

Behavioral Challenges

Find the *Serving Children with Disabilities* training series associated with this resource under the Children with Disabilities category at awana.org/clubclinic.

Key Principles:

Think of behavior as communication. You must become a detective. What is the child really saying through their behavior?

The child may be communicating that what you are asking him to do is really hard for him or that he is uncomfortable.

You must get to know the child so that you can crack the communication code.



Think of each member of the body of Christ as a pink and green puzzle piece.

Green = areas of strength

Pink = areas of weakness

Every member is made up of both pink and green!

Tips for Handbook Time:

In Handbook Time, leaders often focus on one particular child at a time. Other children are usually expected to work in their handbooks on their own. This unstructured atmosphere can be very challenging for children who have behavioral struggles. Consider how you can add structure to this time.

- Can you incorporate several stations with a specific task or activity to accomplish in each one?
- Can an LIT provide one-on-one assistance to guide a clubber through activities?

Some children with ADHD cannot physically sit still and focus. Give a child with behavioral challenges choices in relation to how he participates. Think about how you can include some type of physical activity or movement into Handbook Time.

- Can the child sit in a different type of chair such as a bean bag chair or an exercise ball?
- Can you give a child the option of sitting on a wobble cushion (also called a balance cushion) or tie a Thera-Band® around chair legs so the child can push against it while sitting (Both items can be found at www.isokeneticsinc.com)?
- Can you plan an errand for a child to run to that he can take a short walk and come back?

Tips for Game Time:

Game Time signals a lack of structure for many kids with behavioral or emotional struggles. Think about how you can add structure to Game Time.

- Use a bright-colored piece of paper to designate a standing spot for a child.
- Use a Time Timer® so that the child can anticipate when Game Time will be over.
- Snap photos of the general sequence of events during Game Time so the child can know what is going to happen and in what order.



Tips for Large Group Time:

A group setting can be especially difficult for children with behavioral challenges. Again consider ways that you can add structure to Large Group Time and prepare a child in advance for what is going to happen and for what is expected of them.

- Use standard Awana discipline methods: Positive Points, the 3-count and the five-count consistently for all clubbers. (See your Basic Training Role Book for more information.)
- Give the child advance preparation and warning about what is going to happen in Large Group Time and all of club as a whole. Use the Church Welcome Story and customize it for your Awana club.
- Let the child visit ahead of time. Have him walk through the rooms and explain to the child what will happen in each room. This is a great relationship building experience for the leader with the child.



Stop and Think:

Do you know or suspect that a child in your club has a behavioral challenge?

What accommodations need to be made to help this child succeed?

Before implementing special accommodations for a child make sure you discuss them with your club director and the child's parents.



Resources

Autism in Your Church Book or Training DVD

Find it: Online store at clcnetwork.org

G.L.U.E. Training Manual

Find it: Online store at clcnetwork.org

Time Timer®

Find it: Online store at clcnetwork.org

Church Welcome Story

Find it: Online store at clcnetwork.org

Basic Training Role Books

Find it: awana.org/store

Questions? Contact us at leadershiptraining@awana.org.