



## Promoting Good Behaviour in the Troop or Unit

# Leader Support Guide

### Promoting good behaviour

You can only achieve good behaviour in a Scout Troop or Unit with the co-operation of Patrol Leaders (PL's), adult Leaders and all the Scouts in the Troop or Unit. Accepting that discipline needs this team effort is the first key factor.

Leaders may feel that it is good for PL's to be responsible for discipline as part of their development.

PL's on the other hand may feel that Leaders just leave them to 'get on with dealing with difficult Scouts and don't give any support.'

This Leader Support Guide looks at some ways that PL's and Leaders can work together to promote good behaviour in the Troop or Unit - and what to do if things don't go as smoothly as hoped. Don't forget that the Assistant Patrol Leader (APL) will work closely with the PL and is an important part of the team.

### Leaders need to remember they have experience on their side

The truth is that experience can really help when dealing with bad behaviour and a PL is not likely to have much experience in this area.

Leaders should realise that PL's can easily reach a point where they just cannot cope. The Leader has to step in and help before this stage is reached. For PL's the process of finding their limitations and learning from them is a valuable lesson in life skills.

The Leader and the PL each have a role to play in the team and both must contribute. There is more information about this in The Scout Leaders Handbook.

A starting point can be setting the ground rules for acceptable behaviour within the Troop or Unit - a Code of Acceptable Behaviour (or Code of Conduct). Initially this is best done at a troop or unit council, perhaps after a general discussion with the Troop who then give suggestions to their PL.

### Planning and developing a Code of Acceptable Behaviour

A Code of Acceptable Behaviour is a good way to help people think about how they can work together.

A Code has to be drawn up as a result of discussion between the Leaders and all the Scouts in the Troop or Unit. It will have to be reviewed periodically by the Troop - and certainly soon after new Scouts join.

It may be worth asking if other Troops or Units in the District have such a Code - if they have, invite them to come and talk to you and use any good ideas they have had.

### PL's responsibilities.

The PL is responsible for running the Patrol and helping Scouts to work together to get a job done. The PL only deals with Scouts - if the parents become involved this must be handled by the Leader.

The PL's role in preparing a Code is to work with their Patrol through the Patrol Council and the Troop or Unit Council.

### **Leader's responsibilities**

The Leader is responsible for the Troop or Unit and supporting the PL's.

The Leader must make sure that the Troop or Unit is run in a way that encourages good behaviour and discipline.

The Leader is responsible for following any Scout Association guidance on discipline and behaviour and for liaison with other Leaders and parents.

The Leader's role in preparing a Code is to make sure that it is workable - but not to set the rules (this should be done by the Scouts). It is also a good idea to make sure all the other Leaders in the Group have a copy of the Code so they know what the Scout Troop or Unit is doing.

### **Troop or Unit responsibilities**

All members of the Troop or Unit are responsible for contributing to, and following, the Code.

### **Parent's awareness**

Troops or Units should ensure that parents are aware of their rules on behaviour and discipline by issuing a copy of the Code when a new member joins the Troop or Unit. This helps parents to understand what is expected of their son or daughter.

### **Starting the Code**

Use a statement such as 'The Leaders and Scouts of the 129<sup>th</sup> Grong Grong Scout Troop or Unit will work together to promote good behaviour in the Troop or Unit whilst having a programme which is both challenging and fun.'

### **Identifying acceptable behaviour**

Decide what is acceptable behaviour in the Troop or Unit.

Examples may be when:

- all Scouts come to meetings regularly;
- all Scouts join in and work as a team;
- Leaders and Scouts listen to each other;
- no one makes fun of anyone else because of their colour, religion, abilities, or disabilities;
- there is no bullying;
- no one makes a noise in quiet times like prayers, ceremonies or while game rules are being explained.

### **Publishing the Code of Acceptable Behaviour**

When the Code of Acceptable Behaviour is finished, make sure that:

- the Code looks attractive - use colour, cartoons or drawings;
- the Code is on the wall where everyone can see it;
- the Code is given to all Scouts and their parents and to other Leaders in the Group.

You might like to get all the Scouts and the Leaders to sign the copy on the wall to show that they accept the Code.

### **Six steps to follow**

It is important to remember that handling a group of other people is not always easy, so if things aren't working well don't be ashamed to ask for help.

If behaviour is a problem try following these six easy steps

- Step 1. PL's look at how they run the Patrol.
- Step 2. PL's work as a team with other PL's.
- Step 3. PL's ask their Leader to help them.
- Step 4. Leaders look for patterns in the behaviour.
- Step 5. Leaders ask someone from outside the Troop or Unit to help.
- Step 6. Leaders may have to talk to the parents.

### **Step 1. PL's look at how they run the Patrol**

**Always try to praise work that is done - not just criticise someone else's efforts.**

Lead by example.

It is important to be consistent in the approach to discipline, and to try hard to 'keep your cool.' Sometimes it is necessary to walk away from a problem until you have your own feelings in control. Always try to be firm but fair.

Don't make threats to try and get jobs done. Usually these can't be carried out and it may make you look silly.

Never resort to physical measures to try to sort out a problem.

If you know bullying is going on you must tell your Leader.

Sometimes the PL can spend so much time making sure other Scouts are busy doing something that they get criticised for doing nothing themselves!

Decisions the PL makes need to be seen as fair by all in the patrol.

### **Try these ideas**

Why not think about how to reward good behaviour rather than always knocking bad behaviour.

Make sure that activities are well planned, and that everyone has a job to do. It is important to check that all the equipment that will be needed is available and ready for use.

Explain clearly what you want done, and why. It may help to assist to get a job started if the PL was to lead by example - otherwise Scouts may think their PL is being lazy!

Ask for volunteers, or give the options of jobs that have to be done, before you give Scouts jobs to do.

Sometimes people won't take on responsibility because the job to be done seems too big for them. So start with smaller, more easily achieved tasks and build them up - but avoid favouritism.

Remind the Scout of the Code and try to agree how behaviour will be improved.

Ask them why they come to Scouts if they don't want to join in with what you are doing.

### **Step 2. PL's work as a team with other PL's**

If one PL cannot solve the problem alone the next step is to have a chat with the other PL's casually or in the Troop or Unit Council. They may be able to suggest new ideas that can be tried.

It will be easier to solve a problem if all the PL's work together!

Other PL's may be able to see something that has been missed. For example even if a PL sees bullying going on, it might be that the Scout is not a bully, but just retaliating.

If those causing trouble know that they can 'wind up one PL' or 'play one PL off against another' they will try to do so. If all the PL's work together in a consistent way this should not happen - so long as all the PL's remember to keep their cool.

### **Step 3. PL's ask their Leader to help them**

Running a Scout Troop or Unit is a partnership between PL's and Leaders.

Responsibility for behaviour has to be shared by both. So if there are problems in the Troop or Unit talk about them together. Sometimes it will be easier for an adult to cope with a difficult situation.

If Leaders and PL's work together as a team it should be easier to sort out a problem. Discuss how the situation might be helped and think about:

- Can the Leader give more help to the Patrol to help get the jobs done?
- Should a trouble maker be moved to another Patrol?

PL's need to make sure their Leaders know what has been done so far. It is important not to exaggerate as this will only make matters worse.

The Leader should have a quiet chat with the 'trouble maker' to hear his or her side of the story.

### **Things for the Leader to consider**

The Leader may have to consider:

- giving a warning about the behaviour.
- has the transgressor received a fair hearing and his/her reasons and excuses understood and taken into account.
- ensuring any discipline metered out is appropriate, not too severe, and cannot be seen as bullying. (*Youth at this age nearly always go for the electric chair or hangman's noose even for the smallest transgression. The Leader must help them to learn and grow by offering two or three appropriate strategies for them to choose from, after they consider the pros and cons of each.*)
- having a meeting with the parents.
- stopping Scouts from taking part in an activity where their behaviour could be dangerous to themselves or others.
- removal of authority in the case of a PL breaching the rules.

### **Step 4. Leaders look for patterns in the behaviour**

Try to identify patterns in the behaviour at Scouts.

You may find out that the cause can be something which is outside your control, but it may be something to do with Scouts.

### **Examples of behaviour you cannot do anything about**

- Problems brought from home - everyone has the occasional crisis.

- Differing standards between home and Scouts - for example, if swearing is accepted at home but not acceptable at Scouts it will be very confusing to the Scout concerned.
- Something that has happened at school or on the way to Scouts - for example, a fight or bullying which may spill over into the Troop or Unit meeting.
- Some food colourings and additives can cause behaviour problems.
- Sometimes parents may keep someone away from Scouts as a punishment for behaviour at home.

#### **Examples of behaviour you can do something about**

- The day and time of the Troop or Unit meeting is causing a problem because the person involved would rather be doing something else which is on at the same time.
- Energetic activities just get out of hand - perhaps a quietening down time is needed.
- The programme is poorly prepared, disorganised, unchallenging, inflexible, boring or repetitive.
- That there is not too much spare time so that people hang about with nothing to do.
- If you can see anything which seems to start off the problem - try changing it, it might help you!

#### **Step 5. Leaders ask someone from outside the Troop or Unit to help**

Sometimes someone who is not regularly attending the Troop or Unit meeting may see something the PL's and Leaders have missed.

A good next step is to ask the Group Leader (GL) or Regional/ District Commissioner (Scouts) (RC(S)) to pop in to the meeting to have a look.

Don't tell them what the trouble is - let them make their own judgement!

If, on the night of the visit, the problem doesn't occur - don't be embarrassed - try again. If there is never a problem during a visit then this has identified something important. Has the way the Troop or Unit meeting runs been changed because of the visitor?

#### **Step 6. Leaders may have to talk to the parents**

The Leader may have to discuss the problem with the parents concerned. If this takes place the PL's will not be involved in visiting the Scout's parents.

Before making a visit the Leader must tell the Scout concerned - this might be enough to sort out the problem!

It is important that the Leader is accompanied by another Leader from the Group, for example an Assistant Leader or the GL.

#### **Preparing for the visit**

Before making a visit the Leader must be quite clear what action they may have to take - and should have discussed it fully with the Group team.

Such a visit will have to be handled sensitively as the parent may not want to believe that their son or daughter could misbehave enough to warrant a visit by a Leader.

Leaders must stick to the facts and not exaggerate.

During the meeting aim to agree to a review period after which the position will be discussed again. Use the Code as a basis for any discussion.

Leaders may have to suggest the person concerned comes for the last half hour of the meeting and if they behave acceptably extend the time in following weeks. It is important that parents are aware of what is going on.

### **What if all this fails?**

One final option might be to consider whether the person concerned would transfer to another Troop or Unit (if there is one locally) to see if this would help.

Asking a person from the Member Support Team for some help,. They can be contacted through your Region Office.

If you have tried everything you can think of and can neither solve, nor cope with the problem, then the only remaining option is to ask the person to leave Scouts.

Such action must follow the procedures in Organisation & Information Handbook and will involve the Leaders, the GL and the District Commissioner.

### **A final word.**

Recent studies here in Australia and overseas reinforce the knowledge that part of the brain making teenager more responsible is far from developed and will not reach full development until around 25, or even 28 years, of age. Teenagers are at a stage where their brain development propels them toward taking risks and to act before they think, sometimes appearing to be quite irresponsible.

Scouting can be a significant help by providing fuller programs with safer more acceptable forms of risk taking, and by utilising the Troop or Unit Council offering balanced suggestions as to appropriateness of behaviour , and any disciplinary measures, to help toward strengthen those aspects of the developing brain.