

Motivating Your T&Ters

Third through Sixth grade girls and boys is a challenging age to reach. Today we're going to learn how to reach & motivate those who aren't quite interested

INTRO - (10 Minutes)

A. Greeting & Introduction.

Greet everyone and introduce myself. Then ask everyone to introduce themselves and state what role they have in AWANA (take notes).

B. Opening Prayer

In looking at Motivating T&T boys and girls, there are three major areas we are going to look at:

1. Why they might not be motivated. In order to help them, we need to have at least an idea as to why they aren't motivated.
2. How to motivate these young oaks of righteousness – some methods you can try.
3. Finally, why it's important to motivate them (or at least give it your absolute best effort).

D. After we look at the three points above, we will have time for some questions and answers. Also, if we have not run out of time, I'd like to hear what you do at your AWANA Club, what is working and what you might be having a struggle with because we are all in this together.

MAIN PRESENTATION - (20 Minutes)

A. Part I – Why they might not be motivated?

1. There are a great deal of possibilities as to why they might not be motivated. The important thing is to not jump to any conclusions. Get to know your clubber in order to be able to approach the situation in the best possible way.
2. Knowing why they aren't motivated is important because the solution or method in dealing with the problem will vary from one problem to another. Your approach to the situation must be done from the vantage point of love and concern for the clubber. When you approach the young man or lady let them know up front that you care for them as Jesus cares for all children.
3. Some of the reasons might be difficulty at home with parents or a sibling. It might be a learning disability that doesn't show up on the outside. It could be a problem with another clubber. I know you might think this would never happen in your club, but a couple of years ago, we had a young man who was doing very well, then there was a drop-off. The handbook leader shared it with me and I asked his mom (who was involved in children's ministry but not AWANA) if everything was okay. She said she was thinking of pulling her son out because he was being bullied. Well, we dealt with the situation and the young man finished the year very strong.
4. These aren't the only reasons for having an unmotivated child because each child is unique and what might not bother one child might really bother another.
5. There are also different types of being unmotivated. Some children are withdrawn; some stop doing their work; some become a discipline challenge. Some reasons are easier to deal with than others and some might require immediate attention and action.
6. Always pray before approaching the clubber. Seek God's wisdom and knowledge. And always remember to approach from the standpoint of wanting the best for the clubber.
7. Also, they might not want to open up to you. How do you find out what's going on if they don't want to talk to you? One of the things we did last year was that every leader's binder had pockets and two of the pockets

had these cards that I'm going to pass out. Keep them, recreate them if you want to. This gave the clubber an opportunity to let us in on what was happening so we would know how to approach the situation.

B. Part II - How to motivate these young oaks of righteousness – some methods you can try.

By the way, if you can relate to any of these examples, please share what was going on and, if there was breakthrough or success, how did the success happen. We are here to help and encourage each other in this area. And if you are having a frustration, share that as well, perhaps someone here can give you a tip that will really help.

1. Before you can start to try to motivate them, a critical element is knowing why they are not motivated. This will greatly help you in determining a path to take.
2. Besides prayer, one of the first steps in motivating these young oaks of Righteousness is to not just establish a relationship with them, but build on it. You have to get them to open up to you to tell you what is going on so you can help. They are not likely going to let you in their space unless you have some kind of rapport with them and this won't happen overnight; especially if the reason they are not motivated is because of a problem with one or both of their parents. They could easily see you as a parent figure (because you are) and this will make it even harder to get through to them. By building a relationship with them, they, hopefully, will see that your motives are genuine and you really care for them. This will go a long way in them opening up. If they can feel secure with you, then the possibility of them opening up to share what's going on becomes a probability. Remember, there are three things that last, faith, hope, and love and the greatest is love. Also, if they aren't talking to you, keep an eye out to see if there is another leader they do relate to. If so, talk with them and see what the other leader can do to help.
3. If it's a family situation, let them know you are praying for them and if they need someone to pray for them, you are always available. If it is an abuse situation, you absolutely must notify your commander of this. It's a very delicate situation. The first two things to do is pray and talk with your Commander immediately. The Commander who will take the appropriate action. If it is a family problem without abusive behavior, again, let the clubber know you are there to help, talk to and pray. Some-

times all they need is to have something explained in a different way. It might not be as bad as the clubber thinks but he or she cannot see that. One of the best opening lines is “Hey Deborah, you don’t seem to be your happy, joyful self lately. Is everything okay? Is there anything I can be praying for you for? I’d love to do that.”

4. If it’s a problem within the handbook group between two (or more) clubbers, and you have tried talking with all the members to see if a Christian solution can be reached, but it doesn’t appear to be, then it’s not a sign of failure on your part or that you aren’t doing a great job to have one of the children moved into another group. Sometimes, that’s the best thing that could happen. We’ve had to make some switches in the past and it hasn’t always been because of a problem between two clubbers. Sometimes there’s a personality clash between a leader and a clubber. That sometimes happens. It’s better to make a move than to have the clubber either quit or be a distraction for the entire year. Sometimes a switch in and of itself is a motivating tool.
5. What if it’s a learning problem or the child is not grasping the material, or he or she has a learning disability. Some of these are much easier to see or know than others. We have a deaf child in one of our handbook groups and he has an interpreter with him throughout the club who works with him one-on-one to help him. He did very well last year. He didn’t finish his book his first year, but he did this past year and we were so proud in sharing in the moment during award time. He worked so hard it was such a blessing to have him with us. Sometimes it’s something far milder. If you have a suspicion and are not sure, ask one of the parents how the child is doing in school. Hopefully this will clue the parent to let you know that there is a learning disadvantage for the child. In that case, be very, very encouraging with him and when he or she accomplishes a goal take a moment to celebrate it. Be careful not to go to far because then the child might become self-conscious and shut down.
6. What if it’s simply that the clubber does not want to do sections? Do you have anyone like that? These might be the hardest to motivate. They don’t have any problems, per se, nothing going wrong at home, no struggles with other clubbers and the child is intelligent. They might just be coming to AWANA to be with their friends or to play games. How do you motivate that type of person? What are your ideas? (Allow them to

answer). Short of pulling your hair out (that's why mine isn't that long --- it makes it harder to pull out), what can you do? Well, besides keeping the child at or near the top of your prayer list, how about finding out what he or she likes and making the reward go along with their likes. If they like trading cards, then reward him or her with some AWANA trading cards. If they have a sweet tooth, how about giving them a piece of candy? Chocolate and candy are great mini-rewards in the handbook groups at our AWANA group.

C. Part III - Finally, why it's important to motivate them (or at least give it your absolute best effort).

1. Besides knowing why they aren't motivated and having some ideas as to how we might motivate them, I believe it's also critical that we know or understand why motivating the unmotivated is so very important.
2. If one of our major goals with these guys and gals is to help them build and strengthen their relationship with Jesus, and it should be, then we should understand why this goal is so important or we might be just spinning our wheels.
3. This is a calling, not just something we do to help out the church. Jesus calls us to enter into & develop a Christian relationship with them. They are our responsibility during club time. We are their mentors, role models and disciplers. If I were to ask you when in the New Testament did Jesus get angry, most people would probably say when he chased the Moneychangers out of the temple. However, in Mark 10, Jesus became very angry with the disciples for trying to send away the children who were coming to Jesus for a blessing. He was very upset with them and put them in their place. This tells me how important these clubbers are.
4. For me, the thought of having to face my Heavenly Father knowing He has placed me in charge of these guys and not noticing what is going on will cause for me to have to answer for that. I don't want to face my Father knowing I could have done better.
5. These are good reasons for wanting to motivate them, but these are not the only reasons. Here are some more to think about. Most of these come from George Barna's book titled "Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions." This is an excellent read and I encourage you to read it

if you get a chance. The stats that follow after the next few paragraphs are very disturbing. I shared these with leaders last year, but I really think they deserve to be touched on again.

6. Our children (these young men and women) will define the future which makes them our most significant and enduring legacy. If we are going to leave the future in their hands, don't we want to do our best to make sure their future is solid. If we can influence the future by helping to mold and shape these young oaks of righteousness, shouldn't we?
7. Young people admit to being highly influenced by their role models but nearly half of all preteens admit that they don't have any role models. We can and need to be those role models. We have that opportunity with these clubbers. Every chance we get to mentor them, to guide them, to help them in their Christian walk, we need to. Some of them might have parents who aren't saved and don't take the child to church. We might be the only Christ they see on a regular basis. Let's step up with these young ones and be Jesus to them to the highest degree. Let's not let them slip by without having an authentic experience of Jesus' love and caring. They are so heavily attacked by the world through TV, music, movies, schools, it's pathetic. If we are their only light source then let's make sure our light is shining brightly for them.
8. The most significant aspect of every person's life is his or her spiritual health. Some people would say that other dimensions are more important – the physical, intellectual, relational, professional, moral, socio-economic, etc. What do you say? What do you think is the most important? (Let them answer). I don't mean any disrespect, but I would disagree with them and say their spiritual health is most vital. I agree with George Barna when he says that "every dimension of a person's experience hinges on his or her moral and spiritual condition." During their formative years, children develop their decision-making perspectives and patterns. If we can guide or motivate them to make decisions that are Christ centered then we should, and we must!
9. If we don't motivate them while they are in AWANA to do their sections, it might be the only chance we get. This is really important. When we are called by God to perform a certain task, take heart in realizing He is also going to equip you. Please don't ever think you are not getting through to these clubbers. You are and in a wonderful way I might add.

The spiritual truths you are impressing on them between you helping them memorize their verses and by your example easily beats what the world is trying to teach them. Remember, greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world! Check out this info. Three quarters (that's 75%) of young people believe the following:

- a. The devil does not exist – Satan is just a symbol of evil.
- b. A good person earns entry into heaven by doing enough good works.
- c. People are born morally neutral and make a choice as to become good or bad.
- d. All of the sacred books from different religious traditions (i.e., the Bible, the Koran, the Book of Mormon, and so forth) are merely Different expressions of the same spiritual truths and principles.
- e. Spiritual and moral truth can only be discovered through logic, human reason and personal experience.

This should be a great motivator for all of us, but it gets even better. Half or more than half of young ones contend the following:

- a. There are no absolute standards for morals and ethics.
- b. Life either has no meaning or the meaning is realized through hard work, which produces the resources to enjoy comfort and security.
- c. The Bible does not specifically condemn homosexuality.
- d. And my personal favorite: When Jesus Christ lived on earth, He committed sins.

This clearly tells me one important thing about motivating the unmotivated, find a way to do it, period. If we are their only hope, and I pray we aren't. I pray we are only supplementing what they are receiving at home. But if we are their only hope, let's be a shining hope!

10. So you might ask yourself, does one particular child who isn't behaving or listening really matter? Shouldn't I just focus on the others, the ones

who are being good and obviously want to be here? Deuteronomy 7:13 shows us that Children are a gift from God and Psalm 127:3 states “Sons are a heritage from the Lord, children a reward from Him.” Deuteronomy 6:3 shows us that Children are desirable and Jesus even told us how a Shepherd will go searching for the lost sheep. If you have a lost sheep in your “herd”, go after him or her. Give them your best shot, they are worth it!

11. And finally, here’s a closing thought: The longer you wait to pursue influence, the more difficult it is to counteract the influence of other parties that have been imprinting their values upon children. In other words, the longer we wait to try to influence/motivate these young men and women, the more imprinting from the world that is going to be on them and the harder it will be to counter what is being poured into them outside of church.

CLOSING - (10 Minutes)

- A. Question and Answer time.
- B. Have you had a time when you had to motivate an unmotivated child? Did you have a positive result? If so, would you share the circumstances?
- C. Have you had a situation where you just couldn’t motivate someone? What did you end up doing?
- D. Closing Prayer