

# The Dreaded **D** Word: Discipline

**A Necessary Evil:** Whether you want to deal with it or not, discipline is a necessary evil in a middle school youth ministry program. In order for The EDGE to proceed each week in an orderly fashion it is important that every middle school youngster be attentive, respectful, and on task for each activity. Disruptive behavior, defined, as conduct, which distracts from or interrupts an EDGE function, cannot be tolerated.

**Boundaries:** Middle schoolers operate best within boundaries. Having rules is important for early adolescents since it provides them with direction, and they know what behavior is appropriate. When kids know the rules are, they are less likely to try to get away with something.

**The Key is Consistency:** So how do you discipline the kids in your small group without appearing angry, upset, overbearing, or just downright mean? When middle schoolers see that you are firm but fair, they will respect you. Through practice and experience you will also develop your own style. While it may work well for you, it does not necessary mean it is another core group member's method.

**Appropriate Behavior:** Here are some appropriate behaviors expressed in a positive manner that will be expected of middle school youngsters at The EDGE:

1. Respect Others:

- a. listen while others are speaking
- b. use positive words/tone
- c. respect personal boundaries
- d. take turns and be courteous toward others

2. Stay on Task:

- a. stay in designated area
- b. participate in group discussion or activity
- c. stay focused
- d. come back from breaks timely and orderly
- e. minimize interruptions and respect the schedule

## **CONSEQUENCES FOR INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR AT AN *EDGE* NIGHT.**

1. **VERBAL WARNING:** A verbal warning from any *EDGE* team member (adult) will be given to the middle school youngster whose actions are disrupting. The child will be “identified” and then pulled aside to talk with the middle school youth minister. The CYM will talk with the middle schooler one-on-one about their actions, allowing the student to reflect on their conduct. The student and the CYM will discuss possibilities strategies to improve their behavior.
2. **TIME OUT:** If the student continues to be disruptive, a team member will pull the youth immediately from the activity and remove them from the group. The CYM will talk with the middle schooler one-on-one about their actions and a conduct report will be written. A copy of the conduct report will be put in the youth’s RE file and the original given to the parents. The parents must review it with their child, sign it, and return it before the next *EDGE* session.
3. **PROGRAM REMOVAL:** If the inappropriate behavior persists, the middle school youngster will be expelled from *The EDGE* program. After a conference between the parent, the student, the middle school youth minister, and possibly the pastor, the child may return *The EDGE* program.

*EDGE* is an education program and disruptive behavior prohibits learning. Appropriate behavior is not only strongly recommended but a necessity.