Short & Snappy—Learning Opportunity for Volunteers

10 Ways to Help Instill Self-Confidence in Girls

As girls grow up, they are faced with self-esteem issues that affect behavior. Recognizing this and working to instill self-esteem through activities is a win-win for everybody. Here are 10 tips to launch girls on the right path.

1. Girls want opportunities for leadership. They also want to share in planning and decision-making. As a Girl Scout adult, you can empower girls by giving them a chance to choose activities and share increased responsibility.

2. Girls want their voices to be heard now, not just when they are older. They want adults to listen and take them seriously. Actively listen to girls’ voices, opinions, and ideas. Remember to recognize accomplishments.

3. Provide girls with a safe place where they can discuss real issues. Girls desire a trusting, confidential environment to feel emotionally safe.

4. Girls want to choose from a full range of activities. Create opportunities for girls to explore new things, sample diversity, and give back to their communities.

5. Girls are experiencing teen pressures at younger and younger ages. However, they may have trouble dealing with these issues because their emotional development may not be in sync with their social, cognitive, and sexual development. Let Girl Scouting be a safe, fun environment where girls can just be girls.

6. Girls’ self-images are determined not only by their self-perceptions but also by the perceptions of others. It is imperative that adults be positive, honest, and supportive. Girls also need to strengthen cultural beliefs and practices that enhance self-esteem; this includes a competent approach to dealing with body image and nutrition.

7. Girls are interested in expressing themselves through a variety of ways—fashion, art, community action, the outdoors, and decorating, for example. Take time to find out what girls’ interests are and help them tap into their creativity.

8. Girls want to connect with young women they admire, such as young professionals and college students. They also want to work with “experts” who can share their talents. Offer girls opportunities to connect with a myriad of adult role models.

9. Girls ages 8-12 are more worried about being teased and made fun of than they are about being attacked with a weapon or being kidnapped. That is how seriously they regard negative attention. Show, by example, how important it is to respect girls’ experiences.

10. In the company of other females, girls can express themselves without fear of being judged by boys. Provide opportunities for girls to build on their strengths and try new things in a supportive all-girl environment.
Activities to Choose from:

1. Have small groups brainstorm ways Girl Scouting builds confidence and report out. Have groups count a point for each unique answer that nobody else thought of.

2. Split the group into two and play Family Feud style trying to guess “Ways the GS Program builds confidence” (the items on the handout).

3. Have small groups read through the list and choose the ONE best suggestion. Discuss why that was chosen.

4. Have individuals give personal examples or examples they’ve seen in their girls where they could tell that girls had built their confidence (and if they can, tell why they believe Girl Scouting built that confidence.

Activities to Do With Girls:

Self-esteem has been compared to a bucket of water. It starts out full when we’re born, but whenever we develop negative beliefs about ourselves, it’s like poking little holes in that bucket and our self-esteem drips out. Have the group brainstorm a list of things we do or say to ourselves or to others that pokes holes in the self-esteem bucket. Put this list on the wall to serve as a constant reminder.

Eleanor Roosevelt said "Nobody can make you feel inferior without your permission." Have a group discussion about this quote. What does it mean? How true is it? Can you think of cases where it might not be true? In what kinds of situations would this quote be most useful to remember?

Ask each other questions about thoughts and feelings: What do you like about yourself? What are your biggest strengths? Talk about opportunities for growth and make a plan to reach tangible goals. How do you want to feel about your own unique beauty? What can I do to help make you feel confident?

The *It’s Your Story—Tell It!* Journey Series offers a fun, comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach to building girls’ leadership. Self-esteem is a natural by-product of this particular journey because, through storytelling and creative expression, girls gain a better understanding of themselves and their potential, and develop confidence to become leaders in their own lives and in the world.