





Social Work Best Practices For Girl Scouts Camp Counselors

Cultural Humility, Equity, Building Trust, Recognizing Verbal and
Nonverbal Cues, and Preventing, Identifying, and Working Through
Peer Conflict

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Cultural Humility & Equity

Cultural Humility: What does it mean?

- ❖ Children bring their own set of culturally based expectations, skills, talents, abilities, and values with them into their classroom or any place they interact with peers in their age range.
- ❖ They begin to develop their own self-concept (at least in part) from how others see them.
- ❖ To form positive self-concepts, children must honor and respect their own families and cultures and have others honor and respect these key facets of their identities too.
- ❖ ***If the environment where these children are interacting does not reflect and validate their families and cultures, children may feel invisible, unimportant, incompetent, and ashamed of who they are.***
- ❖ To many of us this may be seen differently or mean something different depending on the culture you represent.
- ❖ Your culture predicts how you view this term, of which determines how equitable your experience will be in this society. Your cultural backgrounds can also be a great indicator of why some behaviors differ in people.
- ❖ For example: “White European Americans tend to use implicit demands, meaning they are not very direct with demands, such as **“Johny, can you please put the blocks away?”** Children raised in the White European American culture understand that they are being told to put the blocks away”(SAMSHA, p.2).
 - “Children raised in the African American culture may interpret this utterance differently. Their culture, adult commands are usually explicit, which means more direct. **“DuShane, put away the blocks”** (SAMSHA, p.2).

Cultural Humility

What does it mean?

- ❖ The concept of cultural humility is, first and foremost, a process “of openness, self-awareness, being egoless, and incorporating self-reflection and critique after willingly interacting with diverse individuals” (Foranda, et al., 2016, p.213)
- ❖ Culture also defines personal space, including how much space feels appropriate for example, circle/meeting time.
- ❖ In some culture children feel comfortable playing close to one another; in others, the same space may feel claustrophobic and lead children to hit or shove playmate who seems too near.
 - **For example: If Candace doesn't pay attention to your request to keep the sand in the sandbox, you may be too far away to connect with her.**
 - Proximity in some cultures makes all the difference.
- ❖ It has been known that it is better to act colorblind and/or “colorblind”—“that is, to not acknowledge color or culture. This is a fallacy because this can lead to a plethora of conflicting self-concepts and feeling of unworthiness in children.
- ❖ But research has shown that this artificial blindness keeps us from recognizing, acknowledging, and appreciating important differences. And worse, it may lead unintentional bias toward or disrespect for those who children who are different one another.

Equity

What does it mean?

- ❖ Cultural Equity embodies the values, policies, and practices that ensure that all people—including but not limited to those who have been historically underrepresented based on ***race/ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, geography, citizenship status, or religion***—are represented in the development of arts policy; the support of artists; the nurturing of accessible thriving venues for expression; and fair distribution of programmatic, financial, and informational sources.
- ❖ The idea of equity is to meet people where they are, under the umbrella of these concepts and help them get to the level where non underrepresented people are by providing whatever it is needed. One cannot assume everyone is in the same boat pertaining to this concept and equitable practice acknowledges the gap that exists in each of these categories.

How Do We Become More Equitable and Inclusive of Everyone With All The Diversity They Come With?

Answer: Is as simple as becoming educated in what you do not know about before making any judgement or formulating any biases.

- ❖ Understanding of these concepts and how one may be discriminated via these concepts and subcategories of these concepts would be a great starting point:

Race/ethnicity- Today, *race* refers to a group sharing some outward physical characteristics and some commonalities of culture and history. *Ethnicity* refers to markers acquired from the group with which one shares cultural, traditional, and familial bonds

Age- The length of an existence extending from the beginning of any given time.

Disability- A physical, mental, cognitive, or developmental condition that impairs, interferes with, or limits a person's ability to engage in certain tasks or actions or participate in typical daily activities and interactions.

Sexual Orientation- A person's sexual identity or self-identification as bisexual, straight, gay, pansexual, etc. **See [hyperlink for more information on Gender Identity: Safe Zone Training Training Facilitator Guide](#)**

How Do We Become More Equitable and Inclusive of Everyone With All The Diversity They Come With? (Continued)

Answer: *Is as simple as becoming educated in what you do not know about before making any judgement or formulating any biases.*

Gender Identity- A person's internal sense of being male, female, some combination of male and female, or either, or neither male nor female. ***See hyperlink for more information on Gender Identity:*** [Safe Zone Training Training Facilitator Guide](#)

Socioeconomic status- A way of describing people based on their education, income, and type of job. Socioeconomic status is usually described low, medium, and high. People with lower socioeconomic status usually have less access to financial, educational, social, and health resources than those with higher socioeconomic status. As a result, they are more likely to be in poor health and have chronic health conditions and disabilities.

Geography- A science that deals with the description, distribution, and interaction of the diverse physical, biological, and cultural features of the earth's surface.

Citizenship Status- Means an individual's status as a U.S. citizen or national, or non-U.S. citizen, including the immigration status of a non-U.S. citizen.

Religion- A personal set or institutionalized system of religious attitudes, belief, and practices.

Teaching Diversity to Girl Scouts

How does one go about explaining such a complex topic to young children?

- ❖ Exposing children to and teaching them about diversity and inclusion is an effort needed from adults in today's world. Although children may notice differences between themselves and those around them, they may need guidance about diversity and inclusion.
- ❖ It is vital to speak to children about the ways in which people are different from each other make each person special and unique. We should be sure to reiterate to children that we should embrace diversity and show love to those around us.
- ❖ We can explain this concept in many different ways. However it is important to simplify it for second and third graders.
- ❖ Explaining such a complex concept to children might look like, "Diversity means that all of the people around us are different from each other", "We all look different, speak differently, and act differently and that's okay. Our differences are what make us special".

Teaching Diversity to Girl Scouts

What forms of diversity are important for children to know about? What might affect them?

- ❖ Since lots of details about diversity and inclusion will most likely be too much for a child to understand, it might be beneficial to simplify such difficult topics.
- ❖ For example, it could be important to discuss gender norms and gender roles with children. We could frame this by talking about “boy colors” and “girl colors”, differences in clothing, toys, etc.
- ❖ When speaking with children about gender norms, we could reiterate the idea that boys can play with dolls, wear dresses, and like pink and purple if they want to, and girls can play with trucks and superheroes and like the colors blue and green if they want to. It is vital for children to hear that these things are okay and address diversity in a way that will most likely be relevant to their lives.

Building Trust

Activities

Building trust within your group can help bond everyone, teach kids to work together, and increase communication skills.

- ❖ Trust fall
- ❖ Trust the leader
- ❖ Pass the hula hoop

Some of these example of trust activities can help build the trust bond between teens and children.

<https://www.healthline.com/health/parenting/trust-exercises-for-kids>

How to Build Trust

- ❖ Show them you understand. For example, listen to their concerns.
- ❖ You can tell once you are trusted by how much they are opening up, what they talk about, and body language
- ❖ Give them space to communicate
- ❖ Respect them. Make them feel important

<https://www.butlrhealth.com/blog/how-to-build-trust-with-a-client-in-therapy>

How to Build Trust (Continued)

- ❖ Try and be helpful. Focus on their small concerns at first and give positive feedback they can understand.
- ❖ Speak to them in a non critical way.
- ❖ Match their vibe. See how they talk to you and try to communicate to them in a similar way.
- ❖ Self disclose some information about yourself. But knowing when and how will impact the relationship. For example, if they are sharing an embarrassing story and you had something similar happen to you; opening up about it to them will make them feel comfortable.

<https://www.butlrhealth.com/blog/how-to-build-trust-with-a-client-in-therapy>

Recognizing Verbal and Nonverbal Cues

What do they mean?

- ❖ We communicate our thoughts, ideas, and plans to other people through both verbal and nonverbal communication. An individual's facial expressions, gestures, posture, and tone of voice are powerful communication tools that can assist in identifying what that person is feeling.
- ❖ Verbal communication consists of getting your message across using sounds, words, and languages. Examples may include speaking over the phone, face-to-face discussions, interviews, debates, presentations, written communication, etc.
- ❖ Non-verbal communication involves unsaid things like movement, body language, facial expressions, and tone. All of your nonverbal behaviors, such as the gestures one makes, their posture, their tone of voice, lack of eye contact, etc, can send strong messages about the person's emotions. Since body language is natural and unconscious, it broadcasts your true feelings and intentions.
- ❖ When two people are communicating face-to-face, they tend to use verbal and nonverbal communication at the same time. For example, if you are presenting material to a classroom, you might speak about the material while simultaneously use your hands to point, smile, and make eye contact with those you're presenting to.

Nonverbal Cues with Adolescents

Things to pick up on:

- ❖ It is vital to be able to pick up on cues of struggle, sadness, anxiousness, or anger when working with adolescents. Learning how to interpret and understand body language helps you better understand them and assist them in solving the issue at hand.
- ❖ Non-verbal communication uses body language, facial expressions, tone, and pauses in speech as the main form of communication. Certain examples of non-verbal communication can help to identify that a child is mentally struggling and/or experiencing some form of bullying.
- ❖ Some examples of non-verbal cues that are important to pick up on are lack of eye contact, closed body language, facial expressions such as frowning or a furrowed eyebrow, social isolation, etc.

Cues to Pay Attention to

What are some behaviors that may identify a struggle?

- ❖ If you suspect that a child is struggling, they might express it in multiple different ways. While they might tell you verbally, you can also use their body language and non-verbal cues to identify that they feel bullied, withdrawn, or isolated.
- ❖ Eye contact or lack thereof can be an indication of uncomfortability or struggle. Looking away frequently or avoiding eye contact altogether can indicate that the child is uncomfortable, withdrawn, or upset. In addition, frequent blinking can indicate that the person feels uncomfortable or upset as well.
- ❖ Certain facial expressions can help identify sadness, fear, or withdrawal. Some examples may include directing their eyes to the floor, frowning, or furrowed eyebrows.
- ❖ Bad posture and crossed arms may also indicate withdrawal and nervousness. These body languages display that the child is closed off.
- ❖ Lastly, social isolation is an extremely important behavior to pay attention to. If a child is isolating from the group, it's possible that they are being bullied or struggling with sadness or nervousness.

Addressing a Struggling Child

How you can help:

- ❖ Adolescents may struggle with many things, such as bullying, mental health, school, grades, etc. It is vital that children have a space that they feel is safe to problem-solve and feel their emotions.
- ❖ If a child displays (verbally or nonverbally) that they are struggling, there are various ways a camp counselor can approach the situation to help the child feel seen, heard, and supported.
- ❖ Examples include, “I see you’re struggling and having a hard time. I’m here to help” or “This is a safe space for you to share. I’m here to listen”.
- ❖ It can be difficult for adolescents to put into words that they might need help. Letting them know that you see they might be struggling and are there to help them can make them feel comfortable to come to you when they are ready. It also reassures them that they can count on you for help in the future and displays that they’re in a safe space.

Preventing, Identifying and Working through Peer Conflict

How to prevent conflict from happening

Create a routine with clear rules and guidelines.

- When expectations are known of everyone and rules and guidelines are clear it prevents others from having to step in to fill in blank spaces, which can cause conflict and disagreements.

Avoid making everything a competition and rather place more focus on bonding as a team.

- Turning events or experiences into a competition when it is not required encourages an “us” versus “them”. Place focus on the team and how being a part of a team is how everyone will win, placing focus on the smallest of role that played a part in the teams success.

Limit/control group integrations

- Limit does not mean don't allow, but rather limit the possibility of groups and clicks forming by mixing up group members frequently. By having control over the groups and overseeing their work you are able to allow others to have a say in different groups. Your involvement and oversight as a leader will be very important.

Identifying Early Signs of Conflict in Others

Signs that conflict is brewing...

1. Isolation – either a child is isolating themselves from the group or the group is isolating another individual
2. Side comments or separate conversations – even if the group is together are comments being geared towards one person, are others whispering or laughing without the other being involved.
3. Body language – moving away from another, side eyes, glares; at a young age it is difficult for children and adolescents to hide facial expressions.

Conflict Resolution

- Acknowledge their feelings – many times when conflict arises (especially with children/adolescents) we don't want to acknowledge their feelings because we don't expect them to be “real” when compared to the emotions of adults. DO NOT DO THIS. Their feelings are real and they are upset allow them to be upset and work with them to understand why they are upset and how to move on or compromise.
- Create a goal of the conversation/mediation that is occurring. They may not leave as friends, but can they come to an understanding to be kind.
- Separating people when necessary, this will be most valuable when there is a group against one person or a smaller group.
- Be aware of your own feelings and bias, who may know more or have seen more of the situation, but this does not mean that you are the judge and jury of the conflict. Again emotions and feelings are valid, work with both sides.
- Remember conflict can be good, it allows individuals to learn and grow and for you to understand how to make the groups and experience better.
- Lastly, celebrate the compromise. Conflict is never easy, so when a solution comes out of it, it is a big deal, praise and celebrate their ability to do so.

Thank you for the opportunity to better educate
the Girl Scouts and camp counselors on the
best practices of social work!

Girl Scout Promise

On my honor, I will try: To serve God and my country, To help
people at all times, And to live by the Girl Scout Law

*Members may substitute the word God in accordance with
their own spiritual beliefs

Girl Scout Law

I will do my best to be honest and fair, friendly and
helpful, considerate and caring, courageous and strong,
and responsible for what I say and do, and to respect
myself and others respect authority, use resources
wisely, make the world a better place, and be a sister to
every Girl Scout