



REMEMBER

- Remind yourself that their behaviour is speaking something about what is going on inside them, not something about you. Resist speaking out of hurt or embarrassment. Choose to respond rather than react.
- When feelings are high, thinking is low—in both of you. Choose a time when feelings have calmed down to discuss heated situations. Don't try to get them to unpack the situation in the moment - just deal firmly and kindly with the behaviour. Invite them into a later or separate conversation about their feelings.
- Often time and maturity are your two biggest allies but neither can be applied to the situation that is before you. So in the meantime, be patient, support parents, look for the image of God stamped on them, and don't let them push you out of their lives.



RECOGNIZE

- “Acting out” refers to unrestrained actions in a young person. In short, it means he/she is behaving in a way that is disruptive and potentially harmful to themselves and others.
- Acting Out behaviour can feel like it relieves stress and is therefore attractive to repeat, but it is only a temporary fix.
- Young people “act out” for many different reasons. Some basic motivators are: attention, uncertainty, power, revenge (against parents/authority), feelings of inadequacy, boredom, desire for peer approval, past trauma, or stress.
 - ▶ Trying to identify motivations helps us know what needs they are trying to fill with this behaviour. Eg. a youth who feels powerlessness, might try to take power away from others; a youth feeling inadequate may be trying to distract people from their perceived flaws. Understanding the goal can help us feel compassion despite the behaviour and address the core of the behaviour.



RESPOND

- **Take time** to intentionally get to know the young person outside the setting they typically cause trouble in. Look especially for evidence of assets they have to bring to the world and point them out. Tell those around them about the assets you see in him/her as well.
 - **Seek a place of connection** In spaces they feel comfortable or confident so you can have common ground. Don't make every conversation about their behaviour.
 - **Avoid confrontations** about their behaviour in front of others if possible, recognizing that image is probably important to them and we have no desire to leave them feeling humiliated. Bow out of power struggles because they will always result in a no win situation.
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- **Work together** on appropriate expectations for behaviour in your context and suggestions on how to respond when lines you have drawn together get crossed.
 - **Be honest with them** about how their behaviour impacts you. Explain that it confuses you because it doesn't fit with the assets you have seen evidence of in them. After a difficult time has passed, ask them what thoughts/feelings were going on inside and tell them you want to understand.
 - **Ask them** what story they think their behaviour is telling people about them? Is that story true? Is there another, more positive story you have seen that might be true as well? What would change if they and others began to believe that story?
 - **Find places of legitimate contribution** for them in your program or your life. Is there something they can help you with?



ACTING OUT

lifeteams
resources



RESOURCES

teenagewhisperer.co.uk - Blogs and resources for living and working with troubled teens.

joshshipp.com/acting-out/ - An informative video about how to handle youth who are acting out.

www.cyc-net.org/ - Search “aggression” for practical steps for creating a safe and helpful place for youth.