

Short and Snappy – Understanding Girls at Different Ages



Objective

To raise awareness about the needs and characteristics of girls at different ages and stages, and how that can be incorporated into planning and carrying out meaningful girl programming.

Length

20 minutes

Materials Needed

Handout (attached).

Information to Share (spend 5 minutes on this section)

Is your troop moving up from one level to the next? Do you have a multi-level troop? Are your girls wanting to work with younger girls?

As girls get older, their maturity and their emotional, physical, and cognitive development levels change and grow. This means that girls at each age level have different characteristics and behaviors. Some common characteristics can be expected of certain age groups. Being aware of these can help you as the volunteer to understand and adapt to the needs and perspectives of the girls you work with.

Activity (spend 15 minutes on this section)

1. Print copies of the attached handout (print 1 copy per group).
2. Get everyone into groups (4-5 groups, depending on how many people you have).
3. Have each group complete their handout by matching the characteristic to the appropriate suggested activities.
4. After most of the groups have finished, bring everyone back together for a group discussion.

Discussion/Reflection (spend 5 minutes on this section)

Lead the group in discussion to reflect on what they learned about girls of different age groups:

1. Were you able to match up the characteristics to the appropriate age group?
2. Did any of the descriptions surprise you?
3. In your experiences, what activities and/or group management techniques have worked well for you with:
 - a. Daisies?
 - b. Brownies?
 - c. Juniors?
 - d. Cadettes?
 - e. Seniors?
 - f. Ambassadors?

Activity Handout – Match the descriptions to the appropriate activities/management styles.

1. Daisies have loads of energy and need to run, walk, and play outside.
 2. Daisies love to move and dance.
 3. Daisies are just beginning to write and spell, and they don't always have the words for what they're thinking or feeling.
 4. Brownies need clear directions and structure, and like knowing what to expect.
 5. Brownies know how to follow rules, listen well, and appreciate recognition of a job done well.
 6. Brownies are becoming comfortable with basic number concepts, time, money, and distance.
 7. Juniors want to make decisions and express their opinions.
 8. Juniors are concerned about equity and fairness.
 9. Juniors have strong fine and gross motor skills and coordination.
 10. Cadettes are starting to spend more time in peer groups than with their families and are very concerned about friends and relationships with others their age.
 11. Cadettes can be very self-conscious—wanting to be like everyone else, but fearing they are unique in their thoughts and feelings.
 12. Cadettes are going through puberty, including changes in their skin, body-shape, and weight. They're also starting their menstrual cycles and have occasional shifts in mood.
 13. Seniors are beginning to clarify their own values, consider alternative points of view on controversial issues, and see multiple aspects of a situation.
 14. Seniors have strong problem-solving and critical thinking skills, and are able to plan and reflect on their own learning experiences.
 15. Seniors feel they have lots of responsibilities and pressures—from home, school, peers, work, and so on.
 16. Ambassadors can see the complexity of situations and controversial issues—they understand that problems often have no clear solution and that varying points of view may each have merit.
 17. Ambassadors are continuing to navigate their increasing independence and expectations from adults—at school and at home—and are looking to their futures.
- A. Engage girls in moving their minds and their bodies. Allow girls to express themselves through written word, choreography, and so on.
 - B. They might especially enjoy marching like a penguin, dancing like a dolphin, or acting out how they might care for animals in the jungle.
 - C. Trust girls to plan and make key decisions, allowing them to experience what's known as "fun failure." Girls learn from trying something new and making mistakes.
 - D. Offer support only when needed. Allow girls to set schedules for meetings or performances, count out money for a trip, and so on.
 - E. Do not shy away from discussing why rules are in place, and have girls develop their own rules for their group.
 - F. Encourage girls to share, but only when they are comfortable. They may be more comfortable sharing a piece of artwork or a fictional story than their own words. Highlight and discuss differences as positive, interesting, and beautiful.
 - G. Girls are more than able to go beyond community service to develop projects that will create sustainable solutions in their communities. Be sure to have girls plan and follow up on these experiences through written and discussion-based reflective activities.
 - H. Offer only one direction at a time. Also, have girls create the schedule and flow of your get-togethers and share it at the start.
 - I. Ask girls to explain the reasoning behind their decisions. Engage girls in role-play and performances, where others can watch and offer alternative solutions.
 - J. Be sensitive to the many changes they are undergoing and acknowledging that these changes are as normal as growing taller! Girls need time to adapt to their changing bodies, and their feelings about their bodies may not keep up.
 - K. Girls will enjoy teaming-up in small or large groups for art projects or performances, as well as tackling relationship issues through artistic endeavors or Take Action projects.
 - L. They'll enjoy going on nature walks and outdoor scavenger hunts.
 - M. Acknowledging when the girls have listened or followed the directions well, which will increase their motivation to listen and follow again!
 - N. Whenever possible, allow girls to make decisions and express their opinions through guided discussion and active reflection activities. Also, have girls set rules for listening to others' opinions and offer assistance in decision making.
 - O. Acknowledge girls' pressures and share how stress can limit health, creativity, and productivity. Help girls release stress through creative expression, movement, and more traditional stress-reduction techniques.
 - P. Have girls draw a picture of something they are trying to communicate is easier and more meaningful for them.
 - Q. Inviting girls to develop stories as a group, and then individually create endings that they later discuss and share.