

Dealing with Difficult Behavior in Girls

Bringing out the best in everyone.

The foundation of a well behaved group is good leadership through communication and modeling positive behavior. Earning the respect of the girls in a group occurs when you:

- Listen to the girls
- Maintain eye contact
- Make each girl feel she is valued and important
- Learn the names of the girls in the group and call on them by name

Once you have earned the respect and trust of girls, you can work with them (yes, with them!) to create rules that ensure safety and a standard of behavior. Consider the following as you establish an environment for excellent behavior:

- Rules are necessary, but remember that Girl Scouting should be fun! Avoid going overboard and encourage independence; give each girl a chance to take part in making decisions.
- Plan for lots of group involvement! Because most girls would rather do than listen, this will improve the focus of the group.
- Correct behaviors on a one-on-one case with the specific individual and not in front of the group.
- Never try to embarrass or ridicule a girl.

Even if you have an environment for excellent behavior, girls may still act out on occasion. Don't ignore inappropriate behavior. When girls are together, conflict can occur—and conflict is not always bad. Girls have different opinions, thoughts and ideas and that is part of the fun of working with a diverse group of girls. Before the conflict occurs, be sure to tell the girls what behavior is expected and what the consequences will be for inappropriate behavior. This can be done in a group agreement format.

The following is a step-by-step guide for how to cope with conflict or inappropriate behavior that occurs between girls:

- Find out what is going on, who is involved, and what happened.
- Call a time out! Calmly tell the girls that their conflict is causing disruptions. Ask them to go to a quiet spot and to return with a solution within a specific time limit.
- If the girls return without a compromise, sometimes you will need to separate the girls to give them time away from the conflict before they can reach a compromise.
- If they still cannot reach a solution, call in a mediator who will listen to each side. Each person tells their side without interruption and the mediator offers suggestions for compromise until each side agrees to a solution. The mediator can be another girl from the group.
- Once a compromise is reached hold the girls accountable to their agreement.

Volunteer Essentials acknowledges that “talking in this way can be uncomfortable and difficult, [but] it does lay the groundwork for working well together in the future.”

Girls may also relate to resolving conflict using the Girl Scout Promise and Law. As girls work to reach compromise, or even as a girl comes to terms with her own behavior, ask, “Have you acted/how can you act...”

- Honest and fair
- Friendly and helpful
- Considerate and caring
- Courageous and strong
- Responsible for what [you] say and do?”

“What steps could you take to...

- Respect yourself and others
- Respect authority
- Use resources wisely
- Make the world a better place
- Be a sister to every Girl Scout?”

Keep in mind that girls will take their cues from older girls and adults. One of the best ways to establish an environment of excellent behavior is for volunteers to model the Promise and Law and effectively manage any conflict that may arise away from the girls.

In short, be direct and upfront. Take a deep breath! **DISCOVER** what is happening. **CONNECT** with an appropriate approach. **TAKE ACTION** by analyzing the situation and acting accordingly. Putting things off only allows the situation to grow out of control and negatively affect the group dynamic.