



PRACTICAL CULTURE GUIDE

CHANGE THE ROOM

10 culture shifts you can make this week to build a healthier, warmer, more intentional children's ministry.



**Culture rarely changes because of one big meeting.
It changes because leaders start doing small things
differently - consistently.**

A Kidmin Magic guide for children's ministry leaders

Culture is what people feel before you explain it.

Your children's ministry already has a culture. It shows up in how volunteers greet families, how leaders respond when something goes wrong, what gets celebrated, what gets tolerated, and what people say when you are not in the room.

The good news: you do not need a rebrand, a retreat, or a six-month initiative to begin changing it.

You can start this weekend. The ten shifts in this guide are deliberately simple. Pick two or three, practice them until they become normal, then add the next ones. Culture becomes believable when the same values show up in hundreds of small moments.

Use this guide like a field manual: read it with your key leaders, circle the shifts your ministry needs most, and decide what will look different by your next service.

1 Name the culture you want.

If you cannot describe your desired culture simply, your team cannot reproduce it. Choose three words that describe what you want people to experience every time they serve or attend.

DO THIS NOW

Before your next team meeting, finish this sentence: "Around here, we are _____, _____, and _____." Then give one observable behavior for each word.

2 Walk slow through the lobby.

Rushed leaders unintentionally communicate that tasks matter more than people. A healthy culture notices people. Keep your head up. Learn names. Say hello first. Stop long enough to listen.

DO THIS NOW

For one weekend, give yourself a rule: no phone in your hand while moving through family spaces. Make three intentional connections before solving your first non-urgent problem.

3

Start every service with a 5-minute huddle.

Culture needs repetition. A short huddle gives you a weekly moment to reset the room, celebrate a win, reinforce one value, and remind everyone why the ministry matters.

**DO THIS
NOW**

Use the same four-part rhythm: Win → Why → One Focus → Prayer. Keep it to five minutes so the team learns to expect it and value it.

4

Catch people doing it right.

What gets celebrated gets repeated. If leaders only speak up when something is wrong, volunteers learn that excellence is invisible and mistakes get attention.

**DO THIS
NOW**

Choose one behavior you want more of this week. Watch for it on purpose. Send three specific texts before Monday: "I saw you... That mattered because..."

5 Fix one frustration immediately.

Culture is shaped by systems. A confusing check-in process, missing supplies, bad communication, or unclear roles can make great volunteers feel defeated.

DO THIS NOW

Ask five volunteers: "What is one small thing that makes serving harder than it needs to be?" Pick the most fixable answer and solve it within seven days.

6 Change the language in the room.

Repeated phrases become shared beliefs. The words leaders use teach people what matters, what is normal, and what kind of ministry you are building.

DO THIS NOW

Replace vague phrases with culture-building language. Instead of "We need bodies," say "We're inviting leaders." Instead of "Just childcare," say "Every room is a discipleship environment."

7

Give volunteers ownership, not just assignments.

People protect what they help build. If every decision comes from the top, volunteers may comply, but they rarely take ownership of the culture.

**DO THIS
NOW**

Choose one area this week - welcome, supplies, classroom flow, volunteer care - and ask a trusted volunteer: "If this were yours to improve, what would you change?" Then let them lead one improvement.

8

Make the parent handoff feel human.

Parents often decide how they feel about your ministry in the first and last two minutes. Efficiency matters, but warmth is what people remember.

**DO THIS
NOW**

At pickup, ask leaders to do three things before turning to the next family: make eye contact, use the child's name, and share one positive sentence about the child's experience.

9

Stop tolerating what contradicts the culture.

Every culture has unwritten permission. When leaders repeatedly ignore cynicism, lateness, unsafe shortcuts, gossip, or poor treatment of people, those behaviors quietly become acceptable.

**DO THIS
NOW**

Identify one behavior you have been hoping will fix itself. Have the conversation this week. Be kind, clear, specific, and focused on the standard - not the person's worth.

10

Create a weekly culture win.

Culture grows faster when people can see progress. Do not wait for attendance records or huge events. Small wins prove that the values are becoming real.

**DO THIS
NOW**

End every weekend by capturing one story: a volunteer who stepped up, a nervous child who stayed, a parent who felt seen, a leader who solved a problem. Share one story with the team every week.

Your next 7 days

Do not try to launch all ten at once. Culture changes when a few new behaviors become normal.

TODAY	Choose the two shifts that would make the biggest difference right now.
BEFORE THE WEEKEND	Tell your key leaders exactly what will look different.
THIS WEEKEND	Model the behaviors yourself before asking anyone else to do them.
MONDAY	Celebrate one visible win and fix one friction point.
NEXT WEEK	Repeat. Consistency is what turns an idea into culture.

The question is not, “What culture do we say we have?”

The question is: “What do people consistently experience when they are around us?”



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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Justyn Smith brings over two decades of experience in children's ministry, having served in various nextgen leadership roles, from church plants to some of the fastest-growing and largest churches across America. His expertise spans leadership, systems, strategy, and creativity, making him a sought-after consultant for children's and nextgen ministries. He is the founder of Kidmin Magic, where he helps churches strengthen culture, volunteer teams, systems, discipleship, and the overall experience families have from the parking lot to the classroom.

Justyn is also an author and ministry strategist who believes great children's ministry is not accidental. Healthy culture can be designed, reinforced, and lived out in practical ways - one interaction, one leader, and one weekend at a time.



IT'S NOT MAGIC. IT'S KIDMIN MAGIC.