



## TIPS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR GIRL SCOUT VOLUNTEERS

While many girls have good intentions about making responsible choices, they need help connecting these desires to action. This report demonstrates the important role adults and volunteers who work with young people play in shaping youth's decision making.

To encourage girls you work with in Girl Scouting to stick to their goals, consider the following tips:

1. Share and discuss the study's findings with them. Ask girls:
  - How often do you talk to or hang out with girls of different backgrounds?
  - How often do you volunteer? Is it easy to find opportunities to make a difference in your community?
  - Have you ever shared your opinion when you knew others would disagree with you?
  - Do girls or boys make decisions differently? If so, why do you think this is?
  - The study found that youth today feel less pressure to fit in than did youth 20 years ago. Do you feel a lot of peer pressure to look or act a certain way?
  - Do you talk to your parents when you're trying to make a difficult decision? Do you think your parents have different ideas about "right and wrong" than you do?
  - Are the concepts of voting and volunteering important to you?
2. If girls express concerns about risky behaviors, work with them to identify resources within the Girl Scout council and in the community that can help them make safe and healthy decisions about issues like drug and alcohol use or sexual activity. Encourage girls to compile and share these resources creatively—rather than simply creating a list of organizations' contact information, they might develop a map, a zine, or a Facebook group to connect other girls to these resources. Also consider visiting one of the organizations to learn more about their work, or inviting a representative to talk to girls about the services her/his organization provides.
3. If girls express frustration over a lack of meaningful service, leadership, or advocacy opportunities, help them explore community volunteer outlets that they can engage in as part of their Girl Scout experience until they find something suited to them. Don't be afraid to approach adults in the community to discuss expanding existing opportunities or creating new ones to ensure that girls have real access to leadership roles.

4. Even though 79 percent of youth say they would express an opinion even if it wasn't popular, our society continues to provide few opportunities for girls to share their opinions on issues affecting their lives. Help girls find opportunities to make their voices heard, stand up for what they believe in, and make a difference. Girls might:
  - Find out what Advocacy efforts the Girl Scout council is engaged in and connect with those persons.
  - Write a letter to the editor. Remind girls to keep their letters concise and to the point, and encourage them to share specific facts and/or personal anecdotes.
  - Call, write, or e-mail an elected official regarding a current issue, bill, or policy. Contacting an elected official can be a great way for girls to influence decisions affecting their lives.
  - Write an article or op-ed for a school newspaper, or send a story, poem, article, or drawing to a magazine that publishes girls' writing and art, such as *New Moon Girls* (<http://www.newmoon.com>), *Stone Soup* (<http://www.stonesoup.com>), or *Teen Voices* (<http://www.teenvoices.com>).
  - Express their ideas creatively—through a zine, a slam poetry piece, a radio show, a song, a mural, or a dance performance.
  - Write for a blog (or start a blog). For an example of a girl-written blog, check out *Women's Glib* (<http://womensglib.wordpress.com>).
  - Make a YouTube video sharing their views on a current issue or cause that matters to them.
  - Explore [www.dosomething.org](http://www.dosomething.org) for more ideas.
5. Provide girls with strong role models of women whose leadership reflects their social change values. Invite girls to read a book by or about a notable woman leader, or invite a woman leader from the community to talk to girls about her experiences as a woman advocating for social change.
6. Girls today are bombarded with media coverage of the less-than-exemplary decision making of many celebrities and leaders. Pick up a tabloid or two and use it to spark a conversation with girls.
  - Do they read celebrity magazines?
  - Why do they think so much media coverage is devoted to famous people who make poor choices? How does this coverage make girls feel about themselves and the choices they make?
  - Who are their role models? Do their role models include any celebrities?

7. Girls today are confronted with myriad dilemmas, from what to do when a close friend tells them a painful secret to how to react when they see a classmate cheat on a test. Spend time talking to girls individually or in small groups about situations in which they've faced or currently face a dilemma. Encourage girls to do the talking—but be willing to share anecdotes of your own experiences, to provide authentic examples of decision making. Creating realistic expectations and strategies to help girls navigate these situations can help them make well-informed decisions that reflect their own values and beliefs.
8. Create opportunities for girls to explore the relationship between values and culture by inviting someone from another culture or country to participate in a discussion with girls on social issues and decision making.
9. Because of differences in how each generation approaches decision making, many girls reported talking little with their parents about moral issues affecting their lives. Invite girls and their mothers to participate in a mother-daughter discussion on beliefs, values, and decision making. Explore the similarities and differences between mothers' and daughters' values and experiences. Ask both girls and their mothers:
  - What role did technology play in your girlhood?
  - What major events defined your girlhood, in terms of both personal/family events and global/political events?
  - What role did religion and spirituality play in your upbringing?
  - Who were your role models?
  - What leadership qualities do you admire?
  - What kind of information did you receive about health and wellbeing in your girlhood?
  - How did the media depict smoking, drinking, drugs, and sex?
10. Create opportunities for girls to connect with adults from different generations who may serve as positive role models.\* Possible intergenerational activities include:
  - A mentoring or tutoring relationship
  - Intergenerational sports
  - Storytelling or oral histories
  - Teaching older people computer or other technology skills

*\*This suggestion adapted from the Girls Action Foundation/Filles d'action*

*This tip sheet was prepared by Natalia Thompson, National Girl Consultant to the Girl Scout Research Institute.*

*Source: Good Intentions: The Beliefs and Values of Teens and Tweens Today (2009)*