Difficult Conversations

20 minutes

This module seeks to answer the questions: Why are certain conversations so difficult? What can you do about it? This module can work well any time of year with any audience!

As a Girl Scout volunteer, you will have the opportunity to develop a working relationship with parents, volunteers, and other members of the community. This module is intended to give you the tools you need when friction arises as you establish these relationships; and as you work towards your common goal of making Girl Scouts a great experience for the girls. Every volunteer has a role in understanding the skills covered in this module and how they can be used to minimize tension and even prevent many difficult situations from arising.

Objectives:

1. Understand why certain conversations are difficult to have
2. Identify the positive impacts of well managed conversations
3. Develop tools to effectively manage difficult conversations

Origins:

Girl Scout volunteers really care about our organization and our mission. Being a Girl Scout is part of who they are.

Strategies:

1. A.C.T.I.V.E. Listening
2. ERA 1SM
3. Careful Communication

A.C.T.I.V.E. Listening:

A – Acknowledge the Speaker
C – Concentrate on the Content
T – Track the Sequence
I – Inquiring Minds Want to Know
V – Vocal & Visual Cues
E – Emotional Control
ERA 1SM:
E – Show Empathy. Open the conversation by showing the listener you understand how they feel.
R – Explain the Reason. Keep this simple and straightforward.
A – Offer an Alternative Solution. Typically this would be one that involves the other person's participation.
1 – Go one step further. This may not always be possible but see if you can.

Careful Communication:

Stay away from phrases like:
“You must...” and “Don't ask why, just do it”
“You always” or “you never”
“You know better than that”

Instead try...

Explaining what you need and why you need it. Rather than generalize, explain why something is an issue, and suggest another way of handling it. Assume they had good intentions and made an honest mistake. Rely on A.C.T.I.V.E. Listening to find out what motivated their behavior.

Example Scenario:

Present the scenario to the group. Allow the group to work as individuals, pairs, or small groups to apply A.C.T.I.V.E. Listening and ERA 1SM in the example scenario.

Resources:

Volunteer RelationsSM Process: Demystified Supplemental Learning Module (online)

Where to go for help:

Contact GSSEM Troop Support Specialist with questions. Call 800-482-6734 if you are unsure who your Troop Support Specialist is.