Guidance Strategies for Working with Youth

Non-formal education brings many different behaviors and group management scenarios. Not all strategies are developmentally appropriate for every age or every situation. This is a list of possible strategies to consider, depending on the situation.

When considering actions, consider the following questions as well:
- What need is the youth trying to meet by their actions?
- Why is this a problem—and whose problem is it?
- What role did I as the leader play in regard to my preparation or reaction to the situation to get us to this place—and how can I adjust?
- What do I want the youth to learn from this experience?
- What will be the effects of my behavior/actions/words for the individual and/or for the group?

Potential strategies to consider when addressing undesired behaviors in the moment:

Provide appropriate experiences and materials

Clear expectations stated calmly

Ignore individual or behavior

Distraction

Redirection of individual or group

Verbal / Physical modeling

Give warnings and preparation for future… especially prior to transitions

Time away / Chill out

Give choices

Trade

Share

Negotiate

Compromise

If… then… or Yes… then…

Effective praise

Encouragement

Natural consequences

Logical consequences

Take action without insult—keep response to the behavior, not the person

Private conversation for correction

Active listening

Share what you are feeling

Turn chores/tasks into games

Tell them what you want them to do (instead of what not to do)

Show interest in the youth/what the youth is doing

Help re-frame

Acknowledge all feelings in a genuine way

Show empathy and compassion

Be aware of vocabulary… when adding "ok" at the end of a request or expectation, it gives an opportunity to say "no". When asking if someone "can," they could respond by saying "no".

Say what you mean and mean what you say.

Pick your battles

Stay calm

Proximity… move closer to the conflict

Give one to two sentence directions.

Provide opportunities for movement (walking, stretching, etc.)