

26. Don't withhold the positives. No matter how rebellious or disobedient a youth may be, do NOT withhold praise, focused attention, hugs and listening during a punishment period. This meets real needs and helps youth trust you and understand that your intentions are for their good, even though they don't like your answers or restrictions.
27. Be humble and open. Sharing your stories can quickly gain the receptivity from youth that you are hoping for. Be quick to admit your mistakes when you have a bad reaction. This helps teens to trust you more and helps them to evaluate and admit their own mistakes.
28. Do not's: Do not ever overlook disrespect (but react calmly). Do not allow your anger to boil when disrespected. Do not try to "beat youth at their game." Do not embarrass youth in front of their peers.
29. Lastly and most importantly, understand the unspoken rule in the hearts of many of our youth today: "Adults don't care about me, they just want to control me." In the hearts of wounded youth, trust takes time to gel. A patient, caring, respectful, persevering, diplomatic approach will pay off as youth come to understand you really do care and that your actions and expectations are for their good.

Clubs In The City is an innovative youth development ministry, offering programs that accurately address the concerns of youth at-risk today.

CLUBS IN THE CITY
URBAN YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

P. O. Box 19661
 Raleigh, NC 27619
 info@clubsinthecity.org

clubsinthecity.org

Responding with Care ~~29~~ Tips for responding to behavior challenges of youth at-risk

*Provided by
 Clubs In The City Urban Youth Development*

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1. Adjust your mindset. Welcome behavior challenges as opportunities to connect, love, teach and train youth that have great potential.
2. Start with prevention. Build relationships on the front end—every year, every program, every day, every class. Greet every youth at the door every day with eye contact and a warm hello. Dedicate the first few days of any new class or group to relationship building. Spend extra affirming relational time with key disrupters and instigators.
3. Understand that many youth come to your program carrying huge levels of stress.
4. Understand that most attitudes are a way of "acting out" distress over what youth may not be able to communicate, control, or easily resolve in their circumstances. Realize that when youth are angry, they probably have something to be angry about.
5. Understand that some youth are largely allowed to run their own lives and bear the weight of adult-like responsibility. They need to be treated with respect and diplomacy.
6. Tune in to needs—physical, social, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual—and gear your environment and responses to meeting these needs.
7. Show you "get it" by responding to attitudes, misbehavior and anger with respectful, compassionate and caring support—even when youth cannot admit they are stressed or reveal the source.
8. Listen first. Often youth just need a chance to unload their stress and frustrations. A non-threatening invitation to share what is going on

will often provide the needed emotional release and open the way to problem solving and solutions.

9. Second, empower youth by giving them a chance to do their own problem solving.
10. Third, offer ideas after you have listened and empowered youth to problem solve. Youth do want and welcome guidance, as long as we have respected and welcomed their thoughts and feelings first.
11. Instead of correcting, offer a different way to think about things. Give reasons and examples. Avoid saying “No” whenever possible. Respond to requests you must deny with “Let’s think this through.”
12. Don’t harm your youth by massaging self-pity and a victim mentality. Prepare youth for healthy families and successful employment by consistently nurturing the habit of taking responsibility for one’s own part in any problem. (How did “I” and “they” contribute to the issue?)
13. Avoid coercion and give choices whenever possible. At-risk youth often feel a loss of control in the face of difficult life circumstances. Work with them to identify the short-term (immediate) and long-term (future and lifelong) options and outcomes. Let them choose—while emphasizing your belief in them and desire for their good.
14. Avoid power struggles. Take yourself out of the battle. Rather than pitting yourself against youth to get them to meet your demands, be their ally as they face needs, wants, impulses, feelings, difficult people and circumstances. Help them choose what will benefit them, and “fight against” responses that may bring them harm.
15. Maintain high expectations. Believing in their ability to rise to the standard, despite their stresses and challenges, shows youth the greatest level of respect and affirmation. Their courage is admirable.
16. Work as a team as program leaders. Come to one another’s aid and back one another up. Respond with a united front. Like all healthy families, work out adult disagreements behind closed doors. Demonstrate healthy teams by valuing all members. Avoid courting favoritism for yourself and undermining others’ authority.
17. Follow the “10 minute” rule for classroom instruction. Pack what you really have to say into 10 minutes. Spend the rest of group time in

interactive and experiential activities that reinforce concepts.

18. Provide energy breaks. When you see your group starting to get restless, “take 3” for everyone to stand up and sing a song, move to a routine or chime out a rap.
19. Provide download zones: places and persons available for youth to take self-determined (or recommended) time outs to de-stress. Respectfully allow youth to make use of these zones as a matter of self-determined prevention from angry, disruptive or violent actions. Respect and assist youth to make up material missed when they make the positive choice of accessing the download zone.
20. Don’t make assumptions that youth know better. Many youth lack consistent home training due to the stress levels of parents. Respectfully instruct youth in expected and beneficial behaviors and resulting outcomes in the classroom and beyond.
21. Always respectfully give the reason when you issue a directive. When youth understand clearly how a request will benefit them and others, they are usually happy to cooperate.
22. Avoid the cultural norm of a “me mentality”. Talk out how our actions affect others and give focus to God’s command to love our neighbor as ourselves. Deal with heart attitudes, not just outward actions, taking the time to consider the selfish nature of our actions toward others and God.
23. Appeal to a higher authority. Point to God’s Word when advising on moral guidelines or consequences. Emphasize that this is not about my opinion or your opinion or anybody else’s opinion, but about a loving, all-powerful God who created us. He sets forth commands and a guidebook of truth because He wants what is best for us and others. No one can escape His truth or reality.
24. Be resolute in carrying out consequences. Don’t give in to whining or bargaining. You will lose respect from your youth and forfeit their growth potential.
25. Serve those who need you most. Instead of expelling youth that get into a fight or bully, pave a path to healing. Mandate they pair with an accountability partner (adult) and attend weekly mentor-counseling to continue in the program. [Contact CITC for more insight]