

# How2: Build positive Christian relationships with children and young people



In this next part of the How2 series we take a look at how leaders of church groups, school groups and Christian events can work towards building long-term relationships with kids- relationships that really make a difference.

*"Of course camp was a great way of presenting the gospel. We were not just telling young people the good news, but showing them what it's all about – modelling faith!"*

**Graeme Barnett, previous es-team worker.**

## Why are relationships important?

Young people will listen to us if they trust us, and that trust can only come with understanding and friendship. Friendship is a gift that we have, that we can give to young people to show them something of what God is like. By valuing each young person we help them to appreciate their own value and to recognise that God loves them. This is right at the heart of our ministry: we know that each child and young person is special to God. We want them to grow up knowing that too.

## Keeping children and young people safe

Scripture Union Scotland is totally committed to building relationships with children and young people that will help them towards a positive and safe experience of life. Here's what our child protection policy says:

*"Scripture Union in all its work with children and young people seeks to ensure the physical, emotional and spiritual well-being and development of each child or young person. Within this context, Scripture Union is committed to the protection of children and young people from all forms of abuse."*

Our child protection policy goes on to provide guidelines on best practice. If you are a volunteer with SU you will be familiar with the policy and receive training before events. If you are interested in knowing more about our child protection policy and how it helps towards positive, safe relationships please contact the volunteers unit on 0141 352 7614 or email [volunteers@suscotland.org.uk](mailto:volunteers@suscotland.org.uk).

## Practical steps for building positive relationships

- **Relationships** are two-way. Allow the child or young person to choose to be friends, or not.
- **Relationships** are most valuable if they are long term. Take time to get to know someone gradually. Then demonstrate that you care by maintaining the friendship. Many Christians tell of church and SU leaders who prayed for them for years, kept in touch and showed friendship. Often this has been very significant in their lives.
- **Relationships** benefit from listening. Two ears and one mouth remind us to listen twice as much as we talk.
- **Relationships** can need work. Friendships are not always instant.

## Ultimate Relationship

We want to introduce children and young people to Jesus Christ. In that relationship we believe they can have the best friendship of all.

*"I no longer call you servants, because servants do not know their master's business. Instead, I have called you **friends**, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you."* **John 15:15**

"We need to be preparing children for life...not repairing children's lives."

Richard Knott used to work for the es-team project in Edinburgh as the Independent Schools worker. He is passionate about telling children and young people that God loves them, and committed to helping young people find dynamic faith. Here's a couple of principles he uses in his work with Children and young people.

### **Commit to regular involvement**

Children and young people appreciate someone spending time with them.

### **Recognise children's ability to respond**

Both primary and secondary age children can develop real, personal faith, and experience God in their lives. Recognising this is an important step in helping them to realise the relevance of the Good News. A child's faith is just as important as an adult's or a teenager's.

This article first appeared in @SU in June 2005.

---