Short & Snappy—Learning Opportunity for Volunteers

Creating Meeting Norms

For any group to work together successfully, they need to establish norms, or standards, for how they will interact with each other. In a Girl Scout environment, it is often necessary for the norms to apply not only to the girls, but also to the volunteers and parents. If a set of norms is meant to apply to someone, let them have a say in what the norms are. A troop may choose to have one set of norms that applies to everyone and your service unit may have a separate one for the adults, just ensure that everyone was included in making them and

Activity:

This activity will enable a group to develop a set of operating norms or ground rules. In existing groups, anonymity will help ensure that everyone is able to express their ideas freely.

1. Indicate to the group that effective groups generally have a set of norms that governs individual behavior, facilitates the work of the group, and enables the group to accomplish its task.

2. Provide examples of norms by posting the list of norms that appears on the Meeting Norms Handout. Ask them to think about communication, respect, meeting behavior, travel or event behavior, responsibilities, complaints, concerns, problem solving, decision making and conflicts.

3. Recommend to the group that they set a set of norms: To ensure that all individuals have the opportunity to contribute in the meeting; To increase productivity and effectiveness; To facilitate the achievement of its goals.

4. Give five index cards (less for large groups) and pens/pencils to each person.

5. Ask each person to reflect on and record behaviors they consider ideal behaviors for a group. Ask them to write on the idea on each card.

6. The facilitator should shuffle all the cards together. Every effort should be made to provide anonymity for individuals, especially if the group has worked together before.

7. Turn cards face up and read each card aloud. Allow time for the group members to discuss each idea. Tape or tack each card to a display board so that all group members can see it. As each subsequent card is read aloud, ask the group to determine if it is similar to another idea that already has been expressed. Cards with similar ideas should be grouped together.

8. When all cards have been sorted into groups, have a group member record the norms that were suggested. Review the proposed norms with the group. Determine whether the group can support the norms before the group adopts them.

9. Have these norms posted at each meeting. Sometimes Service Units want their members to sign a Meeting Norms Agreement.

This activity can also be done in the troop setting. Sometimes this is also referred to as a troop contract where the girls work together to decide how they will treat each other or

What is a Short & Snappy?

- Short training/information segment provided at a Service Unit Meeting
- Any interested volunteer may lead a Short & Snappy.
- Short & Snappy are 10-25 minutes in length

Things to Remember

- Have participants sign the sign-in sheet and keep for Service Unit records.
- Stay within the allotted time.
- If you don’t know the answer, seek the correct answer from the appropriate support person.

Supplies To Hand Out

Meeting Norms Handout
Index Cards, pens/pencils, poster paper, tape or tacks
Examples of Group Norms
These are examples of common group norms that can apply in most settings. Remember, norms may differ for each group based on age and values of the group’s members.

Adult Settings
- Treat each other with dignity and respect
- Transparency: avoid hidden agendas
- Be genuine with each other about ideas, challenges, and feelings
- Trust each other. Have confidence that issues discussed will be kept in confidence
- Listen first to understand, and don’t be dismissive of the input received when we listen
- Practice being open-minded
- Don’t be defensive with your peers
- Support each other - don’t throw each other under the bus.
- Avoid territoriality; think instead of the overall good for the group
- The discussion of issues, ideas, and direction will not become a personal attack or return to haunt you in the future
- Problems are presented in a way that promotes mutual discussion and resolution.

Girl Settings
- Respect others when they are talking by listening
- Do you best each day
- Be willing to share your own experience
- Keep hands and feet to yourself
- Girls will listen to adults’ guidance
- Adult will listen to girls’ ideas
- Use the buddy system during meetings or on field trips
- Everyone will help with activities by using the kaper chart
- Use the quiet sign

Tips
- Post the group norms where everyone can see them
- When someone isn’t following the norms, address it early. If girls or adults learn that they can ignore the norms without consequence, the norms will lose meaning to everyone quickly
- Model the norms yourself
- If a particular norm is broken often, or by several members of the group, hold a discussion to learn what is going on and if that norm needs to change
- Revisit the norms occasionally—at least at the beginning and midway through the calendar for your