

SCOUTS-L

PROBLEM SCOUTS

Date: Thu, 2 May 1996 10:48:00 EST
From: Steve Robinson <0006155173@MCIMAIL.COM>
Subject: Re: How to Help Anti-Social Scout

>"I don't know what to do. I'll just watch. I don't want to learn." were
>his responses. Earlier he had been wandering the school instead of being

>"11 and 12 year old league but I play like a 5 year old. I'm no good at
>baseball."

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>slower at my coaxing. "I'm not good at getting places. I like poking
>along." I asked him to talk louder and more clearly because if he mumbles
>people will start to ignore him. "I like to mumble and people ignore me
>anyway." On top of mumbling he'll turn his back and wander away in

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>Later I heard the Scout say to himself "I was the only funny one up
there."

It appears to me that the boy is just repeating comments what he has heard from others, perhaps his parents. Sometimes people will live up to the comments continually made to them by others, especially parents.

Baden-Powell wrote in his book, "Aids to Scoutmastership":

"Thirdly, the business of the Scoutmaster - and a very interesting one it is - is to draw out each boy and find out what is in him, and then to catch hold of the good and develop it to the exclusion of the bad. There is five per cent of good even in the worst character. The sport is to find it, and then to develop it on to an 80 or 90 per cent basis. This is education instead of instruction of the young mind."

"THE FIRST STEP towards success in training your boy is to know something about boys in general and then about this boy in particular."

"As I have said, the first step to success is to know your boy, but the second step is to know his home. It is only when you know what his environment is when he is away from the Scouts that you can really tell what influences to bring to bear upon him."

"Where the sympathy and support of the boy's parents are secured, where the parents have been brought into a mutual partnership with a fuller interest in the working of the Troop and the aim of the Movement, the

task of the Scoutmaster becomes proportionately light."

"Responsiveness. - When a boy finds somebody who takes an interest in him he responds and follows where he is led, and it is here that hero-worship comes in as a great force for helping the Scoutmaster."

IMO that is where to start, talk to his parents and get a sense of how they are. Maybe just have a meeting with them to explain how your troop operates and how you need their support. I don't think I would immediately bring up these problems, for the boy may be punished for his actions. Once you feel you have a trusting relationship with them, then perhaps ask general-type questions about his behavior at school, etc. All the time letting the parents know of your concern for the boy. It may not work, the parents may not let you "in". But perhaps you will have success and the parents may not be aware of the situation and want to help.

Maybe ask his mom/dad to come along one campout just to help out, in order to observe their behavior around him, and vice-versa, as well as to see if his behavior changes.

Talk to his Webelos Den Leader and ask if he acted the same way, and perhaps some things he/she did to help with the situation. Try to focus on the things he does do well.

I won't tell you it will be easy, but your influence will make a difference in him for the rest of his life, just like in the rest of the boys of the troop.

Hope this helps!

YiS,
Steve Robinson
SM, Troop 1133
Plano, TX

Date: Fri, 17 May 1996 01:42:49 -0400 (EDT)
From: "Michael F. Bowman" <mfbowman@CapAccess.org>
To: SCOUTS-L - Youth Groups Discussion List <SCOUTS-L@TCUBVM.IS.TCU.EDU>

Subject: Re: behavior problems kids and parent

Lauri,

The situation you describe is a sad one. From what I can tell you have about five boys that would like to be Scouts, two who for sure would like not to be and two who are tending to follow the lead of the two disruptive Scouts. This is a situation that does not have to continue for you. Here are two options that you may want to consider.

1. Remember that the chartering organization owns the Troop and has decided to use the Scouting program for youth it wishes to serve. Your Council will want very much to keep this chartered partner, probably more than it will want to deal with a Scouter that is causing problems. Talks with the chartered organization and see what they think about the situation.

They are responsible to see that the unit has good leadership, etc. They may decide that a change is in order and decide that the disruptive ones need not be reregistered with the unit and give help to get the remainder of the unit growing again. You can also talk with your Council and/or District Commissioner and Professional staff about the UC. Although there is no rule against a UC having children in a unit he/she serves, it does tend to create some conflicts of interest. Perhaps someone a little higher up the chain can set things right and get you some help.

2. If you don't think to much of the chances of recovering the unit, or it is far too much effort for what it is worth, don't hesitate to move to another Scout Troop in your area that has a good program. Your son and the boys that want to be Scouts deserve to have a Troop that delivers the promise of Scouting. There is absolutely nothing wrong with moving a Scout to another Troop to give him all of the opportunities of a rich Scouting program. In my own case, I moved my son to a different Troop about three years ago, when the one he was in wasn't providing a program and wasn't willing to change. A number of other Scouts moved too and that

provided the necessary wake up call to get the chartered organization and others involved to make changes. Afterward the unit got new leadership and developed good programs. Meanwhile my son was able to get a good Scouting experience, while I was working on changes that took a long time.

Your son is only going to be interested for so long before this bad environment makes him decide he doesn't want to participate. Before that happens a change is needed. Do what is right for your son first and

foremost, even if that means a move. The other parents of interested Scouts may follow suit. The rump unit that is left probably will come close enough to failing that it will get the District's attention and cause changes to take place that way. As a commissioner the last thing I'd want to see is a unit fold, but on the other hand, our primary objective is to give each Scout a program that is fun and that promotes character development, citizenship, and fitness. Your Troop's program sounds like it is a far cry from that. It needs emergency attention and quick action or you need to move to a unit that can provide a program that fosters growth and development.

If you do leave, make sure your District Commissioner and District Executive know why you are leaving so that they can take the necessary steps to try and fix the problems.

Speaking Only for Myself in the Scouting Spirit, Michael F. Bowman
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Date: Sat, 15 Jun 1996 08:47:11 -0400 (EDT)
From: "Michael F. Bowman" <mfbowman@CapAccess.org>
To: Ron Boyd <rdboyd@HIWAAY.NET>
Subject: Re: Scouter Leaders' Liability

Ron,

You related that you have a Scout who tried to run away from you at a camporee and that he has a negative attitude; e.g., told you that he hated Scouting then, but now wants to go to camp. As to liability you are covered for him the same as for any other Scout. And if you have concerns about what this means, it is probably best to have a chat with your District Executive or Scout Executive to find out more. I don't think that liability is the real issue here, so much as the safety of this Scout.

From your posting it is hard to know much about the Scout. Is he apt to be a danger to himself or another Scout? Is he likely to run away again? What is the situation with his parents? Are they forcing him to go to camp to get rid of him for a week during the Summer? Is he trying to go to camp because he really wants to go, with maybe parents who could care less or are not supportive? Are there problems at home? Would it help,

if one of his parents came to camp with him?

It may well be that this Scout needs the opportunity to grow at camp more than any of your other Scouts. That doesn't of course mean that it will be easy to have him and will really challenge you, if he does go.

Before answering the question, I would encourage you to talk to the Scout and find out what he is interested in, what he likes, what excites him.

What does he think about the Troop? What does he expect out of camp?

How

does he plan to handle himself? Maybe you could work out an understanding

with what is expected - perhaps a contract.

You should also learn a little more about the home situation and talk with the parents privately about your concerns. This will probably give you some insights to both how the family situation is and maybe about why

the Scout has a negative attitude.

After learning a bit more you can make a better assessment of whether taking this Scout is going to be good for him and weigh the effect of taking him versus the effect it may have on the other Scouts.

There is no rule that you have to take him to camp. However, if you can do so, it may well be the opportunity he needs badly to grow. On the other hand, if he would be such a disruption that his presence would ruin the experience of the other Scouts, it may be that you have to remember that these Scouts deserve the best experience we can give too.

In situations like this there are no easy answers. Don't be afraid to talk about this with other leaders and your commissioner. Use the information you gather and the ideas to come to a decision that works best for the situation you have. Good luck.

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Date: Sun, 7 Jul 1996 11:48:55 -0400 (EDT)

From: "Michael F. Bowman" <mfbowman@CapAccess.org>

To: SCOUTS-L - Youth Groups Discussion List <SCOUTS-L@TCUBVM.IS.TCU.EDU>

cc: Multiple recipients of list SCOUTS-L <SCOUTS-L@TCUBVM.IS.TCU.EDU>
Subject: Re: discipline problems

Bob,

Generally when I hear someone excuse egregious conduct with "boys will be boys" I tend to believe that is their way of saying they don't want to be bothered or involved with the hope that ignoring a problem will make it go away. Usually it doesn't.

Without knowing what the bad conduct was, it is hard to measure what would be an appropriate response. It does, however, sound like talking about the conduct was not all that fruitful at camp. If they didn't get the message after three conferences, I'm not sure another one will do much more.

Consider trying a two-pronged response:

1. Evaluate your program and whether it provides ample challenges to hold the interest of these boys. What are they interested in doing beside raising a bit of the devil? What would really get them excited enough to want to participate. They may be bored and simply making their own fun at the expense of others. Do you have a venture program? Can they work with a venture crew in another Troop, if you don't have one.

2. Evaluate the chances of a favorable parent response. If you think the parents will be supportive; e.g., aren't part of the problem, enlist them in the solution process. Meet with them and work out a plan to resolve the conduct. You might require that a parent attend any outing the boy attends for a period of time and that the boy sign a conduct contract also signed by his parents. If the parents are not apt to be supportive and this process would be futile, then your committee should simply tell them what the Troop policies are on conduct, let them know they have had a warning, and act on the next case of misconduct with the remedial response appropriate to the misconduct; e.g., expulsion, suspension, parent required, service project required, etc.

If nothing is done to change things the other Scouts in the Troop won't ignore the situation - they will be learning lessons too. And if they learn that misconduct is tolerated, what is to stop them from joining in the fun. And while your unit needs to react, the reaction needs to be even handed and fair after some self-evaluation; e.g., what can we do to challenge these Scouts to be the best they can.

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Date: Tue, 6 Aug 1996 19:33:39 -0500
From: golden cliff <c60clg1@CORN.CSO.NIU.EDU>
Subject: Re: Who should go to Scout Camp?

Chris, you pose a very good question.

I personally hate to give up on a boy. The "problem boys" are the ones that most need the Scouting program. On the other hand, if their actions threaten the safety of others, or destroy the quality of program for others, we have to consider the benefit of the troop as a whole.

I do not have a patent answer for this, and I do not believe one exists. I think one must examine each situation on its own merit. Individuals differ and so does each unique situation.

One way to deal with it is to have a heart to heart with the boy in a conference, another with his parents, another with all three. Give him some tangible expectations and discuss why they are important. Explain the situation from your viewpoint and ask him to explain it from his. Sincerely listen to what he has to say. There needs to be a real commitment from all parties to work out a successful conclusion to the problem.

Work with him as long as you can. When the time comes that you've done everything you possibly can, work a little longer. There may come a point when you have to say goodbye to the boy for the sake of the group. You'll know when that time comes.

I hate giving up on a boy. It really hurts me to do that. I work as long as I can, and try to believe in them and look for their best characteristics. Often they will turn around and improve. Sometimes the right type of positive encouragement can make a world of difference.

I don't believe in the concept of a "bad boy". I believe in the concept of a "good boy struggling with bad problems". If you can help the boy identify and overcome his problems, what you are left with is that good boy. It's often amazing what time and patience can do.

I've been a Scoutmaster for nearly 20 years and have worked with hundreds of boys, I've turned only 3 away from the program. Each one I

felt was necessary. I didn't enjoy it, but I don't regret having done it either. In those cases, it needed to be done.

Realistically, you can't save every boy. You can try, but they have to try too. If you do decide to discharge a boy from the troop, then have an "exit interview" with him. Explain why he is no longer part of the program. Be honest with him about his good and bad points. Wish him well. Remember he is young and still learning. Try to make it a lesson that might somehow help him later in life.

It's not pleasant, but it can be a growing experience.

Discharging a boy is the last resort. Look for every possible alternative. We are here to develop character, citizenship, and fitness in young people. They won't all start out as perfect Scouts, and few leave as perfect Scouts. We can point to the ideals of Scouting, show the best example we can, work to draw out the best in every boy, and try to show them some fun in the process. Sadly that formula won't work for every single boy that enters the program, but it works for the majority of them. For those boys that have deeper needs, we can try harder to reach them. Sadly sometimes we can't reach them all.

YIS, Cliff Golden

Scoutmaster Troop 33; DeKalb, Illinois

On Tue, 6 Aug 1996, Chris Schwartz wrote:

- > As a troop leader, I and an assistant scout master took
- > 3 boys to high adventure camp at Goshen, VA. There were plenty
- > of good things, but one boy cussed me out, refused orders from
- > the crew chief and leaders and generally made a great week into
- > a barely tolerable week. I felt like I was a baby sitter.
- >
- > I knew this boy had poor discipline and recognized that problems
- > could arise. Every time I threatened him with, "I will call your
- > Dad and he can come get you", he was good for a few hours.
- >
- > It would have been better if he could have been prevented from
- > ruining the trip for everyone, but I couldn't think of a tactic
- > for doing this. Any ideas for next year?
- > Chris Schwart, CC Troop 1033 Beltsville, MD

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> **Chris Schwartz** (301) 286-7345

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> **Greenbelt, MD 20771**

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Date: Sat, 27 Jul 1996 04:21:33 -0400 (EDT)

From: "Michael F. Bowman" <mfbowman@CapAccess.org>

To: SCOUTS-L - Youth Groups Discussion List <SCOUTS-L@TCUBVM.IS.TCU.EDU>

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

Subject: Re: Sticky Fingers

Annie,

Before you have to resort to confrontational counseling with the sticky fingered Cub and/or his parent(s), you might want to try an indirect approach that would allow him an opportunity for growth without pointing any fingers. Take a look at the Cub Scout Leader How To Book's section called Ethics in Action. There is an activity called "Caring and Sharing."

In this activity the Cubs use a mock court to deal with the issues of taking care of one's own things and respecting the property of other people. You vary the exercise just slightly to have the mock trial be on the subject of stealing, using the same introduction, questions, and activities.

I would recommend that "sticky fingers" be asked to be the judge or prosecutor and that a volunteer Cub be the suspect. This should give the young man plenty to think about. :-)

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Date: Sat, 27 Jul 1996 21:26:53 -0400 (EDT)

From: "Michael F. Bowman" <mfbowman@CapAccess.org>

To: SCOUTS-L - Youth Groups Discussion List <SCOUTS-L@TCUBVM.IS.TCU.EDU>

Subject: Re: Integrity Issue

Mike Sullivan,

Scouting is a game with a purpose and advancement is one of our best known tools to recognize accomplishment. It works when it rewards the

kind of conduct that leads to good citizenship, character development, and fitness. In the case of your Scout, it appears that he has failed to keep his honor as a Scout to be trustworthy. In his heart he has to know that he did not earn the rank, regardless of excuses. For that reason it is premature to allow him to be awarded the recognition that says he has grown in citizenship and character, because he has failed in living the Scout Law and in Scout Spirit.

That said, I strongly urge that this not be considered terminal, rather it should be seen as a growth opportunity. This fellow needs badly to learn how to earn trust and live the Scout Law. He obviously wants to be recognized for the skills he has learned and the requirements he has completed. Now comes the hard part, how to help him recover from his awkward position.

I think that several things need to happen:

1. It has to be made clear that the BOR cannot accept the initials and that another BOR will be necessary when the Scout demonstrates he is ready.
2. Explain in very simple terms the ground rules about trustworthiness.
3. Ask the Scout what he can do to demonstrate his ability to abide by the Scout Law.
4. Work out an agreement with him that allows him the chance to show he can be trustworthy.
5. Conduct another BOR and reward his conduct, if he has made progress.

If you can do this you will be moving him towards the goals of Scouting and doing him a great service. Hopefully this will help him to learn in a positive supporting environment, where mistakes can be corrected before they become a life pattern.

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Date: Sat, 24 Aug 1996 20:20:44 -0400 (EDT)
From: "Michael F. Bowman" <mfbowman@CapAccess.org>
To: SCOUTS-L - Youth Groups Discussion List <SCOUTS-L@TCUBVM.IS.TCU.EDU>
Subject: Re: trouble w/ untrustworthy scout

Dan,

The parent's reaction is understandable in wanting to pull their boy out of the Troop as punishment for dishonest conduct, but also a bit like throwing the baby out with the bathwater. Certainly his behavior leaves much to be desired and he needs to make restitution to the victims of his con scheme. But to take him away from what may be the only positive influence on his life is not the answer. What to do?

Lets take a look at what you have. This boy has imagination and pluck. He is creative. He can be motivated by short term goals, if interested. That isn't too bad - you have something to work with. What is he interested in doing? What would he like to be able to do? In other words what would work as a carrot to captivate his attention short and long term?

To answer this means getting to know the boy as much as you can.

If you can find things that he is interested in doing then you can help him get there and along the way work on reshaping character as long as he understands the ground rules.

Does he have leadership qualities? (Forget for a moment whether good or bad)

Can you get him interested in doing some leadership task? Could he be put in charge of a service project as a way of redemonstrating a desire to live by the Scout law? You'll notice that I'm asking a lot of questions, because it is hard to predict what is right for this fellow without knowing more. So pardon me if I brainstorm a bit more.

What would happen if he were put in charge of a service project that involved say collecting donated books for distribution to inmates in the county jail for reading and also in charge of passing out the books? He would for sure get to see where his current path/conduct will lead - might be food for thought.

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