

# Problem Solving & Conflict Resolution

## *Girl Scouts of Silver Sage Council*

This document contains material from several great resources. You will notice that some of the core ideas show up in a few places, but a little repetition is a good thing, especially when we are integrating new concepts. Another source of great information are your fellow Leaders who have been there, done that. Talk to them about what techniques they have had success with.

### EFFECTIVE LISTENING

When we give advice, it's usually "what I would do to solve the problem.." *SO*, the advice given here and now is "Try to help the person find his or her own solution" by utilizing active/effective listening. Effective listeners help the parties involved understand the situation and reach a successful solution.

#### Effective Listening Techniques

STATEMENT TYPE	PURPOSE	TO DO THIS...	EXAMPLES
Encouraging	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. To convey interest</li><li>2. To encourage the other person to keep talking</li></ol>	<p>Don't agree or disagree</p> <p>Use neutral words</p> <p>Use varying word intonations</p>	<p>Use open-ended questions such as:</p> <p>"Can you tell me more?"</p>
Clarifying	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. To help you clarify what is being said</li><li>2. To get more information</li><li>3. To help the speaker see other points of view</li></ol>	<p>Ask questions</p> <p>Restate wrong interpretation to force the speaker to explain further</p>	<p>"When did this happen?"</p> <p>"What you're telling me is...."</p>

Restating actual intellectual/cognitive content	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To show you are listening and understanding what is being said</li> <li>2. To check your meaning and interpretation</li> </ol>	Restate basic ideas and facts – often followed up with question	“Let me make sure I’m correctly understanding what you’re telling me...your co-leader is not following through with her responsibilities. Is that correct?”
Reflecting looks at the emotional content and helps to strengthen the relationship	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To show you understand how the person feels</li> <li>2. To help the person evaluate his or her own feelings after hearing them expressed by someone else</li> </ol>	Reflect the speaker’s <u>basic feelings</u>	<p>Be sure to label the emotion.</p> <p>“You seem very upset.”</p>
Summarizing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To review progress</li> <li>2. To pull together important ideas and facts</li> <li>3. To establish a basis for further discussion</li> </ol>	Restate major ideas expressed, including feelings	“These seem to be the key ideas you’ve expressed that are upsetting you...”
Validating	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To acknowledge the worthiness of the other person</li> </ol>	<p>Acknowledge the value of the other person’s issues and feelings</p> <p>Show appreciation for their efforts</p>	<p>“I understand why you’re upset...”</p> <p>“I appreciate your willingness to resolve this matter.”</p>

## LISTENING & SPEAKING WELL

LISTEN UP! REFLECTIVE LISTENING	SPEAK OUT! ASSERTIVE SPEAKING
<p><b>ACT INTERESTED</b></p> <p>When someone wants to talk to you, <b>STOP</b> what you are doing and <b>PAY ATTENTION</b>, even if you don't like what you are hearing. Wear a body posture of involvement: turn and face the speaker squarely, lean slightly forward, and look directly at his or her face as often as you can. Remember to maintain a comfortable distance between you and the speaker. Remain relaxed and <b>JUST LISTEN</b>.</p>	<p><b>I FEEL – Name/Claim Your Feelings</b></p> <p>Knowing how you <i>really</i> feel can be confusing. Are you mad, sad, glad, guilty? Are you hurt, jealous, angry, excited or bored? Remember your feelings are <i>your</i> feelings. No one else causes you to feel the way you do. You are in control. You <b>can take responsibility</b> for your thoughts, feelings and behavior.</p>
<p><b>BE ENCOURAGING</b></p> <p>Effective listening requires you to overcome your natural tendency to judge what the other person is saying. <b>JUST KEEP LISTENING</b>. Do not evaluate what the speaker is saying from your own point of view. Never interrupt! Instead, offer the speaker encouragement such as, "I see" or "That's interesting", or "Then what?" Invite the speaker to continue sharing so that <b>you can know him/her better</b> and to remind them that you are still actively listening. <b>ASK</b> questions so that you can clarify and better understand the communication.</p>	<p><b>I THINK – Express/Explain Your Feelings</b></p> <p>Even though other people cannot cause our feelings, their behavior can affect us. Letting the listener know what you think and feel lets them <b>know you better</b>. This way, you can <b>protect your feelings and interests</b>. This gives others opportunities to examine their own behavior and perhaps change it. Remember to use "I" statements, not "you" statements, when you are sharing opinions. This technique gives you emotional relief and keeps you connected to others.</p>
<p><b>CLARIFY</b></p> <p>Before taking your turn speaking, be sure you have <b>checked your understanding</b> of what you have just heard. Summarize by using "<b>I heard you say</b>" (IHUS). In your own words, reflect back what you heard from the speaker, to demonstrate your understanding of what was said. Use the <b>SPEAK OUT</b> formula to show you care for the other person. "Did I hear you say that you feel X when Y happens and you want Z from me?"</p>	<p><b>I WANT – Make a Request</b></p> <p>We all have wants and needs. Sometimes you may assume that others – friends and family – know what is important to you and how to fulfill your needs. <b>OOPS – You and only you know your needs and desires</b>. Telling others what you need helps them know you better. <b>It's OK to ask for help</b>. Remember to be clear and realistic in your expectations, and look for ways to help others in return.</p>

From: QuickKnowledge, Inc. 2000

## EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IN DIFFICULT SITUATIONS – Six Steps

### 1. Provide an objective description of the undesirable behavior:

*When you don't complete the work you've agreed to take on...*

### 2a. Use an "I" statement about your own feelings... Don't use the words "like" or "that":

*I feel frustrated and angry.*

**OR**

### 2b. Describe the direct and immediate consequences of behavior:

*Someone else has to take on extra work, adding to their burden.*

### 3. Provide your best guess as to the reasons for the undesirable behavior:

*I suppose...*

### 4. Check your perception of the situation:

*Is that correct?* (remember, "uh huh" is acknowledgement)

(If you receive a negative acknowledgement of your perception of the situation, you'll need to go back through the steps of Active/Effective Listening.)

### 5. Provide a clear statement of your wishes:

*What I want is...*

### 6. Ask for agreement:

*Would that be OK? or Will that work? or Will you do this?*

## CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Conflicts will occur in your troop from time to time. They can be over seemingly small issues, such as who gets to go first for an activity, or over major ones, such as how to spend troop money. Sometimes conflicts have their beginnings in the family or school environment, spilling over into the Girl Scout troop meeting. As Girl Scouts, we can base conflict resolution on the Girl Scout Promise and Law. As sisters in Girl Scouts, we may have conflicts, but we work to resolve them.

Disagreements over issues that affect values or goals need solutions in which both sides win. Girls need to have their self-esteem strengthened, as well as to learn to respect one another. It may be that the troop needs to do together activities that strengthen self esteem and respect. Grade-Level Program books and other Girl Scout resources offer ideas for these types of activities. Talk to your fellow leaders about what has worked well for them.

The following techniques are some ideas for resolving conflicts. You may use different techniques for different situations and different girls. Remember that there is no one way to resolve conflict. If girls become accustomed to dealing with conflict within the troop setting, they will gain skills that last them a lifetime. If the communication among the girls and between you and the girls is positive, then you have already taken a large step toward avoiding conflicts in your Girl Scout troop/group.

**Mediation:** Each girl has a chance to tell her side of the story without interruption. The girl tells you what the problem was and what happened. Each girl tries to develop some possible solutions. The girls try to choose one.

**Active Listening:** You or one of the girls restates or paraphrases what each of the people involved in the conflict has said. You could use phrases such as “It sounds like you said...” or “You are saying...” or “Do you mean?...” Or whatever sounds most natural. Often these phrases are used to discover the main reason for the conflict so that you can then go on to resolve it quickly.

**Time Out:** This can be used when you know the girls are capable of solving the problem themselves. You ask the girls to go off by themselves for a set period of time and return to you with their solution.

**Role Reversal:** This can help girls see other person’s viewpoint. Ask each to state the point of view of the other person. Discuss possible solutions to the problem from both sides.

**Skillful Listening:** The way you and the girls listen and speak to each other is also important for resolving conflict. Listening is a skill.

- Do you look at a girl when she is speaking to you?
- Do you listen actively so that a girl knows you have heard what she said?
- Do you wait to give a girl a chance to answer you?
- Do you avoid interrupting her?
- Do your body language and facial expressions agree with what you are saying?
- Do the girls understand that put-downs are not allowed in the troop/group meeting?

## COPING WITH DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

The following are a few disruptive behaviors that can happen in a group along with a few ideas of "what to do about it". These may help you to be prepared when meetings begin to get off track.

<p><b>The Blocker</b> -- Goes off on tangents, consistently argues on points the group has resolved, and rejects ideas without consideration</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try to focus away from the person exhibiting the behavior.</li> <li>• Politely point out that the person has strayed away from the topic and refocus on the task you are doing.</li> <li>• Summarize conclusions to conflicts to avoid argument on the same topic.</li> </ul>
<p><b>The Fighter</b> -- Attacks the motives of others, shows hostility toward the group or some individual without relation to the group's task, and criticizes and blames others.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Put a stop to it as gently as possible by getting the person to direct anger toward a topic, rather than a person.</li> <li>• Point out where the person has been critical and why the criticism is unwarranted.</li> <li>• Point out that you all share ideas as you work and everyone should be recognized for what they have contributed.</li> </ul>
<p><b>The Pleader</b> -- Proposes own pet concerns beyond reason; attempts to speak for 'the girl,' 'the leader,' etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give the person some attention, then focus on the priorities of the group.</li> <li>• Ask the person gently to speak only for herself or himself.</li> </ul>
<p><b>The Dominator</b> -- Interrupts the contributions of others; uses authority in manipulating the group or certain members by pulling rank</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give the person a special project.</li> <li>• Send the person on an errand.</li> <li>• Add a strong person to the group and encourage more group participation.</li> </ul>
<p><b>The Withdrawer</b> -- Acts passive or indifferent, doodles, whispers to others, and passes notes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct questions to the person that you know can be answered.</li> <li>• Ask the person to lead a discussion.</li> <li>• Find ways to get the person actively involved with others in the group.</li> </ul>
<p><b>The Talker</b> -- Seeks recognition by extreme ideas and boisterous boasts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use tact to interrupt the flow of talking. Ask specifically for others to comment.</li> <li>• Indicate that you are happy that the person has so much to share and could others have a chance to contribute.</li> <li>• Have a private conversation with the person.</li> </ul>
<p><b>The Nit Picker</b> -- Criticizes, finds fault with everything – the room set-up, the typing, and the materials, under the guise of helping.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try to get the person to see that these things do not affect the group that much.</li> <li>• Ask the person to help with the next session with assurances that you will discuss it later.</li> </ul>
<p><b>The Dependent One</b> -- Overeager to please the leader by doing whatever is expected or desire, waits to be directed, demonstrates little initiative.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask the person to initiate ideas and give reactions.</li> <li>• Watch for changes and then praise for initiative.</li> </ul>

## **PROBLEM SOLVING STRATEGIES**

Usually, a problem is the difference between what is happening right now and what a person would like to have happen. Most problems can be worked out if people are willing to follow a few problem-solving steps. The most important word here is willing. If you think there is a problem, do not wait while you get angry at what is happening. Anger does not solve anything. Positive action will.

There are two general approaches to dealing with difficult behavior: working to cure the behavior or devising a strategy for coping with the behavior. The goal of the two approaches is the same, to minimize the problem and maximize the use of human resources.

Both approaches include the same four steps:

### **Step One: Identify the Problem**

Begin by trying to understand the nature of the problem. This means identifying the specific behavior that is unacceptable, determining with whom the behavior surfaces, and how frequently it occurs. Negative behavior that occurs with only one person is probably evidence of a personality conflict, rather than "difficult behavior," and needs to be worked out between the two parties involved.

### **Step Two: Examine the Relationships**

Examining how the difficult person interacts with others gives clues to the possible causes of the behavior. Determining why the behavior occurs and why it is annoying helps point toward possible solutions.

### **Step Three: Determine the Costs**

Difficult behavior always carries a cost whether it be in terms of lost productivity, lower morale, or general discomfort. If there is no identifiable cost to you, the person involved, or to others, the behavior should be ignored.

#### **Step Four: Seek a Solution, Get an Agreement, Get a Commitment**

Once you have determined that the costs of ignoring the behavior are too high, the issue must be discussed with the offender. Plan out an approach that best fits the nature and gravity of the problem, the personality of the person involved, and your relationship with that person.

- Set up a meeting. Arrange for privacy and sufficient time to address the issue. Select a time when you are calm and have adequately prepared for discussion.
- Describe the difficult behavior in a non-accusatory manner and explain why it concerns you. Focus on a description of specific facts. Avoid offering your opinion as to why the problem exists and stick with a discussion of the problem behavior, rather than the individual's personality. Finally, select only one or two negative behaviors to work on, to avoid overwhelming the person. These should be behaviors the person can do something about.
- Use active listening skills to check your understanding of the problem and its causes. Active listening includes showing empathy.
- Ask questions to check your understanding and restate major ideas -- "So we're being criticized because you want to help us do our jobs better, not because our work is no good?"
- Passive people need a lot of encouragement to start talking. Wait patiently for them to respond to questions, and hear them out once they have started talking.
- State the change in behavior you are seeking. Be clear about what you want, but be open to changing your goal or solution, if that becomes appropriate.
- Solicit ideas for change and how to accomplish it from the difficult person. He or she will often come up with the best solutions, and will be more agreeable to implementing these solutions than the ones offered by someone else. Express confidence in the person's ability to change. Offer your own solutions if none suggested by the other person are acceptable to you.
- Agree on an action plan. Work towards a solution acceptable to both parties. Get agreement on specific actions you or the other person will take, and set a timetable for these actions. Start with short term, easily attainable goals.
- Set a follow-up date and time. This reminds both parties to review progress on implementing the plan.
- Follow up. Recognize any progress that has been made. If there has been no change in the difficult behavior, reevaluate the action plan and revise it, if necessary.

## SHORT-TERM METHODS OF CONTROLLING BEHAVIOR

1. Warn the child, and redirect if she will accept such redirection. For example, you might warn a girl that if she continues to throw sand, she will lose the privilege of staying in the sandbox; then suggest a couple of interesting things that could be done with the sand instead of throwing it. It is important to make the girl understand that behavior is up to her. It is her choice; but if the girl chooses to continue, see to it that you carry out your warning.
2. Warn only once. If a girl persists in doing what she has been told not to do, react calmly and promptly. Remove the girl and insist that she sit beside you, telling her that the privilege of playing in the sand has been lost. This is much more valuable than just letting the girl run off. Having a girl sit beside you interrupts what she wants to do, is a mildly unpleasant consequence of the behavior, and prevents substituting another activity that is more pleasant.
3. Take time to describe the girl's feelings in an understanding way, but be clear about firmly stating the rule and the reason for it. Don't moralize or rub it in too much. Don't talk too much.
4. At step 4, many leaders say something on the order of, "Now you sit here until lunch is ready," thus shifting the responsibility for the girl's behavior to the leader's own shoulders instead of putting the girl in command of herself. It is better to say, "Now, tell me when you can control yourself, and I will let you go back," or more specifically, "When you can keep the sand down, tell me and then you may go back in and play." Some children can actually say they are ready, but others will need help from the leader, who can ask them when they look ready, "Are you ready to go back now?" (perhaps the child nods or just looks ready.) "Good, your eyes tell me you are, what would you like to do for fun there?"
5. Finally, it is important to go back with the girl and help her be successful so that she has the experience of substituting acceptable for unacceptable behavior. It will probably be necessary to take a few minutes and get the girl really interested. Be sure to congratulate the girl when she has settled down, perhaps saying, "Now you're doing the right thing. I'm so proud of you!"
6. Occasionally, the leader will come across a more glib customer who says hastily when removed from the sandbox, "I'll be good, I'll be good!" but then goes right back to throwing the sand upon return. At this point it is necessary to take a firmer action. Have the girl sit beside you until she can think of something acceptable to do, but don't permit her to go back to the sandbox. You might say, "What you did (be explicit) shows me that you haven't decided to do the right thing, so you'll have to come and sit with me until you can think of somewhere else to play. You've lost the privilege of playing in the sandbox." Then when she decides, go with her or alert another leader so that the girl does start on something desirable to do.

From: Total Learning for the Whole Child, Joanne Hendrick, PhD.

## WORKING WITH YOUR DAUGHTER

1. Try to treat her as you would the other girls, with no special favors, but no discriminations. Leaders tend to want to select their own children, knowing their abilities or wishes – or to be “fair”, never select their own. Use an **IT BAG** or Kaper chart to select helpers, giving your daughter an equal chance to be selected.
2. Since leaders are particularly sensitive to a daughter’s misbehavior that might be easily overlooked in someone else, let the other leader correct her. Have the other leader work with her during projects and sign off recognitions requirements. Discuss this with your co-leader ahead of time so she will know to take the lead in dealing with your daughter. Often the co-leader has a daughter in the troop also, so in the beginning you both should decide on ways you will work with each other’s daughter and handle disciplinary concerns.
3. Give your daughter money for dues, etc., in the morning before school. This gives her the responsibility of keeping her dues, like the other girls, until the troop meeting time. If she loses it or forgets it, let her do without just as any other troop member.
4. See that she has permission slips signed ahead of time just as the other girls have to do. This is good training for a time when you may not be going along.
5. Avoid letting her know the troop plans in advance. Ideally, the troop makes the plans so that everyone knows what is coming up.
6. Do not discuss other troop members in front of her or with her.
7. Keep the troop meeting time for the troop. Check her report card, etc., outside of troop time. Likewise, this is not the time for her to show off her new dress.
8. Sometimes when you have to furnish transportation for a committee of which your daughter is not a member, you will be saying, “of course Jane will have to go with us.” Other times you arrange for her to stay elsewhere.
9. Other girls may sometimes choose not to participate in a troop activity field trip or camping trip. Whenever possible, your daughter should have the same options that others have.