

Behaviour management guidance for groups

Woodcraft Folk



**The following procedures should help in establishing a happy and orderly Group.
WCF recommended principles:**

- i) Establish simple routines so that children know what to do without being told every time.
- ii) Establish a balanced routine of activities, alternating quiet, restrained ones with noisy, more active ones. A certain amount of noise is permissible - don't confuse noise with bad behaviour when it is simply high spirits and enthusiasm. However, children will need to know that at other times you will require them to be quiet and that you expect them to co-operate with you.

*All leaders should expect, and receive, the same degree of co-operation from the children.
- iii) Address children in a quiet, friendly but firm manner, raising your voice only when necessary to gain attention. Use assertive techniques i.e. address yourself to them directly, with eye contact around the room or circle, and to individuals as necessary. Smile, relax, and let them know you enjoy their company! Keep a calm disposition and don't over-react to bad behaviour.
- iv) Use the Woodcraft Call to gain attention when you have a positive statement or directive to follow, not just to obtain quiet for its own sake. If the activity is too noisy, boisterous or dangerous, use the Call and then direct the children into another activity.
- v) An interesting, varied programme with plenty to do will be an incentive to attend the Group and a good reason to remain in it. Expect children to join in all the activities, even if their participation is minimal. Wait until all members are assembled in the Circle before you begin the announcements, Creed etc. It is the most important part of the meeting, representing the Group's unity.
- vi) Praise and encourage acts of kindness, helpfulness, and co-operation as these help to show the children what we are aiming for. Leaders of course, must set the example by which the children learn.
- vii) Minor misdemeanours are best ignored but it is necessary to deal with anti-social acts such as hurting other children, interfering with or damaging property or equipment etc. Giving extra attention to difficult children often cures the problem - it may be that that is what they were seeking. Give warnings privately. The cases of extreme bad behaviour are fortunately rare in our groups and there is no simple answer to the problem. Remember though, that small children require and need boundaries to be set and guidelines within which they can operate. Setting no limitations on behaviour causes confusion and can do children a great disservice.

Quiet warnings are often effective, but in the last resort a word to the parents is probably best, and a short period of suspension from the Group will allow things to return to normal. We cannot sacrifice the

majority while we educate the minority and few Groups have the child-adult ratio which permits a one-to-one relationship which such a child requires. It is also very damaging to the others if they see one child getting away with anti-social behaviour.

viii) The Clan system can help to break up 'cliques', especially if there is a tendency for girls and boys to separate. Games and activities which involve mixing will develop a healthy group spirit and help to overcome the problem of girls refusing to hold hands or play with boys, or vice-versa, without special mention being made of it.

ix) Adopting practices that are uniquely Woodcraft will help to establish a Group identity and create bonds between its members. Special events - hikes, festivals etc. will develop loyalty to the Group as a whole and promote a more cooperative attitude.

Some pointers for promoting positive behaviour

- Separate the child from the behaviour: "I welcome you, but I will not accept this behaviour".
- Use 'I' messages "I feel upset" not "You naughty boy!" messages which accuse and put the child on the defence.
- Take action for yourself, not against the child (that may mean removing yourself from the situation if you are going to 'lose it')
- Stay calm, stay separate from the behaviour by remembering not to personalise the behaviour and do not get into conflict.
- Act from a place of understanding by talking 'with' not 'at' the child
- Correct the behaviour, but not the child and do not over punish
- Do not break relationship with your child
- A behaviour that is noticed increases 'Thank you for putting your cup in the dishwasher' in other words 'Catch the child being good'
- A problem behaviour that's ignored decreases i.e. Ignore the bad behaviour
- Request respectfully, do not order or command
- Be clear about expectations, write them as a group – Remember the younger members will have expectations too
- Settle for less than perfection.
- Give them choices, and say 'You decide', this shows you respect them and teaches responsibility

The W Questions

Look at the child and ask the 'W' Questions:

- Why is Behaviour happening?
- What's going on for the child?
- Who is it happening with?
- When is it happening?
- Where is it happening?
- What is taking place?
- Why the defensive response?

Ask yourself how you interact with this child on a daily basis:

- Do you regularly affirm this child?
- Do you treat them with respect?