

frustrations at the group, remember shaming and reprimanding don't motivate people as well as kindness.

3. Practice humility—Humility requires honesty. Admit your mistakes. Then move on. For instance, if you blame someone else for something you forgot to do, acknowledge your blunder. Be humble. A transparent, authentic approach lets members see your humanness. And knowing you're human—like everybody else—could challenge the group to be more helpful.

Humility also recognizes the need for others. Ministry requires togetherness; nobody can do it alone. Without a sense of humility, you might think you're the only one who can do it right; or you're the only one capable of making things happen. Dismiss the thought. Work on a humble attitude.

4. Use gentleness—A leader who keeps his or her "cool" is respected. So when you think of gentleness, don't confuse it with being limp, weak or powerless. Just the opposite. Gentleness involves speaking with authority and firmness without losing control.

A practical tool for speaking that way comes from using "I" messages. "I" messages come across honestly, firmly, yet gently. The focus is on owning your feelings, not placing the blame on the group. For example, instead of blurting "You make me mad!" the same feelings can be shared in a more constructive manner. Take responsibility for your feelings by stating it in another way. Say: "I'm getting upset. When no one pays attention I feel as though I'm losing control. I need your cooperation." Notice the change in tone of the second

6. Exhibit tolerance—As a leader, you've probably learned what group behavior is acceptable and what violates the limits. Leaders have varying "tolerance" levels. What irks one leader might go unnoticed by another. The key is balance. When any group gets together, expect some degree of noise and action. That's certainly tolerable. But make sure the group doesn't hurt someone by getting too "rough" in actions or words. Have the group share in writing contracts or covenants that set boundaries for what's to be tolerated. Be understanding and giving.

HANDLING FRUSTRATIONS

When things get out of hand and you've reached your limit—let these eight, Bible-centered hints help you be a better leader

BY JOANI SCHULTZ

8. Live love—"... the greatest of these is love..." (1 Corinthians 13:13). As a leader, show love and sincerity. Keep Christ as the center of your love. Check your motives as a leader. Do you lead because of love? Or do you feel it's an obligation, a "have to"? Or do you lead only because nobody else will do it? Do you lead with a grudge? Or do you lead with a servant attitude—wanting to offer what you can in love?

Make sure your motivation is love, Christ-centered love. Because what's inside you shows through to the group.

Put these hints into action, and you'll not only prevent some of the frustrations many leaders feel, you'll be a more Christlike example for the rest of the group. ☐

That did it! Last night's youth meeting finally burned the fuse that sizzled your patience. As the young person who was responsible for the meeting, you kept those ugly, angry feelings tamed. Until now. And you've exploded!

You can prevent explosive encounters by handling frustrations before reaching your limits. Read and practice the following list inspired by Colossians 3:12-14:

"You are the people of God; he loved you and chose you for his own. So then, you must clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Be tolerant with one another and forgive one another whenever any of you has a complaint against someone else. You must forgive one another just as the Lord has forgiven you. And to all these qualities add love, which binds all things together in perfect unity."

1. Show compassion—As a leader, understand where each person is coming from. Don't think of the group as one solid lump of people. Think of it as different individuals who each bring special backgrounds and problems to the

example? Sending "I" messages helps refine the trait of gentleness.

5. Be patient—Patience is the glue that holds a crumbling group together; patience hangs on even when improvement looks impossible. So the trite old saying, "If you're angry, count to ten," maybe isn't so trite. Waiting often brings a fresh outlook. Snap judgment perceptions can change as they're given time to mellow or heal.

If you're frustrated with the group's lack of commitment or other disturbing actions, be patient. Don't expect miracles overnight. But do trust God is still working.

meetings.

As a compassionate leader, you'll desire to learn what makes people tick. For example, Jamie always acts up, shows off and talks back. Why? By investigating his personal needs, you may discover Jamie's parents just split up, and right now he needs extra doses of love and understanding. By taking a personal interest in each group member, you'll begin to understand each person more fully. If group members know you genuinely care, they're bound to be more cooperative. And that helps reduce frustration.

2. Be kind—Build up the group—even when you're feeling frazzled. Expressing kindness doesn't mean being a fake. It means letting the members know when you're pleased and happy with them. Focus on the positive stuff. Every time you're together, say friendly, encouraging words: "With so many talented people in our group, we have unlimited potential!" Or "Thanks for the good job to all who worked on last week's fund raiser." Or "We're a great group. Let's keep working together!"

When you feel like blasting your

Accept shortcomings and mistakes.

7. Forgive—Sometimes the muck of mistakes requires major cleansing. That's when forgiveness comes in. When things get unbearable, stop. Take time to reconcile differences and misunderstandings. "I'm sorry" and "Please forgive me" go a long way in patching up the rough edges. Forgiveness breaks the way for new beginnings.