

Training Children

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This title basically says it all for any Instructor, because teaching children can be a very difficult thing to do.

As a children's Instructor it is advantageous to have the children look up to you as an authority figure who is in control, earn their respect and also to be a person they can relate to as a friend and not just an Instructor. I have found they are more co-operative and willing with this sort of relationship.

No two children are alike they all have their own personalities, and difficulties in understanding. So in this situation, my method is to go down to their level. In other words to be a big kid myself. By doing this I have built a relationship between myself and the child, which once accomplished you will have opened a doorway of communication, which usually leads to a strong friendship and earns their respect.

Personalities & Difficulties

It can take a while to get to know a child's personality, unless you have gone out of your way to give them the time and patience they need to express themselves. During the process you will find out what type of person they are, and what is needed to train them.

There are two types of personalities that we deal with.

The quiet type - children who are shy or may not have much self-confidence and the extrovert - children who are easily distracted, who may be very aggressive or may find it hard to listen to commands.

The quiet child needs to be spoken to very carefully, and given a lot more praise and encouragement than most children. While with the extrovert, it is best to let them know who is in charge, while keeping in mind what caused the outbursts or distractions in the first place.

Students who are aggressive or disruptive during training whether it be due to lack of interest or dedication usually prevent others training by interfering with the others concentration. This can be dealt with, in a number of different ways.

- 1) Making the student perform physical exercises.
- 2) Making the class perform physical exercises, while they remain standing.
- 3) Telling the student off in front of the class or if it is of a serious nature speak to them alone.

Understanding

When teaching children you will notice the difference compared to teaching adults. Most kids find it hard to understand your commands, so basically I simplify my instructions, by doing this, I achieve a better result from my students. You may notice at times with some children, that even when simplifying your instructions, they may not understand, so by giving reasons for each technique, patience and a bit of time, the instructions do eventually get through.

Training

Keeping their interest can be difficult, especially when changing your routines, so finding ways of making training exciting and fun and making them do things you want without them getting bored is my aim. I always try to keep them smiling. My method to achieve this is that I usually have fun with them, by making them laugh all the time, I tease them and even pull faces at them, kids like that. Most of all, I always talk to them. When kids get the attention they need they try their best. Unfortunately for children, training sessions cannot be fun all the time, you have to be serious at times to keep their standard high or in order. If I notice a child who is not giving their best I give them a big push. I don't stop pushing until they give me some effort. There is one thing about training children which I don't like and that is having to yell at them. Unfortunately that is the way it has to be, somebody has to do it.

Physical

When doing physical exercises games are alright but not all the time. A good idea is to combine the game with the physical exercise for an example:

- sprinting from one end of the hall to the other (its a big hall)

To turn this into a 'game' the smaller kids are told to go to the middle of the hall. I tell them that if I beat more than five of them then they all have to do 20 pushups on my count. The funny thing is they love it - they are so excited about trying to beat the Instructor.

Before we start I get them laughing - usually by starting off with 'On your marks', 'Get set' and then 'Banana split' or 'Monkey face' - even the Parents are amused by it.

Basically I turn most of our warm-up exercises into a fun time.

Techniques

Techniques is the area most kids have trouble with, trying to remember things each night when they come to training. For kids it can really get confusing.

The way I help them to perform their techniques to the best of their ability, is to constantly check them and telling them to go home and practise it the correct way. For example - some have a problem keeping their fingers and thumbs tucked under when making a fist. I tell them that while they are walking around the house to practise clenching their fists keeping their fingers and thumbs tucked under. Nine out of ten times their next training night shows a big improvement.

Theory & Terminology

When I teach the children their theory and terminology, there are two things that I look for:

Sound - when giving the answers to my questions, it must be said loud and clear. To achieve this I make each student stand at one end of our very large hall and shout !!

Knowledge - I make sure my students know exactly what answer is required from them. Whether it is word for word from the handbook or put into words that they understand. I also take the time to help my students who have speech deficiencies and have successfully assisted them so far.

Power

This is probably the most difficult to bring out in the young. I have found that by making the children shout when yelling on a punch or block, helps to generate power and being kids they love to make a noise. With patterns it is even more difficult for them to remember the movements, sine wave and power. My students tend to rush through their patterns when trying to use power and need to be reminded to slow down.

To try and draw out the 'power' in these kids, I have found it helps to use a form of 'mental training'.

E.g - Saju Jirugi

For the first step in this pattern, I tell them to imagine someone is in front of them and someone is also behind them, so that when they punch they must hit their target in front and also try to hit the 'person' behind them when they pull their elbow back. Its simple but effective.

Conclusion

One of the most important and greatest assets I have at my disposal is my young students' Parents.

Most of them attend classes every training night, always attend our weekend trainings and always support me by allowing me to show them the correct way their child should perform a technique and then taking them home and spending time with their child practising. By doing this I have got better results not only for the club but also by assisting to draw the parents and children closer together and both feeling proud of what they have achieved together.

I am also very lucky to have the support and help from Susie during our training sessions. It is so much easier to have someone supporting me, who knows a little more about children than I do, who doesn't mind having a house full of young ones all weekend, to suggest some new ideas and who enjoys helping the kids to improve themselves as much as I do.