



## Youth Inclusion Workshop Guide: Responding to Challenging Behavior

**Workshop Description:** This workshop includes information and practice for obtaining the knowledge necessary for identifying and addressing problematic behavior within the program. These skills will allow youth program staff to respond to these behaviors in a manner that teaches youth how to act appropriately. Through the development of these skills, staff will improve the program experience for all youth.

**Preparation Time:** The preparation time for this workshop is approximately 15 to 20 minutes. This preparation time should include reading background information on the Youth Inclusion Training website and in this workshop guide, collecting and preparing materials, and gathering any additional information you may need.

**Instruction Time:** It will take approximately 50 minutes to complete all activities within this guide.

**Materials:**

- Printed copies of the worksheet *Creating Behavioral Statements*.
- Printed copies of the handout *Challenging Behavior Examples*.
- Large sheets of paper, at least three.
- Writing utensils.
- Additional paper for staff responses.

**Preparation Instructions:** You should read the content related to this topic on the Youth Inclusion Training website, specifically the content related to Rules, Systems, and Language. In addition, you should review the background information in this workshop guide as well as any others related to this topic (e.g., *Following the Rules and Language and Inclusion*). Lastly, gather all necessary materials, prepare the *Challenging Behavior Examples* handout by cutting the handout so only one scenario is on a strip of paper, and familiarize yourself with the workshop guide.

### **Knowledge: Understanding Strategies to Respond to Challenging Behavior**

Behavioral problems can be defined as anything that takes away from the program experience for a particular person or group. A result of these behaviors is that the program staff leader is distracted from focusing on their lesson plan, group activity, etc. (Hoy, Perkins, et. al, 2005). Some common behavioral problems include:

- Attention-seeking behaviors (e.g., calling attention to themselves or interrupting others while others speak)
- Disruptive behaviors such as sudden outbursts or distracting others
- Inappropriate conversations
- Defiance by challenging the program staff or refusing to comply with authority
- Heckling behavior (e.g., speaking out of turn and/or picking on others while others speak)
- Inappropriate social behavior (e.g., interrupting others, not waiting their turn)
- Lack of social skills (e.g., being unable or unwilling to work on a team with others)



### Intervention Techniques:

- *Understand discipline and punishment.* Discipline refers to teaching someone appropriate behaviors while punishment is used to enforce discipline or control a situation. When addressing behavioral issues, it is important to manage inappropriate behavior while teaching the appropriate behavior.
- *Establish expectations and rules.* Expectations and rules should be established by both the staff and youth. When youth are involved with the development of rules, they have a clear understanding of what the rules are and the consequences for breaking them.
- *Ask questions.* Ask the youth questions that make them think about their actions in a non-threatening, uncondescending way. These questions should get youth to think about their actions and the consequences associated with them. For example, the staff can ask, “What are you working on/what do you need to be doing?”
- *Teach modeling.* Youth program staff are often seen as role models for youth. Youth, therefore, model staff’s behaviors. Program staff need to teach by example by modeling appropriate behaviors.

### Objectives:

- Identify the root or cause for a youth’s challenging behaviors.
- Effectively utilize strategies for addressing misbehavior that involve teaching youth appropriate behaviors.
- Model appropriate behaviors for youth.

### Introduction (5-7 minutes):

- Describe problematic behavior by first defining what qualifies as challenging behavior, what may cause it, and how to properly respond.
  - What to say: “When youth exhibit problematic or challenging behavior, it can detract from the program experience. Therefore, it is crucial that you as program staff recognize these behaviors and implement intervention techniques. It is also important to try to prevent these behaviors from occurring in the first place by clearly expressing program rules and expectations.”
  - Start with what defines challenging behavior:
    - “How would you define a behavior as challenging? What constitutes challenging behavior?”
    - “What may cause a youth to behave poorly? What are some triggers you can think of?”

### Prior Knowledge (5-7 minutes):

- What to say: “In order to gather a sense of your prior knowledge regarding this topic, we are going to ask what it is you already know, what you don’t know, and what you want to know regarding how to respond when youth exhibit problematic behavior.”
- Ask the staff how they would generally respond if a youth were to display the challenging behaviors that were previously discussed. Record staff responses.



- Ask the staff what they are unfamiliar with regarding responding to problematic behavior. Responses may include uncertainty regarding how to respond to certain situations, how to maintain a calm demeanor, etc. Ask if there is anything they need clarification or elaboration on. Again, record responses.

### Activities:

#### Activity: *Creating Behavioral Statements* (15 minutes)

- Describe the *Creating Behavioral Statements* activity:
  - What to say, “Behavioral statements are a way to organize and place youth’s problematic behavior on a timeline to examine the trigger, behavior, and outcome/consequence. This tool will allow you to better understand the problem behavior and the consequences that accompany them.”
- Lead the *Creating Behavioral Statements* activity:
  - Provide each staff with a *Creating Behavioral Statements* worksheet.
  - Explain the worksheet to staff by saying that behavioral statements encapsulate the behavior, the context in which it occurs, and the consequences that accompany it.
  - Instruct the staff to fill out the Consequences column of the worksheet independently for each behavior.
  - Once staff have completed the worksheet, ask volunteers if they would like to share any of their own experiences of challenging behavior to provide real examples and context. If staff feel comfortable, have them also share how they responded to a situation/solution.

#### Activity: *Challenging Behavior Examples* (25 minutes)

- Describe the *Challenging Behavior Examples* activity:
  - What to say, “This next activity will expose you to the different types of challenging behavior you may come across in the program, what may be causing that behavior, and what you should do to address the behavior.”
- Lead the *Challenging Behavior Examples* activity:
  - Separate the staff into seven groups with a few individuals in each group. If there aren’t enough participants to form seven groups, give the groups more than one challenging behavior example.
  - Give each group the strip(s) of paper containing their group’s *Challenging Behavior Examples*, a writing utensil, and a sheet of paper.
  - Instruct each group to read through the example on the strip of paper and answer the following questions: “What do you think is the cause or reason behind youth exhibiting that behavior?” and “What should you do and not do in response to each behavior?”
  - After each small group has had enough time to answer the two questions, facilitate a larger group discussion.
  - Have a volunteer from each group read their example(s) out loud. Ask each group to share what they came up with for why youth exhibit their behavior(s) and how they would respond.



- Record responses for each example on a large sheet of paper. Create two columns, one for “Dos” and one for “Don’ts”. An answer key to facilitate discussion is provided in the Resources section of this workshop guide.

### Reflection and Recap (5 minutes):

- Return to the staff’s responses gathered at the start of the workshop (see Prior Knowledge activity). Ask the staff what they learned during the course of the workshop and record the information on the same paper or a new blank page if there is no room. Draw attention to topics that were on the list generated earlier, new topics, and questions that were answered.
- Ask follow-up questions, such as “What part of the activity made you realize that?”

### Resources:

Worksheet: *Creating Behavioral Statements*

Handout: *Challenging Behavior Examples*

Instructional Aid: *Challenging Behavior Examples – Answer Key*

### Sources:

Hoy, P. E., Perkins, D. F., Webster, P. V., Christner, B. J., & Mock, L. (2005). After-school programs behavioral issues toolkit. *Department of Agricultural and Extension Education, Pennsylvania State University.*

The *Creating Behavioral Statements* handout was adapted from Wright, J. (Presenter). (n.d.). How to: Write behavior statements to identify causes of child behavior problems. Retrieved from [https://www.interventioncentral.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/pdfs\\_blog/behavior\\_management\\_behavior\\_statement.pdf](https://www.interventioncentral.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/pdfs_blog/behavior_management_behavior_statement.pdf)

The *Challenging Behavior Examples* activity was adapted from Manitsa, N. (2017, November 9). Bad behavior and how to deal with it. *ELT Teacher’s Corner*. Retrieved from <https://www.teachers-corner.co.uk/bad-behaviour/>



## Youth Inclusion Worksheet: Creating Behavioral Statements

**Directions:** Fill out the Consequences/Outcome column for each youth behavior.

Precursor Activity	Youth Behavior	Consequences/Outcome
Large group activities	Leaves without permission	
Large group activities	Uses cell phone or other digital device against program rules	
Student work-pairs	Makes loud or distracting noises	
Student work-pairs	Calls out with non-relevant comments	
Transition between activities	Distracts other youth and does not listen to instructions	



## Youth Inclusion Worksheet: Creating Behavioral Statements

Other	Fails to comply with staff requests (verbal refusal)	
Other	Makes verbal threats towards adult	
Other	Makes comments/encourages other youth to misbehave	



## **Youth Inclusion Handout: Challenging Behavior Examples**

**Directions:** Hand out a slip of paper containing one example of a challenging behavior to each group.

### **Challenging Behavior 1: Defiance**

**Observed:**

- Talks back/laughs at staff
- Appears unaffected by what staff says or does
- Claims staff is unfair
- Has poor relationships with peers
- Often emotional with little self-control
- Blames others

### **Challenging Behavior 2: Making Silly Noises**

**Observed:**

- Makes disrupting noises such as humming, tapping, whistling, etc.
- Pretends he/she is not the cause when asked to stop
- Gives the impression they are purposefully trying to annoy staff and other youth participants

### **Challenging Behavior 3: Abusive Language**

**Observed:**

- Loud, offensive, or abusive to others in group situations
- Can't accept criticism from others
- Attempts to shock staff and impress peers
- Doesn't form relationships with peers

### **Challenging Behavior 4: Refusal to Work/Participate**

**Observed:**

- Draws, daydreams, and uses a variety of tactics to avoid work
- Frequently out of seat, wandering around
- Fails to bring equipment/materials to program
- Short attention span

### **Challenging Behavior 5: Disrespectful**

**Observed:**

- Displays total lack of courtesy towards staff
- Frequently sneers, rolls eyes, mutters, or gives looks of sheer disdain
- Totally ignores staff
- Acts superior



## Youth Inclusion Handout: Challenging Behavior Examples

### Challenging Behavior 6: Class Clown

#### Observed:

- Continually disrupts with wisecracks and silly behavior
- Will do or say anything to be in the spotlight
- Doesn't know when to stop

### Challenging Behavior 7: Interrupting

#### Observed:

- Shouts out
- Makes silly or rude comments
- Tries to engage staff in off-topic conversations
- Generally ignores the staff and talks over them

The *Challenging Behavior Examples* activity has been adapted from a class management article by Natassa Manitsa. Reasons and responses for each of the behaviors can be found at this link for facilitator's reference: <https://www.teachers-corner.co.uk/bad-behaviour/>





## Youth Inclusion Instructional Aid: Challenging Behavior Examples – Answer Key

**Directions:** Use this instructional aid to help you facilitate the *Challenging Behavior Examples* activity.

### **Behavior 1: Defiance**

Do:

- Remain detached. By remaining disconnected, you can offer help without risking saying or doing something that will aggravate the situation.
- Remove audience pressure. If possible, speak to the student privately or redirect them so as to deal with the problem later. Say, for example, “Let’s not talk about it here. Let’s meet later so that you can tell me everything that’s bothering you.”
- Be caring but honest. Tell them exactly what they have done that is causing problems. Be sure to listen to the student and don’t interrupt.
- Give them the opportunity to succeed. Tasks that are tailored to their interests and ability level give them the opportunity to experience success and raise self-esteem.
- Acknowledge their achievements by giving sincere praise.
- Encourage and facilitate cooperative group work. Develop positive relationships between peers and staff.

Don’t:

- Get into a power struggle with youth. Silence is a better response.
- Raise your voice, issue threats, or give ultimatums.

### **Behavior 2: Making Silly Noises**

Do:

- Proactively deal with persistent offenders. One of the most likely reasons for this behavior is needing attention, boredom, or fear of failure. Through planning, these factors can be reduced by providing alternative, more appropriate tasks.
- Explain the effect of the behavior. Make sure the youth is aware that their behavior impairs other youth’s ability to function. You can use questions such as “Do you know what you are doing? Do you realize how you make others feel?”
- Reinforce positive behavior.

Don’t:

- “Tactically ignore” the noises only to react to them later. This trains youth to push a little harder in order to get your attention next time.
- Overreact and end up being hostile or making threats.

### **Behavior 3: Abusive Language**

Do:



## Youth Inclusion Instructional Aid: Challenging Behavior Examples – Answer Key

- Take a long-term approach. Plan to teach appropriate means of dealing with anger and controlling aggression.
- Remain calm. Remind youth that inappropriate language won't be tolerated. Try not to give them the reaction they are looking for.
- Remind the youth that you want to help.

Don't:

- Ignore foul language.
- Use condescending, patronizing, or sarcastic responses.
- Spend time lecturing or preaching.

### **Behavior 4: Refusal to Work/Participate**

Do:

- Get parents on board. Agree on an action plan with coordination between home and program.
- Enlist help from support staff. A staff member who has a positive relationship with the youth can give them adequate support and may provide a stepping-stone to success. This youth needs as much positive attention as possible.
- Find and use their interests to create activities and tasks that will appeal to them and build relationships with them.
- Have regular 1:1 time with them. Show you won't give up on them.
- Adjust work. Speak to them privately and ask if there is anything you can do to make the work more appealing.
- Give them explicit instructions. Make sure they know exactly what is expected of them by giving concise, clear instructions.

Don't:

- Nag or lecture them.
- Belittle them.
- Take the view that the youth should "just get on with it."

### **Behavior 5: Disrespectful**

Do:

- Remember this youth can't be changed with force. Fighting fire with fire will only lead to more arguments and more serious incidents.
- Make youth responsible for their actions. Remain calm and remind them of the consequences for choosing to continue to behave this way.
- Remove the audience. Public confrontation may put the youth on the spot and compel them to act even worse.
- Keep your cool.



## Youth Inclusion Instructional Aid: Challenging Behavior Examples – Answer Key

- Deny them an enemy. Disrespect is usually caused by hostility and revenge. Give the youth nothing more to be hostile towards.

Don't:

- Use sarcastic comments, put-downs, or ridicule them.
- Lose control. Responding too quickly or harshly may cause youth to retaliate further.

### **Behavior 6: Class Clown**

Do:

- Meet their need for attention. Meet this need by giving them attention when they are not messing around. Show them that they can get attention without having to act like a fool.
- Arrange a time when they can be the comedian. This youth is often very funny. The comedian needs to know that there is an acceptable and unacceptable time to be a clown.
- Make time for this youth. Take the time to build a relationship with this youth by showing interest in them.
- Respond with silence. When silly behavior becomes interruptive, use silence. A serious expression and total silence gives the clear message that the behavior is immature and unacceptable.
- Separate them from their audience.

Don't:

- Belittle them, particularly not in front of peers. Their esteem is already likely to be low.

### **Behavior 7: Interrupting**

Do:

- Include cooperative group work activities in lessons. Allow youth to make connections with peers and give opportunities to practice appropriate social behavior.
- Don't allow them to interrupt program flow. Continue leading the program.
- Give adequate opportunities for expressing ideas.
- Speak to persistent interrupters in private at the earliest possible time. Tell them the effect their behavior is having on the group and calmly but firmly tell them you will not allow this to happen.
- Give positive feedback to the youth in private.

Don't:

- Neglect the opportunity to teach good social skills.
- Give undue attention to their interruptions—it will encourage a repeat performance.