeple" are exceedingly important to me, and they know it, hear it, and feel it. I don't let a child steal the leadership role from me. I also obey Jesus.

## Discipline

Not every leader needs the same degree of discipline. I am always amazed myself when children think that mischief can be done so well with me. Well, I like to make fun and enjoy it when children are funny. I can lead easily and don't run the risk of letting the reins slip. I find it unbearable when discipline has to be struggled for all the time. I have also had a difficult composition and had to lead more consistently.

The important thing is that no matter where we set the boundaries, we must enforce them. If we don't, we have no credibility.

## Bullying

I do not tolerate it when people exclude! If they do, I react strongly. I say it hurts me, not just the child involved. I rebuke the perpetrators forcefully. Again and again I have very weak children. I can only succeed in not excluding or ridiculing them if I watch over my own attitude. Do I succeed in treating them with respect as well? Children are sensitive. In all points our role model function is central. The only thing we can reassure ourselves about is that the role of parents is more crucial.

## Rituals

It is good to keep creating momentum with new forms and songs. It is also good for us leaders. However, it is important to note that rituals and ritualized processes give the child security and structure. Especially lively and also insecure, shy children are grateful for this.

## Proximity and distance

Of course we should be cordial. But it is important to be careful when it is derailed. It is good and does good when it is possible for a warm familiarity to develop. However, striking children often become aloof. It doesn't help the child if I play along with every behavior. As an adult, I have a responsibility to set boundaries. There is a danger with these children that one's own needs will be satiated in ungood ways.

## Inspire

Rather than thinking about discipline, I focus on how I can inspire "my" children. Wild kids are easiest to lead and also integrate if I can get them excited. I can only do that if I am enthusiastic myself. I absolutely have to be genuine! It is impossible for me to be credible with the message of God's love if I am distanced from it and do not live it. This is a central point in teen and children's ministry. It is totally challenging. Adults I may be able to fool. In youth ministry, the deception does not succeed. I get to inspire as an enthusiast, love as a lover, and tell of the love of God. As one carried by God, I want especially the outsiders to let Jesus take hold of them, to let them fall into loving, safe, and godly hands.

## Jesus loves outsiders

Not everything is grasped immediately, even by children. A very flamboyant little bruiser I could get very excited about Jesus. One Sunday he told me quite excitedly how he had beaten up another. Still, he said, the latter had not wanted to understand that Jesus loved him.

There is much to do. Let's tackle it, with God's help.

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