

Help! There are kids in my Life Group.

ReGroup Fall 2008

Intro

- Kids in our neighborhoods – riding skateboards, walking dogs, sitting on the curb smoking, and going to the pool. We have to adjust in different ways to deal with them – drive slowly and carefully, yield when they are crossing the street, sometimes swerve to miss them, watch my step since they rarely clean up after their dogs.
- And we do these things because they are part of our communities and we respect the fact that they are there and have different needs than we do. We want people to treat our own kids this way...if not better.
- Story about the college kids that moved in next door to us. Party on the first night.
- The fact is, nearly ALL our LGs have kids in them. And regardless of how good or bad the kids may be, LGs are open communities so we need to adjust in different ways to deal with our neighbors, and specifically in this case kids.

Challenges

- PARTICIPATION – Let's make a list of some of the challenges groups with kids might face. (List answers on flip-chart or white board.)
 - Different age groups, genders, interests, energy levels
 - Different behavioral expectations from different homes
 - Not enough space
 - Lack of authority
 - Bad attitudes/selfishness/don't play together well
 - Nothing for them to do
- Tell the story of our old LG – 11 adults and 11 kids 8 years old and under. We experienced every one of these issues and it was really tough.
- Truth – Kids can, but don't HAVE TO, make communities messy.
 - Can, but don't HAVE TO.
 - What are some things cities do to address the fact that kids live in communities? (Parks, schools, passeos, crosswalks, etc.) Lots of people have to spend lots of time and money figuring out solutions.
 - Our challenge (as leaders of our groups) is to figure out a way to have great community that INCLUDES and INCORPORATES our kids.

Before we dive into a discussion about what we can do to do that, let me throw a few things at you that begin to describe our philosophy of community.

Philosophy

- Community means working through challenges, not carrying the frustrations quietly.

- One of our ground rules - **Confrontation required** – Our natural tendency is to avoid conflict; however, it is a vital part of developing relationships and community.
- We all know, when we start talking about kids, conflict is pretty much inevitable. But it doesn't have to be deadly to the health of the group.
- Expectation of respect between members of the community (other parents).
 - Another ground rule - **Agree to respectfully disagree** –Disagreements are a healthy part of community. This ground rule reminds us that it's OK to disagree, as long as we do so in a respectful way.
 - Does not mean "agree to disagree" and just drop it. Means you will talk through your disagreements over time and in a respectful way. We'll talk about how to do that in just a few minutes.
 - One of the great by-products of this is that we will model for our kids how to appropriately handle conflict with other adults. (Talk about the "raising adults" concept.)
- Philippians 2 principle –
 - *"If you've gotten anything at all out of following Christ, if his love has made any difference in your life, if being in a community of the Spirit means anything to you, if you have a heart, if you care— then do me a favor: Agree with each other, love each other, be deep-spirited friends. Don't push your way to the front; don't sweet-talk your way to the top. Put yourself aside, and help others get ahead. Don't be obsessed with getting your own advantage. Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand."*
 - In short, CARE about the requests of others in your community.

Ideas

- Establish some "Kid Ground Rules" with your group, just like our Group Ground Rules.
 - If someone raises a concern or requests a boundary (examples: movies, music, roughness of play, etc.)
 - 1) discuss it with love and honesty and then
 - 2) arrive at a conclusion based on Philippians 2:1-4 which we just read.
 - Have to be honest through this process.
 - Let's take some time to come up with a list of possible "Kid Ground Rules" right now. (Make list on flip chart of white board...)
 - Kids either do the kids' thing or sit with the adults.
 - No climbing on furniture.
 - Media (music, movies, video games, etc) must be approved by all adults, not just the host.
 - Any adult can enforce a rule/expectation.
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- ROUTINE, ROUTINE, ROUTINE
 - Example – include in prayer, dinner, and opening question; dismiss to play/activity; come back for dessert when adults are done with discussion
- Make a plan for the kids activities

- Progressive or alternating to accommodate different interests/age groups
- “Not your kind of fun right now...”
- Practical ideas – sidewalk chalk, playdough, sand box, video games, movie, board game, coloring/art, sprinklers in the yard, legos...)
- Consistent expectations (routine, behavior, flow, involvement) regardless of whose home you’re in
 - These are expectations you’ll need to talk about honestly and respectfully.
 - Facilitator needs to have the courage to bring it up.
- Whole group must agree to and comply with these routines and expectations. Differing parenting styles will be *less* of an issue if everyone agrees on these rules.
- **Bottom Line – if YOU as the leader have a problem with kids in your group, your group is going to have problems with kids.** If you can find a way to work through the issues that come with kids, your group can flourish even with kids.

Questions?

A few things I am working on to help groups succeed at this...

Help from us

- Would love to come to your group and help you arrive at some ground rules and find some harmony between parents regarding kids.
- Discussion ideas for kids to be included in LG material and/or on a blog.
- Putting together a resource packet with tips, ideas, games, etc for kids to do during LG.