

Hints for Making RE More Boy-Friendly for TEENS

Initiated in a workshop on this subject, Feb. 28, 2003 , at Universalist National Memorial Church, Wash. , DC. Co-leaders were *Jaco B. ten Hove and Janice Holmblad.*

NOTE: Some of these ideas apply to younger boys and all teens as well.

Language issues:

“Religious *Exploration*” can be a more boy-friendly title than *Religious Education*.

“Projects” instead of “crafts” will generally be more enticing activities for teen boys.

Adults’ role:

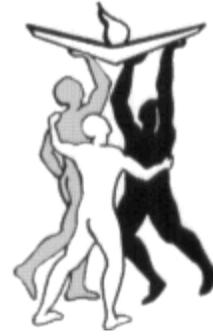
- Adult credibility is an often elusive but essential element.
- There is often much testing of adult authority and boundaries. Be firm but don't overreact.
- Adults vary widely in their reaction to the wildness of some teen boys.
- Teen boys’ behavior will sometimes flip-flop in different contexts. Don’t be surprised.
- Adults can be helpful in guiding apparently chaotic behavior into content for learning.
- As helpful as men are as teachers, they may lack relevant experience and training, and make assumptions that they can or can’t do it. (Either may be true.)
- Boys maturing in this post-modern world often have few older role models for learning non-stereotyped behaviors. Protect those who take healthy risks.
- Adults can model how leadership is important ministry.
- Adult male-female interactions in RE settings can be important role

Things to Balance:

- Complementary adult styles.
- Spirituality, leadership *and* goofiness.
- Activity *and* time for self-reflection.
- Curriculum/information acquisition *and* group-building opportunities.
- Clear class goals *and* willingness to shift gears when necessary and as appropriate.
- Strict organization *and* an attitude of softer, “benign structure” (less noticeable).
- Good, productive space inside *and* outside.

models for impressionable teen boys.

- Adults can benefit greatly from “de-briefing” together after activities.
- If things are really out of hand, ask for help!
- Ensure more than enough organization and planning, and be prepared to make adjustments.
- Establish rules and consequences WITH youth. Be wary of imposing authority.
- Channel rebellious leaders into specific, often customized roles. Help boys develop their own unique support network.
- Invite in guest speakers who bring interesting talents, skills, and especially props.



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