



tips for youth workers

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“THIS IS BORING!”

(The following article is from Pioneer Clubs’ March newsletter and is shared with permission from Pioneer Clubs. The article uses Pioneer Club terms but the situation can happen anywhere: Sunday school, after school club, youth group or whatever ministry you may lead. Be sure to visit pioneerclubs.org for midweek discipleship resources, VBS program and other helpful children and youth ministry resources.)

Imagine this: You’ve carefully read the meeting plan in your planbook and spent time studying the passages and gathering supplies. You’ve adapted as needed for your particular club. You’re ready and excited. It’s going to be a great time!

Just a few minutes after you begin club, a kid blurts out the phrase that breaks you: “This is boring!”

“This is boring” can be said in two ways:

- An irritating, whiny voice. This means there’s a concern you need to address.
- A somewhat malicious, angry voice. This means there’s a confrontation you need to defuse. In this case, the situation is more serious and had to be dealt with cautiously, just as you would deal with a power struggle.

Here are some possible answers when you hear the first type of “This is boring!”

1. “Hang on, because I’m going to make things better!” This isn’t meant to be said sarcastically. You really have to believe that whatever activity you have next is going to be better. If you say this in an enthusiastic way, and if club members trust you, then they really will wait to see if things get better. This is particularly good if you are setting up an activity and they can’t quite see what’s going to happen yet.

Two warnings: First, don’t overuse it. Second, be sure you make things better. I once said this, and a club member responded, “That’s what you said last time, and things *didn’t* get better.”

2. “When did you start feeling this way?” Most youth blurt out “I’m bored” without thinking about it. They imply you’re at fault. This question turns the responsibility to them. Have you felt this way for a long time? Are you bored in general or just with this activity? Are you bored with your fellow club members? With me?

This makes them think about and analyze what they said a little more. Their comments are likely to be less whiny and a little more constructive.

3. “What can make things less boring?” or “Why is it boring?” This one takes a little courage, because you might not like what the club members say. You also might end up with a long diversion from the activity at hand.

However, if you treat this as a proper and constructive discussion, and you aren’t worried about setting your lesson aside, these questions can be really useful. At first you might get silly responses such as “Take us to Paris” or “Drive us around town” (actual responses I’ve received). After that, you might actually get to the heart of the matter.

4. Thanks for telling me. Again, this isn’t sarcasm. Although you might hate to admit it, what you are doing may truly be boring! “This is boring” could be important feedback about the kinds of activities and teaching techniques your club members enjoy, and you’ll have to try to make a more engaging lesson next time. Often, I do the activities with the kids myself. If they’re writing answers to questions, so am I. If they’re playing a game or doing a project, so am I. If I’m bored, then they probably are, too.

These suggestions are not meant to be snappy comebacks or pat responses, but ways to address a morale breaker. Left alone, “This is boring!” can attack your spirit as well as the other club members. By tackling the issue, you can try to make a difference in the club environment. And hopefully, with God’s grace, you’ll be hearing, “This is fun and interesting!” instead.