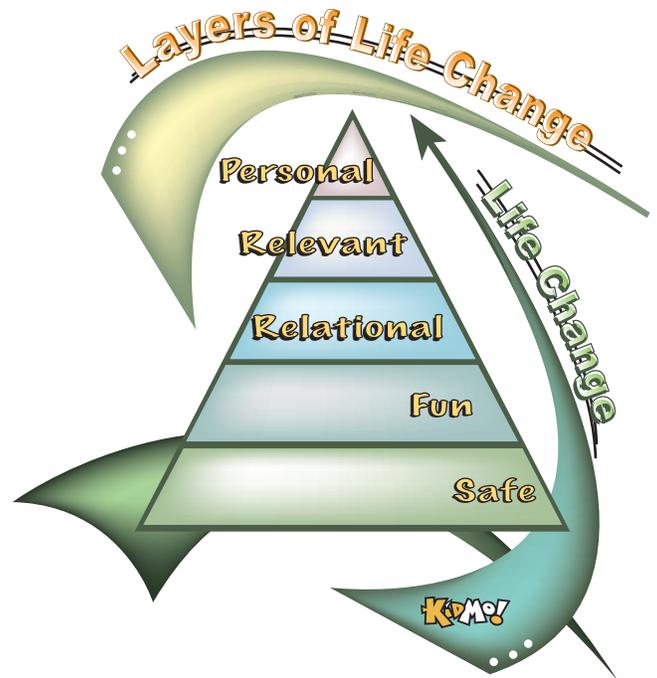


Layers of Life Change

5 LAYERS OF LIFE CHANGE

How do we ensure that our ministry investment truly has impact? Ultimately we want to see the lives of our children transformed through the power of God. We begin by understanding the layers of life change we build into our children's ministry. These layers are: Safe, Fun, Relational, Relevant, and Personal.



SAFE

Every child grows best in an environment that is physically and emotionally safe. The first contact with your ministry defines it in the minds of your parents and children. You've got 3 seconds before children decide whether they want to come into your ministry or not. Ready, go!

Why must safety come first? If children do not feel physically or emotionally safe, it is difficult for them to become engaged. In order to revolutionize their lives, children must be open to the life-changing message of Christ. The first step down the road of transformation is feeling and knowing they are loved and safe. Nothing melts children's guarded hearts more than the knowledge that someone has their best interest in mind.

Children aren't the only ones who need to be convinced of safety, however. Parents now demand that steps are taken to ensure the security of their children, and churches are responding by instituting safety precautions. Statistics are alarming for churches that do not take this issue seriously. Creating a screening process helps protect your kids and volunteers, and communicates to parents that you value the lives of their children.

Creating a physically safe environment demands a firm screening process.

- Written application
- Finger printing volunteers
- Interviews for EVERY volunteer in your ministry
- Background check
- 6 month rule
- Supervision of volunteers (2 person rule)
- Budget for your process

After creating a physically safe environment, your next step should be to train your volunteers to create emotionally safe environments. Emotional safety is represented by affirmation, attention, appreciation, and authenticity. Affirming children is simple and easy to do. Kneel down so you are on their level. Look them in the eye when they are talking to you, practice focused attention, and affirm their positive behavior. Paying attention to children is equally important. Conversing with them allows connections to be established. Conversations can begin with simple questions that send the message, "I'm interested in your life. Tell me about it." Showing appreciation to children proves "You are valued here." We can honor children by welcoming them with a smile and a high five. We also honor children by listening more than we talk. Finally, remember to be authentic and genuine. You can show kids you sincerely care about their lives by praying for their requests during the week, asking them about their weeks, and remembering things they share with you in conversations.

Jesus was relational and showed God's love by how he cared for people, especially lost people. Kids come to church for a variety of reasons. What will make a lasting impact in the lives of children? Most likely, it will be the relationships they establish with people who genuinely care for them. Communicating to children in safe, honoring, and affirming ways becomes our first call to action.

FUN

Learning through play is critical to a child's development. Child-centered design means creating an environment that is culturally in sync with a child. There is no good reason church should be boring. God is not boring. What's more, God is enjoyable, playful and yes, even fun. If we are to communicate the message of transformation to children, we must communicate it in a language they understand. Fun is the language kids speak. When our children's ministries reflect an enjoyable environment, it sends the message, "you belong here." Children's ministries should strive to be the best part of a child's week. It is easier to build ministry-wide momentum when children want to keep coming back. Imagine parents asking, "What are you guys up to? My kid can't wait to get to church!"

Evaluate these areas when looking at your current ministry:

What do kids see when they enter your children's ministry?

What does a first time attendee hear when they enter your children's ministry?

What do families feel when they enter your children's ministry?

How do kids respond and relate to your children's ministry environment?

Creating fond memories will go a long way to building a ministry that not only lasts, but also is stronger as it grows. Ask yourself, "If kids could drive, would they still come?"

RELATIONAL

Children are longing for deeper, more authentic relationships as technology introduces a new form of isolation. They are asking, “Do you care about me because you have to, or because you want to?” More than ever kids are translating the message of Christianity through the lens of relationships. It is said, “Kids don’t care how much you know, until they know how much you care.” Through His relationships, Jesus showed God’s love by how he cared for people, especially lost people. The kids that show up in your ministry each week come for a variety of reasons. One of the most significant and transformational elements of your ministry is relationship. Most likely, it will be the relationship with someone who genuinely cares that will allow the seeds of transformation to become deeply rooted in the lives of your children.

RELEVANT

In order for children to begin cultivating the principles of God’s word in their lives, they must see how it connects to their worlds. We must build a bridge between the seemingly ancient Biblical time and their here and now. Just because children show up in your ministry does not mean they are primed to learn. In order to link the biblical world and what happens on the playground tomorrow, each lesson needs to answer these foundational questions: What’s the point? Why should I care? How does that apply to me? Additionally, when teaching, keep in mind that your lessons should be simple and motivational. Using words and concepts that a child can easily understand will create a more relevant experience. Likewise, a motivational lesson will make them say, “I want to do this!”

PERSONAL

How do children take the word of God and live it out in such a way that it transforms the way they live their lives? In order to see true transformation in the lives of our children we must move beyond application to personalization. We must answer the question, “How will I know when I get it right?” Give kids a picture of what biblical living looks like through drama, movie clips, video, and testimonies both from your leaders and from your kids. Additionally, giving children a measuring point helps them see how they can personalize the lesson. A measuring point breaks down Biblical concepts into Biblical pictures of real-life situations where kids see these principles lived out. A measuring point inspires your kids to go out and do something specific and also affirms your leaders when they see the kids in action.

Where does a transformational children’s ministry begin? Start by laying a foundation of safety. Develop a program that is fun and engaging. Train volunteers to be relationally focused. Provide kids with an understanding of how the Bible can apply to their daily lives, and give them a picture of what Biblical living looks like in the real world.