

SCOUTS-L

BORED SCOUTS

Date: Thu, 13 Mar 1997 13:20:07 -0700
From: Amick Robert <amick@SPOT.COLORADO.EDU>
Subject: Re: How to make Bored Scouts Do
To: Multiple recipients of list SCOUTS-L <SCOUTS-L@TCUBVM.IS.TCU.EDU>

This is not an uncommon theme; and here are a few things we did to work on the problem to help solve it, and most seemed to work very well. The "symptoms" you pose are common with many older Scouts who have "been there, done that" and aren't challenged with meaningful activities suitable for their age group. The "roughhousing" with younger Scouts is often symptomatic of frustration and a lack of direction and opportunity for the senior Scouts. They need respect, direction, challenge, and an opportunity to be recognized for positive contributions. Most of all they need to have FUN and to look forward to each meeting or activity.

The next step is to get all the Scouts together on a meeting night, or even better at a "retreat" setting in a "fun" place where they can do other things after the session. This might be a rec center, a Scout camp, or whatever they like. If they know they will get to go swimming, climb a rock wall, shoot some hoops, play racquetball, etc., afterwards, they will be eager participants. FUN is the watchword. Don't make it like a "classroom" session.

Be SURE to serve food/snacks, ice cream, beverages, pizza, etc.. This is literally a proven group dynamics catalyst that stimulates participation and improves positive attitudes of the group immensely, especially with "two-legged incinerators" of the Scout persuasion, and leaders as well.

The sessions consist of "brainstorming" ideas about selected topics. Pick a leader, or even better a sharp older Scout or Eagle who is well liked and respected by the Scouts and who is dynamic and enthusiastic to moderate the session. If he is unfamiliar with the techniques of brainstorming, give him some advanced training on how to do the session. Be sure to keep things positive; no personal attacks or criticism, only constructive critiques, no names, no personalities; talk about things in general and if someone has a complaint, they should also have a suggestion for how to "fix" it positively.

A good way to do it is have Scouts line up around the room in front of sheets of newsprint, attached to easels or taped to the wall, and put

topic headers at the beginning of each page (such as campout ideas, mini-adventures, high adventures, advancement, community-service opportunities, and fun-stuff events. Give them colored large "felt-tip marker pens" to record the information.

Have them "record" the ideas as the moderator goes around the room and asks each Scout to contribute an idea. If someone doesn't have an idea, have them say "pass" and quickly go on to the next person. Keep the session lively and fast moving. When it appears that everyone is "running out of ideas," end the session and go with what you have to the next step. Adults may participate if the Scouts agree, but be careful not to have more than just a few leaders do this if so.

Ask the "hard questions" first:

1. What don't you like about troop meetings and activities?; what should the role of older Scouts be as leaders? Are they doing what you would like them to? Are they helping you? What do the older Scouts see their role as? What changes would make things better for everyone?
2. What do you like about what we are doing now.
3. What would you like to see changed to make Scouts more fun for you.

Then move into program development phase of brainstorming. Ask them:

What would YOU like to see the troop do in the way of activities at:

1. Meetings
2. Campouts
3. Other "fun" events.

The only rule is *there are NO bad ideas!* everyone should say whatever they think and not be afraid of being ridiculed or humiliated by others. Some of the very best ideas come from seemingly "impossible" or "off the wall" suggestions, which when examined, become very feasible and fun events.

Don't let anybody, especially adults, say "YES, BUT..." because this is an immediate "turn off" for the Scouts, and suppresses creativity.

If any one makes a disparaging comment, Scout or adult, the moderator should politely rule them "out of order."

Don't make this too long, as attention spans are short (adults just hide it better, nod knowingly, and are "somewhere else"). Intersperse food and fun between planning sessions. If you can't do a retreat, and have to do the sessions at meetings, do a little at each meeting; this lets folks think about things and come up with still more ideas..

When you get a good range of ideas, have the Scouts "vote" on each idea to give a "straw poll" of which ones they like best. They can vote as many times and as often as they want for each item of interest.

You will probably have enough stuff to last several years, so keep your newsprint ideas; then go to the third phase which is implementation.

Be very careful that the folks who are charting the ideas don't abbreviate them too much or change the intent of the idea. Many good ideas are lost when not enough detail is listed about the idea, and then when you go back to it, no one can remember exactly what was intended. The moderator should watch this and if it looks like there is a problem, help the Scout who is charting, with a little more detail to record the information accurately.

You will be amazed at how much input you will get from the Scouts if they are encouraged to speak freely, and some great ideas will come of it. If they are empowered to develop and plan the program they want, they will support and participate in the events.

Then, have them put their plans into action. Show them how to select and calendar the activities they want to do for at least three to six months, or even a year if you can. Use an activity planning form such as Exploring Activity Planner (from Explorer Leader Guidebook) and give small groups of Scouts, or a Patrol, the task of planning a specific activity with an older Scout and a Leader as consultants.

This process then becomes truly a "boy-run" program, and gives them a sense of responsibility and accountability for operating the programs they have selected and support.

Finally, the "Senior" Scouts (14 & up) need their own program. We started an Explorer Post in connection with the troop, which allows the Older Scouts to be concurrently registered as Explorers and to have their own more challenging activities that they choose and conduct. They wear the dark green Explorer Shirts, and serve as Troop Leaders. Our Explorers very much enjoy their leadership positions with the troop and are great role models and teachers for the younger Scouts who think they are "ten feet tall." The younger Scouts really look forward to being old enough to join Explorers when they turn 14, so membership retention is very high. Our Post has female members and many come from area Girl Scout Troops who concurrently become Explorers. With dynamic and fun events, both programs will complement and support each other, and you will not be wanting for older Scout youth leaders to keep your Troop viable and active.

Get motivated adult leaders to be Patrol Advisors to work with each Scout Patrol, and similarly for the older Scouts and/or Explorer Post. Make sure they are trained in their responsibilities.

Don't forget about Junior Leader Training. We send as many of our Scouts as we can to the "Bighorn" Junior Leader Training program operated by Denver Area Council. This program embraces the concept of youth leaders training youth leaders and really pays off when they come back to the troop and assume leadership roles. For Explorers, the Advanced Leadership Development Workshop is great and really teaches them how to lead and plan a post program effectively.

Hope this helps. Let me know if you need more information about the Exploring side of the program for Senior Scouts.

Bob Amick, Explorer Advisor, High Adventure Explorer Post 72, Boulder, CO

Date: Thu, 13 Mar 1997 11:19:59 -0800
From: Mikele Hushing-Kline <spinyarm@FIX.NET>
Subject: Re: How to make Bored Scouts Do
To: Multiple recipients of list SCOUTS-L <SCOUTS-L@TCUBVM.IS.TCU.EDU>

Melissa,

I'm sure you've heard from lots of Scouters already, but I guess I'll add

my two cents worth.

BSA has TONS of information available on how to run a troop; try sending your Scoutmaster and assistant Scoutmasters to Scoutmaster Fundamentals again. Have them read their Woods Wisdom for program ideas at troop meetings. Have them read their Scoutmaster Handbook on how to run a BOY LEAD troop

Addressing your specific questions:

**>The older scouts complain
>of being bored. They don't come in uniform and aren't interested in
>camping in the same boring place (I agree) one more month.**

Have you considered starting a Venture Crew for the older boys? Are you familiar with the program? It has saved more than one troop from dissolution when the older boys lost interest.

**>How are other
>units motivating their Scouts to get involved?**

The boys are motivated to get involved if THEY are running the program. If they don't run the program, why should they care what's happening? If they're not running the program, there really shouldn't even BE a program! Are they in positions of leadership? Have they been to junior leader training? Who makes the calender of events? What are the interests of the boys? Should they be encouraged to do a merit badge in their area of interest?

**>What exciting things does
>the troop do during the weekly meetings that spark their attention?**

Scout skills refreshers that pertain to the upcoming events. Special speakers on such subjects as Rock Climbing, Rappelling, Canoeing, or whatever the upcoming high adventure event is.

In our troop, if the boys don't earn the money in the fund raisers, the events don't happen. So, when they're planning a fund-raiser, they know EXACTLY what they're raising the money for.

Team building games. There are lots of books out there on how to run these very goal oriented games. If you like, I'll track the names of them down.

>The scout hut needs lots of repairs and they aren't interested in doing them
>because it would take time.

Frankly, I wouldn't want to do that either. Some Scouts never WANT to do service; some do. Don't push it right now. Sounds like these older Scouts need a real attitude adjustment; they need to learn to love Scouting again. Once they love Scouting and what it stands for, the service attitude will follow. Really.

>The younger (recently crossed) Scouts are picked on physically (punching >and hitting). Now they don't want to come to troop meetings because of >the bullies.

And what has been done to stop the abuse? Scouting is a SAFE HAVEN for boys. Your Scoutmaster should have put an IMMEDIATE stop to that kind of behaviour. If he can't discipline, why not ask an Assistant Scoutmaster to take over the job?

I know the tone of this is kinda harsh; I apologize. It's just that I've been there before, and it's not a good place to be. Fix it quick! You're on a slippery slope right now, and the Scouting literature, commissioner program and other Scoutmasters can help you put on the rubber skids.

Best of luck!!

Mikele Hushing-Kline
Del Norte District
Los Padres Council

Date: Thu, 13 Mar 1997 02:21:39 +0000
From: "(MAJ) Mike Walton (settummanque, the blackeagle)"
<blkeagle@DYNASTY.NET>
Subject: Re: How to make Bored Scouts Do
To: Multiple recipients of list SCOUTS-L <SCOUTS-L@TCUBVM.IS.TCU.EDU>

Martin, "computer guru in training" (and doing a great job of it!!)
passed along a note from Melissa, asking us:

>The older scouts complain of being bored. They don't come in uniform
>and
aren't interested in camping in the same boring place (I agree) one >more
month. How are other units motivating their Scouts to get >involved?

By letting THEM decide where to go camping. If all you were being offered was Chicken Nuggets (which sound really good this morning at 2am!) every time you came through the door, eventually you will either eat before you arrive, say "Chicken Nuggets....AGAIN??" or simply not show up ("Hey!! It's the same old stuff...all they are going to have are those stupid Chicken Nuggets!!)

However, if you came one week, and instead of having Chicken Nuggets, you were handed a coupon good for \$5 at the local mall food court, WOW!!!! you can now CHOOSE between Chicken Nuggets and several other things.....you may end up still getting Chicken Nuggets out of "confort" (I know what they taste like, and besides, I haven't tried them with hot mustard from the Chinese Resturant yet....wonder what THAT'LL taste like??)...but its YOUR CHOICE.

Those Scouts aren't being offered a chance to decide for themselves their own program, one of the cornerstones of a Troop's program. How can we teach leadership and citizenship if they are "working" with a "governmental system" that doesn't ask for or listen to what they want to do....and is flexiable to try what they are suggesting?? How can we allow Patrol Leaders and Senior Patrol Leaders to think on their feet if they already know the answers?? How can we instill the idea of self-reliance and cooperation if they know that "it's the same place and this is what I have to do to get ready for it"??

The answer is easy: LET THEM PLAN THEIR OWN PROGRAM WITH SOME (LITTLE) GUIDANCE FROM YOU. Want to make their eyes perk and allow you to SEE those "gerbels" in their brains "move"?? Bring a road map to your next Troop meeting and sit it down at the table along with a pad of paper and some pencils for each of your older Scouts. Announce that you want THEM to plan a 50-mile hike between any two points on your map. After they have planned their trip, ask them to meet together and decide on which trip is the most appealing to the group. Finally, take the final plan and bring it before the Troop's Patrol Leader

Council as a possible trip for the entire Troop, with those senior (older) boys serving as guides and organizers. Don't offer any help, hints or even ideas....just let them do it and let them "hash it out" between themselves!! When they ask "do we have to do on foot?", "can we use a car?", "can we eat at McDonalds' instead of cooking over a fire?", simply state "It's up to you....it's YOUR PLAN, not mine. I don't care. You TELL ME and the REST OF US WHAT YOU WANT TO DO...."

Keep them from "skating out" on this by setting a time period for the completion of their plan....the end of the meeting, for instance. Go onward with the rest of the meeting...you will see that for the first time in a while, the meeting will surprisely go smoother, because you'll have less distractions.

Then DO IT as much as possible during the spring break or right after school lets out but before Summer camp. See what kind of reaction you will get from those boys that months, weeks, days before, were just "sitting around, waiting for somethng to do". Don't let their plan get cold...insist that the older boy "leader" (there'll be one, trust me!) "brief" the plan to the Troop's Committee (not for their "approval" but for their "support"...there's a big difference, and boys will pick up "we want you to tell the Troop Committee what your plan is for their approval" (sound negative already, doesn't it??) and "We want you to share it with the Troop's Committee to get their support" (sounds like a chaallenge..."to get their support"!)

Your Scoutmaster needs, Melissa, to attend Scoutmaster Fundamentals and to in turn, train his boy leaders. Then he or she needs to GET OUT OF THEIR WAY and to LET THEM LEAD. Some Scouters have a low opinion of our youth....they think that they can't lead because they seemed not interested in leading...what those youth are afriad of and perhaps have been done to them in the past, is trying to lead and then some adult, sensing that "Oh oh!! I'm not as important as I thought I would be!!", comes in and says "No, you can't do that... you have to have my permission and I won't let you....this is what *I* think you need to do...." and takes away any bit of authority they may have had up to that point....

...and you end up with kids sitting around bored, waiting for some adult to

stand up and say "Hey guys!!! Let's got camping!!!"

As I've wrote many times here, Melissa, the function of the Scoutmaster boils down to four essentials: to welcome new Scouts and parents and to assist in their recognition; to train the leaders of the Troop, in particular the Senior Patrol Leader and Patrol Leaders; to keep the building, hut, or room from being burnt to the ground and Scouts and Scouters from injuring themselves or others on purpose or accidently; and in having a mug, cup or glass of their favorite non-alcoholic beverage and sitting off in a corner or in another room away from the "action" and reflecting upon how much confidence you have in those boys you've trained and in the things they can do.

Sounds like the Scoutmaster needs that training and so do those leaders of the Troop....the Scoutmaster is NOT the leader. He or she is the adult advisor to the elected boys of the Troop and their appointed assistants. When more Scoutmasters realize that, we will continue to have stronger boy-led programs and less bordom among youth AND adults!!

The key is in allowing as many of your Troop members and NOT adults to make decisions on what the Troop's going to do....plan it, with the youth taking the lead....and watch them TELL you that "Hey!! We HAD IT with the Chicken Nuggets!!! We want Chinese Food from Mr. Han's on Cherry Street, next week...how about it!!!"

How about it??

Settummanque!

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---FORWARD in service to youth ----

Date: Wed, 12 Mar 1997 19:38:48 -0500
From: "H. Alan Schup" <aschup@WHY.NET>
Subject: Re: How to make Bored Scouts Do
To: Multiple recipients of list SCOUTS-L <SCOUTS-L@TCUBVM.IS.TCU.EDU>

There is many things that need commented upon:

>The older scouts complain
>of being bored. They don't come in uniform and aren't interested in
>camping in the same boring place (I agree) one more month. How are
other
>units motivating their Scouts to get involved? What exciting things does
>the troop do during the weekly meetings that spark their attention?

Have you thought about the Venture / Varsity Scouting program? I
always

have separate programs for the new, experience, and older scouts. I stress
that the program is boy-decided so that they pick the activities that
interest them. (No uniform, no scout spirit, no BoR/advancement. Sounds
like a Troop in trouble of dying.) Another suggestion is to try the
C.O.P.E. program to unite them into a team, then allowing them to plan
activities at other camps that interest them. Has this troop ever gone to
any High Adventure Base in its history?

>The younger (recently crossed) Scouts are picked on physically (punching
>and hitting). Now they don't want to come to troop meetings because of
>the bullies.

THE BULLYING MUST IMMEDIATELY STOP. All the "bullies" and their
families

are close to being sued for abuse, especially if there are bruises and
other marks. All the adults in charge are also legally liable for allowing
the abuse to occur (both physical and emotional child abuse). In Michigan,
a scout was physically abused by another scout while I was Summer Camp
SM,
and Child Welfare was contacting me to get details of my involvement/lack
of involvement. My Troop By-Laws have bullying and physical contact as
a
behavior that results in the immediate telephone call of parents to pick up
the abusive boy. The parents need to know that the bully behavior must
stop or the adult leaders are required by BSA to notify the proper legal
authorities.

>I have heard the thread about boys lead program etc. The boys aren't
>leading, don't care to lead, and probably don't know how. The troop needs
>help and direction. Scoutmaster welcomes ideas, but seems to be
>"afraid" of being strict with the boys. He wants discipline, but doesn't
>know how to get it.

You get respect only if you show you deserve it. Teens keep pushing the limit to see where the limit is. For one scout that the PLC kept sending to me because of improper language, I asked him in a SM Conference as to why he minds me, but gives his parents hell. His answer was, "You require me to behave. My parents do not care about me, but you do."

Unfortunately, I feel the problem with the older boys stem from the SM not

doing the job in training leaders. The PLC should administer discipline, with the SM to OK or veto their decision. Youth peer pressure works much better than adults giving lectures and looking like a dictator in front of the youth. There is no trained youth leaders in the troop, hence no PLC, hence no means for proper discipline or example for the other scouts to follow.

Good luck in correcting the troop's situation.

-Alan Schup

SM and 25+ year veteran scouter

Date: Wed, 12 Mar 1997 19:19:11 -0800

From: Marvin Rosen <marv@NEBULA.ISPACE.COM>

Subject: Re: How to make Bored Scouts Do

To: Multiple recipients of list SCOUTS-L <SCOUTS-L@TCUBVM.IS.TCU.EDU>

Martin Konigsdorffer wrote:

>

**> One of our local troops has requested the help of the list once again. So
> as computer guru in training, I get to ask. :) The older scouts complain
> of being bored. They don't come in uniform and aren't interested in
> camping in the same boring place (I agree) one more month.**

**> The younger (recently crossed) Scouts are picked on physically (punching
> and hitting). Now they don't want to come to troop meetings because of
> the bullies.**

**> I have heard the thread about boys lead program etc. The boys aren't
> leading, don't care to lead, and probably don't know how. The troop needs
> help and direction. Scout master welcomes ideas, but seems to be
> "afraid" of being strict with the boys. He wants discipline, but doesn't
> know how to get it.**

It appears appears your unit needs some discipline as well as a program. The boys can't lead if they don't know how. A JLT is in order. If your Scoutmaster feels uncomfortable about running a JLT help could be had

from his commissioner or a joint JLT with another unit.

An older Scouter when asked what are the three most important things needed to keep boys and get new ones involved responded

#1 PROGRAM

#2 PROGRAM

and

#3 PROGRAM

Woods wisdom has excellent suggestions for troop programs. have a venture patrol for your older boys. Our venture patrol in the last few years have become SCUBA certified, gone repelling, flown simulators and airplanes, waterskied, gone sailing, made model rockets, Hiked in the mountains, taken bike trips, gone deepsea fishing allthis and camping too. Our younger Scouts have participated in some of these activities too.

All this takes a lot of planning and some fund raising too. We put very few restraints on our venture crew. They come up with a plan and we help them to accomplish it. We dont do it for them. We require the venture patrol members to maintain an active leadership roll in the Troop such as patrol guides instructors.

Its not always easy and things don't always work out but we have fun and a lot of advancement happens.

YIS

Marvin Rosen

CC UC I used to be an OWL....