



MANAGING CHILDREN'S INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR

Strategies for dealing with inappropriate behaviour

Initially, quietly correct the child's behaviour:

- Children, even young ones, know that there are rules about what behaviour is considered acceptable. Just drawing a child's attention to the fact that they have been noticed is usually enough to get them to change their behaviour.
- Do this as soon as possible after the inappropriate behaviour occurs.

Alternatively:

- use non-verbal cues where possible – move closer, nod, frown slightly or stare
- join in and partner the child whose behaviour has been problematic, without commenting
- divert their attention by asking a question: 'John, how is that serve coming along?', 'Sarah, can you organise this activity with your group, please?'
- praise a good aspect of their involvement
- ask them if they are having difficulty
- remind them of the group rules and appropriate behaviour (privately)
- address the behaviour not the character of the child: 'That's a silly thing to do, Matthew', not 'You are silly Matthew'
- find out why they are misbehaving and ask if it is helpful to the group (privately).

If the behaviour is still problematic then relate the problem back to group rules:

- The coach might ask the child, 'What are you doing? Is this against our rules?', then ask what they should be doing.
- Politely ask the child to change their behaviour, reminding them of the consequence if they do not.

If the inappropriate behaviour continues:

- politely and calmly issue the consequence, or loss of privileges
- be respectful, but firm and specific
- do not use punishment, blame, shame, pain, ignoring or sarcasm
- be consistent
- be brief – do not nag, lecture or interrogate
- remain calm – do not show anger and keep a 'cool head'
- forgive and forget.

One way of dealing with inappropriate behaviour is to withdraw the child from the activity:

- Place the child in 'time out' for a period before inviting them to rejoin the group. Rejoining the group occurs only if the child agrees to abide by the team rules.
- The 'time out' area should be somewhere away from other children but still located close enough so that the coach is able to supervise the child.
- On the child's return find an early opportunity to praise them or involve them in leading a group.
- Be patient as some inappropriate behaviour may need time to correct.

Tips for managing behaviour:

- Ensure that participants, parents and administrators are aware of the expected codes of behaviour and consequences that will be applied.
- Deal with the problem by focusing on the behaviour – don't get personal. Do not publicly insult or embarrass the participant.
- Avoid punishing a group for the poor behaviour of one participant.
- Take a firm, fair and consistent approach to managing behaviour.
- Apply consequences quickly and fairly. It may be necessary to exclude an individual from an activity. The exclusion should be brief and the coach should discuss the incident privately with the individual while they are excluded.
- Use praise, acknowledgment and rewards to reinforce desired behaviours.

