

# Guidelines for Small Group Behaviors

Within a large group, young people often don't get a chance to or feel comfortable enough to share their thoughts and feelings. This is why small groups can be so valuable. (It's much harder to get lost or to hide in a group that numbers only eight.) As you know, much of what will be discussed and worked on will be within small groups. The following guidelines may help you and your group to get more out of the time you spend within the small group.

- If possible, meet the participants prior to the group gathering.
- Be prepared prior to the group gathering. Have all needed materials.
- Be sure that the environment is appropriate and supportive of the kind of activity or event that is planned.
- Be there as the group arrives. Unsupervised free time invites disruptive behavior.
- Greet the young people by name. Be genuinely happy to see them.
- Define the expected behavior for the kind of event they will be involved in. *(The difference between listening respectfully to a speaker or cutting loose during a wild game of volleyball.)*
- Be specific when giving instructions and setting expectations.
- Ask for an agreement. (verbal contract) *Ask whether everyone understands and accepts the guidelines for the experience. Give them the opportunity to opt out if they need to. Agree on any changes to the original plan before you begin and review the appropriate consequences for deviation from the agreed upon standards.*
- Remind the group of their agreement (if needed). *If disruptive behaviors arise, remind the group of the guidelines set at the beginning of the meeting. Do not single out one person to discipline. That is a nonproductive way to keep order. It also puts the young person on the spot in front of others and can be very frightening.*  
  
*Also, remind the group or individuals of guidelines with nonverbal cues: a serious look, a hand gesture, silence, etc.*
- Affirm desired behavior.
- Respond appropriately to disruptive behavior. *If the group's talking is unproductive or if you feel as if you've lost control of the group, try being silent and looking downward until the group quiets down. Often they will discipline themselves. Don't get into a power struggle. Don't give undo attention to an undesired behavior.*
- Don't forget to pray! Always keep in mind why we're doing what we're doing.