

ATTENTION, PLEASE!

Managing Behavioral Needs
in the Religious Education Classroom
Ana Arista White and Joseph D. White, Ph.D.

Questions for Reflection

- When am I most motivated to do my best?
- As a child, what adults in my life did I respect most? Why?
- When and how did I learn to listen to, and show respect for, God's Word?

From Sacred Scripture

- "Do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" Ephesians 6:4.
- "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and [the one] who fears is not perfected in love" I John 4:18.

From the GDC

- May patience and trust abide in the spirituality of the catechist, since it is God himself who sows, gives growth, and brings to fruition the seed of his word, planted in good soil and tended with love"
-- *GDC*, 289

A beginning framework...

- Structured
- Loving
- Positive, not punitive
- Patient
- Trusting

Structure

- Arranging the Space

- Schedule/Activities
- Behavioral Expectations

Arranging the Space

- Inviting
- Interesting, but not cluttered
- Functional
- Proactive
 - Forbidden objects put away
 - Activity supplies ready
 - Participant proximity to catechist and others

Schedule/Activities

- The world of today's child
- Know the developmental level
- Attention span – new research suggests equal to age in minutes!
- Multiple Intelligences/ Multisensory learning

Question for Reflection:

In what ways do our Catholic traditions provide for people who learn best by seeing? by hearing? by doing?

The Body of Christ

- “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ... For the body does not consist of one member but of many.” (I Cor. 12: 12, 14)

Multiple Intelligences (Howard Gardner, 1983)

- Logical Mathematical – numbers, logic, puzzles, scientific method
- Linguistic – reading, writing, speaking, storytelling, poetry
- Musical/Rhythmic – singing, music appreciation, composing
- Spatial – charts, graphs & diagrams, painting & drawing, photography, geometry
- Bodily-Kinesthetic – movement, skits & plays, hands-on activities, manipulatives
- Naturalist – sensitivity to the features of the natural world; ability to discriminate between living things.
- Interpersonal – cooperative groups, conflict resolution, clubs
- Intrapersonal – private space, journals

From the General Directory for Catechesis

- "Perfect fidelity to Catholic doctrine is compatible with a rich diversity of presentation." (GDC, 122)
- "...the "variety of methods is a sign of life and richness" as well as a demonstration of respect for those to whom catechesis is addressed." (GDC, 148)

Multisensory activities that can be adapted to various content

- Visual, interactive story times
- Music
- Drama
- Creating meaningful visual symbols of the lesson
- Games
 - Tic-tac-toe
 - Game show
 - Mystery word
 - Who Am I

Multi-sensory, Active Learning Approaches to the Six Tasks of Catechesis

- Knowledge of the Faith
- Liturgy
- Morality

- Prayer
 - Community Life
 - Missionary Initiation
 - Knowledge of the Faith – interactive stories, object lessons, drama
- Liturgy (hands-on sacramental education through props and role play, vessels and vestments, classroom altar, etc.)

Morality

- 10 Commandments TIC-TAC-TOE
- Acting it Out (social stories, in-vivo situations)

Prayer

- Visuals (make a picture for God)
- Make your own chaplets
- Guided meditations (Christ-centered)
- Music and movement

Community Life

- Team work
- "Peer partners"
- Service projects
- "How Can I Help?"

Missionary Initiation

- Sharing Jesus with others (stories, pictures, etc.)
- Learning about other cultures

Sample schedules

Schedule A:

9:30 – 9:45	Gathering time (art/craft activity)
9:45 – 9:55	Music and lesson introduction
9:55 – 10:10	Lesson

10:10 – 10:25 Tic-Tac-Toe
10:25 – 10:30 Prayer and dismissal

Schedule B:

9:30 – 9:45 Gathering time (music, lesson introduction)
9:45 – 10:00 Lesson
10:00 – 10:10 Art response
10:10 – 10:25 Skit on the lesson theme
10:25 – 10:30 Prayer and dismissal

Behavioral Expectations, Part One: The Positive Climate

- Gifts/Talents are appreciated
- Positive feedback is given
- The best is expected and encouraged
- Catechist facilitates collaboration
- Sense of humor

Behavioral Expectations, Part Two: Some Rules About Rules

- Clear (again, know the developmental level)
- Concise
- Positively phrased
- Posted
- Assertively stated
- Backed up by action

Now, You've Met Your Match: The Child with ADHD

- Myths and Facts
- Everything we already talked about, only double
- Visual cues especially important
- Personal cues
- Encouraging self-monitoring

Common Characteristics of Children with ADHD

- Short attention span
- Distractibility
- Repeated failure to follow instructions
- Forgetfulness, inattention to detail, losing things
- Hyperactivity: high energy level, restlessness, difficulty sitting still, loud or excessive talking
- Impulsivity: acting before thinking

Dispelling the myths about ADHD

Myth: ADHD is not really a disorder

Fact: We have physical evidence that ADHD is a neurological disorder

Myth: Kids with ADHD just lack proper discipline

Fact: Kids with ADHD lack *executive functioning* skills

Dispelling the myths about ADHD

Myth: Kids on Ritalin and other stimulant medications for ADHD will become addicted/ Behavioral interventions alone are more effective/ Kids on medication for ADHD are just sedated

Fact: Kids with ADHD who are on medication are *less* likely to use illegal drugs than those with ADHD who are not on medication. Behavioral intervention plus medication is the most effective treatment, and for good scientific reasons.

Dispelling the myths about ADHD

Myth: Most children who have trouble paying attention have ADHD

Fact: About 5% of children meet the diagnostic criteria for Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Many more children experience emotional and behavioral difficulties related to anxiety (13%), or depression (1.5% to 10%).

Now, You've Met Your Match:

The Child with ADHD

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Now you've *really* met your match:

The Oppositional/Defiant Child

- When it's hard to remember they're naturally good: some causes of oppositional/defiant behavior
- Behaviors in Baskets
- Empathy and Invitation

Talking to Parents about Children's Behavior

- Early intervention
- Positive first
- Specific examples
- Concern for the Child
- Collaborative Stance

Don't Forget to Pray!!

- Pray for each child by name
- Pray especially for children who are having difficulty, that God will lead them, and you.

Catechist's Assessment

- How many of these things am I already doing, to some extent?
- What can I do better/differently?

- What questions do I still have?

Additional resources: For more detail and further ideas, please see the booklets *Catechist's Companion: Multisensory Methods in Catechesis*, *Catechist's Companion: How to Manage Behavior*, and *Catechists for all Children*, by Joseph D. White and Ana Arista White – all available for less than from Our Sunday Visitor, www.osv.com.