

## CONFLICT RESOLUTION

### Overview

At Girl Scouts, we recognize our girls are members of diverse communities and are affected by unique challenges and that they may seek guidance or support from their troop leaders and other volunteers. Given our focus on identifying community needs and creating positive change, it is important that you feel comfortable creating an environment where girls have the freedom and security to ask difficult questions and to air views and concerns in respectful conversations.

Follow these steps when problem-solving an issue:

1. Bring all involved parties together to seek an understanding of each other's perspectives
  - a. Identify who the issue or situation is currently affecting or could affect
  - b. Allow each person to state their concerns without interruption
    - i. Encourage re-stating of concerns shared by others to check for understanding
2. Identify options for a mutually satisfactory solution
  - a. Discuss ideas for resolving the situation, so that all parties' needs are met while the needs of the girls are the priority
3. Agree on a solution
  - a. Set a timeframe to ensure the solution is effective for all parties

Things to consider when mediating a problem-solving issue:

- Maintain respectful, open communication with all parties throughout the problem-solving
- Remember, as a Girl Scout adult you are modeling positive, responsible, and mature behavior for the girls!
- Circle back around to how the girls are representing the Girl Scout Promise and Law
- Put it in writing! All parties should agree to the solution and the timeframe as well as what next steps will be taken if the solution proves ineffective
- GSWO encourages the problem-solving of concerns to occur with the parties most directly involved in the situation, but there are times when council staff assistance is necessary. This may include:
  - The safety and well-being of the girls and their assets are at risk
  - The safety and well-being of adult volunteers, parents/caregivers or community members are at risk
  - Problem-solving attempts with parties directly involved were unsuccessful
  - The initial issue or concern has escalated in seriousness or urgency



### Use “I” Statements

- Using an “I” message can help you state your concerns, feelings, and needs in a manner that is easier for the listener to hear and understand.
- An “I” statement focuses on your own feelings and experiences. It does not focus on your perspective of what the other person has done or failed to do.
- It is the difference, for example, between saying, “I feel that I am not being utilized in the Service Unit to the extent that others are” and “You always let Marge work on the Service Unit Events, but you never ask me if I’m interested.”
- If you can express your experience in a way that does not attack, criticize, or blame others, you are less likely to provoke defensiveness and hostility which tends to escalate conflicts, or have the other person shut-down or tune you out which tends to stifle communication.
- “I” statements help create more opportunities for the resolution of conflict by creating more opportunities for constructive dialogue about the true sources of conflict.



### Activity 1: Shake It Out

#### Instructions:

Have participants stand in a circle with a bit of room between each person. Explain that we will shake out our right hand, left hand, right leg, and left leg on different counts. First, we will shake 5 times with each body part, then 4, then 2, then 2, then 1. Each time, everyone counts out loud from one up to the number shaking that body part and then moving on to the next with the same number. Example:

Right arm: 5, 4, 3, 2, 1

Left arm: 5, 4, 3, 2, 1

Right leg: 5, 4, 3, 2, 1

Left leg: 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, then we will start with the right arm again just counting down starting at 4

Right arm: 4, 3, 2, 1

Left arm: 4, 3, 2, 1

and so on through 4, 3, 2, 1.

The game is fast and can be used as a cool off (shaking off the work) or as a warm-up to prepare for work. After “1, 1, 1” everyone can either take in a deep breath and let it out or say something together, depending on the goal of the exercise.

## Activity 2: Commonalities

### Instructions:

Have participants stand in a continuous line and step forward or backward if the read statement relates to them. Please be advised: some of the statements may touch on sensitive topics, so make sure you have created a safe space for girls and volunteers to share etc. Make sure to debrief with participants; some questions might include: what emotions were brought up, how does/can this challenge perspectives, and what will you take away from this experience?

1. If your primary ethnic identity is “American,” take a step forward.
2. If you have been ashamed/embarrassed of your clothes, house, car, take a step back.
3. If one or both of your parents were “white collar” professionals, take a step forward.
4. If you live(d) in an area where there was prostitution, drug activity, take a step back.
5. If you attended a school speaking a language other than English, take a step back.
6. If you have health insurance, take a step forward.
7. If you attended private school or summer camp, take a step forward.
8. If you ever had to move because they could not afford the rent, take a step back.
9. If you are a single parent household, take a step back.
10. If your family owns the house where you live, take a step forward.
11. If you or your parents own their own business, take a step forward.
12. If you were generally able to avoid places that were dangerous, take a step forward.
13. If you were ever the victim of bullying related to your race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, take a step back.
14. If your parents did not grow up in the United States, take a step back.
15. If your parents said you could be anything you wanted to be, take a step forward.
16. If you or someone in your family has a visible or invisible disability, take a step back.
17. If you are being raised by someone other than your biological parents, take a step back.
18. If you come from a family where alcohol or drugs were a problem, take a step back.
19. If someone in your family has been incarcerated, take a step back.
20. If you receive free or reduced lunch, take a step back.
21. If you have experienced homelessness, take a step back.
22. If you can participate in after school programs, take a step forward.
23. If your family has two vehicles, take a step forward.
24. If your family can volunteer at your school or afterschool activities, take a step forward.
25. If you change schools regularly, take a step back.

## Activity 3: Breathing Exercise

### Instructions:

Ask participants to sit comfortably in a chair. They may sit on the floor if that is more comfortable. Guide them through the exercise by providing the following instructions:

This exercise is used to help you relieve some of that tension by focusing on relaxing your muscles. I will ask you to tense a specific muscle group for 5 seconds, and then relax it for 10 seconds. While relaxing your muscles, do so completely and let the muscle go completely limp. While relaxing, try to remember the pleasant feeling of the moment.

1. Hold your right arm straight out in front of you and bend your hand upward pointing your fingers toward the ceiling. Hold that tension. (Count 5 seconds). Now relax and let your arm drop to your side. Count 10 seconds, then proceed to the next step.
2. Hold your left arm straight out in front of you and bend your hand upward pointing your fingers toward the ceiling. Hold that tension. (Count 5 seconds). Now relax and let your arm drop to your side. Count 10 seconds, then proceed to the next step.
3. Shrug your shoulders, raising them as high as possible. (Count 5 seconds). Now relax and let your shoulders drop down. Count 10 seconds, then proceed to the next step.
4. Sit up straight in your chair. Arch your back as much as you can. (Count 5 seconds). Now relax and sit back in your chair. Count 10 seconds, then proceed to the next step.
5. Close your eyes tightly. (Count 5 seconds). Now relax and leave them closed but softly. Count 10 seconds, then proceed to the next step.
6. Tighten your jaw muscles as much as you can, clenching your teeth together. (Count 5 seconds). Now relax your jaw muscles and unclench your teeth. Count seconds, then proceed to the next step.
7. Bend your neck forward, trying to touch your chin to your chest. (Count 5 seconds). Now bring your neck back upright. Count 10 seconds, then proceed to the next step.
8. Straighten both legs, stretching them outward and tensing all the muscles. (Count 5 seconds). Now let them relax and bring them back down to the floor. Count 10 seconds.
9. Take three nice deep breaths and remember that feeling of relaxation and calm.



### S'more Info

- [Volunteer Essentials](#)
- VTK- Resource Tab
- [GSWO Blog](#)
- [GSWO.org](#)
- Conflict Resolution Curriculum
- GSWO staff
- [girlscouts.org>adults>volunteer>tips for troop leaders>working with girls and families>6 ways you can foster respectful conversations within your troop](#)
- [girlscouts.org>Raising Girls | Am parenting Advice for Parents of Daughters>Help Her Be Happy and Healthy> Raise a Happy Girl> 7 Ways to Deal When the World is Just So Overwhelming](#)