

## 5 Facts Every Leader Should Remember

1

### ***All behavior is a form of communication.***

Everyone uses behavior to communicate.

Girls with limited vocabulary or limited verbal skills may rely on their behaviors to communicate when they don't have words to express their feelings.

2

### ***There is always a reason for problem behavior.***

A girl's unusual or challenging behavior is communicating to you that there is a problem.

Individuals with some types of disabilities may have extra difficulties expressing their feelings, so behaviors can be more severe or more frequent.

3

### ***There can be many reasons behind one specific behavior.***

The girl could be communicating that something is not right or that her needs aren't being met.

The girl could feel out of control or unsafe so she'll take inappropriate action over things she can control (kicking, yelling, etc).

Ask yourself: Is the girl tired, hungry, uncomfortable, confused, avoiding something...

4

### ***Adults can learn to understand and interpret challenging behavior.***

Girls will often use the same types of behaviors to signal common feelings/problems.

Adults who know the girl are good resources to help interpret or predict some behavior signals.

All girls, especially those who display challenging behavior, need the consistency of a reliable, loving adult.

5

### ***Challenging behavior can be reduced with support, not punishment.***

When girls feel respected and have their needs met, there is no longer a reason to use challenging behavior to communicate.

Yelling at or being physical with a girl does not give the girl support or provide alternate ways to act in difficult situations.

When adults help girls find positive ways to communicate their needs to others, girls learn important social and problem-solving skills that will help them throughout their life.

# 7 Ways to Reduce Challenging Behavior

## 1

### ***Set Clear Expectations***

Decide on rules and consequences together-before there is an incident.

Review rules often and give examples to make sure every girl understands.

For some girls, it may help to have rules written or drawn out on an index card so they can carry it with them as a reminder.

## 2

### ***Be Consistent/Avoid Surprises***

Make sure there are consistent and predictable routines whenever possible.

Provide written/picture schedules of the day's events.

When there is a change in a routine, prepare girls ahead of time so they know what to expect.

## 3

### ***Change the Setting or Activity***

Remember that everyone responds differently to stimuli (noises, smells, colors, etc).

Reducing stimuli or allowing the girl to have some supervised time alone in a quiet place may help to reduce anxiety.

If many of the girls are behaving poorly or are not following directions, it may be time for a new activity or it may be that you didn't give clear explanations and/or expectations.

## 4

### ***Respond Calmly***

Respond to the situation calmly and without your own anger – adults may need quiet time too.

If a rule has been broken, call the girl aside, show and tell her which rule has been broken and give a warning.

After 3 warnings follow through on the consequence without anger.

Remember that the girl may not be able to control her behaviors and is not trying to upset you.

Every moment can be a new moment and girls should not continue to be punished for behavior that has occurred and been corrected in the past.

## 5

### ***Teach Alternate Behaviors***

Teach girls acceptable ways to express anger (verbally sharing their feelings, walking away).

Tell girls what you expect them to do if they need help or are upset (raise their hand, etc)

Don't just tell, but model what to do. Use teachable moments as they arise.

## 6

### ***Offer Choices***

Offer opportunities for the girls to choose. Give only 2-3 options for younger girls and for girls who have difficulty processing information.

Too many choices (as in "free time") is very overwhelming to some girls, so having some ready-made decisions or limited options will help with this.

## 7

### ***Notice the Positive and Create Opportunities for Success***

Notice positive behavior as soon as it occurs and provide genuine praise.

Feel free to modify activities in order to allow every girl to participate in a meaningful way.

Remember that success will look different for every girl, depending upon her challenges and strengths.