

Guidelines for Leader/Student Behavior

The youth workers at Grace Baptist seek to build trust with teens and their parents to more effectively assist the parents in raising godly young adults.

We build trust with parents through clear communication, dependability, good judgment, and example setting.

1. Communication – we should always be very clear in our motives and purpose with a student. The parent should not be caught off-guard by things. They should not discover from their student at 8:30 AM that they need \$50 and a ride to the church for a trip to Six Flags that day with their small group.
2. Dependability – Many New England families schedule nearly every minute of every day. If you told them you would return at a certain time, then you need to be back either at that time or earlier. Being late with parents waiting in the parking lot for 35 minutes erodes trust and builds frustration.
3. Good Judgment and example setting – when with students, we assume responsibility and authority and should maintain not only the same family standards but be models of propriety. Do not expose students to things that their parents would not want them exposed to, or take them places their parents would not want them to go to. Do not drive recklessly or share too much of our personal lives with them. The parents should never have reason to worry when their student is with us.

In protecting the reputation of you, the kids, and the church:
Some rules and guidelines –

1. Try to have more than one student or adult with you at all times. There are always exceptions (those times when one-on-one same gender counseling needs to be done; or that in dropping two kids off, one is dropped off before the other, leaving you alone for a short time with the other.) However, our rule of thumb is more than one adult or student.
 - You should not be alone with a student behind closed doors (unless the door has a window and there are others just outside of that door).
 - You should not be alone with a student in their room or your room, or a part of their house in which no one else is around.
 - You should not be alone with a student in their house or yours. (*I visited a family one time and the parents were not there. The daughter invited me in and I declined, staying at the door and speaking to her through that door. I simply told her that her parents weren't there and so I wouldn't go it. She did not like that, but later on I received a call from her mother thanking me for protecting her reputation and setting those boundaries.*) Likewise, if a student were to come to your house when no one else is around, stand outside on the porch, but avoid being alone with them in your house.

- If alone with a child in a vehicle, after ascertaining parental permission, clearly communicate to the parents of when you are leaving and when you are arriving. *“Mr. Davis, I have James with me at Mike’s house. Would you like to come get him or would you like me to drop him off? It will just be me and him and we try and avoid that if possible.” Ok then, if you’re ok with that we’ll head on over. It’s 8:15 now and we should be there by 8:30. Here’s my cell phone number.”*
- If you need to meet one on one, then please disclose that to the parents, to me, and meet in a public place.

2. Keep clear and defined modesty boundaries. Kids are developing both sexually and physically. They do not think as adults do and nor should they have to.

Therefore:

- Hands off. Yes, a quick hug is allowable, but lingering full body hugs are not. Side to side hugs are OK, pelvic hugs are not. Hugs should be short (three seconds or less).
- No kissing. Yes scripture says to greet your brother with a holy kiss. In our culture and clime though, that could be construed as sexual misconduct. Avoid the appearance of evil.
- In whatever situation; trips, visits, whatever, a leader should never enter into an occupied bathroom or invite a student into a bathroom during a shower.
- We do want leaders to be open and authentic in their stories as this invites the same from students, but we should not burden them with graphic details.
- Appropriate touching includes: a hand on the shoulder, side-by-side hugging, tousled hair...

3. Be an adult not another teen friend. They have friends. What they need is an adult who loves them and can LEAD them.

- You should not be sharing your marital or dating struggles with a teen. Yes, you can say something like *“I know it’s hard to maintain peace in the family, just the other day my husband and I had an argument. It was difficult but we made peace through....”* You should not share that you are dating someone and that they are this way and that, or that your wife is such and such.
- Do not make your time with the kids YOUR emotional healing time. They are not here for you, but you for them. Make sure that your primary and emotional relationships are in order. Emotional dependency on a teenager is dangerous and definite red flag.
- Do not encourage the teen to think that you are their ONLY friend or adult shepherd. Try to help them build healthy relationships with other adults. Proverbs 15:22 *“Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.”*
- Act your age, not their’s.

4. Be a shepherd to those sheep assigned to you. Each of you are small group leaders and are given the holy responsibility to provide watch-care over your group. Even though another teen from another group might be inviting to you and respond to your words, focus your attention on your kids. I know it is difficult to approach some of the kids assigned to us. It's much easier to go on the path of least resistance. But if you notice a kid not in your group having some needs, go to THEIR small group leader and encourage them to address those needs. Each of you has only a limited amount of time to give to our students, please do so to those entrusted to you. If you feel there is an extenuating circumstance, then please talk to me. We do have some leaders who I have designated as those who can reach out across the lines in a counseling capacity.

5. Always remember:
 - Avoid the APPEARANCE of Evil.
 - Do nothing to make another stumble.
 - Care for them as if they were your own.
 - Remember, you are a resource to the parents. Be a good and trustworthy one.
 - Exhibit self-control, live wisely, have a good reputation.