

SEVEN TIPS FOR POSITIVE BEHAVIOR

By Melinda Barbosa, Middle School Program Director for the Gately Youth Center



Positive behavior begins and ends with relationships—not with the rules. While systems and guidelines can provide structure for young people, cultivating an environment of meaningful connections between staff and youth creates a culture where positive behavior is part of the ongoing learning and development of youth. The better you know your young people, the easier it becomes for them to meet program expectations. The more you include structural supports for staff, the easier it will be for them to guide youth. Remember, the process to building relationships takes time. **Use these seven tips alongside your behavior system to deepen the relationships between staff and youth.**

1 BEGIN WITH THE GREETING: As youth come buzzing through the door with backpacks and coats, staff are filling the room with high-fives and “hellos.” This sets a tone for the community that we care about each other. Their transition into your space should be one of warmth and acceptance.

2 PROVIDE INDIVIDUAL ATTENTION: Make time for staff to sit with young people—chair to chair, knee to knee. The message to each child is that they matter, they mean something, and they deserve this personal attention. In these intimate moments, youth let their guard down and share what matters most to them.

3 HOLD YOUTH ACCOUNTABLE: Youth rise to expectations when they are coached by supportive adults. Youth are expected to make mistakes and staff are expected to guide them through that process. Staff are responsible for teaching youth the desired behaviors and need to take the time to guide them.

4 SCAFFOLD STAFF EXPECTATIONS: Set appropriate benchmarks for your new staff. For example, by the first week they should know every child’s name. For your veterans, they are expected to learn more about the child and to coach them through difficult situations. As a team, take time to go through the highs and lows of relationships with youth.

5 DAILY CHECK-INS: As a team, discuss specific youth who are on the radar. Who needs more homework help? Who needs extra attention because of ongoing issues at home? By shifting the conversation to the emotional care of young people—not just the logistics—staff know what to look for and how to work around the obstacles that can prevent youth from being at their best.

6 LEARN TOGETHER: Build a learning community amongst staff that promotes skill and knowledge sharing. Staff meetings need to include time for staff to develop themselves through hands-on activities and case studies. One of my favorite questions to ask staff is, “Pick a child in the program who is least like you. How can you get to know them better?” Make mini action plans that focus on staff-youth interactions and provide time for staff to report back on their progress.

7 RINSE, REPEAT, AND REFLECT: When you think you have arrived to a place of positive relationships between staff and youth, ask, “What else could we know about this child?” This work never ends—and the deeper you go into these connections, the higher we can raise the expectations for youth behavior. If you are struggling with behavior, before replacing your rules, implement these seven strategies.

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SEE MORE AT: <http://naaweb.org/tip-of-the-week/item/137-7-tips-to-positive-behavior#sthash.RT97M913.dpuf>

OPENING DISCUSSION

Which of these tips resonates with you?

Who has an example of a time when using one of these tips would have been helpful?

What about an example of a time you've used or seen someone else successfully use one of the tips? What was the outcome?

What questions or other thoughts do you have about the article?

APPLICATION ACTIVITY

You have a colleague that refuses to learn children's names uses nicknames instead. How would you guide them to learn children's names and explain the importance?

You notice staff gravitate to the children with whom they share similarities. How can you challenge them to get to know the children with whom they are less similar? How would you approach this so that they begin to build a relationship with this group of children?

CLOSING REFLECTION

What's something that we discussed today that could be implemented easily in your program?

What's something that may be more challenging but you'd like to commit to integrating?

CERTIFICATE of PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



SEVEN TIPS FOR **POSITIVE BEHAVIOR**

_____ **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT HOURS, EARNED BY:**

CONTENT INCLUDED:

All About Relationships • Making Meaningful Connections • Build a Support Structure for Staff
Begin with a Greeting • Provide Individual Attention • Hold Youth Accountable
Scaffold Staff Expectations • Daily Check-ins • Learn Together • Rinse, Repeat and Reflect

FACILITATOR: _____ **DATE:** _____

| List three ways you will get to know each child in the program?

- a.
- b.
- c.

| How will you guide children through mistakes that they make in the program?

| How will you be a role model for other staff, as well as children by demonstrating your positive and supportive behaviors?