



Volunteer RelationsSM Conflict Management Roadmap

For Volunteers



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Welcome to the Girl Scouts San Diego (GSSD) Volunteer RelationsSM Conflict Management Roadmap for Volunteers

The goal for the staff and volunteers of Girl Scouts San Diego is to provide a high-quality Girl Scout Leadership Experience for girls, while ensuring their safety and well-being. Adults, serving as role models of leadership for girls, demonstrate it through their actions, attitude, and behavior. One key aspect of leadership is the ability to effectively work with others and the effective usage of communication and teamwork to achieve the desired goals and outcomes.

Differences of opinion, disagreements, and conflicts are inevitable parts of life. When they are handled constructively, they can actually enhance communication, improve relationships, and achieve a higher quality result or outcome. However, when disagreements or conflicts escalate, they interfere with the ability of adults to ensure a high-quality Girl Scout Leadership Experience for girls.

Volunteer Relations Consulting Group, LLC and GSSD have developed this Volunteer RelationsSM Conflict Management Roadmap to volunteers in relationships with others in order to provide the highest quality Girl Scout Leadership Experience for all girls and adults.

Grant me the serenity to accept the people I cannot change
Courage to change the one I can change,
And wisdom to know it's me.

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Marla Benson, SPHR, Certified Workplace Mediator and President/Founder of *Volunteer Relations Consulting Group, LLC* for creating this customized Volunteer RelationsSM Roadmap.



con·flict

Conflict is a disagreement through which the parties involved perceive a threat to their needs, interests or concerns.

What is Volunteer RelationsSM?

Volunteer RelationsSM involves the body of work concerned with maintaining staff-volunteer, parent-volunteer, and volunteer-volunteer relationships that contribute to satisfactory productivity, motivation, and morale. Essentially, Volunteer RelationsSM is concerned with preventing and resolving problems involving individuals which arise out of or affect work situations and the Girl Scout Leadership Experience for girls and adults.

What Is Meant By 'Volunteer Conflict & Disputes?'

Conflict may be between volunteers, parents, troops, it does not matter what ones position is there is no choice but to manage that conflict towards an end.

Common issues include when volunteers/parents...

- Are in conflict or dispute with other volunteers, parents or staff that now interfere with mission and goals.
- Behave or communicate in a manner that is contrary to mission and goals.
- May deliver a threatening message to the organization including 'going to the media' or 'contacting a lawyer'.
- Do not perform the volunteer role as desired or required even with training and coaching.
- Have broken procedures, policies or laws in an extreme manner.
- Are in the wrong role for current knowledge, skills and/or abilities.

Where Does Conflict Originate?

Conflict arises from a clash of perceptions, goals, or values in an arena where people care about the outcome. The breeding ground for conflict may lie in confusion about, or disagreement with, the common purpose and how to achieve it while also achieving individual goals within an organization.

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Conflict: Good or Bad?

'True' conflict is not necessarily destructive. Conflict can lead to new ideas and approaches to organizational processes and increase interest in dealing with problems. Conflict, in this sense, can be considered positive, as it facilitates the surfacing of important issues and provides opportunities for people to develop their communication and interpersonal skills. Conflict becomes negative when it is left to escalate to the point where people begin to feel defeated and a combative climate of distrust and suspicion develops (Bowditch & Buono, 1997).

Common Sources of Conflict

1. **Unclear definition of responsibility** — there can be numerous occasions for conflict to arise over decisions made or actions taken in disputed territory.
2. **Limited resources** — time, money, space, materials, supplies, and equipment are all valuable resources. Competition for any of these resources can inevitably lead to interpersonal and interdepartmental conflict.
3. **Conflict of interest** — individuals may fight for their personal goals and lose sight of organizational goals. Each individual needs to know how his or her personal goals and efforts fit within the organizational goals and efforts.
4. **Unmet personal needs** - beyond the primary needs of every human being, those being food, clothing, and shelter:
 - The need to be loved, valued, and appreciated
 - The need to be in control – of ourselves and our destinies
 - The need for self-esteem. (Feel good about myself)
-Denis Waitley)

When one of these needs is unmet in an interaction or relationship, that relationship can suffer. When someone is 'acting out', look to this list to determine what may be lacking.

GSSD Proactive Approach to Managing Conflict & Disputes

Sometimes, issues appear from a complainant who either misunderstands or has incomplete information about their role or other aspect of Girl Scouting. As a GSSD Volunteer, you are in a position to participate in and guide others with information that may answer their concerns including directing them to *Volunteer Essentials*, the GSSD website, and sharing your knowledge and expertise.

Specific Reference to GSSD Conflict Support Materials are included in the following locations:

Volunteer Essentials - Page 60

- Location:
 - GSSD Website, Forms and Training webpage
http://thinmint.sdgirlscouts.org/files/perm/TRS-0041W_Volunteer_Essentials.pdf

Volunteer Policies and Procedures - Page 22

- Location:
 - GSSD website, Governance and Training webpage:
http://thinmint.sdgirlscouts.org/files/perm/HRV-0082AW_Volunteer_Policies_and_Procedures.pdf

Troop/Group Financial Guidelines

- Purpose:
 - Adult Learning: Travel and safety related to money and cookie selling
 - Program: Troop split
- Location:
 - GSSD website, Forms Webpage:
http://thinmint.sdgirlscouts.org/files/perm/AD-0049W_Financial_Guidelines.pdf

Let's Go! A Resource Guide to Trip and Travel Planning

- Audience: Adults and Girls
- Purpose: Guide for travel, hotel, money, chaperone and safety disputes
- Location:
 - GSSD website, Training webpage: http://thinmint.sdgirlscouts.org/files/perm/PGO-0090W_Lets_Go.pdf

Troop Cookie Manager Handbook

- Location: ebudde

Service Unit Booth Coordinator Handbook

- Location: ebudde

Service Unit Cookie Coordinator

- Location: ebudde

Individual Member Handbook

- Audience: Girls
 - Location: ebudde

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Volunteer Steps to Managing & Escalating Conflicts & Disputes

1. Create an agreement, in advance, between parties stating the desired actions, attitudes, behaviors, or expectations to be honored by each.
2. Use Active Listening and the ERA1SM tools to resolve situations before they escalate and become a conflict between the two parties. Deal directly with the party involved and ensure that the situation does not have a negative impact on the quality of the leadership experience for the girls.

Confidentiality should be maintained at all times in order to protect the dignity and rights of the individuals involved. Do not discuss the situation with other adults or girls in the troop/group.

When working to resolve a situation, keep in mind that a Troop/group Leader may not dismiss a Girl Scout from a troop/group for any reason.

3. If the situation escalates to a conflict, set up a private, in-person meeting with the other individual and use the Self-Resolution process/tool to address and resolve the situation. Inform the Troop Support Specialist of the meeting. Additional support is available to you at request.
4. If the two parties are unsuccessful in resolving the conflict during the Self-Resolution session, the person who initiated the meeting will contact the Troop Support Specialist in order for the matter to be referred to a neutral Staff member, the Volunteer RelationsSM Specialist.
5. The Volunteer RelationsSM Specialist will serve as a third-party Facilitator to work with the parties towards creating an agreement with a written action plan of the outcome. The Volunteer RelationsSM Specialist will compile the group agreement/plan of action and a copy will be provided to both parties for signatures.
6. If resolution of the conflict does not result in an agreement, or the parties are unable to fulfill an Action Plan, the Volunteer RelationsSM Specialist is to be informed to determine further actions.

What Happens Once a Matter is Referred to Volunteer RelationsSM?

The role of the Volunteer RelationsSM Team:

The Volunteer RelationsSM Team supports all aspects of the council by addressing volunteer conflict and dispute issues and quickly moving to resolution. In addition to mastering communication methods outlined in this Roadmap, members of the Volunteer RelationsSM Team are trained in conducting impartial inquiries, creating documentation and conducting staff facilitated conversations.

First to receive and review Volunteer RelationsSM matters, is the Volunteer RelationsSM Specialist. When needed, the VRS consults with other members of the Volunteer RelationsSM team and may escalate matters.

The Volunteer RelationsSM Specialist serves as a neutral, impartial third party who does not decide solutions to conflicts. The Volunteer RelationsSM Specialist supports both parties in arriving at a mutually acceptable agreement.

When the Volunteer RelationsSM Specialist 'opens' a matter:

1. Volunteer RelationsSM Specialist contacts complainant, other parties, and witnesses to gather information.
2. Whenever possible in situations of 'true' conflict, Volunteer RelationsSM Specialist encourages parties to communicate directly with one another in attempt to resolve.
3. If direct communication does not occur or fails, the Volunteer RelationsSM Specialist offers staff facilitated conversation and acts as impartial staff Facilitator.
 - a. The goal of staff facilitated conversation is to encourage the two primary parties to sit down together with the staff Facilitator to discuss how they will work together moving forward.

Staff-facilitated conversations are NOT:

- For the purpose of judging guilt or innocence
- A substitute for discipline
- A substitute for training

Prior to the staff facilitated conversation, disputing parties are made aware of the following:

- No action is taken by council administration on behalf of either party to resolve true conflict situations.
- Staff Facilitator's role is to support complainants in solving their own issue, not to solve problems or suggest solutions.

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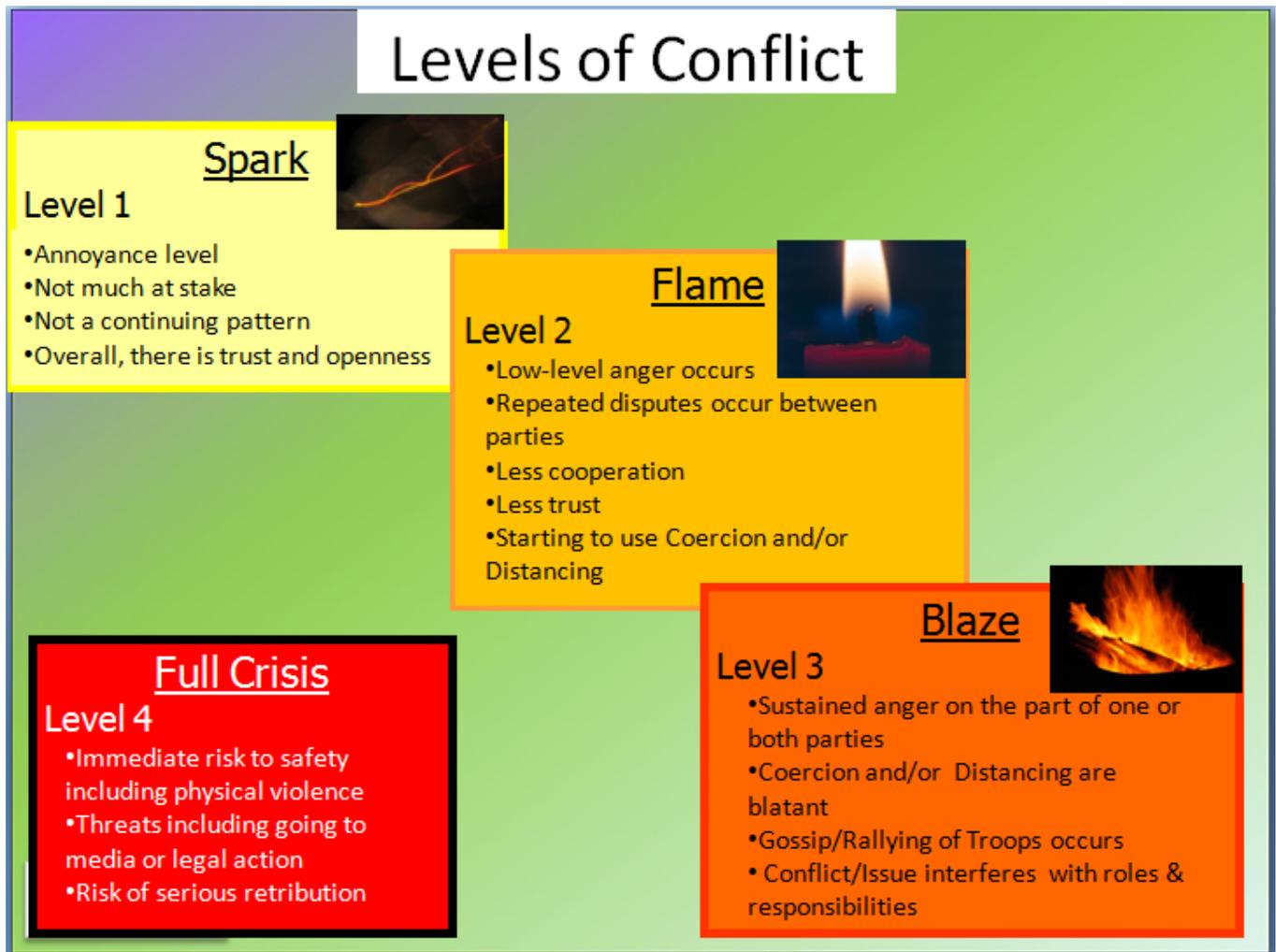
- Staff facilitated conversation happens only once. If parties are unsatisfied with the staff facilitated conversation process or outcome, there is no opportunity for another .
 - During staff facilitated conversation, parties reach a balanced, behaviorally specific, mutually acceptable agreement referred to as an 'action plan' recorded by the staff Facilitator. The action plan defines each party's future behavior with regard to the situation that has impacted the Girl Scout Leadership Experience for girls and adults.
4. Post-staff facilitated conversation, the staff Facilitator provides the written action plan to both parties. Within weeks of the staff facilitated conversation, Volunteer RelationsSM Specialist follows-up to determine the action plan status.

Using Common Language About Conflict

Like a fire, conflicts and disputes generally begin with one incident or misunderstanding, a spark that if addressed early on, can often be extinguished. When not addressed, the issues may continue or increase in severity becoming a flame. In situations where the conflict or dispute becomes public and interferes with The Girl Scout Leadership Experience for girls and adults, a blaze has taken place and must be addressed.

Full crisis is another category altogether. This may be someone posing a risk to physical safety, threats of 'going to the media', legal action, or other serious retribution. Crisis issues requires one to follow GSSD Crisis policies and procedures.

Understanding the levels of conflict creates common language within the organization and helps with clear identification and communication of issues.



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Tools to Manage Levels of Conflict

Level #	Level Title	Signals	Tools
Level 1	Spark	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Annoyance Level - Not much at stake - Not a continuing pattern - Overall, there is trust and openness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACTIVE Listening • ERA1SM • Suggestion of direct communication between parties (provide self-resolution meeting guidelines)
Level 2	Flame	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Low-level anger occurs - Repeated disputes occur between parties - Less cooperation - Less trust - Starting to use coercion and/or distancing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACTIVE Listening • ERA1SM • Suggestion of direct communication between parties (provide guidelines) • If no resolution, escalate to Volunteer RelationsSM
Level 3	Blaze	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sustained anger on the part of one or more parties - Coercion and/or distancing are blatant - Gossip/rallying of troops occurs - Conflict/issue interferes with roles & responsibilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACTIVE Listening • ERA1SM • Escalate to Volunteer RelationsSM
Level 4	Full Crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Any circumstance or incident that may: - threaten the safety and health of girl and/or adult members - adversely impact finances or property - result in negative media coverage - cause opposition from the community 	Follow Volunteer Emergency Procedures

ACTIVE Listening

ACTIVE Listening is useful for all verbal communication whether in-person or via phone and is critical to:

1. Better understanding of others
2. Demonstrate your interest in others feelings and well-being
3. Enablement of clear and impartial perception of situations.

ACTIVE Listening is an effective tool to use regularly to minimize conflict, but is particularly helpful once you are aware of a difference of opinion.

In conversation, we often jump in with our own advice or experience which may deter the speaker from providing complete information. An ACTIVE Listener puts his/her own feelings aside in order to better understand the speaker and only interrupts to request clarifications.

How to use ACTIVE Listening:

It is helpful to choose a time and place (by phone or in person) that will allow you to focus on the conversation and have few distractions.

Acknowledge the Speaker:

Acknowledge the speaker with proper body language, eye contact, and head nods. If on the phone, 'mmhmmms' to indicate you are listening.

Concentrate on the Content:

Try to strip out the emotion that you may hear. You want to fully understand the issue in order to resolve it.

Track the Sequence:

What series of events happened in what order? Understanding the chain of events is often useful in facilitating resolution.

Inquiring Minds (Really do want to know):

Ask questions to uncover specific details such as sequencing of events, what was said and done, who were parties present and more. Understanding facts helps prevent us from making assumptions.

Vocal and Visual Cues:

Although we are stripping away emotion, you need to understand the level of anger or frustration by paying attention to the vocal tone and body language of the other person.

Emotional Control:

A main component of listening is staying neutral. Only you can control your own emotions!

ERA1SM

The ERA1SM tool is extremely useful in communicating with others in all aspects of life when you:

- Need to say 'no' or deny someone's desire or request
- Need to deliver what may be perceived by the other as 'bad news'
- Need to deliver feedback to another that may be perceived as negative

Crafting an ERA1SM statement takes practice and above all else, requires one to be truly empathetic to the others situation and needs in determining an appealing alternative to what is being denied.

ERA1SM Begins with Empathy:

Empathy is a Greek word that means 'listening with the eyes and the heart'. Empathy in tandem with ACTIVE Listening provides assurance to speakers that it's safe for them to share their concerns. Empathy does not mean agreement with the speaker or reacting in a way that leads the speaker to believe that you are 'taking a side'.

Empathy is:

- Non-Judgmental
- Non-Critical
- Non-Threatening

ERA1SM

Empathetic Phrase

To show empathy, use positive body language and vocal tone along with the following phrases:

- 'I understand.....',
- 'I can appreciate.....',
- 'I'm sorry.....'

Reason

- That you have to say 'no'
- That you are delivering bad news (or what may be perceived as bad news)
- They should adopt the 'new' behavior that you wish for them to embody

Alternative Solution

- If they cannot have what they want, what can they have instead?
- **WIIFT** – What's In It For Them?
 - How seeing and/or complying with your proposal benefits them (and common goals)
- If they need to comply or change behavior, how can you assist them or lead them towards finding a best solution

1-Step Further

How you are willing and able to go 1-step further in helping them

When and How to use ERA1SM:

ERA1SM allows you to help the other party see the importance of complying with your request without resorting to bullying or coercion. In being empathetic (E) and in seeking an alternative solution (A), you are showing that you are attempting to see their point of view and are willing to team with them towards future solutions.

A complete ERA1SM statement may be something like this: (Empathy) 'I certainly understand how busy your schedule must be, however (Reason) 'by turning your paperwork in on time, your daughter will be assured participation in this activity that I'm sure she is looking forward to.' (Alternative Solution) 'Would it be helpful if I were to send out an e-mail reminder of the deadline a couple of days ahead of time?' (1-Step Further) 'And, that technique may work for many of the other parents as well. What do you think?'

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What is a Self-Resolution Meeting (SRM) and When to Use It

A self-resolution meeting is best used when the parties involved have experienced a past foundation of trust. Direct conversation can help prevent a spark or flame level of conflict to turn into a blaze.

- The situation is a 'true' conflict between parties.
- There are no more than two people in the dialogue. Additional parties can add fuel to the fire and prevent a breakthrough.
- Use when parties have an on-going, interdependent relationship.
- Future cooperation is the goal, not settlement of past complaints.
- There is a spark or flame level of severity.
- There is no or low risk of retaliation for initiating the dialogue. (i.e., The other person has no history of abusing authority).
- There is no risk of physical violence. If this is a concern, escalate to crisis and follow crisis guidelines.

Self-Resolution Meeting Guidelines Snapshot

1. DEFINE the issue and its impact on Girl Scouting

2. Find a time to talk: A conversation about having a conversation

3. Talk it out

4. Create a written action plan

Self-Resolution Meeting Guidelines in Detail

1. Define the issue statement of the problem (that is impacting the high-quality Girl Scout Leadership Experience for girls and adults).

The focus is on the 'business' problem that is causing an issue, not to find fault with the other person. This is your opportunity to DEFINE the issue and its impact on Girl Scouting. No conversation is taking place just yet.

Criteria:

- Unbiased & impartial
- Objective - does not place blame
- Specific - so the other knows exactly what is to be solved
- Resolvable – do we have the authority to solve it?
- Concise – brief

For example:

- Negative impact on the girls experience
- Specific evidence (observable behavior/facts) of the issue

2. Find a time to talk: a conversation about having a conversation

The 'In the moment' conversation often occurs to vent about a problem, however it isn't always the best time to discuss issues in a manner that will lead to solutions. Approach the other person to suggest a direct conversation and to set some ground rules.

- **Initiate:** Contact the other person to discuss having a self-resolution meeting.
- **Provide the issue statement:** The reason we need to talk
 - *I'm concerned about the girls experience when we...*
 - *I've noticed evidence (observable behavior / facts). When that occurs, it is affecting...*
 - *I'd like for us to find a solution to the difficulty we are having in working together to ensure that we provide a high-quality experience for girls.*
- **The request:** *Would you agree to sit down with me to explore a solution?*
- **The rules:** *Can we agree that we will continue to discuss until we can come up with a mutually agreeable solution? And, that neither of us will leave until that is accomplished?*
- **The time & place:** When and where we will have our conversation that will provide privacy, no interruptions or distractions.

3. Talk it out

- **Express appreciation:** *Thanks for meeting with me* (reduces the perception of a threat).
- **Express optimism:** *I am sure we can find a way to work together better.*

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- **Focus on the issue:** *My understanding of the problem we are here to solve is.....; what is your understanding?*

Sometimes you are in a more powerful position by using ACTIVE Listening and asking probing questions rather than pushing your own agenda. Let the other person get their points on the table and the more you explore, you may have a better understanding of their position.

Probing statements include:

- *Help me to understand your viewpoint.*
- *I want to understand.*
- *Can you explain further?*
- *How do you believe that impacts...(the girls, the troop, the event, other parents)*

4 Forces that lead to breakthrough:

- **Weariness:** Fatigue that occurs from stressful or frustrating conversation
- **Realization:** The 'light bulb' moment when one realizes one's own contribution to the issue
- **Desire for resolution:** The wish for a solution that satisfies all parties
- **Susceptibility response:** The natural lessening of anger in response to the display of openness or susceptibility from another

Use careful communication. Do NOT use:

You must...(ought, should...)

You always....or You never....

Don't ask why, just do it

You know better than that

4. Create a written action plan

The meeting itself is certainly important, but equally important is recording what was agreed to. This may be useful in the future for review.

- Plan the future by creating an agreement that is mutually beneficial. If you feel you are being coerced or dominated, indicate that you don't feel the solutions are balanced and keep working on it. Both parties should benefit and share sacrifices or compromises.
- Agree on who will write up the agreement and determine the delivery date.
- For a more complex issue, it may be necessary to meet again. *Let's meet again in two weeks to review our progress...*

When the Self-Resolution Meeting (SRM) Works, How You Will Feel

Effectively using SRM will help you to feel empowered to work toward solutions with others. By resolving the conflict, you will be able to maintain the focus for all parties on ensuring that the girls are receiving a high-quality Girl Scout Leadership Experience.

When Self-Resolution Doesn't Work, What's Next? (i.e., Blaze, Level 3)

If Active Listening, ERA1SM, and SRM tools do not lead to resolution, parties are referred to the Volunteer RelationsSM Specialist. He/she provides and facilitates a 90-minute, in-person staff facilitated conversation session. The goal of the staff facilitated conversation session is for the two parties to come to a written agreement detailing what each party will do to work more effectively in the future.

When to Confront...or, Not

Not all situations are worth the stress, time and effort. These questions may help you to decide.

Is it important? Or..... simply annoying?

Look at the big picture. Does this cause harm, interruption or a safety hazard to the business at hand? Or does it just bother you and have no real long-term effects.

Is the behavior consistent?

Is the behavior repeated? Does it demonstrate a separation from policies, goals, or safety?

Is the behavior intentional?

Is the behavior a power-play, domination, or retribution technique? Then yes, it may be worth confronting.

Can you affect a change in their behavior?

Are you able to affect change? If not, you may need to let it go.

Will you possibly win the battle, but lose the war?

You may win the skirmish, but what happens to the overall relationship? If you desire to confront from a domination or retribution position, you may win the battle, but you may also cause irreparable long-term damage.



SAMPLE

Girl Code of Conduct Agreement

As a Girl Scout member, I agree that the following statements are true and I will follow them. They will be in effect every time I participate in a Girl Scout activity.

Girl Scout Promise:

On my honor, I will try: *To serve God and my country,
To help people at all times,
And to live by the Girl Scout law.*

Girl Scout Law:

I will do my best:

- *To be Honest and Fair* (for example, I will always tell the truth.)
- *Friendly and Helpful* (for example, I will be nice to others and I will help when I am asked or I see someone who needs help.)
- *Considerate and Caring* (for example, I will show kindness to others.)
- *Courageous and Strong* (for example, I will stand up for what I know is right. I will go to my leader or another adult when I see someone is being bullied or hurt.)
- *Responsible for what I say and do* (for example, If I say I will do something or say I won't do something, I will keep my promise.)

And

- *Respect Myself and Others* (for example, I will not put myself down or make fun of others.)
- *Respect Authority* (for example, I will listen and do as I'm asked by my leaders and parents.)
- *Use Resources Wisely* (for example, I will only take what I need and not waste supplies. I will respect the meeting and event property by following the rules of the facility.)
- *Make the World a Better Place* (for example, I will live by the Girl Scout Promise and Law not only in my Girl Scout meetings but every day and everywhere.)
- *Be a Sister to Every Girl Scout* (for example, I will respect, be inclusive, and have fun with every Girl Scout I meet.)

Additional Group Agreements:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

I understand that if I choose not to honor this agreement, it may impact my ability to participate in Girl Scout activities.

Girl Scout Signature

Date

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

Troop / Group Leader Signature

Date



SAMPLE

Parent/Guardian Agreement

Our children learn by example. Our volunteers endeavor to follow and teach the Girl Scout Promise and Law. It is expected that families/guardians will support those values in all Girl Scout activities.

As a parent of a Girl Scout, I agree to:

- Demonstrate a genuine interest in my daughter’s participation in Girl Scouts, so I will reflect on the Girl Scout Promise and Law to be a positive role model for the girls.
• Support the volunteers who are working with my child in order to encourage a positive and enjoyable Girl Scout leadership experience for all. I will make every effort to attend any required parent meetings and adhere to parent deadlines.
• Ensure that my daughter’s behavior supports the Girls’ Code of Conduct.
• Submit requested permission slips, dues, and/or materials on time, ensure that my daughter is prepared for Girl Scout activities, and drop her off and pick her up on time.
• Communicate any concerns that I have directly to the volunteer responsible for the activity that my daughter is participating in private (not in the presence of the girls or other parents) and will follow the GSSD Conflict Management process if we are unable to resolve a particular conflict situation.
• Not initiate or participate in gossip or negative statements about Girl Scouting and will refrain from behavior that may undermine the leadership of a Girl Scout activity or the troop/group. Should I have a complaint or problem, I will share a suggested solution.
• Play an active role in my daughter’s Girl Scout Leadership Experience. I will follow safety guidelines for all activities and guarantee a high-quality environment for my child that is free from drugs, tobacco, and alcohol. I will refrain from their use at all Girl Scout events.
• Recognize that Girl Scouting is girl-led so I will uphold the Girl Scout Promise and Law by demonstrating positive support and respecting the opinions and goals of my daughter and other girls.
• Support my daughter’s participation in product sales and will follow the GSSD requirements for the distribution of rewards and recognitions.
• Support the Girl Scout efforts to provide an environment of acceptance for all girls and their families by asking my child to treat others with respect, regardless of race, color, creed, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, citizenship, ancestry, physical or mental disability, marital status, veteran status, socio-economic/public assistance status, national origin or any other protected status.
• Acknowledge that there are a variety of ways for girls and adults to participate in Girl Scouting. If I or Council staff feel that a different participation option would be best for my daughter, staff will assist in engaging her in those activities.

I understand that my behavior directly impacts my daughter’s ability to participate in a troop/group or other Girl Scout activities. I will honor this agreement so that my daughter can have a high-quality Girl Scout Leadership Experience.

Signature

Date