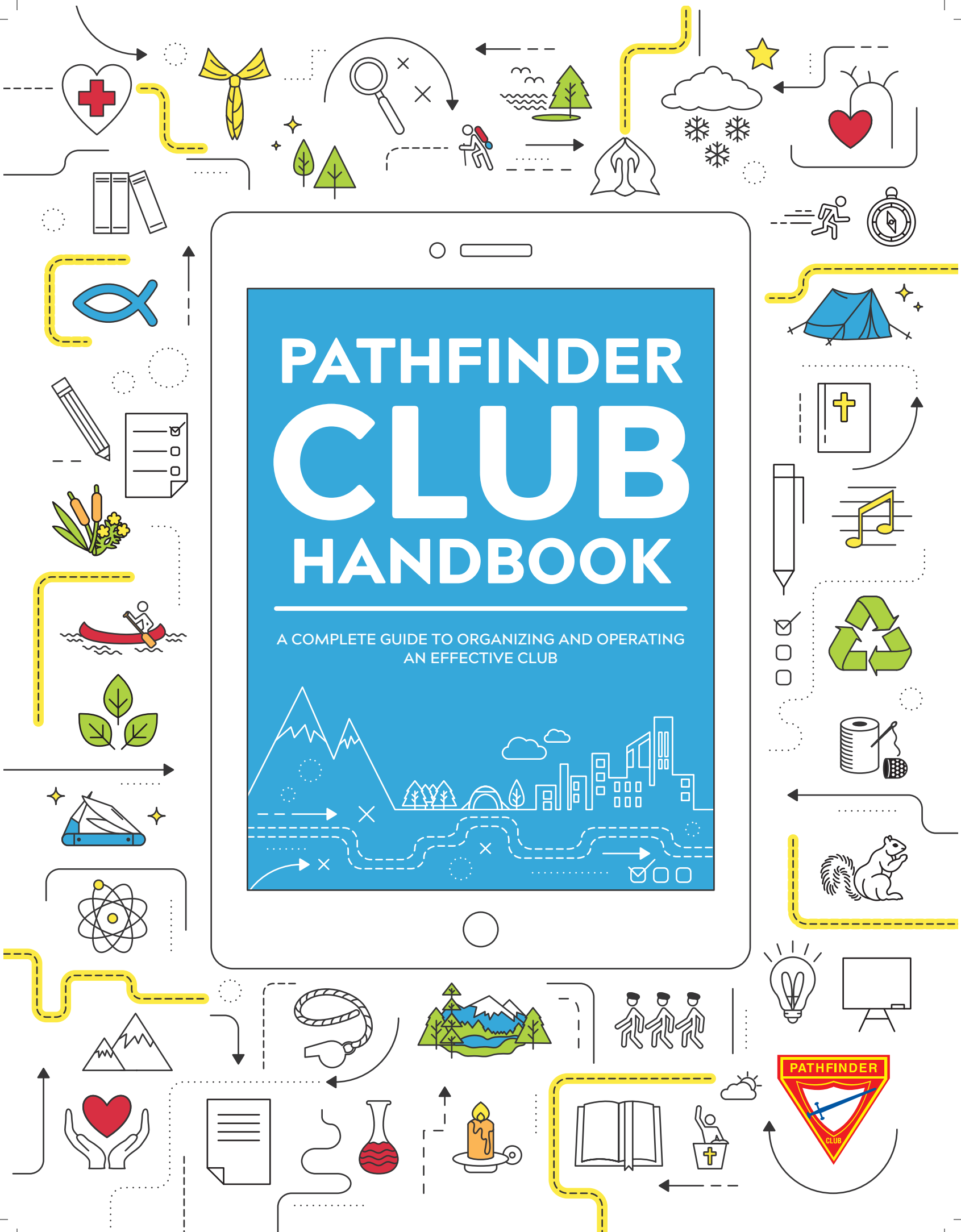


## A COMPLETE GUIDE TO ORGANIZING AND OPERATING AN EFFECTIVE CLUB

## A COMPLETE GUIDE TO ORGANIZING AND OPERATING AN EFFECTIVE CLUB



Pathfinder Club Handbook

Prepared by the Youth and Young Adult Department of the North American Division

Design and Layout: Liv Jacobson

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# → PATHFINDER CLUB HANDBOOK ←

## INTRODUCTION

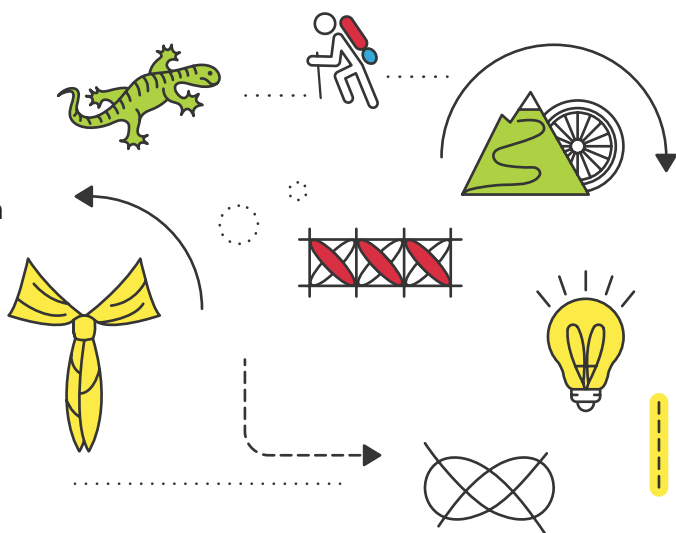
Since its adoption in 1950 by the General Conference Youth Department, the Pathfinder Club Ministry has developed into a worldwide organization. The interpersonal relationships and the power of influence by consecrated leaders has shaped the lives of thousands of Pathfinders.

The key to the success of the Pathfinder Club Ministry is well-trained and dedicated leadership. From the early days, conferences held annual Pathfinder staff training where they offered basic organizational leadership and specialty courses for experienced Pathfinder staff members. As the organization grew, conference leaders started to bring programs and ideas together into a printed manual for easy reference.

In the 1970s the North American Youth Department Advisory Committee voted to prepare a Pathfinder staff manual. A committee composed of Clayton Child, Danny Davis, Lorenzo Grant, John Hancock, Norm Middag, Jack Olson, Milo Sawvel, Leo Ranzolin (as chair), and Susan Pettibone (as secretary) met in Washington, DC to outline the manual. A large amount of material gathered through the years from division and conference bulletins and training booklets was considered by this committee. Norm Middag and Milo Sawvel were preparing comprehensive Pathfinder staff training manuals for their conferences at the time. This information formed the basis for much of the committee's work. Other individuals who contributed to the manual were Frank Phillips, Adjust Taylor, Jim Harris, Harry Garlick, Ron Wisbey, and Winston DeHaven.

The *Pathfinder Staff Manual* that resulted served the North American Division for over a decade. In 1988 the North American Division Pathfinder Committee voted that the Pathfinder Staff Manual should be revised to keep pace with the changing times. Those contributing to the revision were Norm Middag (chairperson), Terry Bolton, Charles Case, J. C. Hicks, Al Williamson, Terry Dodge, and Glen Milam.

In the years that have followed much has changed in our world, but the one thing that has not changed is that Pathfinder Club Ministry has remained vibrant and strong. This 2025 *Pathfinder Club Handbook* builds on the resources created before it while adding content to help Pathfinder leaders who are ministering in the digital age. This manual is not exhaustive in content, but it has brought together a wealth of material to guide Pathfinder directors and staff members in understanding all aspects of Pathfinder Club Ministry.



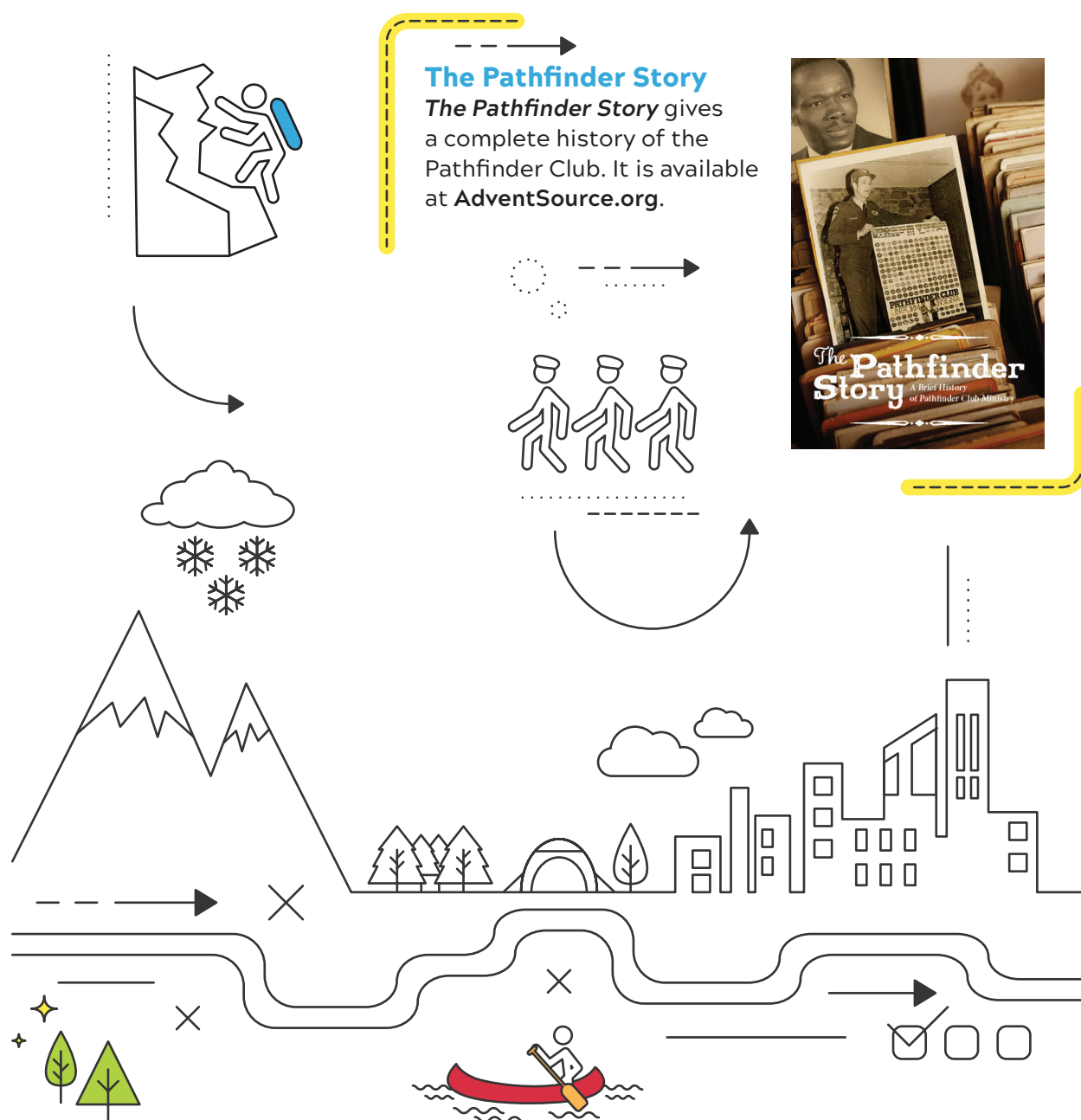
Pathfinder Club Ministry, with leadership that dedicates its time, talents, and energy to keeping the program running smoothly, has proven to be one of the great soul-winning agencies of our church. It is designed to help Pathfinders sense their God-given destiny and keep them marching together in step toward the Kingdom of God.

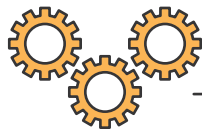
Tracy Wood, *Youth and Young Adult Ministries Director*

Vandeon Griffin, *Youth and Young Adult Ministries Associate Director*

Armando Miranda Jr., *Youth and Young Adult Ministries Associate Director*

North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church





## PATHFINDER CLUB MINISTRY BASICS

### OVERVIEW

Welcome to Pathfinder Club Ministry! Although the Pathfinder Club was formally organized in 1950, it was people just like you, people that had a passion for working with youth and connecting them with Jesus, that started developing what would become the Pathfinder Club Ministry in the early 1900's.

Today, Pathfinder Club Ministry is a church-based program that encourages youth grades 5–10 to develop a balanced physical, mental, social, and spiritual life. The program offers action, adventure, challenges, and group activities for young people working together with adult staff. This worldwide youth organization is sponsored by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, though young people of any religious persuasion are welcome and encouraged to join. In 2024, there were nearly 66,000 clubs with a total membership of more than two million.

Pathfinder clubs offer a wide range of activities including, but not limited to:

- Weekly or bimonthly meetings.
- Life-enhancing activities that promote personal growth, spiritual growth, service, friendships, health and fitness, nature study, and outdoor living, all of which are integrated into the Investiture Achievement Curriculum.
- Interactive training in a variety of recreational, artistic, nature, conservation, vocational, and outreach areas. Honor patches are given for successful completion of the interactive training modules.
- Personal care and encouragement by caring staff members! While many school classrooms have 10–30 students per teacher, Pathfinders offers AT LEAST one staff member to every five Pathfinders!
- Camping and survival skills.
- Field trips.
- Drill and marching that instills a sense of discipline and team building.
- Age-appropriate learning activities provided by the Investiture Achievement Curriculum.
- Activities promoting community involvement through outreach activities such as helping in soup kitchens, collecting food for the disadvantaged, cleaning and maintaining city and regional parks, visiting and encouraging the elderly, and a variety of additional community service projects.



### Mission

The Pathfinder Club Ministry is dedicated to meeting the social, physical, mental, and spiritual developmental needs of junior and teen youth by challenging each Pathfinder to experience a personal relationship with Christ, to experience a sense of achievement and responsibility, and to develop respect for God's creation and all people.

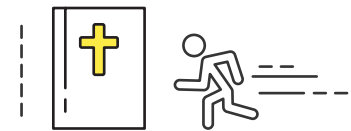


## PURPOSE OF THE PATHFINDER CLUB

The purpose of the Pathfinder Club is to introduce young people to Jesus Christ. The curriculum helps them develop body, mind and spirit. More than just skills, we want young people to build a relationship with Christ as their Lord and Savior, and we want to give them the tools they need to be successful in this world while preparing for Heaven. As you are planning for your club year, you should take time to reflect on the purpose of your club. Meetings and activities should do the following:

- Help Pathfinders learn that God has a plan for their lives.
- Lead Pathfinders to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.
- Empower them to lead others to Christ.
- Give opportunities for the development of leadership skills.
- Encourage youth to set and achieve goals.
- Provide positive social interactions through meeting new people and developing friendships.
- Engage Pathfinders in active service.
- Give guidance in physical, mental, social, and spiritual growth.
- Develop an appreciation for nature and a concern for the environment.
- Teach Pathfinders specific skills that will help to make their life meaningful.

The Pathfinder Club program at its core is focused on connecting each club member to Jesus and giving them an opportunity to choose to follow Him.

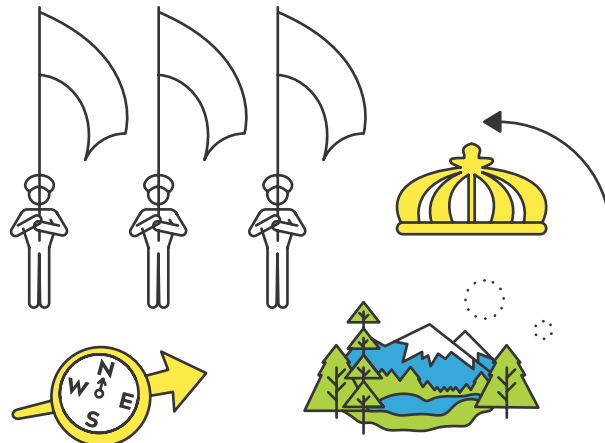


### Work for the Salvation of Each Pathfinder

Research says that 43 percent of all children who become members of the church make their decision before the age of 13 ("Evangelism Is Most Effective Among Kids," The Barna Update October 11, 2004, para. 2, updated 2009: <https://www.barna.com/research/evangelism-is-most-effective-among-kids/>). This confirms what Ellen White wrote, "Children of eight, ten, or twelve years are old enough to be addressed on the subject of personal religion" (*Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 1, p. 400, 2002, Pacific Press).

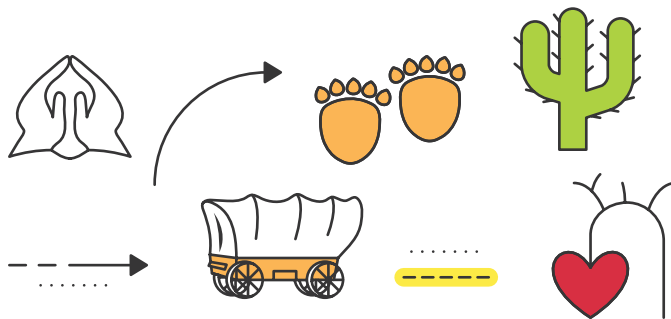


Although the Pathfinder club is an organization of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, youth don't have to be a Seventh-day Adventist to become a Pathfinder. All youth are welcome!



## THE INVESTITURE ACHIEVEMENT CURRICULUM

The core of every Pathfinder Club program is the Investiture Achievement curriculum. This comprehensive curriculum will lead the Pathfinders in your club through an exciting journey as they learn and grow in their Christian experience. Throughout the curriculum, special focus is given to creating a series of age-appropriate, accessible sequenced requirements that allow Pathfinders to build on the skills previously learned. For more on Investiture Achievement, see Section 7.



|  |                  |                    |
|--|------------------|--------------------|
|  | <b>FRIEND</b>    | GRADE<br><b>5</b>  |
|  | <b>COMPANION</b> | GRADE<br><b>6</b>  |
|  | <b>EXPLORER</b>  | GRADE<br><b>7</b>  |
|  | <b>RANGER</b>    | GRADE<br><b>8</b>  |
|  | <b>VOYAGER</b>   | GRADE<br><b>9</b>  |
|  | <b>GUIDE</b>     | GRADE<br><b>10</b> |

## HONORS

With more than 600 honors from which to choose, Pathfinder leaders have a large array of options for club activities. Some honors are integrated into the Investiture Achievement curriculum. Others can be done during club time, campouts, or on field trips.

## HONOR CATEGORIES

Honor categories are identified by the background color of the honor patch. Each honor is assigned a skill level to guide leaders in selecting age-appropriate honors for the club members. Skill levels are divided into Level 1 (Grades 5–6), Level 2 (Grades 7–10), and Level 3 (grades 11 and above). These are designed to guide leaders in their choice of honors. It is important to note that if you choose a Level 1 honor, you may want to add more in-depth study and additional activities for older Pathfinders than you require of younger Pathfinders.



## ADVANCED LEVEL HONORS

Many honors have an advanced level. Once Pathfinders complete the requirements for an advanced honor, they may add a small star to their honor patch.



## MASTER AWARD PATCH

By completing seven eligible honors, Pathfinders can qualify for a Master Award patch which recognizes mastery in the category. The eligible honors list may be found at [ClubMinistries.org/Pathfinders](http://ClubMinistries.org/Pathfinders), then click on “Honors.” For more on honors, see Section 8.



## THE PATHFINDER CLUB IS A PART OF CLUB MINISTRIES



Adventurer Club Ministry includes children from Pre-K through grade 4. The focus of this ministry is strengthening the family in their faith in Jesus Christ.



Pathfinder Club Ministry includes children from grade 5 through grade 10. The focus of this ministry is to develop the faith of children and teens in Jesus Christ and provide them with life-long mentors.



Teen Leadership Training includes teens from grade 9 through grade 12 and focuses on developing leadership skills within the Pathfinder Club.



Master Guide Ministry includes adults from age 18 and beyond. The focus of this ministry is to train adults for leadership in Adventurer Club, Pathfinder Club, Youth Ministries, and Young Adult Ministries.

## PATHFINDER CLUB EMBLEM

### Red (Sacrifice)

The color red reminds us of Christ.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life,” John 3:16 (NKJV).

“Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God,” Romans 12:1 (NKJV).



### **White (Purity)**

The color white reminds us that we desire to have the purity and righteousness of Christ's life in our lives.

"He that overcomes shall be clothed in white garments," Revelation 3:5 (NKJV).

### **Blue (Loyalty)**

The color blue reminds us that it is the purpose of the Pathfinder Club to help teach us to be loyal to our God in heaven, our parents/guardians, and our church.

### **Gold (Excellence)**

The color gold reminds us to have excellent standards. The Pathfinder Club has high standards to help build strong character for the kingdom of heaven.

"I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich," Revelation 3:18 (NKJV).

### **Three sides (Completeness)**

The three sides represent the completeness of the Godhead—Father, Son, Holy Spirit, Matthew 28:19-20 (NKJV).

### **Tripod of Education**

Each side of the Tripod of Education consists of a component of the Pathfinder learning experience:

- **MENTAL** Investiture Achievement levels and honors.
- **PHYSICAL** Campouts, Investiture Achievement levels, and honors.
- **SPIRITUAL** Develop a relationship with Jesus, Bible study and prayer from Investiture Achievement and witnessing opportunities.

### **Shield (Protection)**

The shield represents God's protection of us.

In the Scripture God is often called the shield of His people.  
"Do not be afraid ... I am your shield," Genesis 15:1 (NKJV).

"Above all, taking the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one," Ephesians 6:16 (NKJV).



### **Sword (Bible)**

The sword represents the Word of God in our battle against sin.

"And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, Ephesians 6:17 (NKJV).



## PATHFINDER PLEDGE

Pathfinders need to understand the meaning of the Pathfinder Pledge. As they memorize the words, have them explain what the words mean and encourage the Pathfinders to give concrete examples that illustrate the phrases.

### By the grace of God

Only as I rely on God to help me can I do His will.

### I will be pure

I will fill my mind with everything that is right and true and spend my time in activities that will build a strong, clean character.

### I will be kind

I will be considerate and kind not only to others but also to all of God's creations.

### I will be true

I will be honest and upright in study, work and play and will always be counted upon to do my very best.

### I will keep the Pathfinder Law

I will seek to understand the meaning of the law and will try to live up to its spirit, realizing that obedience to law is important in any organization.

### I will be a servant of God

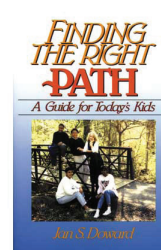
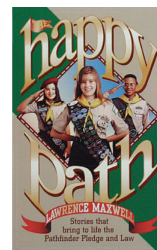
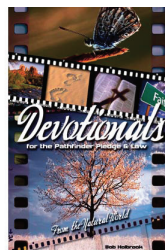
I will pledge myself to serve God first, last, and best in everything I am asked to do.

### I will be a friend to man

I will live to bless others and do unto them as I would want to be treated.

## Understanding the Pathfinder Club Pledge and Law

The pledge and law are not just something to say at the beginning of the program; they give an outline of what is expected of the Pathfinder. To help your Pathfinders internalize these words use *The Happy Path* (Lawrence Maxwell, 1975, Review and Herald Publishing Association), *Finding the Right Path* (Jan S. Doward, 1990, Pacific Press Publishing Association), or *Devotionals from the Pathfinder Pledge and Law* (Bob Holbrook, 2008, AdventSource).



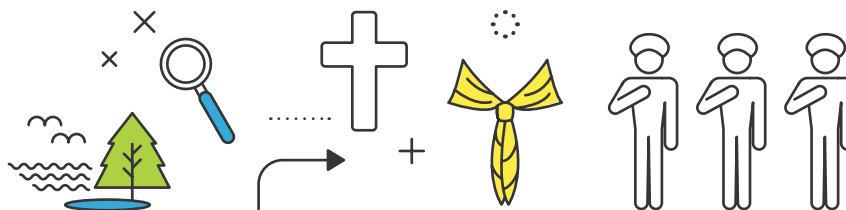
(available from [AdventSource.org](http://AdventSource.org))

## The Pathfinder Pledge

*By the grace of God,*



*I will be pure and kind and true  
I will keep the Pathfinder Law  
I will be a servant of God  
And a friend to man.*



## THE PATHFINDER LAW

Pathfinders also need to understand the meaning of the law. Discuss and give examples of each phrase. Younger Pathfinders may need some words defined.

The Pathfinder Law is for me to

### Keep the Morning Watch

I will have prayer and personal Bible study each day.

### Do my honest part

By the power of God I will help others and do my duty and my honest share, wherever I may be.

### Care for my body

I will be temperate in all things and strive to reach a high standard of physical fitness.

### Keep a level eye

I will not lie, cheat or deceive, and will despise obscene talk and evil thinking.

### Be courteous and obedient

I will be kind and thoughtful of others, reflecting the love of Jesus in all my association with others.

### Walk softly in the sanctuary

In any devotional exercise, I will be quiet, careful and reverent.

### Keep a song in my heart

I will be cheerful and happy and let the influence of my life be as sunshine to others.

### Go on God's errands

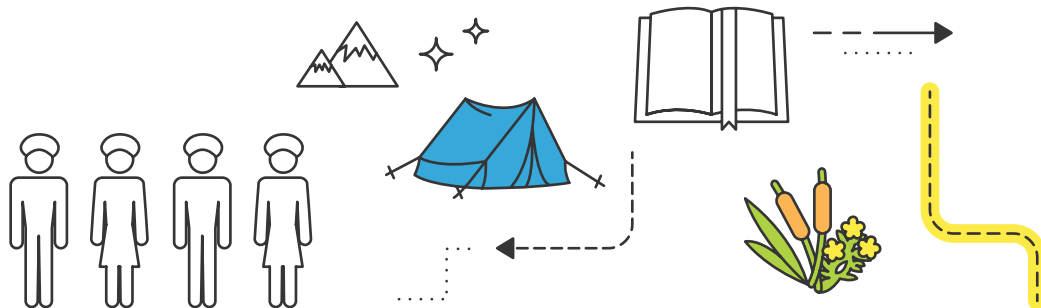
I will always be ready to share my faith and go about doing good as did Jesus.

## ***The Pathfinder Law***

*The Pathfinder Law is for me to,*



*Keep the morning watch  
Do my honest part  
Care for my body  
Keep a level eye  
Be courteous and obedient  
Walk softly in the sanctuary  
Keep a song in my heart  
Go on God's errands*



## THE PATHFINDER SONG

“Oh, We Are the Pathfinders Strong” is the official Pathfinder song. It is sung at club meetings, Induction ceremonies, Investiture services, camporees, and wherever Pathfinders get together. For sheet music for “Oh, We Are the Pathfinders Strong”, go to **page 128**.

*Oh, we are the Pathfinders strong,  
The servants of God are we  
Faithful as we march along  
In kindness, truth, and purity.  
A message to tell to the world,  
A truth that will set us free  
King Jesus the Savior's coming back  
For you and me.*

### The Story of the Pathfinder Song

Read about the history of the song on **page 129**.

## WRAP UP

Now that you know the Pathfinder Club Ministry basics, you are ready to take the next step. As you read each section of this handbook, always remember to filter everything through the mission, purpose and goals discussed in this section. Are you ready? Let's talk about the Pathfinders that are going to join your club!





## CREATING AN AGE APPROPRIATE, FUN, SAFE AND INCLUSIVE PATHFINDER CLUB

When leading Pathfinders, it's important to remember that all youth are unique. They develop at their own speed, based on genetics, environment, and social situations. Pathfinders should be a place where all youth can find a safe, supportive environment to learn and grow in Jesus.

The following developmental characteristics are guidelines. Remember that not all youth hit the same developmental markers at the same time as their peers. As the Pathfinder director, you need to be aware of the talents and challenges of each individual Pathfinder. You need to provide support and teach strategies to help young people navigate each developmental stage. Just because youth are capable of a new skill, doesn't mean they know how to do it or that they are proficient at it.

Remember that all youth are unique and develop at their own speed. Pathfinders should be a safe and supportive environment for all youth to learn and grow in Jesus.

Leaders need to provide support and strategies to help Pathfinders navigate developmental stages.

### DEVELOPMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS OF 5TH AND 6TH GRADERS

#### Physical

- Noticeable increase in height and weight
- Improved fine motor skills and hand eye coordination: handwriting, using scissors, typing, knot tying
- Improved gross motor skills: jumping, running, throwing, catching
- Increased physical endurance
- Onset of puberty in some children – particularly girls as they typically begin puberty earlier than boys

#### Social and Emotional

- Increased need for privacy and independence
- Sensitive to criticism
- Wants to be accepted and part of a group
- May experience peer pressure when making decisions
- Increased awareness of social norms
- Increased awareness of different perspectives and others' feelings
- Learning to resolve conflict with peers
- Increased concern about fairness
- Enjoys exploring personal values and moral reasoning

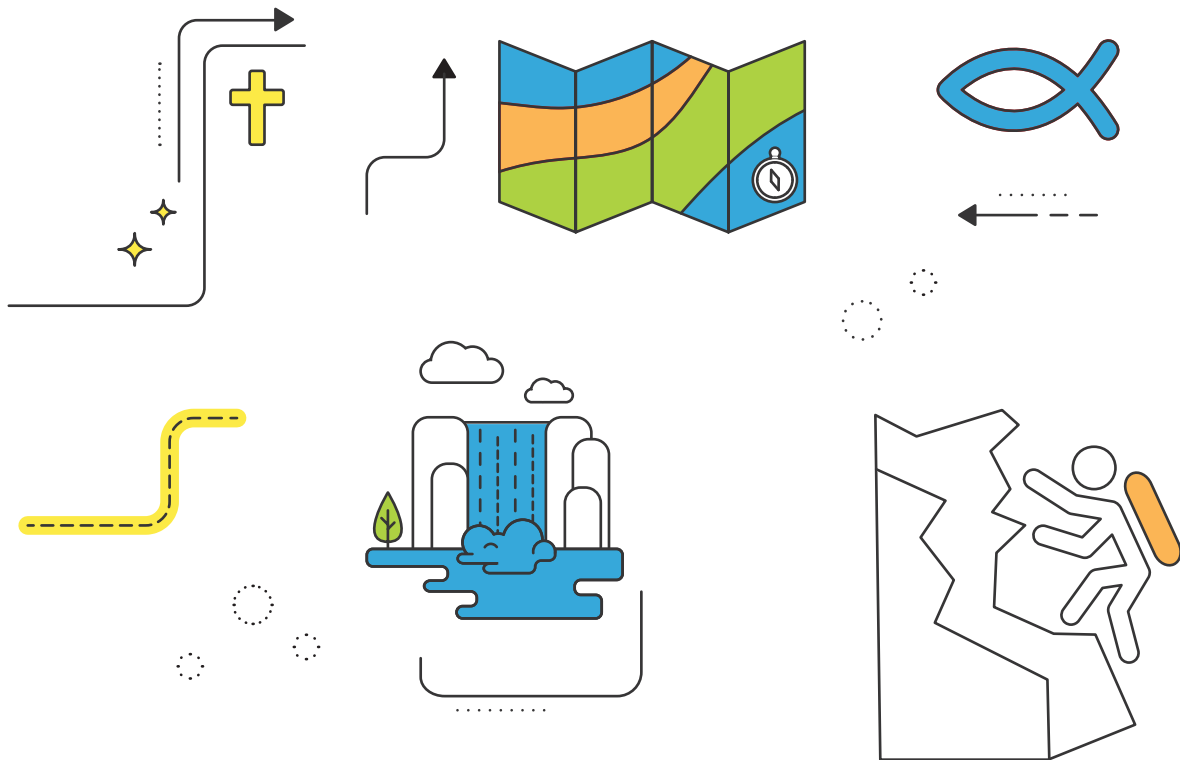


## Cognitive

- Increased abstract reasoning abilities
- Improved problem-solving skills
- Starts to be able to analyze information and use critical thinking skills
- Begins to understand cause and effect relationships
- Increased ability to consider multiple perspectives
- Attention span increases
- Improved ability to complete multiple tasks
- Improved organizational skills

## Spiritual

- Faith often experienced as being part of a group or the church family
- Enjoys exploring the meaning of life through stories
- Begins to understand symbolism and rituals
- Increased awareness personal connection between self and God
- Increased curiosity of “big” questions and starts to explore different perspectives
- Spirituality based on personal practice (activities/actions) and religious practice (church membership)



## DEVELOPMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS OF 7TH AND 8TH GRADERS

### Physical

- Onset of puberty may create body image concerns and mood changes
- Growth spurts may affect coordination, agility, and balance
- Muscle mass increases, resulting in increased strength and endurance
- Periods of high energy followed by periods of fatigue
- May need more rest and sleep due to increased energy used for physical development
- May be more physically than cognitively developed
- Fine motor skills continue to improve
- Increased need for personal hygiene

### Social and Emotional

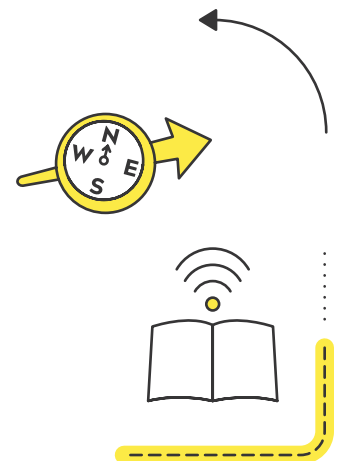
- Friendships become increasingly important
- Peer pressure may impact behavior and choices
- Concerned about fitting in with peers
- Worried about body image
- Struggles with self-identity
- Enjoys exploring personal interests and values
- May express feelings through actions rather than words
- Continued concerns about fairness and justice, especially as it applies to them

### Cognitive

- Increased ability to think critically about complex issues
- Starts to use flexible thinking: adapting plans, brainstorming multiple strategies
- Improved ability for self-expression
- May provide idealistic solutions to complex problems
- Continued development of personal ideals, values and role models
- Desires to contribute through actions or earning money
- Develops a world view
- Questions others' beliefs: religion, politics, social norms

### Spiritual

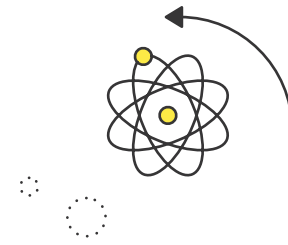
- Develops a sense of purpose and meaning of life



### Spiritual Objectives of Pathfinder Clubs

The spiritual objectives of the Pathfinder Club are to foster a personal connection with God through activities that encourage Bible study, service to others, appreciation of creation and commitment to living a Christian lifestyle. You can help Pathfinders in their spiritual journey by modeling positive Christian values through your own spiritual practices and actions.

- Continues to explore and question beliefs of self and others
- Relies on modeled values and beliefs of family and community
- Seeks authentic role models
- Enjoys exploring spiritual gifts
- Personal experience and actions important part of faith



## DEVELOPMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS OF 9TH AND 10TH GRADERS

### Physical

- Visible signs of puberty: growth spurts, body hair, voice pitch changes
- Fluctuations in coordination and balance during rapid growth
- Increased appetite during rapid growth
- Sleep patterns change causing youth to have difficulty falling asleep early and getting up early
- Increased physical and athletic ability
- Concerns about physical appearance in comparison to peers
- Mood swings due to hormonal changes

### Social and Emotional

- Continued importance of peer relationships and social acceptance
- Peer pressure may be a factor in decisions
- May develop romantic crushes or relationships
- Increased desire for autonomy from parents/guardians
- Enjoys exploring personal identity, values, interests and talents

### Cognitive

- Increased self-awareness
- Begins to question information and evidence
- Developing more abstract reasoning skills
- Begins to consider multiple points of view
- May struggle with complex planning
- May be impulsive and make quick decisions without considering all options and consequences

### Communication is Key

Open communication is important! Provide a safe space for questions. Actively and respectfully listen to Pathfinders.

### Spiritual

- Continues to explore own beliefs, values and purpose in life as they form personal identity
- Needs to connect to something bigger than themselves often through religion, nature, or activism

- Questions beliefs as they try to understand who they are and their place in the world
- Reflects on what's important to them: ethics, morality, personal behavior
- May explore other religions and spiritual practices

### **A Time of Transition**

All ages, during Pathfinder years, are a time of transition. These transitions and changes don't just happen once but are an ongoing process throughout adolescence. It can be an exciting time for youth as they learn their strengths, talents and how they can contribute to the world. It is also a confusing and emotional time for them and their families. Your job as Pathfinder director is to be aware of stages and issues individual Pathfinders experience.

The following are a few tools you can use to support and motivate Pathfinders.

- Be a good listener
- Be authentic
- Create a safe space to talk about feelings and ask questions
- Teach strategies for dealing with emotions
- Focus on the process not the outcome
- Acknowledge mistakes (yours and theirs) and teach problem solving skills
- Model behaviors and attitudes you want Pathfinders to emulate
- Identify and encourage youth to use their strengths and improve weaknesses
- Provide opportunities to lead and participate in decision making
- Challenge Pathfinders to explore their purpose in life and to try new skills
- Keep a good sense of humor

## **INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS**

In addition to an awareness of your Pathfinders' developmental stages and needs, you need to be aware of instructional methods that can engage Pathfinders both physically and mentally in active learning. Pathfinders that are actively engaged in learning are interested in the material, ask questions and take ownership of their learning.

Try to include the following methods of instruction when presenting Pathfinders with information and skills:

### **Build on prior knowledge and skills.**

Pathfinder staff can point out connections to past information and prior activities. They can also ask questions, brainstorm, model skills, and use visuals to encourage Pathfinders to recognize what they already know about a topic.

### **Transfer previous knowledge and skills to new areas of learning.**

When teaching new information or skills, Pathfinder staff can help Pathfinders identify similarities and differences to old skills and concepts. This can aid Pathfinders in acquiring new skills and information and promote problem solving.

#### **Bias Awareness**

Pathfinders are uniquely created by God. Pathfinder staff must be aware of their own biases related to gender, ability, race and socioeconomics. This ensures fair treatment, fosters inclusivity and creates a supportive learning environment.



### **Reflect on personal habits, knowledge and approaches to learning.**

This is a form of self-awareness. Pathfinder staff can ask Pathfinders a variety of self-reflection questions such as how they manage distractions, when do they enjoy learning, what makes them adverse to learning new ideas or skills, and what type of learning activities do they enjoy. Then Pathfinder staff can discuss with the Pathfinders how their answers can help or hinder learning.

### **Observe, imitate, work, and learn with others.**

Social learning encourages Pathfinders to work together for a common goal. They also learn diverse viewpoints and skills. Communication and problem-solving skills may also be improved.

### **Recognize learning in the digital world.**

Pathfinder staff need to recognize the importance of technology and collaboration in the learning process. Technology and social media are a significant part of the Pathfinder's world. Digital learning can provide a network of diverse people, ideas, and resources such as books, databases, apps, websites, and assistive technology.

### **Involve youth in active learning.**

Pathfinder staff should use a variety of presentation methods and activities that encourage Pathfinders to think, analyze, discuss and model information and skills, rather than passively absorb information.

## **INCLUDING PATHFINDERS WITH DISABILITIES**

When you learn that a Pathfinder with a disability will be a member of your club, you might initially feel overwhelmed. Don't worry; often simple changes to an activity or requirement are all that is needed. Youth with disabilities can generally tell you when they require assistance, and if they can't, their parents/guardians can. Remember that the Pathfinders and staff look to the Pathfinder director to see how to act, so make sure you treat the Pathfinder with a disability with the same openness and ease that you show all the Pathfinders.

#### **Neurodivergent**

Neurodivergent is a term that describes people whose brains develop or work differently than what is considered typical. Some youth with disabilities may use neurodivergent to refer to themselves and prefer that you also say neurodivergent instead of disability.



All youth are unique in their strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes. It's the same for youth with disabilities. Your primary focus should be on the Pathfinder first and the disability second. This means discovering the Pathfinder's interests and strengths before focusing on any obstacles created by the disability. The next step is to remove or lessen these obstacles by talking with the Pathfinder with the disability, the Pathfinder's family and, if needed, experts in the area of the disability (special education teachers, physical or occupational therapists, others with the same disability or searching online organizations specific to the disability).

### The Church and Inclusion

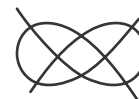
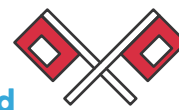
As a Seventh-day Adventist, you know that all are part of the body of Christ (I Corinthians 12:12-27). As part of the body of Christ, all are called to fulfill God's mission. This directive for inclusion of all people was illustrated by Jesus. He included individuals with disabilities in His ministries and modeled that all are part of God's family. Unfortunately, youth with disabilities have often been excluded from many areas of life, including the church. But you can change this by welcoming and involving all youth to your club!

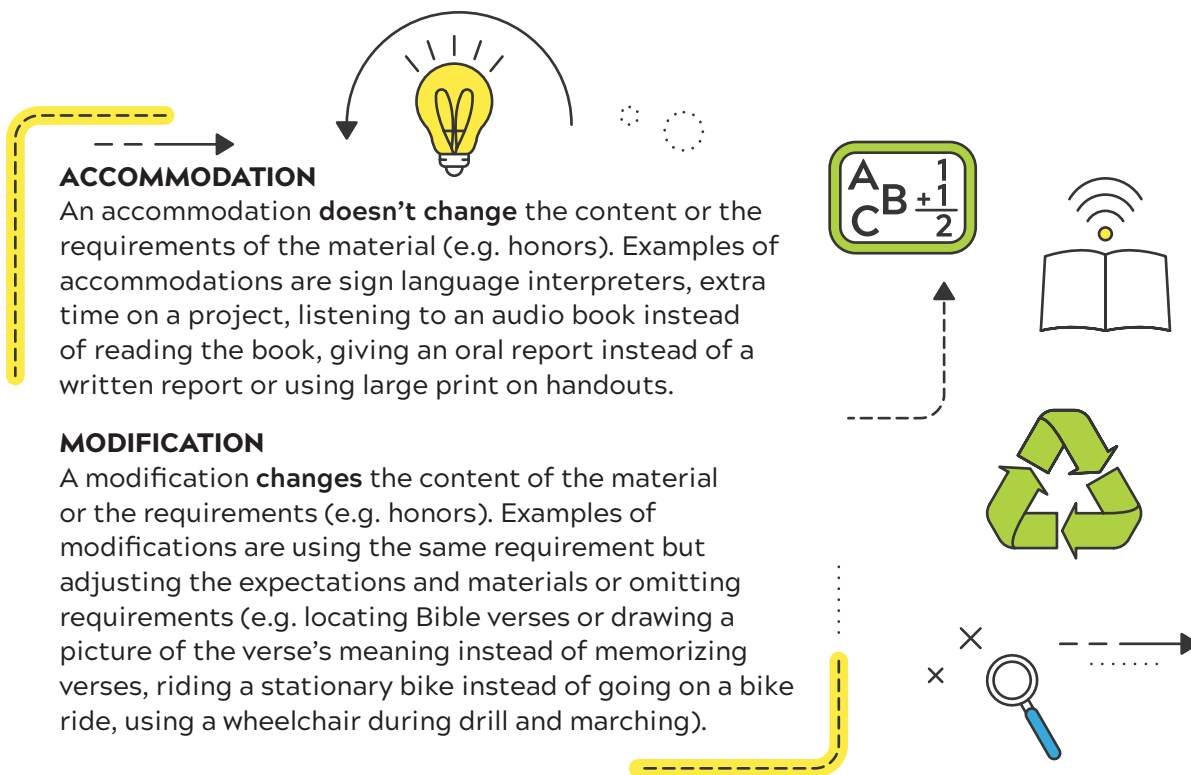
### Do's for Creating a Welcoming and Inclusive Pathfinder Club

- Speak directly to the Pathfinder, not to the adult.
- Recognize that a Pathfinder's physical disabilities don't indicate cognitive disabilities.
- Explain special equipment to all club members to alleviate fears.
- Take extra care in planning for the safety of the Pathfinder with a disability.
- Ensure the meeting facility is accessible.
- Ask the Pathfinder how they would prefer to accomplish a task.
- Foster independence.
- Focus on all Pathfinders' strengths.
- Expect reasonable behavior from all Pathfinders.
- Be flexible.

### Planning Inclusive Activities

At times, you will need to provide accommodations for or modifications to the honor, activity or Investiture requirements for some Pathfinders with disabilities. This may mean creative thinking on your part. When it comes to including youth with disabilities, Pathfinder directors and staff are expected to be flexible in adapting requirements and activities for the Pathfinder with a disability to participate. Pathfinder directors and staff are **not encouraged** to rigidly follow the requirements if doing so prevents the inclusion of Pathfinders with disabilities. Remember that the point is for the activity to be fun and meaningful for the Pathfinder.





## Disability Disclosure

All disability information is confidential unless permission is given to the Pathfinder director by the Pathfinder with the disability and/or the Pathfinder's parents/guardians. Your Pathfinder application and other forms should include sections for disability disclosure and accommodation or modification needs. You open the door for parents/guardians to share this information simply by asking if their young person has a disability and what accommodations or modifications you can provide.

However, disclosure of a disability is voluntary. Not all Pathfinders and families are willing or need to disclose disability information. Make sure that you state on any forms that all information is **confidential** and will only be shared with your team as necessary.

## DISCIPLINE

### The Purpose of Discipline

The results you'll get when disciplining youth will depend on your primary emphasis. Some adults use discipline as punishment to stop unacceptable behavior; others use discipline to teach youth acceptable behavior.

As a Pathfinder director or staff, what is your purpose for disciplining Pathfinders? According to Ellen White, the purpose of discipline is "the training of the child for self-government. He [or she] should be taught self-reliance and self-control" (*Education*, whiteestate.org, p. 288). When discipline emphasizes these qualities, a young person's sense of resilience, self-esteem, and ability to problem solve all increase. When discipline is used as a teaching tool, youth can learn to make good

choices and to control their own behavior. This isn't to say that youth are not taught the consequences of wrong choices and inappropriate behavior. Consequences are an important part of discipline. If there are no consequences, then Pathfinders are unlikely to change behavior. However, the consequences should be a result of helping youth to learn, not as a result of an adult's desire to be in control.

Using discipline to teach may not get the immediate results that punishment often gets. Teaching Pathfinders life skills, assisting them to learn from choices, and helping them to correct mistakes takes time and a lot of patience. However, it can be rewarding to both you and the Pathfinder. You can take encouragement from this observation by Ellen White: "The parent or teacher who by such instruction trains the child to self-control will be the most useful and permanently successful. To the superficial observer his [her] work may not appear to the best advantage; it may not be valued so highly as that of the one who holds the mind and the will of the child under absolute authority; but after years will show the result of the better method of training" (*Education*, whiteestate.org, p.290).

### **Prevent Problems Before They Occur**

One of the best ways to prevent disciplinary problems is to keep Pathfinders busy and on task. To do this you'll need to have a plan for each meeting and all activities. Meetings and activities should start on time. Clearly explain expectations and directions so youth can be engaged in the activities. Disorganization gives Pathfinders opportunities to find things to do themselves which may lead to behavioral issues. Fill as much of the meeting as possible with planned activities. If some Pathfinders finish an activity quickly, have back up activities they can do.

### **Discipline Strategies to Avoid**

During this stage of development, Pathfinders may be sensitive to criticism and embarrassment. This is especially true if criticism or discipline occurs in front of peers. Ellen White advises parents and teachers to avoid fault finding and censure. She explains that "continual censure bewilders, but does not reform. With many minds, and often those of the finest susceptibility, an atmosphere of unsympathetic criticism is fatal to effort" (*Education*, whiteestate.org, p.292).

### **Don't**

- Embarrass or shame a Pathfinder in front of others or privately
- Overreact
- Lose your temper – no yelling, using threats, or nagging
- Hit or spank
- Verbally hit (examples: you're stupid, you're useless, you're a klutz)
- Use sarcasm
- Compare Pathfinders

- Label Pathfinders
- Demand respect; instead earn it
- Expect Pathfinders to behave as adults

## Disciple Strategies to Use

You want Pathfinders to be a fun experience for everyone, so try to keep your sense of humor and compassion even when a Pathfinder's behavior is a problem. Remember that you're there to help Pathfinders and their families learn to love Jesus; therefore, it is important that you model love, patience, and a cheerful attitude. Here are a few strategies to use:

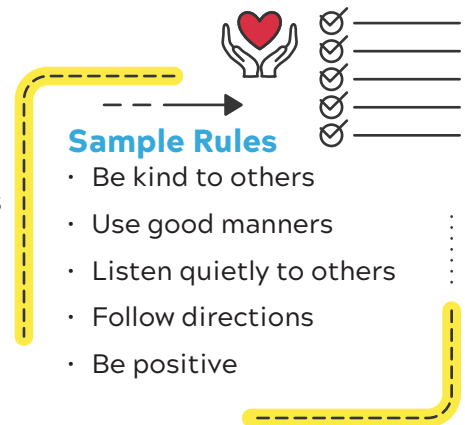
**Establish rules:** Begin the year with a few simple rules that are positively stated. Make sure they are comprehensive and clear. Involve Pathfinders in making the rules. This gives the Pathfinders a sense of ownership of the rules, and Pathfinders may be more likely to follow these rules.

**Use signals:** It's never a good idea to yell to get Pathfinders' attention. Instead, ahead of time, let the Pathfinders know a signal that you will use when you need their attention. Signals can be just about anything – quickly turning a light on and off, turning on a flashlight and moving it about, or an upheld hand. Make sure the Pathfinders know your expectations once you've used the signal. Are they to stop talking and stop moving? Do you want them to come to where you are or sit in a chair? When you first explain the signal, you should have the Pathfinders practice several times. Try to have fun with this. A small reward to the first Pathfinder to correctly respond might encourage Pathfinders to respond quickly to your signal.

**Silence:** When you are trying to get a Pathfinder's attention focused back on you, stop what you are doing, keep eye contact with the Pathfinder, and remain silent. Most of the Pathfinders, if not all, will realize that it is now time to focus on you. If a Pathfinder asks why you aren't saying anything, kindly explain you are waiting for everyone's attention. This is an especially effective tool to use when you are telling a story or giving directions.

**Eye contact:** In most cultures, but not all, getting a Pathfinder to look at you, especially if you are quietly waiting for everyone's attention, is a good way to get a Pathfinder to stop an action and focus on you. Once Pathfinders remember you can actually see them, they often will get back on task.

**Names:** If you say a Pathfinder's name followed by a question or directions, you can usually get the Pathfinder back on task. You should not use an angry tone. Instead, gently, yet firmly, say the Pathfinder's name. For example you might ask, "Alexi,"



(pause to make sure you have the Pathfinder's attention) "what is the next step in rock climbing?"

**Proximity:** You can often get Pathfinders back on task by standing near them. You don't need to stop what you are doing, instead, you can just casually walk over and stand near the Pathfinder.

**Interact:** It's important for Pathfinders to stay busy and engaged. However, it's just as important for the Pathfinder staff to move around to the groups and activities and stay engaged with the Pathfinders. You want the Pathfinders to model the Pathfinder staffs' behavior. The Pathfinder staff and parents/guardians should avoid congregating together and talking during meetings, activities, and events.

**Choices:** If a Pathfinder needs to be redirected, ask the Pathfinder to make a choice. If a Pathfinder is flicking paint on another Pathfinder, ask the Pathfinder doing the flicking to make a better choice of how to use the paint. If this doesn't work, quietly take the Pathfinder aside and give another choice. For example, you might ask the Pathfinder to choose to not flick paint or to go work alone at a table.

**Transitions:** Most Pathfinders can quickly transition from one activity to another, but not all Pathfinders can easily end one activity and start another activity. To help with transitions, announce when there are ten minutes left of an activity. Then repeat the announcement when there are five minutes left.

**Use humor:** You can use humor to lighten a situation but not to embarrass or tease a Pathfinder. If a Pathfinder knocks over a can of paint, just smile and say, "Oh, I like this green floor, but maybe we should clean it up." Then help with the clean-up.

**Redirect:** If a Pathfinder is starting to misbehave, try quickly redirecting the Pathfinder. Sometimes the simple act of involving the Pathfinder in another activity is all that is needed. You should quickly evaluate the situation. Do you need a quick activity to keep the Pathfinder busy or is the current task too easy or difficult? You can ask the Pathfinder to help you set up the next activity or to explain something about the current activity.

**Avoid confrontation:** When possible, privately talk to the Pathfinder about inappropriate behavior. You can simply speak quietly to the Pathfinder so no one else can hear. If the matter is more serious, arrange to talk to the Pathfinder at another time. There are times when you need to immediately stop a Pathfinder's behavior. However, you can still ask the Pathfinder to come with you and an additional Pathfinder staff member to another area to privately discuss the issue. If the Pathfinder has a chronic behavioral problem, you should ask the Pathfinder to explain what may be causing the behavior, and you should explain why the behavior is a problem. Then the two of you can come up with a plan to change the behavior. It might be as simple as the

two of you agreeing when the Pathfinder sees you pick up a specific object that they should stop doing the behavior. More serious issues need to involve a meeting with the Pathfinder and the parents/guardians.

**Be fair:** Treat all Pathfinders fairly. If you've been letting a behavior go unchallenged for the first part of the meeting or activity, don't discipline a Pathfinder that does it later because you've finally had enough. Also, make sure you keep responses to misbehavior in perspective – don't overreact and make sure consequences are equal to the action.

**Be assertive:** Tell the Pathfinders what they will be doing. Don't ask. If you ask Pathfinders if they want to do something, at least one of the Pathfinders is likely to say no. Instead, say it's time to start the activity.

**Over plan:** It's good to have something additional planned for your meeting or activity. Some Pathfinders struggle with unstructured time, and this may lead to misbehavior. You should always have a backup game or activity for the entire group or for individuals just in case something doesn't go as planned.

**Use a partner:** Never discipline a Pathfinder alone. Ask another Pathfinder staff member to either join you or to stand quietly and unobtrusively by an open door.

### **Pathfinder Club Code of Conduct Policy**

It's important to list Pathfinder Club rules and consequences in writing. The rules should be posted and revisited frequently for the group. As mentioned previously, involving the Pathfinders in creating a few simple rules and the consequences creates a sense of ownership and cooperation in the Pathfinders. Some clubs find it helpful to create a code of conduct agreement and have Pathfinders and their parents/guardians sign it. Reviewing this document with Pathfinders and their families gives them a chance to ask questions or express concerns. The code of conduct should include simple rules and the steps that will be taken for more serious behavioral issues. Go to **page 131** to see a sample code of conduct.

## **PREVENTION OF BULLYING**

Research shows that authority figures, including Pathfinder directors and staff, can play a powerful role in bullying prevention. Their leadership can foster a climate of respect and inclusion. But you and your staff cannot do it alone. When Pathfinders and their parents/guardians are involved, bully prevention is improved.

### **Tips for Preventing and Responding to Bullying**

- Create a bullying policy and share with staff, parents/guardians and Pathfinders.
- Offer continuous bullying prevention training to staff, parents/guardians and Pathfinders.
- Provide specific examples to clearly define bullying.

- Address behaviors that concern you.
- Ask Pathfinders open-ended questions to allow them to express concerns.
- Encourage Pathfinders to speak up when they see bullying.
- If you see bullying, act immediately.
- Remain calm when addressing bullying.
- Investigate thoroughly, don't force Pathfinders to resolve it themselves.
- Listen individually to all parties involved.
- Avoid judgement until you have all the information.
- Handle Pathfinders individually and privately.
- Hold bystanders accountable.
- Follow up continuously with both the bully and the victim to ensure that the bullying incidents have ceased and to provide ongoing support.
- Praying with each Pathfinder after talking with them helps them know you value them and God loves them.

### Implementing Your Bullying Prevention Policy

To implement your Pathfinder Club's bullying prevention policy, it is necessary to provide Pathfinder staff development training in bullying prevention. Additionally, fostering acceptance and understanding among all Pathfinders and their families about identifying and preventing bullying is essential. This can be done by discussing the Pathfinder Club's bullying prevention policy with Pathfinders and their parents/guardians and assuring them they do not need to tolerate any form of bullying. Bullies in the Pathfinder Club will face disciplinary action, including possible expulsion. Additional resources for your Pathfinder meeting are available:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x6VLonPD6Ls>
- <https://adventistyouthministries.org/safety-resources/protection-supervision>

**Sample Bullying Policy**  
A sample bullying prevention policy for local clubs can be found on page 132.

### Signs a Young Person is Being Bullied

Be aware that not all youth who are bullied exhibit warning signs. However, there often are indications. Some signs that may point to a bullying problem are:

- Unexplainable injuries.
- Lost or destroyed personal items.
- Frequent headaches, stomach aches, feeling sick or faking illness.



#### Bully Prevention Honors

One way to engage Pathfinders in your club is to complete the Bully Prevention honors.

- Changes in eating habits, like suddenly skipping meals or binge eating. Kids may come home from school hungry because they did not eat lunch.
- Difficulty sleeping or frequent nightmares.
- Reduced interest in club activities or not wanting to go to Pathfinder Club meetings.
- Sudden loss of friends or avoidance of social situations.
- Feelings of helplessness or low self-esteem.
- Self-destructive behaviors like running away, self-harm or talking about suicide.

### Bullying and Disabilities

Youth with disabilities are at an alarmingly high risk of being bullied. Reports on bullying vary, but some data shows 42 percent of youth with disabilities experience bullying and the percentage increases to 62 percent for youth with more severe disabilities ([150.statcan.gc.ca](http://150.statcan.gc.ca)).

If you know someone in serious distress or danger, don't ignore the problem. Get help right away. Adapted from **StopBullying.gov**

## CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT: RECOGNITION AND PREVENTION

### Child Abuse Definition

Child abuse is any intentional harm or endangerment to a child under 18. Child abuse includes all forms of mistreatment that harms or has the potential to harm a child including emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse and neglect. Child abuse occurs in all socioeconomic groups, in all ethnic and cultural groups, in all religions and at all educational levels. Ninety percent of abusers are known by their victim ([mayoclinic.org](http://mayoclinic.org)). The abuser might be a parent, family member, caregiver, family friend or church member.

### Types of Abuse

#### EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Emotional abuse causes harm to a child's self-esteem or emotional well-being. Emotional abuse includes verbally abusing, constant belittling, humiliating, terrorizing, berating, rejecting or isolating a child.

#### PHYSICAL ABUSE

Physical abuse causes bodily damage to a child. Physical abuse includes beating, shaking, burning, slapping, punching, kicking, throwing a child or fracturing a child's bones.

#### SEXUAL ABUSE

Sexual abuse involves any sexual activity with a child, such as intentional touching, fondling, oral-genital contact, intercourse, exposure to pornography, observing, filming, photographing sexually, and harassment. It also includes child prostitution and sex trafficking.

1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 U.S. boys are sexually abused before turning 19. **InvisibleChildren.org**

59.7 percent of Canadians reported some type of abuse before they were 15 years old. **statcan.gc.ca**

## NEGLECT

Abuse caused by neglect is any action or lack of action that endangers a child's physical or emotional wellbeing. Neglect includes failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, sanitary/clean living conditions, affection, supervision, education or medical care for a child.

Sources for the previous types of abuse: **ChildSafe-sa-org** and **MayoClinic.org**

## SPIRITUAL ABUSE

Spiritual abuse involves using a child's religious beliefs to control or harm them. This includes coercion into unwanted religious activities, justifying abuse through teachings, isolating the child for religious reasons, instilling fear through punishment doctrines, exploiting their faith for personal gain, and emotional harm through strict practices.

## Signs of Child Abuse

The following are signs that a child is being abused. However, these indicators of abuse may also indicate other issues. Whatever the causes of the signs, as a Pathfinder director, you need to quickly act to ensure the safety and wellbeing of your Pathfinders. However, not all children will exhibit all signs. Some abused children may exhibit additional signs or show no signs at all.

**Behavioral changes or issues:** withdrawn from friends or activities, increased anxiety or fear, depression, loss of confidence, desperately seeks affection, increased risky behavior (drug and alcohol use, carrying a weapon), fear of going home or going with a known person, increased or decreased appetite causing weight gain or loss, regression to earlier developmental stages (bedwetting, thumb sucking, baby talk), hoarding or stealing food

**Sleep Issues:** nightmares, difficulty going to sleep, increased daytime fatigue

**School performance and attendance changes or ongoing problems:** difficulty concentrating, poor grades, excessive absences (abuser may be trying to hide child's injuries)

**Poor personal hygiene:** consistently dirty, severe body odor, lack of appropriate clothing

**Unexplained injuries:** bruises, fractures, burns that are unconvincingly explained

**Inappropriate sexual behavior:** sexual behavior or knowledge that is not age appropriate, inappropriate behavior toward peers, overly sexualized behavior, sexually explicit language, frequent genital infections, pregnancy or sexually transmitted infections

### Adventist Youth Ministries Child Abuse Resources and Information

For additional resources, information, and handouts on child abuse, visit Adventist Youth Ministries at [AdventistYouthMinistries.org/safety-resources/abuse-prevention/](https://AdventistYouthMinistries.org/safety-resources/abuse-prevention/).