

International Institute of Christian Ministries
CRE 101 Understanding Children
Compiled by May-Ellen Colon, Ph.D.

Course Objectives

As a result of this training the students in your classes will be able to:

1. Understand the ages and stages of childhood, faith development at the life stages, special needs of children, and the issue of child abuse.
2. Feel comfortable relating to children at their level of development, and willing to minister to their special needs.
3. Provide the best learning approaches for the various levels of spiritual understanding, and use effective, grace-oriented strategies for discipline and classroom management that are appropriate for the various age levels and special needs.
4. Joyfully and confidently share Jesus with children at their development level, and adapted to their special needs, so that they will *really* love Him.

Textbooks

How to Help Your Child Really Love Jesus, by Donna J. Habenicht, Ed.D.

How to Talk So Kids Will Listen & Listen So Kids Will Talk, by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish

Suggested student requirements for the course

1. Attend and actively participate in each of the class sessions.
2. Read the two textbooks and write a one-page summary of each textbook.

3. Teach one Bible lesson each to children who are at two different developmental levels. e.g. Teach in beginners Sabbath School and in junior Sabbath School.

Outline

- I. Introduction
- II. Ages and Stages of Childhood
- III. Faith Development and the Life Stages
- IV. Children With Special Needs
- V. Protecting Children (Child Abuse)

I. Introduction

Today's child* is generally not like his grandparents were at his age or even like either of his parents were at his age. In fact, children today are not even like the kids of 10 years ago. In *Choices Are Not Child's Play*, Pat Holt says "children today are not inherently so different from children of the past. But society is. The world they live in is very different. And the by-product of that is a very different child."

Think about today's child. She probably attends day care and may have done so since birth. Because of busy schedules, she is awakened before daylight and hurried to the sitter's. She may not return home until after dark. Much of the day she spends with other children of the same age, learning through structured play.

Today's child spends much time in an electronic bubble. When he is not watching TV or a video, he is likely playing computer games, exploring cyberspace, or talking to friends on the telephone.

Unlike her parents, today's child is multicultural. She plays and learns with children of other cultures. She accepts cultural differences as previous generations accepted family differences. Her acceptance of children from other cultures, however, may soon be jeopardized by family attitudes.

Today's child, worldwide, is predominantly urban. We may be kidding ourselves if we picture Adventist children in country settings since 90 percent of us live in cities. As a result, many children today are growing up with almost a complete absence of nature. Their parents and teachers are knowledgeable about science, but not intimate with nature.

*Adjustments may need to be made in the description of "today's child" when referring to children in developing countries.

ACTIVITY:

It seems as if today's child is growing up on a different planet than we did. But this is the only world a child knows.

Pass out and discuss the following "How Different Was It?" handout:

HOW DIFFERENT WAS IT? (HANDOUT)

How many of the things on the list below were different when you were growing up? Place an X beside each statement that was not typical when you were growing up. Discuss your answers in small groups.

___ Children grow up in different cities from their grandparents, aunts and uncles, and sometimes even from their parents and siblings.

___ Neighborhood streets are full of crime and no longer safe for play.

___ Water, air, and soil pollution threaten personal health and safety.

___ Children see nature on videos or in books, but they don't have hands-on experience in nature or the time to dream about it.

___ Children view world tragedies almost as they happen without setting a foot outside their front door.

___ Children view the private and staged pain of many people without being asked to get involved.

___ Children are bombarded with more and more, bigger and better things and pressured to buy them by every magazine, billboard, and TV commercial.

___ Children are living vicariously; TV culture and the entertainment world live for the more and more.

___ Every family knows somebody whose life has been touched by AIDS.

___ Daily warnings of global warming, loss of the ozone layer, pollution, terrorism, and violence erode a child's sense of security and expectations for the future.

(HANDOUT)

What might the above mean for Children's Ministries? Check each needs statement below that you think is justified by the facts above.

Children that come to your Children's Ministries programs need. . .

- Personal relationship with real people, not more entertainment.
- Opportunities to encounter the real world: real people, the real out-of-doors, real communities, and real needs.
- Mentors---people who don't just present a program, but people whom they respect and who show them how to serve.
- Opportunities to interact so they can see each other as real people.
- To understand and cooperate with each other, so they can communicate, solve problems, and live in harmony with differences.
- A chance to accomplish real things.
- Children need a chance to make real choices and think for themselves.
- Trusted adults who hear what children say about their fears and dreams.
- A safe environment. Not just safe physically, but safe emotionally (where they are accepted for themselves) and socially (where all differences are accepted, acknowledged, and valued).

Basic Needs of Children

All children have certain basic needs as well as needs that are specific to their age and stage of development.

The basic needs of children are for . . .

Physical

- Food
- Warmth
- Shelter

Mental

- Power—to make choices and follow plans

Emotional

- A sense of belonging
- Approval and recognition
- Expressions of unconditional love and acceptance
- Freedom within defined boundaries
- Humor—a chance to laugh

Spiritual

- An all-knowing, loving, caring God
- Forgiveness of wrongs and a chance to start over
- Assurance of acceptance with God
- Experience in prayer, answers to prayer
- A chance to grow in grace and in the knowledge of God

TRY THIS. . .

Give each trainee a plain piece of paper and ask them to divide it into thirds. As you fill in each section, discuss the points together. On the first portion, describe the needs of children today. Personalize your list for the children in your congregation.

In the second section, describe how your present church programs meet these needs. Use the third section to plan for the future. What needs of today's children do you feel your programs should address?

—The content of section I is adapted from *Children's Ministries*, edited by Ann Calkins, published by AdventSource, Lincoln, Nebraska, USA, 1997, pp. 21-24.

II. Ages and Stages of Childhood

Present the following set of parables:

THE CHILD AND THE FATHER

First Parable. I took a little child's hand in mine. He and I were to walk together for a while. I was to lead him to the Father. It was a task that overcame me, so awful was the responsibility. I talked to the little child of the Father. I painted the sternness of the Father's face were the child to displease Him. We walked under tall trees. I said the Father had power to send them crashing down, struck by His thunderbolts. We walked in the sunshine. I told him the greatness of the Father who made the burning, blazing sun.

And one twilight we met the Father. The child hid behind me, he was afraid; he would not look up at the face so loving. He remembered my picture; he would not put his hand in the Father's hand. I was between the child and the Father. I wondered. I had been so conscientious, so serious.

Second Parable: I took a little child's hand in mine. I was to lead him to the Father. I felt burdened by the multitude of things I was to teach him. We did not ramble; we hastened on from spot to spot. At one moment we compared the leaves of the different trees, in the next we were examining a bird's nest. While the child was questioning me about it, I hurried him away to chase a butterfly. Did he chance to fall asleep, I wakened him, lest he should miss something I wanted him to see. We spoke of the Father often and rapidly. I poured into his ears all the stories he ought to know. But we were interrupted often by the coming of the stars, which we must needs study; by the gurgling brook, which we must trace to its source.

And then in the twilight we met the Father. The child merely glanced at Him. The Father stretched out His hand, but the child was not interested enough to take it. Feverish spots burned on his cheeks. He dropped to the ground exhausted and fell asleep. Again I was between the child and the Father. I wondered. I had taught so many, many things.

Third Parable. I took a little child's hand in mine to lead him to the Father. My heart was full of gratitude for the glad privilege. We walked slowly. I suited my steps to the short steps of the child. We spoke of the things the child noticed. Sometimes it was one of the Father's birds; we watched it build a nest, we saw the eggs that were laid. We wondered, later, at the care it gave its young. Sometimes we picked the Father's flowers, and stroked their soft petals and loved their bright colors. Often we told stories of the Father. I told them to the child and the child told them to me. We told them, the child and I, over and over again. Sometimes we stopped to rest, leaning against the Father's trees and letting His air cool our brows, and never speaking.

And then in the twilight we met the Father. The child's eyes shone. He looked up lovingly, trustingly, eagerly, into the Father's face; he put his hand into the Father's hand. I was for the moment forgotten. I was content.

—Donna Habenicht, *How to Help Your Child Really Love Jesus*, Hagerstown, MD, Review & Herald, 1994, p. 224.

The above parable (parable 3) said: “We walked slowly. I suited my steps to the short steps of the child. We spoke of the things the child noticed. Sometimes it was one of the Father's birds; we watched it build a nest, we saw the eggs that were laid. . . .”

In dealing with your children, follow the method of the gardener. By gentle touches, by loving ministrations, seek to fashion their characters after the pattern of the character of Christ (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 516).

Parents and teachers should aim so to cultivate the tendencies of the youth that at each stage of life they may represent the beauty appropriate to that period, unfolding naturally, as do the plants in the garden (*Child Guidance*, p. 204).

It is important to understand “each stage of [a child's] life” and what is “appropriate to that period” so that we can more effectively lead children to a growth in Christ that bonds them to God and His Church. What are some of the characteristics of the different stages of a child's life?

Distribute and discuss with your class the “Understanding Children” handout on the next two pages. Also give them the three charts—“Understand your Beginner child, Understand your Primary child, Understand your Junior child” for future reference.

(The “Understanding Children” handout and the three “Understanding Your. . . charts are courtesy of North American Division Children's Ministries director, Noelene Johnsson.)

III. Faith Development and the Life Stages

Luke's simple statement, "And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature," (Luke 2:52, NIV) sums up Jesus' development through the ages and stages of childhood. Even more important, the statement clearly recognizes wisdom (mental) and stature (physical) as separate areas of development. But Luke adds, "and in favor with God and man," suggesting spiritual and social growth or faith development.

What is faith? *After reading the following Bible verses together, invite the trainees to privately decide which of the following statements about faith agree with their personal experience to this point.*

1. "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." (Hebrews 11:1, NIV)
2. "Jesus (is) the author and perfecter of our faith." (Hebrews 12:2)
3. "Faith without deeds is dead" (James 2:26) and "cannot save" (2:14)
4. "Faith comes by hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ." (Romans 10:17)
5. "Continues to grow. . ." (2 Cor 10:15)
6. Faith, when tested, "develops perseverance." (James 1:3)
7. Faith is the means by which "Jesus Christ will continue to live in your hearts." (Ephesians 3:17)

Faith is all of the above and more. As one chooses Jesus a bond of trusts is forged. This relationship is daily strengthened through prayer, Bible study, and a multitude of choices. Faith grows and expands with development until it is able to withstand severe stress and testing.

Faith is a living, growing relationship with God that develops and grows throughout one's life.

John H. Westerhoff III, one of several theorists concerned with faith development, likens faith to a tree trunk. The young trunk has few rings; older trunks have many. The rings of faith growth occur as a result of life experiences and in interacting with others and with God. Westerhoff identifies four main stages of faith development. *Refer the class members to the graphic in the "Faith Development" handout (found after this section).*

1. Experienced Faith

- **The Key** to experienced faith in early childhood is observation and reaction. Children observe love and faith in their interaction with adults and react to what they experience. At this stage they are too young to consciously think about faith, but nevertheless, demonstrate unwavering faith.
- **The Needs** at this stage are to experience trust, love, and acceptance. Little children need a few trusted and loving adults in their lives. Sometimes pets provide the love and acceptance adults are too busy to give.
- **Foster Faith** at this stage through warmth, hugs, active listening, and countless experiences of unconditional love.

2. Belonging Faith

- **The Key** to faith for a primary-age child is a sense of belonging. Children of this age have a keen sense of the order of things. They are also great

“joiners.” They want to belong to a church that is bigger than their family and to clubs within the church.

- **The Needs** for children at this stage of faith development are:
 - A sense of authority. They are satisfied to have their “why” questions answered, “because the Bible” or “because the Adventist Church” says so.
 - To hear the story of the community they belong to. Stories of God’s working in Bible times and in the beginnings of their church feed the child’s growing faith.
 - Experiences of awe and wonder, which are partly what worship is about.
 - To sense they are wanted at church, they are accepted by their teachers and peers, and they are missed when absent.
- **Foster Faith** by filling the above needs through stories, drama, art, and creative worship experiences in a warm, accepting atmosphere.

3. Searching Faith

- **The Key** element of the adolescent’s searching faith is critical judgment. For the pre-adolescent, quoting authorities is not enough. They want to examine all the information for themselves.
- **The Needs** at this stage of faith development are:
 - To establish their own identity. They are questioning and examining their beliefs, their lifestyle, their appearance, all

authority, and anything they identify with, in an effort to define themselves.

- To know that the religion of the head is equal to the religion of the heart. This compels children to ask searching questions that challenge the adult's beliefs. They become critical of any explanations that cannot be supported by logic, good sense, and scientific inquiry. Adults need to accept the questions without feeling threatened, working with the children to find the answers.
- To be needed in the faith community.
- **Foster Faith** in adolescents through serious Bible study, short-term journeys, mission trips and service opportunities.

- *To encourage a "Searching Faith:"*

Pack the earliteen group into a van and go visit in quick succession a hospital nursery, a child care center, a court of law, a nursing home and the city morgue. Plan ahead so that your visit will be expected. Ask for a short tour and introduction at each facility. Space the visits to take the entire day.

Make the connection: *Read together Jeremiah 1:5 after visiting the nursery; Jeremiah 1:6, 7 after the child care center; Proverbs 14:12 and Isaiah 48:17, 18 after the court; Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 at the nursing home; and Psalm 23 on the way home. Allow time for kids to talk about what they see. Don't labor any point or try to preach to them. Instead, ask them how they felt about the journey.*

4. Owned Faith

- **The Keys** to a lasting faith for the adult are: conversion, witnessing, and discipleship. While conversion in pre-adolescence or childhood was real, the individual experiences it again in terms of a faith that they have taken responsibility for and ownership of.
- **The Needs** in adulthood are to be an example, to find opportunities to witness by word and by lifestyle, and to help others put faith to work.
- **Foster Faith** through teaching opportunities and social action as well as by personal Bible study and prayer.

—The content of the above explanation of Westerhoff's four main stages of faith is adapted from *Children's Ministries*, edited by Ann Calkins, published by AdventSource, Lincoln, Nebraska, USA, 1997, pp. 43-48.

Go over the remainder of the "Faith Development" handout with your class, covering Jean Piaget's stages of thinking and Erickson's 8 life stages.

(The "Faith Development" handout found on the next pages is courtesy of North American Division Children's Ministries director, Noelene Johnsson.)

A little extra:

On the next page is a chart that supplements Dr. Paul Irwin's "Understanding Ourselves and How God Works in Us" chart that is found in the above handout. This handout chart gives a clear overview of the eight life stages, their tasks, and resulting virtues:

Erickson’s Eight Life Stages, How achieved, Developmental Tasks, and Resulting Virtues (HANDOUT)

Psychologist Erik Erikson suggested eight stages in a person’s life. He named the stages according to the chief developmental task of each stage. The favorable outcome of mastering the task is a virtue—a positive character trait. A person who masters each stage of development is systematically developing character. So perhaps Luke’s “in favor with God and man” suggests character development. Notice that faith—as in trust—is foundational to character development. Psychologists tell us that mastery of each successive virtue is dependent upon mastery of the previous tasks.

The Life Stages	How Achieved	Developmental Task	Resulting Virtue
<i>Infants through First Year</i>	Trust is learned when their physical and emotional needs are anticipated and met.*	To learn trust	Hope
<i>Second Year</i>	Autonomy is learned as they begin doing things for themselves.	To become autonomous	Right use of the will
<i>Third through fifth Years</i>	They gain self-confidence as they take initiative to follow through on tasks.	To develop initiative	Self-confidence
<i>Sixth Year through Puberty</i>	Completing job assignments, learning recognition for both effort and results.	To become industrious	Competence
<i>Adolescence</i>	Learning one’s place in family, school and church. Discovering one’s gifts and talents.	To identify one’s role	Loyalty
<i>Young Adult</i>	Learning the value of shared love and commitment.	To learn intimacy	Love
<i>Middle Age</i>	Taking part in service work; share expertise with others.	To be productive for the good of self and others	Caring
<i>Old Age</i>	By passing on virtues, accepting changes that can and cannot be made; accepting death.	To maintain integrity	Wisdom

*Children who learn to trust that their needs will be met have *faith* in their providers. This faith, initially conferred on humans, can eventually be transferred to the One who fills all our human needs. (Adapted from *Children’s Ministries*, edited by Ann Calkins, published by AdventSource, Lincoln, Nebraska, USA, 1997, pp. 54, 55.)

Try this:

To help children know a personal Christ, try “Asking God’s Empty Chair.” Set an empty chair beside you and say, “Imagine Jesus sitting here.” Each child in turn tells what they would ask Jesus if He were there. Explain that Jesus is there and hears them. He wants to help them find the answer through Bible study, prayer, and knowledgeable adults. They will know when they have found their answer. You can adapt this activity to surface problems they would like Jesus to solve. (Adapted from *Children’s Ministries*, edited by Ann Calkins, published by AdventSource, Lincoln, Nebraska, USA, 1997, p. 41.)

IV. Children With Special Needs

Veteran Children’s Religious Educator, Birthe Kendall shared the following:

“Some years ago I was invited to speak to a group of lively primaries. After my talk, I stayed with the children and enjoyed the way they were exploring, interacting and actively involved in their learning experience. Except for one little girl. . .

After watching her for some time, I discovered she was blind. While the rest of the group took part in various activities and enjoyed the prepared visual aids, she sat quietly in her own little world.

Not once was she encouraged to become involved. Not once was she asked to touch one of the felt figures or place it on the flannel board. Not once was she allowed or encouraged to touch one of the visual aids to help her ‘see’ its size and shape. Not once was the scene on the flannel board described to her, to help her create a mental picture of the life and time of the Bible story—how the houses looked, how the people dressed, etc.

She had lost one of her senses, but had she been encouraged and allowed to learn through the four healthy senses she had left? Had the program been adapted to her needs as well as to the needs of her peers, she could have been as actively involved

in the learning as they, and enjoyed every minute of it. Would she be happy in your Sabbath School?"

In the past 10 years child abuse and neglect have risen alarmingly—3.1 million reported cases in the United States during 1994, double the number reported in 1984. Those who would minister to children need to understand the special needs of abused children. But abuse is just one of many problems afflicting today's children.

Special problems that affect children can include:

- Physical disabilities
- Visual impairment
- Hearing impairment
- Learning disabilities
- Emotional disorders
- Mental retardation
- Abuse – physical, mental, or sexual

Today's children must cope with the loss of family members through death or divorce, the trauma of natural catastrophes such as tornadoes, bombings, etc., and the day-to-day reality of living in a single-parent home.

Becoming Advocates for Children with Special Needs

The Bible makes it clear that Christians have a duty toward children, especially those with special needs:

“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all.” (Prov 31:8)

The habit of overlooking persons with disabilities, unfortunately, is harder to overcome than the lack of ramps in our buildings. That's why children with disabilities need advocates who demand that we give attention to our attitudes.

An advocate for children can challenge people to treat persons with impairment or disabilities as:

- Persons in their own right
- Persons with special needs as well as with needs similar to ours
- Persons who need to hear the gospel
- Persons for whom Jesus would have died, if they were the only ones
- A group belonging to the body of Christ

All children need advocates to speak out for them at home and at church, as well as in the media and government. An advocate needs to stay informed about needs, attitudes, and statistics.

People First

When talking about someone who is impaired, use “people first” language. Refer to them as “people with” the specific disability. Do not use the name of the disability as a noun that stands for a person, such as “the disabled.”

Making Your Ministry Inclusive

Children with a handicap like to be treated as full participating members along with the other children. But teachers must adapt their presentations to fit the special need.

Jim Pierson, founder and director of the Christian Church Foundation for the Handicapped, reminds us that “inclusion is more than a concept. It is a method of teaching a child with disabilities about God’s love in the accepting environment of the church.”

“Creating a positive environment in the church will help children of all abilities.”

—Jim Pierson

Physical Disabilities

Physical disabilities or mobility impairments can result from spinal cord injury, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, arthritis, cerebral palsy, polio, aging and a variety of disabling conditions. In the United States, 1.4 million people use wheelchairs. Others depend on crutches, walkers, braces or canes to gain mobility if they have paralysis, muscle weakness, poor coordination, nerve damage or still joints.

How to Assist Students with Physical Disabilities

- Familiarize yourself with any special equipment, such as wheelchairs or braces.
- Be sure the classroom and building are accessible.
- Train helpers to assist graciously and sensitively with physical tasks beyond the student’s capabilities.

When You're with a Person Using a Wheelchair:

- Talk directly to the person, rather than to someone else with them.
- If possible, sit so you are eye level with the person.
- In guiding a wheelchair down an incline, grasp and push handles tightly so the chair does not go too fast.
- For more than one step, keep the chair tilted back at all times while descending or ascending.
- Learn the location of wheelchair-accessible ramps.
- Do not move crutches or wheelchairs without permission of the individual.
- Do not lean on the wheelchair—respect the individual's personal space.
- Do not act embarrassed by the person's disability or ignore the individual.
- Do not talk about being "confined" to a wheelchair—wheels give the person freedom.

Blindness/Visual Impairment

Persons with blindness or visual impairment rely on their other senses to perceive the world around them. People who are blind have no vision or only minimal vision (light perception).

Others may have "low vision" or "partial sight." Low vision refers to limited distance vision. People with low vision are able to see items close to them. They use a combination of vision and other senses to learn to read, although they may require special lighting, larger print, magnifiers and special glasses. Visual impairments can result in blurred or hazy vision and loss of peripheral (side) vision.

How to Assist Students with Visual Impairments

- Use clear, uncluttered visual aids.
- Give explanations each time an activity changes or movement is necessary.

- Familiarize yourself with appropriate sighted guide techniques.
- Explain guide dog etiquette to the class.
- Contact Christian Record Services at P. O. Box 6097, Lincoln, Nebraska (402-488-0981) for Braille or large-print materials. They also offer a summer camp program for youth who are blind or visually impaired.

A visually impaired child will feel more a part of your class if:

- A volunteer sits with him giving a running description.
- You obtain raised tape from her school and outline pictures for coloring. She colors between raised lines.
- He brings his Braille typewriter and types something for the children.
- The children try to learn to read Braille letters.

Children Who are Blind or Visually Impaired	
Need. . .	Teachers Can. . .
1. Words along with gestures	Say “as big as a house” instead of gesturing “this big.”
2. Pictures	Use three-dimensional objects they can feel. Describe pictures.
3. Person-to-person contact	Teach the children to give their names before speaking in class. Initiate a conversation with the child to let her know you are there.
4. Physical & verbal direction	Take the child by the arm and speak as you guide him.
5. Colors	Describe the feelings of colors— “It is red; it feels hot.”

Deafness/Hearing Impairments

The onset of deafness may occur from birth, gradually after months or years of being able to hear or suddenly as a result of an injury or accident. Signs of this “invisible disability” may include:

- Speaking unusually loud or soft
- Accusing others of mumbling
- Inappropriately answering questions
- Withdrawing from social participation

How to Assist Students with Hearing Impairments

- Don't shout!
- If the child lip reads, be sure they have a clear view of your mouth and face
- If the child wears a hearing aid, keep extra batteries on hand and learn to replace them
- Provide a sign language interpreter, if necessary

Children with Severe Hearing Loss

Are like this. . .

1. Tend to act fearful
2. Cannot hear your commands
3. Read lips to some extent
4. Are not stupid
5. Are sensitive

Teachers can. . .

- Make the child comfortable.
- Touch them on the shoulder or clap to get their attention. Use words and gestures.
- Face them when speaking; do not cover your mouth. Do not overemphasize lip movement.
- Avoid shouting or showing exasperation. Do not pretend to understand. Ask the individual to repeat the message.
- Do not act as if they are invisible. If you have a question that involves them, ask them, not the person with them.

Learning Disabilities

Learning disabilities is an umbrella term for many different problems that make learning difficult. Learning disabilities should not be confused with mental retardation.

A learning disability is a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or using language (spoken or written). This disability may affect a student's ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell or do mathematical calculation.

Symptoms of a learning disability include uneven test performance, short attention span, poor memory, impulsiveness, low tolerance for frustration, problems with

eye-hand coordination and problems in handling day-to-day situations. Low self-esteem and behavioral difficulties are frequently the result.

Children with Learning Disabilities	
Are like this. . .	Teachers can. . .
1. Easily get discouraged	Provide encouragement and acceptance.
2. Often have to repeat task.	Praise them for the things they do correctly. (Every child can be affirmed for <i>something</i> .)
3. Have short attention spans & poor memory	Keep directions and instructions simple and direct.
4. Need “total-body” learning	Involve the different senses—listening, touching, seeing. Use Bible learning activities. Team with a reader.
5. Have a low tolerance for frustration	Recognize the individual’s difficulty in handling day-to-day situations due to their limitations. Provide help, if necessary. Do not insist they complete all tasks.
6. Cope with low self-esteem; behavioral problems	Provide opportunities for involvement and sharing, ensuring them success.

How to Assist Students with Learning Disabilities

- Provide for needed breaks in concentration.
- Don’t “lecture” for long periods
- Continually refocus the student’s attention

- Use their name or lightly touch them to draw attention to the task at hand.
- Reward attentiveness and cooperation.
- Use active learning strategies.
- Be visually direct.

Attention Deficit Disorder

Hyperactivity, inattention and perceptual coordination problems may also be associated with learning disabilities but are not examples of the disorder. Because of the prevalence of attention deficit disorder (ADD), the following tips are included in this section.

The Child with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)	
Has a problem. . .	Teachers. . .
1. Sitting still	Plan an active program. Add actions to the songs. Get kids marching around the room and singing. Allow for a less formal setting so he can move around within the limits. Have a volunteer sit exclusively with him.
2. Understanding limits	State the limits—tell her how far she can roam when doing an activity. Don't assume her over-reaching of limits to be disobedience.
3. Being impulsive	Use the child's energy! Have him pass out songbooks; ask him to count money; assign him the role of door monitor.
4. Paying attention	Seat her in front of the class. Assign her tasks ahead of time. Compliment her when she is paying attention. Ask an assistant to give special attention to these children.

Try This. . .

Pray for special grace to minister to the child with ADD. Then plan for an extremely active Sabbath School. Have the children on their feet often. Playing rhythm instruments or clapping and snapping to the music can also make a program active.

Encourage grandparents (seniors) or earliteens to volunteer once a month to sit beside the ADD child.

Touch the child's shoulders to encourage them to remain seated when they become restless. Or take a "wobble-break" for all the children to get the fidgets out!

Emotional Disorders

Child development specialist Dr. Kay Kuzma in *To Understand Your Child* says: "It is important to understand and work with a child's negative emotions (anger, aggression, temper tantrums, jealousy, etc.) in such a way that he doesn't feel guilty or inadequate. Deep, long-standing emotional problems are complex and usually require not only the patience and insight of the parent, but in addition, the specialized therapy and counseling of a child psychologist or psychiatrist."

Is My Student Emotionally Disturbed?

The following behaviors can help you identify the student with emotional problems. "Please note that none of these may be significant alone," says Kuzma. "But when they occur in combinations, you may have a key to a developing emotional problem."

How to Assist Students with Emotional Disorders

- Be loving but firm
- Encourage the student with praise for even the smallest successes and provide opportunities for them to demonstrate areas of competence
- Ask the student's parents to explain the behavioral interventions and discipline plan used at home and school
- Be consistent in your response to the child
- Don't make promises you can't keep

Emotional Disturbance Inventory

Check those symptoms that you have observed over a 3-week period.

- Extreme nervousness or irritableness
- Inability to relax or rest
- Listlessness/excessive daydreaming
- Excessive inattention and tendency toward distraction
- Frequent unprovoked crying spells
- Lack of interest in surroundings or other children
- Unusual shyness or quietness
- Lack of laughter or smiles
- Overanxious about doing what is expected or "right"
- Frequent hiding or attempting to run away
- Repeated aggression (in words or in actions such as hitting or biting)
- Destructiveness
- Frequent temper tantrums
- Frequent complaints of physical problems such as stomachaches or headaches
- Bed-wetting (after a period of dryness)
- Unusual or unreasonable fears
- Marked personality/behavior changes
- Marked drop in grades (for a child in school)

Keep in mind that emotional disturbances, especially in children, are mostly temporary in nature and frequently accompany a change in the family structure or

routine. Parental conflict, divorce, excessive criticism of the child, unrealistic expectations, scholastic pressures, neglect, illness or death of a parent can all contribute to negative emotions in children.

Checklist to Combat Negative Emotions

- Give the child the attention and love needed to grow into a healthy, secure individual
- Correct and deal with negative emotions when they are first expressed rather than let them develop into bad habits
- Reassure the child that everyone has negative emotions
- Show the child how to deal with negative emotions constructively
- Provide the child with an emotionally “safe” environment
- Cultivate a relaxed, cheerful atmosphere

Children with Mental Impairment

Mentally impaired children can be observed sitting in beginner and even primary Sabbath School classes. However, they many remain at or below the primary thinking level. With help, they can learn the fundamental truths of salvation and formally join the church through baptism.

How to Assist Students with Mental Impairment

- Routine is important
- Avoid abstract concepts and ideas
- Use repetition and concise one or two-step directions

Children with Mental Impairment

Tend to . . .

1. Be concrete thinkers
2. Be sensitive to feelings
3. Have a short attention span
4. Have short memories
5. Need help with prayer and reading
6. Lack adaptive skills.

Teachers can . . .

- Use lots of visual aids.
- Tell Bible stories in terms of how the characters felt.
- Make learning active.
- Use lots of repetition.
- Teach him one simple prayer. Provide picture Bibles.
- Provide transitions: “We are going to get up and sing now.” Or “It is time to sit quietly.”

Communicating Love

When communicating with someone who has mental impairment:

- Do not be condescending
- Use simple sentences
- Make instructions clear and concise
- Talk with the person even though he may not be verbal enough to respond

Try This . . .

When teaching mentally impaired individual, use lots of:

- **Motion songs**
- **Snatches** (“little chunks”) of song to get everyone’s attention. Make the song quick and emphatic. Break into this song anytime you seem to be losing their attention.

- **Affirmation.** Praise kids for even the slightest effort. Hug them around the shoulders or touch their cheek.
- **Instruments** to play while they are singing.
- **Help with transitions.** Snatches or songs can help define the different parts of the service. Make a picture book that shows the different parts of church or communion. Turn the pages for them when the service comes to a transition, like taking the offering or praying.
- **Whisper chants.** Repeat a phrase such as “Jesus is coming!” Begin as a whisper; each time say it louder.
- **“Song-ettes.”** These are the musical equivalent of the little disposable pictures kids take home and stick on the refrigerator. “Song-ettes” are snatches of hymn tunes to which you set any words that fit the lesson. They are sung to teach the lesson and then discarded.
- **Picture Bibles** (they look like comics with a Bible cover). Or glue memory verse pictures into a regular Bible.
- **Opportunities to help** in the community of believers. They can be greeters (along with another person, not by themselves), ushers, Bible bearers, candle lighters, choir members, drummers, plant keepers, one of several persons offering prayer.
- **An occasional chance for segregated worship** with others who are mentally impaired.

“The main qualification to look for in a teacher for people with mental impairment is love. Persons too timid to teach an adult class often do extremely well in this ministry.”

—Noelene Johnsson

Children Coping with Loss

Whether it is the loss of a favorite pet, separation from a best friend, their parent’s divorce or the death of a special grandparent, each child eventually must deal with loss.

Donna J. Habenicht, Professor Emerita in the School of Education at Andrews University, says “death is unavoidable for even very young children. Concerns and questions about death are a normal part of growing up. Using teachable moments, such as the death of a pet, helps prepare children for more difficult deaths later on.”

Adults are often uncomfortable discussing such loss with children. Children are then left to their own imaginations to figure out why animals or people die or how to cope with the loss of a special friend after a move. Dr. Habenicht suggests some loving, practical ways to help your Sabbath School children deal with loss.

How to Assist Students Who Are Coping with Loss

- Deal with the child calmly
- Provide a refuge of stability and calmness
- Be willing to listen as the child is ready
- Respect the child’s way of responding
- Show the child that you understand their feelings
- Help the child understand the grieving process
- Let the child participate in the rituals remembering the loved one

- Give thoughtful answers that a child can understand

Children from Single-Parent Homes

More than half the children growing up in the United States* today will spend part of their childhood living in a single-parent family.

Children from Single-Parent Homes	
Tend to . . .	Teachers Can . . .
1. Feel they are alone in this experience; they don't share their feelings readily.	Provide opportunities for children in similar situations to share thoughts and feelings; let them know "God is a very present help in trouble." (Psalm 46:1)
2. Worry about "Who will take care of Me?" "Where are we going to live?" "Will we have enough money now?"	Listen actively and reassure students that they have permission to feel upset. Explain they can count on God.
3. Must deal with new family relationships and strangers becoming family members.	Help the child stay neutral. Avoid comparisons. Emphasize forgiveness to heal wounds.
4. Need to know what the Bible says about trouble and hope.	Can reassure students that there is hope on this earth and in heaven. God will provide comfort to every child in trouble; He is a "Father to the fatherless."

*If possible, adapt this statement to the region where this class is taught.

How to Assist Students from Single-Parent Homes

Here are some specific things that you can do to help your students that come from single-parent homes.

- Spend one-on-one time with them
- Give them positive attention
- Know their family background

- Acknowledge their emotions
- Get them in touch with other single-parent kids
- Make appropriate referrals when needed
- Be a big brother/sister to the family
- Provide resources for the parents
- Be a helper, not a rescuer

—The above content dealing with understanding children with special needs (Section IV) is adapted from *Children's Ministries*, edited by Ann Calkins, published by AdventSource, Lincoln, Nebraska, USA, 1997, pp. 120-134.)

Give to each student the “Children with Special Needs” handout found on the next page, for supplementary information.

V. Protecting Children (Child Abuse)

Child abuse has become a major problem in the United States today. There are over 1.5 million cases of child abuse reported annually and 5,000 children die each year in America as a result of abuse by their parents. Karen Flowers, co-director of General Conference Family Ministries, states that while data collection in many countries has only just begun, few experts doubt that this is a serious global problem.

Definition

There are eight types of neglect and abuse but the most serious and the easiest to prove are physical and sexual abuse.

Physical abuse – involves physical injury to the child in some manner that was not accidental. Examples are multiple fractures in the long bones, skull fractures, soft tissue injuries and bruises, and subdural hematoma.

Sexual abuse – everything from indecent exposure to full intercourse and rape.

Physical Abuse

What to Look For

- Cuts, welts or swelling
- Burns; cigarette burns or “donut-shaped” burns from immersion in scalding liquids; burns with a pattern such as from an iron
- Fractures
- Scars with a peculiar pattern – looped or rounded
- Bruises
- Bite marks

- Physically abused children will often have successive injuries

Behavioral Characteristics

- Sleep difficulties
- Thumb sucking and nail biting
- Fearfulness
- Listlessness and apathy
- Aggression and violence or withdrawal

Sexual Abuse

What to look for

- Torn or stained underclothing
- Difficulty with bowel or bladder control
- Soreness, bleeding or discharges from a non-menstruating girl
- Trauma to breasts, buttock, lower abdomen, thighs, genitals or rectal area
- Evidences of self-mutilation (cuts, sores, cigarette burns)

Behavioral Characteristics

- Regressive behavior such as thumb sucking or bed wetting
- Refusal to undress under normal circumstances (getting ready for bed)
- Avoiding physical contact
- Poor personal hygiene
- Obsessively good behavior
- Frequent unprovoked anger, such as mutilation of toys

- Panicking or flinching when being touched, like when being tucked in at bedtime
- Continually falling asleep during the day
- Seductive behavior
- Fire setting
- Cruelty to smaller children and animals
- Obsession with punctuality
- Frequent sore throats, difficulty swallowing or choking
- Sudden weight gain or extreme weight loss

How to Respond to a Child's Report of Abuse

Carol Cannon, clinical director and therapist at The Bridge, a Christian center for treating dependency disorders in Bowling Green, Kentucky, outlines these steps for reporting alleged abuse:

- Remain calm or the child may decide not to disclose information in order to spare your feelings
- Allow the child to talk without applying pressure
- Assure the child that reporting the abuse was the right thing to do
- Believe the child—neither the abuse nor the aftermath is their fault
- Tell the child you will try to help the offender
- Do not, under any circumstances, attempt to verify the child's story or to disprove it
- Don't investigate the matter, confront the perpetrator, or try to determine guilt
- Report the abuse to Child Protective Services

- For the child's sake, do not discuss the matter with anyone but the authorities
- If it is confirmed that the abuse has occurred, don't hesitate to prosecute the perpetrator
- Don't explain or excuse the abuser's behavior to the child
- Help the parents of an abused child find a trusted confidant

RESOURCES

A Guide to Feeling Comfortable with Persons Who Have Disabilities. Bethesda Lutheran Homes and Services, Inc. Watertown, Wisconsin.

Cannon, Carol. "Why the Silence? What You Can Do." *Kid's Stuff*, Spring 1994, pp. 6-7.

Children and Families in Crisis. Children's Defense Fund Report, pp. 68-70.

Dealing with Child Abuse- Video available from AdventSource, Lincoln, Nebraska, USA.

"Dealing with Child Abuse – What to Look For." *Kid's Stuff*, undated first issue published by North American Division, pp. 10-11.

Doran, Sandra. "What to Do with Touch Kids in Sabbath School." *Kid's Stuff*. January – March, 1995, pp. 8-9.

Explaining Death & Divorce to You Kids – Video from AdventSource.

Habenicht, Donna. "Helping Children Cope with Death." *Kid's Stuff*, April-June, 1996. pp. 4-5.

Kendall, Birthe. "Would She Be Happy in Your Sabbath School?"

Kuzma, Kay. *To Understand Your Child.* Parent Scene. Redlands, California, 1985.

Meier, Paul, Ratcliff, Donald E., & Rowe, Frederick L., *Child-Rearing and Personality Development.* Baker Books, 1993.

Ministering to Children from Broken Homes – Video from AdventSource, Lincoln, Nebraska, USA.

Pierson, Jim. "Including Kids with Disabilities in Your Ministry." *Kid's Stuff*, October – December, 1995, pp. 4-5.

Sexually Abused – (catalog #556310) 3-brochure set for parents, victim and church/community. AdventSource, Lincoln, Nebraska, USA.
Sprague, Gary. “Ministering to Single-Parent Kids.” *Kid’s Stuff*, October – December, 1966, pp. 10-11.

Curriculum for Mentally-Impaired Youth:

Christian Record Services, P. O. Box 6097, Lincoln, Nebraska (402-488-0981). Provide Braille or large-print materials.

Growing Closer to God by CRC Publications.

Hands Uplifted, An audio tape of songs for the Christian classroom, by David Morstad, Bethesda Lutheran Homes and Services, Inc., 700 Hoffmann Drive, Watertown, Wisconsin, 53094, USA. Phone 1-800-369-INFO, extension 418.

Living God’s Way by CRC Publications. A mini-course on prayer and worship.

The Friendship Series, Year 1: God, Our Father; Year 2: Jesus, Our Savior; Year 3: Jesus, Our Helper – Teacher’s Manual, Student Resources, Group Leader’s Kit. CRC Publications, 2850 Kalamazoo Avenue SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49502-8034. Phone 1-800-333-8300 within US; 1-800-263-4252 within Canada.

—The above content in section V dealing with child abuse (protecting children) is adapted from *Children’s Ministries*, edited by Ann Calkins, published by AdventSource, Lincoln, Nebraska, USA, 1997, pp. 135-138.

Hand out and discuss “Safeguarding Children’s Ministries Volunteer Management – Best Practices” (found on next pages).

—Document courtesy of Adventist Risk Management, Inc.

(The church in North American Division has adopted the procedures in “Safeguarding Children’s Ministries. . . .” General Conference Children’s Ministries recommends that these same procedures eventually be adopted in all world divisions.)

A thank you goes to AdventSource for permission to integrate portions of *Children's Ministries: Ideas and Techniques that Work* into this syllabus. Also, thank you to North American Division Children's Ministries Director, Noelene Johnsson, for sharing materials from her departmental website, and for her input into this syllabus.