

Effectively Interacting With ADD/ADHD Youth — Part II

BY MICHAEL BURDO

Time and again, whenever I hold a training session, leaders desperately ask for information on this topic. Over the next few issues of *Scouting Life Magazine*, I will provide general and specific techniques to assist you in providing the best Scouting experience possible to these youth. The January/February column discussed characteristics, interactive techniques and effective communication tips with ADD/ADHD youth.

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A Recipe for Discipline

At this stage, many leaders will begin to sigh “Yeah.... But what if?” Their concern is about discipline. Remember that discipline relates to effective communication. Much like a recipe, discipline requires several ingredients to turn out a successful end product. These ingredients are a mixture of positive leading, mutual respect, fairness, trust, consistency and a love for youth.

When you must intervene regarding discipline matters, do not provide lectures, put downs, sarcasm, youth comparing, or an authoritarian approach. Keep away from a punitive approach. Never yell at the youth. It announces that you have lost control. Remain calm and talk in a clear and even tone. Never threaten but rather be consistent and mean what you say. If it’s one or two chances only, then that is what it is!

Consequences for inappropriate behaviour must be logical. A short “time out” off to the side with a quiet activity such as a crossword puzzle, drawing, or basic craft and then a quiet exchange with a skilled leader with a focus of engagement and not lecturing should soon find you asking the child if he/she is ready to return to the group. It may be that at times, a skilled leader should be assigned to briefly shadow/support the child experiencing a behaviour challenge. Often, behaviours of a negative nature dissipate when you give the child a leadership role or responsibility. Remember to redirect inappropriate behaviour.

Other Factors

Medications play a role and so it is important to educate yourself in order

to be aware of youth outcomes. This requires dialogue and ongoing communication with the parents of challenged youth. Strive to enlist the parents as your allies. Welcome them through a style of inclusiveness. Take time to chat with them before and at the end of meetings. Inviting a parent to a camp provides an extra pair of hands; someone familiar with the ADD/ADHD youth with ways to work with

them. Who knows, you may even gain an additional leader down the road.

Learn to listen to the youth. When young children are talking with you, they are often trying to tell you about their thoughts, their ideas and their feelings. Watch your body language. Avoid glaring, crossed arms, angry facial expressions, and looks of frustration. Be fair and admit when you’ve made

a mistake. By far, hang on to your sense of humor. Know that children are able to read adults better than we are able to read them!

Control the environment for distractions. For example, do you need to do something about the level of noise off to the side when you are trying to talk with the youth? Have an ADD/ADHD child repeat back in their own words what they understood from your message/request. Let the child record simple notes to bring home (help them with this). Include the parents in problem solving issues and concerns. Foremost, ask yourself: “Do you “Demand Respect” or Do you “Command Respect”! Mutual respect is earned.

In the May/June issue, I’ll focus on specific techniques that may go far in effectively working with ADD/ADHD youth. X
— Michael Burdo, B.A., B.S.W., is a Youth and Family Counselor and Scout counselor for 92nd Ottawa Scout Troop, Ontario.



Photo: Richard J. Petsche