

Ministry with kids is fantastic—especially when you're a part of a team with motivated members. But team spirit doesn't just happen. It's cultivated through the labors of a committed leader. Here are four things to keep in mind when building a youth ministry team:

1. **Know your people.** Meet regularly with your team members one-on-one to share your ideas, visions and plans. Listen to each person's ideas and feelings. Treat team members as creatures of eternal worth, and not as tools to be used and discarded. Ministry can be a real joy, but it can also be lonely and confusing. Be there for your team members.

2. **Structure group times.** In addition to a short meeting before our youth group meeting, our staff met together once each month for training, idea exchange, personal sharing and prayer. The purpose of meeting together is to build your staff into a team. Some groups do this on a weekly basis. Determine how often your team needs to meet together.

3. **Give significant responsibilities.** The unconscious temptation of almost every youth leader is to plan and lead each event and delegate to the staff the less "significant" chores. People want to be needed. Give your team members the opportunity, if they desire, to carry out some of the truly significant items on the agenda. If they like "up-front" work, let them emcee or lead music. If they have organizational skills, let them plan an evening event.

4. **Encourage contact with parents.** When young people are enjoying the youth program, parents are happy. And happy parents say good things. Encourage your staff to meet with parents during family participation nights, recognition breakfasts or while they're visiting the kids' homes.

By doing this, team members are directly encouraged in what they are doing, and in the process they develop a support system among other adults. This support system is vital to the team member who may be tempted to rely on the kids in the group to meet his or her needs.