

Adapted from Volume 1, The Complete Guide to Godly Play
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DISRUPTIONS IN THE CIRCLE (Storyteller Role)

You always want to model the behavior you expect in the circle: focused on the lesson and respectful of everyone in the circle. If a disruption occurs, you deal with that disruption in such a way that you still show continual respect for everyone in the circle – including the child who is having the trouble that day. You also still maintain as much focus on the lesson as you can, returning to complete focus on the lesson as quickly as possible, just where you left off. (The lesson remains “suspended” while you deal with the disruption.)

As you consider responses, remember to keep a neutral tone in your voice. Remember, too, that our goal is to help the child move him or herself toward more appropriate behavior. At the first level of interruption, you might simply raise your eyes from the material. You look up and move your eyes around the circle, looking at each child, while saying, “We need to get ready again. Watch. This is how we get ready.” Model the way to get ready and begin again the presentation where you left off.

If the interruption continues or increases, look at the child directly. “No, that’s not fair. You need to be ready, too. Let’s try again. Good. That’s the way.”

If the interruption continues or increases, ask the child to sit by the door person. Don’t think of this as a punishment or as an exclusion from the story: some children want to sit by the door person for their own reasons. Continue to keep a neutral tone of voice as you say, “(*Child’s name*), get up and walk carefully over to (*door person’s name*). It will be easier for you to get ready there. You can see and hear. The lesson is still for you.”

The goal is for the child to take himself or herself to the door. If the child is having trouble, or says, “No!”, you can say, “May I help you?” If a child states “No” again and does not move then return to the lesson and you may find the child is given an opportunity to redirect his or her own behavior once attention has shifted away.

Suppose you are dealing with a ten year old taller than you whose only way of relating to adults is by a power struggle. He or she has only one card to play. Say, “Oh, but it will still be easier for you to get ready there.” Keep the tone of voice still neutral and relaxed. Then say, “You don’t need to wait for me to invite you. You can always go over there when you need to.” You then go on with the lesson and let the polarized situation drop of its own weight. Don’t feed it with more of your attention.

In Godly Play we are committed to caring enough for children to help them learn how to take responsibility for their own behavior and to guide them toward ways of relating to one another that are appropriate for genuine Christian community.