

Here are three to get you started:

1 Instead of working to keep kids' attention, work to keep their interest. If they're interested, they'll pay attention. I confess: I'm not interested in knitting. Therefore, if someone tries to lecture me about "The Joys of Knitting," I'll have a hard time faking like I care. The same is true in junior high ministry—specifically when it comes to lesson time. Kids will pay attention to stuff that interests them. Work to make your lessons interesting, and you'll be shocked at how well junior highers actually listen.

2 Whether or not you realize it, everything that happens in your ministry teaches something. My friend Scott Rubin refers to this truth as "the hidden curriculum." The way you treat visitors teaches them something. The way you show grace to troublemakers teaches them something. The way you treat your spouse teaches him or her something. Every aspect of your ministry and life is teaching something—all the time. But hey, no pressure!

3 If you wouldn't say it, play it, or show it with parents in the room, then don't say it, play it, or show it. This simple rule has kept me in line (and out of hot water) countless times. Whenever I'm tempted to lead a game that feels a bit dangerous or tell a joke that feels a bit edgy, I first ask how I'd feel if parents saw or heard it themselves. If that makes me uncomfortable, I know my answer. ●