

Short and Snappy – Finding the Balance



Objective

To provide tips and insight into maintaining a healthy and sustainable volunteering-work-life balance.

Length

20-25 minutes

Materials Needed

Copies of the worksheet (next page) for everyone.

Information to Share (spend 10 minutes on this section)

Volunteering for Girl Scouts is a wonderful and rewarding experience. But sometimes it can be difficult to balance your commitment to Girl Scouts with all of the other important, busy pieces of life. Even for the most enthusiastic and dedicated volunteers, lack of balance can lead to burnout.

This Short and Snappy suggests some tips for maintaining a balance between your many commitments.

1. **Be honest with yourself.** Be realistic about the amount of time and input you are able to contribute. Try not to take on more than you are able to manage.
2. **Ask for help.** If you have already taken on too much, or if something important comes up, talk to others and do not be afraid to ask for help. Maintaining positive relationships with other GS volunteers and GS parents provides you with a great support network of people who are happy and willing to help you help girls.
3. **Form a routine.** Think about what seems difficult to manage – is it responding to the questions and needs of others? Is it preparing for troop meetings? Once you have isolated your trouble area, set aside a specific time in your weekly routine to devote to that task. Set realistic expectations for what you can accomplish in that time, and stick to a firm start and stop time.
4. **Prioritize.** Sometimes, all of the many tasks of life – especially volunteering – hit you at once. There are always those weeks when everyone comes down on you at the same time: you have a presentation at work and a Girl Scout troop meeting on the same day that your spouse is away on a business trip, and you wake up with the flu. Learning to prioritize what must come first and what can be tabled for next time involves a continual process of reflection. Be willing to prioritize and don't be beat yourself up over making a necessary choice. This is a skill that starts with introspection and improves with time.
5. **Organize your supplies.** Between volunteering commitments and work, you may have 5 or more different groups or meetings that occur on a regular basis and require specific supplies. One thing that can save you from stress is having your supplies for each commitment always at the ready. Have a separate tote bag that you keep ready for each different type of event, such that all you have to do is grab your bag on the way out of the door. For example, you may have a separate tote for GS troop meetings, GS community meetings, work, church council meetings, and Boy Scout meetings.
6. **Multi-task.** Wait...isn't multi-tasking supposed to be bad? In the traditional sense, yes. But what we mean by multi-tasking, is to choose your commitments in ways that benefit multiple areas of your life. For example, you may highly value time with family, time with Girl Scouts, and career-networking or self-development. Choose an area of Girl Scout volunteering that you can do with your whole family, and also meet new people from your community to network with (such as Event Planning or Day Camp).

Activity (spend 15 minutes on this section)

1. Give each person a copy of the Wheel of Life worksheet.
2. Some of the most common top priorities/areas of life are already filled in (Career, Community/Social Responsibility, Family and Friends, Spiritual, Financial, Physical Health, Mental Health/Personal Growth). Tell participants that they may change any of the priorities listed to better suit their own life.
3. Have participants rank their level of satisfaction from 1-10 for each area, with the center of the wheel being "0 satisfaction" and the outer edge being "10." Shade in the area up to your ranking number for each priority.
4. Discuss:
 - a. Many people will see that not each priority is in balance. That is normal. The purpose of the exercise isn't to create a smooth ride, i.e., all "10's." The purpose is simply to note which areas of your life need some attention.
 - b. When we're out of balance, it's easy to overgeneralize and say that that everything is out of whack. The Wheel of Life is a simple tool that quickly points you to the areas that need work.
5. Now have everyone think about the following questions (they may write out answers if they choose):
 - a. What area do you want to work on?
 - b. What is the best possible outcome?
 - c. What is important about this to you?
 - d. What qualities do you need to bring out of yourself in order to accomplish this?
 - e. What areas could overlap, such that you may develop them simultaneously?
 - f. What is the first step?

Worksheet – Wheel of Life

