

A Code of Conduct

- A Necessary Part of your Program

by Kelly Banks

Introduction

A Code of Conduct is something that every colony, pack, troop, company and crew should have in order that all participants get the maximum benefit from their Scouting program. An effective Code of Conduct will protect the quality of the youth's experience, and also ensures leaders are treated respectfully and properly by their section.

A Code of Conduct is a set of "rules" that everyone in a section agrees upon. It ensures that your meetings and activities run smoothly and fairly. It encourages youth to focus on how they work, both as individuals and in a section. Every section has priorities for what they want to accomplish and in Scouting, these priorities revolve around the Promise and Law that all youth and leaders make and follow. As you can see, a Code of Conduct is a useful tool that lists specific actions and ways to accomplish your section's and Scouting's priorities.

For a Code of Conduct to be successful, it needs to be presented to the youth in a participatory and inclusive way, rather than as a list of hard and fast rules. It is important for them to understand WHY a Code of Conduct is needed, as well as the reasons and concepts behind the items

that it is made up of (i.e., respect for others, co-operation etc.). Having them actively participate in the making of the Code, as well as ensuring they have an understanding of why certain rules are in place, will determine your success in implementing one. In the next printing of each *Leader Handbook* we will add more information outlining the process for creating a Code of Conduct.

Drafting a Code of Conduct

Since a Code of Conduct represents the *section's* priorities, it should include everyone's input. You may wish to have the Court of Honour or Sixer's Council design a rough draft of a Code to bring to their patrols and sixes for discussion. Here are some considerations for your youth to consider before they draft their Code of Conduct:

- Who is the Code of Conduct for? Think about everyone in your section and consider who will be affected by the Code.
- What actions/behaviours would you like to prevent from happening?
- What are the typical problems that might occur?
- How can these problems be dealt with?

Once you've considered these things, the next step is drafting the Code of Conduct. Here are the steps to follow in creating your Code:

1. Involve everyone: On-going discussion and everyone's input and agreement are needed for the Code to work.
2. Use the KISS principle (Keep It Simple Scouts!). Wording should be simple and sentences short and to the point.
3. Present the rules in a positive way. For example, instead of saying "You are not allowed to raise your voice, interrupt or talk back to a Scouter/other Scout," say "When talking to another Scout or Scouter, always use a respectful tone and level of voice. Respect other people's rights to speak without being interrupted."
4. Limit the number of rules: There is a danger of having so many rules, that they overlap and become hard to remember. Be aware of this and avoid it.

A Sample Code of Conduct for Scouts

1. Respect religious, cultural and personal beliefs.
2. Be helpful to each other and work as a team.



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- When talking to another Scout or Scouter, always use a respectful tone and level of voice. Respect other people's rights to speak without being interrupted.
- Bullying another Scout or Scouter is absolutely prohibited.
- Physical force or the use of violence against others is absolutely prohibited.
- Verbal comments of a disrespectful nature and/or insults against other Scouts or Scouters are strictly prohibited.

Consequences for Breaking the Code of Conduct

Having a set of consequences for breaking the Code is important. A consequence that everyone understands encourages members to follow the Code and will maintain fair treatment of those who break the rules. You, as a leader, along with youth input, need to figure out what the procedure will be for someone who breaks the Code. Ensure that this procedure is followed in the same way for everyone. Here is an example:

When a Code is broken:

- A verbal warning is issued the first time.
- The second violation will result in the Scout "sitting out" an activity.
- A third violation will result in the Scout appearing before the Court of Honour.
- After a fourth warning, the leader will call the Scout's parents, to explain the recurring problem, and they will work together on fixing it.

Introducing the Code of Conduct to Members and Family

Some ideas for introducing your Code of Conduct could include:

- Designating a meeting early in the year to discuss the Code of Conduct with everyone. Follow the activities posed in this article and on our web site.
- Sending home a copy of the Code to youth's parents, which the youth read with their parents, sign and return.
- Creating a poster that will hang on the wall during your meeting and act as an easy reference to the Code.

Pick and choose from the following activities to help youth understand the importance of a Code of Conduct, and the abstract concepts behind the rules (i.e., respecting and

treating people equally, sharing etc.) Want more ideas? You can find complete meeting plans for each section and more activities on Scouts Canada's web site, under For Leaders, Code of Conduct.



Gathering Activities:

Toothpaste Demonstration: *Words cannot be taken back once they are out there.*

Material: a tube of toothpaste, piece of paper

Directions:

With all of the youth sitting, ask someone to volunteer to do an experiment with you. Bring them to the front and ask them to squeeze some toothpaste onto some paper. Then when they have done so, ask them to put the toothpaste back into the tube. The kids will quickly discover that it is an impossible feat! Explain to them that you used the toothpaste to demonstrate what hurtful words are like. Once you have squeezed out hurtful words at someone – there is nothing you can do to take them back in – much like the toothpaste. Stress to them that the words are out there – you can't take them back. Therefore, if you think you will want to take them back – don't squeeze them out in the first place!

Commonalities

This game is designed to show your youth that they have a lot in common with others in their section, even though it may not be immediately obvious. This helps to create a sense of teamwork and prevents people from being singled out for being different.

Material: one pencil and piece of paper per team

Directions:

Divide the youth into small teams of four or five youth. Tell them you want them to look at their team, and see what they have in common with each other. For example, answers could include: "We are all human", "We all have the same colour hair", "We are all wearing jeans", etc.

Explain to the youth that these are *visible* commonalities. In the game they are going to try and find out what some of their *hidden* commonalities are. A hidden commonality is something you have in common with someone that you cannot see. For example, these could include "We all have sisters", "We go to the same school", "We all like pizza", etc.

Each team is now given a pencil and paper. Allow 15 minutes to find as many *hidden* commonalities as they can. A commonality qualifies as something two or more team members have in common.

Teams are trying to earn the highest score. Points are awarded as follows – one point for a two-person commonality, two points for a three or four person commonality, and three points for the whole team.

Game:

The Blob

This is a classic game where youth have to work together and cooperate in order to maneuver their "blobs" successfully. Introduce the activity by saying that cooperation and working as a team is needed in the game.

Directions:

Two players join hands to form the "Blob". The Blob grows by chasing other players and touching them. Note: Only the free hands at the end of the Blob can be used to touch players.

The Blob continues to grow until everyone is caught by the Blob!

Version for older youth (older Cubs and Scouts): Once Blobs become as big as four people, they should split off into Blobs of two, which will then grow again to four and split again.

Story:

Red Poison Darts An Interactive Story

This story will explain the hazards of name-calling to your youth. It does so in a visual way, by showing that

put-downs and name calling are like “red poison”.

Material: red marker or red chalk, chart paper or a black board with 7 circles drawn on, with dots for eyes, using black marker or white chalk. Label the circles, in order, Roger, Maria, Natasha, Boy 1, Boy 2, Joey, leaders.

Directions:

Start by discussing with the youth what put-downs and insults are, and how they can make people feel bad, hurt or like they are not worthwhile. Have them list some examples like, “dissing”, making fun of appearances etc. Explain you will be reading a story about put-downs and how they hurt others. As you read the following story, you or another leader use the red marker/chalk to show how the red poison is spreading. Colour in the drawings at the appropriate time in the story.

Red Poison Darts

One day Roger was doing a knotting exercise at his meeting and he was having a lot of trouble tying a butterfly knot. [Point to first circle]. He was getting really frustrated and started to put himself down. “I’m so stupid”, he said to himself. “I never get anything right.” [Colour in circle red.] He was so mad at himself it was as if he had filled up with red poison. Maria, who was sitting next to him, asked “Hey Roger, can I borrow some of your rope to practice with?”

Roger snapped, “Shut your big mouth!” at her, “I am trying to work.” It was as if Roger had shot a poison red dart at Maria. [Draw a line from Roger to Maria.] Maria felt hurt and felt like she had been filled up with red poison. [Colour in circle.] “You shut up!” she said. [Draw a line back to Roger].

Natasha came over at that time and asked Maria, “Can you help me set up for our next game?” Maria shot a red poison dart at Natasha. [Draw a line from Maria to Natasha.] “You are so stupid, you always need help setting up,” she said. “Do it yourself.” [Colour in circle.]

Natasha sat down. Two boys near her were talking. She gave them a dirty sneer and shot poison darts at them too. [Draw a line from Natasha to the two boy circles.] They filled up with red poison [colour in circles] and when Joey ran by them, they called him names and said unkind things

about how he ran. [Draw a line from the two boys to Joey.] Joey filled up with poison too. [Colour in circle.] Soon the whole section, even the leaders, was filled with red poison and shooting poison darts at each other over and over again. [Draw more circles and colour them in.] They had created a poisonous atmosphere.

After you have read the story ask your youth if they ever been in a poisonous atmosphere and how it felt to be there. Ask them how to prevent others and an atmosphere from becoming poisoned.



Theme Activities/Skill Building:

Caring

Tell the youth that you are going to do an activity that will show “caring” and make a point. Tell them you will play the music and you would like them to walk around the room. When you stop the music and call out a number (i.e., four), stop and grab hands with enough people to make a small group of that number. Don’t let any extra people break into your section and hold hands until the music starts again.

The first time you do this, have those that are left without a group sit out. Any groups with more or less than the number you call must sit out too. Do this for three or four more rounds, then call a number that is more than half the size of the section.

After this activity – ask the youth how it felt to be left out or even pushed away. Ask them how it felt to be treated the way they were (i.e., excluded). Ask them to give you some words that describe the way they were treated. Ask if they ever have witnessed others in their school and section treating people that way in real life, and discuss some examples.

People may sometimes call others nerds, losers etc. These are terms of

exclusion and they say to the other person that they are not worthy of their time, interest or compassion. As we grow up we learn that feelings don’t need to control us and that we can overrule negative feelings with mature, ethical and caring ways. What does this mean? Have the youth describe caring descriptions. Ask them – does a person’s neighborhood, size or colour give us a right to drop our standard of caring? Elicit responses.

Next, tell the section you are going to throw around a bright coloured ball and hear one bright idea from each youth. Ask them to say one thing they are going to do to show consideration, kindness, compassion or generosity to others.

Golden Rule Skits

Teach and talk about the Golden Rule with your youth: “*Treat others as you wish to be treated yourself.*” (See the November 2005 *Leader Magazine* for more on the Golden Rule throughout religions.) Then give them these skit ideas. Ask them to plan a short skit, acting out the Golden Rule in action.

- You find a watch in the parking lot after your meeting. What could happen next?
- Everybody is in a hurry. A child near you trips and falls down. What could happen next?
- Your leader asks the section to be quiet after somebody said something really funny. What could happen next?
- You borrowed a book from the leader and lost it. What could happen next?
- You think somebody is being cruel by making fun of another kid. What could happen next?
- You are being watched by your neighbor, while your parents are out. They call and leave a message on the phone for him about your bed time. You listen to it before your neighbor can. You really want to stay up later than your bed time to watch a show. If your parents catch you, they would blame the neighbor for not getting the message. What do you do?
- You’re at a picnic and there’s a long line for buying cold drinks. You’re really thirsty. You see a friend of yours way far ahead of you in line. What do you do?
- You are in a dodge ball game at your meeting. One youth is throwing the ball too hard. A

Photo: Bryan Mierau

couple of youth have already quit the game, but most don't want to because they think quitting would make them seem weak. What do you do?

- A bunch of the "cool" youth are picking on someone because his/her clothes aren't a brand name. They call out to you as you walk by "Isn't so-and-so such a loser?" What do you do?

Lodge/Six/Patrol Meeting:

The Rage Gage

This activity is designed to teach youth a metaphor to help them identify how angry they can get in certain situations and gives them a way to talk about their anger. Have youth divide up into their six. Show everyone a thermometer and ask them what it does when the air gets hotter. Then show the Cubs the Rage Gage (see sidebar below). Explain that as people get angry, they get hotter. Review the items on the gage and discuss their meaning.

Material: a copy of the Rage Gage for each six, and a list of the following scenarios

Directions:

Distribute the Rage Gages to each six along with a list of the following scenarios. As a six, discuss the different scenarios and where they would place them on the Rage Gage.

- Someone took something that belongs to you.
- Someone smushed your snack.
- Someone kept bothering you while you were trying to draw.
- Someone called you a bad name.
- Someone on your bus told you – "You can't sit here, I own this seat."
- Someone told you – "A little kid like you should be in a daycare."
- You want to swing, but the kids on the swings won't get off.
- You see some kids picking on a new kid in your section.
- You had to go to bed before your favorite show is over.
- You stubbed your toe.

After the sixes have gone through the list, ask them to give suggestions on what they can do when they get angry and how they can cool their Rage Gage off.

Meeting Debriefing – Reflect, Reflect, Reflect

It is important that during the activities the youth "lose themselves" in what they are doing and just have fun. But it is also important that you bring all the activities back to reality and reflect on them. It gives you a chance to tie it all back into the reason you are doing them in the first place – which is to establish why there is a need for a Code of Conduct and what the Code of Conduct is meant to address. Use these types of questions while reflecting:

Open ended and Guidance questions: (prevents yes and no answers, steers youth towards purpose of activities)
 What was the purpose of <activity name> today? What did you learn from it? How is it related to the items on our Code of Conduct?

Feeling Questions: (reflect on how they feel about what they did)
 How did it feel to work as a team?
 How did you feel during <activity name>?

Judgment Questions: (ask them to make a decision about things)
 How important were the activities to our Code of Conduct? Which activity was most important/had the most impact on you?

Closing Questions: (helps youth draw conclusions)
 What did you learn? What will you do differently from now on? How will you take this information and use it from now on? \

– Many of you are familiar with Kelly Banks' writing as she has been published before in *The Leader*. We congratulate Kelly on her move as a Council Field Executive with Voyageur Region.

Linking to Strategic Directions #1 and #4.

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High Adventure in the Canadian Rockies

Want more ideas?

You can find complete meeting plans for each section and more activities on Scouts Canada's web site, For Leaders, Code of Conduct.