

# following THROUGH matters

BY ELLEN B. KONECK

For children, learning often begins with trust. As teachers and catechists in their lives, you likely already recognize that they are often receptive to new ideas based on *who* is offering the information, rather than *what* the information is about. The time you take to build trust matters. It lays the groundwork for creating an environment where school and parish gatherings can be transformative, not just transactional.

80%

of young Catholics say they **feel listened to when people seem genuinely curious about what they have to say.**

72%

say they **feel listened to when people ask questions about what they've said.**

 **Tide-Turning Tip:** Show sincere curiosity through your body language by turning toward the person you're speaking with and nodding along to show that you're following what they're saying. Communication researchers refer to this as having an open posture, as opposed to a closed body posture where arms are folded, for example. Ask a few questions before offering a comment or advice. These can be as simple as, "Can you tell me more about that experience, person, or idea?"

**76%**

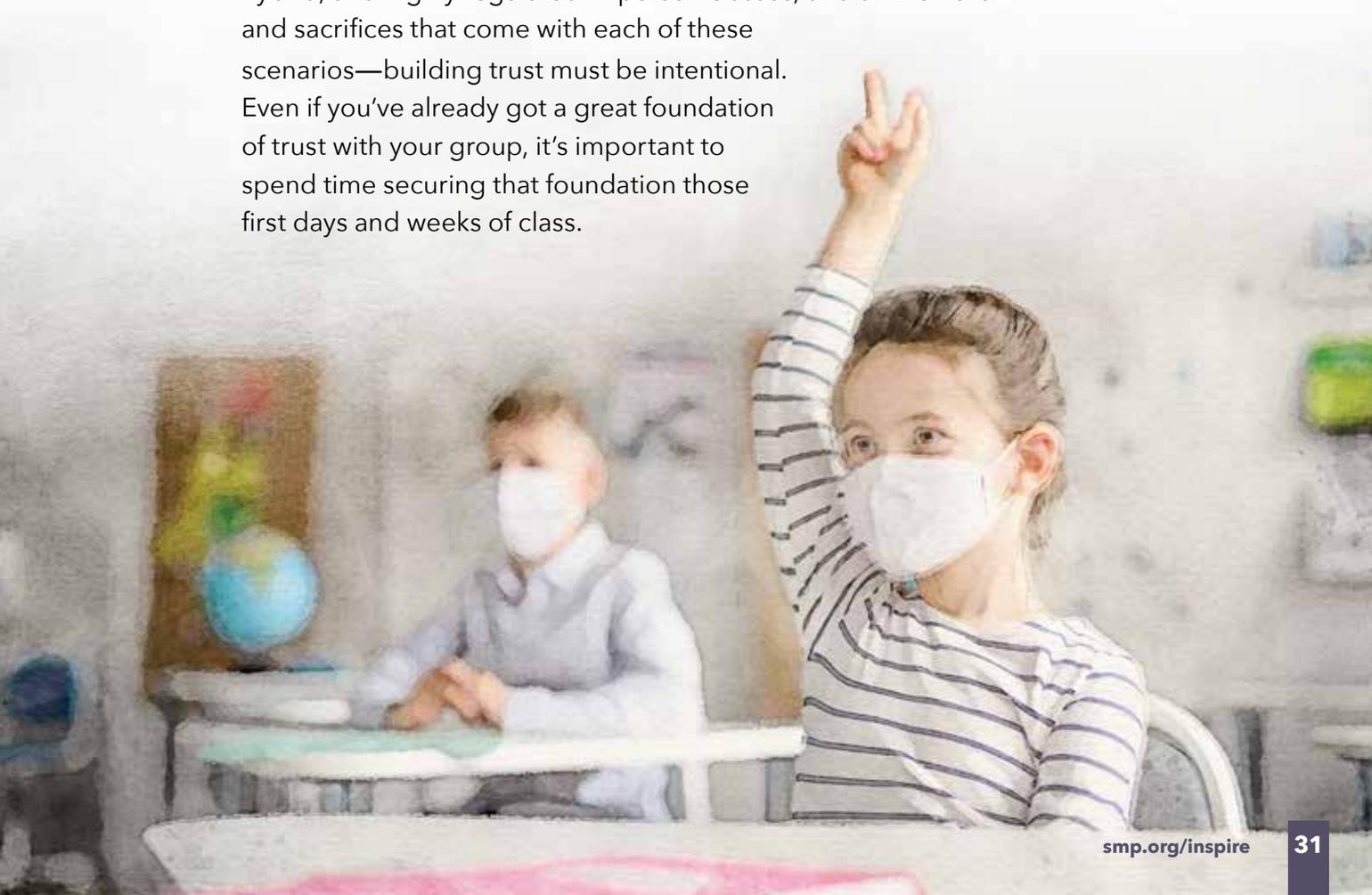
of young Catholics say they **feel listened to when people remain present and engaged as they speak to them.**

**73%**

say they **feel listened to when they are allowed the space to say what they need to say without anyone else interjecting.**

 **Tide-Turning Tip:** Follow up by asking questions to clarify or repeating what you heard as ways to help your recollection. If your conversation is about actions, jot down notes as a way of showing your intention to follow through.

As children head back to school, they need this kind of transformational environment that builds trust. But after what schools, parishes, and children have been through this past year—a combination of online, hybrid, and highly regulated in-person classes, and all the risks and sacrifices that come with each of these scenarios—building trust must be intentional. Even if you’ve already got a great foundation of trust with your group, it’s important to spend time securing that foundation those first days and weeks of class.



Springtide™ Research, a sociological research institute dedicated to listening to the inner and outer lives of young people, conducted research on how adults can build trust with the young people in their lives. We asked over 10,000 13-to-25-year-olds what trust looks and feels like. We learned, among other insights, that **integrity is key**.

### ADULTS WITH INTEGRITY FOLLOW UP AND FOLLOW THROUGH.

Here are two key ways to begin practicing integrity and building the foundation of trust to make your classroom experience transformative for your group this year.

**1. Follow Up:** Eighty-five percent of young people say that their trust in another person grows when that person takes action that responds to the young person's needs, so following up in ways that show children that you care about their needs is crucial.

 **Tide-Turning Tip:** Following up starts with remembering what was exchanged—a hallmark of listening and a foundational aspect of building trust. For children in your care, track upcoming events and milestones on a spreadsheet or list and set reminders. If they have a big event coming up, wish them luck just beforehand. If they are moving, or experiencing some other life transition, check in regularly.

**2. Follow Through:** Eighty-two percent of young people say they trust someone who does what they say they are going to do, so we need to make sure we are following through with our commitments. Follow-through is at the heart of integrity, and integrity is at the heart of trust. It is a simple but important practice of doing what you say you're going to do.

 **Tide-Turning Tip:** Don't overstate commitments that will be hard to keep, and keep all the commitments you make. If you commit to something big, break it down into steps and note deadlines for yourself. This practice of following through might be a given for teachers and catechists,

but even in life outside the classroom, this is important. As children adjust to being back in school, they will need clarity about what's expected and flexibility about how to accomplish it—from all the adults in their lives.

Making your classroom transformative for children, not just transactional, starts with building trust so they feel safe and receptive to new ideas and information. One of the best ways to build trust is to practice integrity. Think about following up and following through as simple practices for growing in integrity this fall.



Get your free copy of *The State of Religion & Young People 2020: Relational Authority* at [springtideresearch.org](http://springtideresearch.org). You may also like *The State of Religion & Young People 2020—Catholic Edition*.

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