

# Behavior Management

The following pages discuss **appropriate techniques** and **ethical considerations** involved with behavior management, child abuse, and neglect. Every volunteer should carefully read the information contained in these sections. The ACT Center would like to emphasize the importance of specific guidelines further described in this manual:

- Be aware that not all people are comfortable being touched. Any unwanted or sexual touching is inappropriate and may be considered harassment or assault.
- Volunteers who interact with minors should have the child's safety and well being in mind at all times. Do not use physical force to discipline.
- If you suspect a child or a vulnerable adult is being neglected or physically or sexually abused, you should report your concern to the supervisor at your volunteer site, Rice County Child Protection Services at 645-4723, or the ACT Coordinator.
- If a volunteer experiences any form of harassment or feels unsafe at their site, the ACT Coordinator should be contacted immediately.

## *Dealing with Inappropriate Behavior*

### Ethical Behavior Management

- Behavior management should be viewed as an opportunity for teaching and not as an opportunity for punishment.
- Consider the impact on the student's interests.
- Avoid embarrassing students.
- Suggestions should be in the form of constructive criticism that occurs in private.
- Never engage in a power struggle. Strive for win/win.
- Thank students when they are trying to improve.
- Do not touch a student who is upset.

Materials adapted from: Baldwin J.D. and Baldwin J.I. (1986). Behavior principals in everyday life (2nd Edition), Engle Wood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall. and Martin, G. and Pear, J. (1992). Behavior Modification: What it is and how to do it. Engle Wood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

### Preventative Measures

The best way to deal with inappropriate behavior is to prevent it from occurring. It's important to create a positive and respectful atmosphere that will encourage your tutee to act appropriately. The following are some suggestions about how you can create and maintain this type of atmosphere.

- During your first session, **be clear** about what is appropriate behavior and be consistent about reminding your tutee and enforcing the specified behavior.

- Make sure your **physical environment** is conducive to doing work. It's best to find a workplace that is quiet and away from other students.
- Remember that **you are a role model** for appropriate behavior.
- Have a clear picture of the task on which you are working and the problems your tutee may encounter.
- Keep your tutee actively involved** and interested by using materials or talking through problems.
- 👉 **Reinforce correct responses** (i.e., "You got eight words right," *not* "You got two words wrong").
- 👉 When you give feedback, **be encouraging**.
- Be understanding, sincere, and a good listener.** Learn to notice when your tutee is tired or having a bad day and tailor your session to the specific circumstances at hand.
- Include time for conversation** to help build a personal relationship.

## How to Deal With Behavioral Problems

Regardless of the type of atmosphere that you create, you are bound to face some behavioral problems. Sometimes children are tired or just having a bad day and no matter what you do they will refuse to cooperate. Remember that this is not your fault. If behavioral problems arise, try these strategies:

**Use the same phrases their teachers use.** Ask your tutee's teacher what phrases s/he uses to get his or her students to cooperate. This works best for K-3rd graders, but may work for older kids, too.

**Explain to your tutee** why the behavior is inappropriate. If the student continues to misbehave, tell your tutee that s/he will have to be taken back to the classroom and that the student will have to explain to the teacher why s/he was taken back early.

**Learn the school rules** and remind your tutee of them. At all of the schools there is a rule that students must respect and listen to the person in charge, which is you!

**Speak in a calm voice.** It's easy to get worked up, but it's best not to let your tutee know that you are feeling frustrated.

If none of the above suggestions work and you encounter problems that you do not feel you can handle or that are continually disruptive, you should always feel free to talk to:

- ❖ The student's teacher (if you have been requested by the child's school).
- ❖ The student's parents (if you have been requested by the child's parents).
- ❖ The ACT Tutoring Coordinator, Marissa Fischer (717) 515-5019, fischmar@carleton.edu

# What to do if...

*The following are suggestions on how to handle common situations that do not warrant disciplinary action.*

## **Your tutee refuses to give you answers.**

- a) Ask open-ended questions to get to the root of the problem.
- b) The student may be afraid of getting the wrong answer—ask easier questions that lead to the answer.
- c) Let the students tell you something that they are good at or know well in order to build their confidence.
- d) Give clues to the correct answer. But don't do the work for the tutee; let the student take pride in getting the answer right by him/herself.

## **Your tutee seems to be angry or upset when you first meet.**

- a) Ask questions and try to find out what is going on.
- b) Let your tutee talk. Find out something good that happened that day and also some of the bad things.
- c) Talk to the teacher. Usually there is an explanation for the behavior.

## **Your tutee asks you for a date.**

- a) If the tutee is a second grader, smile and move on.
- b) If s/he is in high-school, let him/her know that this is an inappropriate question.
- c) Talk to the parent if the problem continues.
- d) Remember that you should *not* meet your tutee outside of the tutoring session.

## **Your tutee says that s/he feels sick.**

- a) Ask your tutee to describe how s/he feels.
- b) If you have doubts, hang out for a little while and see if his/her symptoms go away.
- c) If your tutee is truly ill, contact the parent.

## **Your tutee seems unable to learn the material on which you are working.**

- a) Do not blame yourself. The student's struggle could result from his or her lack of interest in school, low self-esteem, or trouble with learning that has developed over the years.
- b) Refer to strategies provided in these guide sheets. Think of creative ways to try to capture the student's interest.