



## Session One

# Working With Boy Leaders/ The Patrol Method

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### Time Allowed

25 minutes

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### Teaching Objectives

- Show how to establish an environment that is safe both physically and emotionally in which Scouts can learn, grow, and enjoy Scouting to the fullest.
- Explain that listening well is the first step in using appropriate leadership styles.
- Show how positive reinforcement is among the most valuable contributions adults can bring to the lives of young people.
- Employ various supportive leadership styles, matching them to the needs of each Scout and to the patrols and troop as a whole. Among the most effective styles are *directing, coaching, supporting, and delegating*.

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### Materials Needed

- *Scoutmaster and Assistant Scoutmaster Leader Specific Training* video, No. AV02V015
- Equipment for showing videos
- PowerPoint slides or overheads from CD, if desired
- Flipchart or other means of taking notes
- Wall posters

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## Recommended Facility Layout

- Session meeting area. Each participant should have a comfortable place to sit, take notes, and organize written materials. That setting most often consists of tables, each accommodating six to eight participants forming a patrol, and enough chairs for all participants.

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## Delivery Method

- Instructor-led discussion illustrated with video clips

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## Presentation Procedure

“The patrol method is not a way to operate a Boy Scout troop, it is the *only* way. Unless the patrol method is in operation you don’t really have a Boy Scout troop.”

—Robert Baden-Powell, the founder of Scouting

During the New Leader Essentials training, you were introduced to the basics of safe Scouting. Within a Scout troop, that means that meetings, activities, and all other Scouting events strive to be physically and emotionally safe for everyone taking part. In Session Two of this training, during our discussions of the outdoor program, we will discuss at length what you can do as Scoutmasters strive to establish and maintain that safe environment.

By your own example and by insisting on high standards from others, you can steer Scouts away from vulgar jokes, disrespectful comments, bullying and inappropriate teasing, and any other forms of inappropriate behavior that can diminish the Scouting experience or cast a negative light on the BSA. Every boy should feel welcomed into the troop, and every boy should have a feeling of security and opportunity once he has joined.

You as Scoutmaster set the tone of a troop by the ways in which you support and inspire Scouts and trust them with positions of leadership. You also have ultimate authority to deal with behavior that will not be tolerated in the troop. It is essential that you establish and maintain an environment that strives to be safe for Scouts both physically and psychologically.

Within that safe environment, there are tremendous opportunities for Scouts to grow and to thrive on the Scouting experience. There are a variety of ways that Scoutmasters can make that experience as rewarding as possible for Scouts and for themselves. Let's talk for a few minutes about working with boys.

Session 1, slide 16

**Open up the discussion of working with boys by asking participants this question: When it comes to working with boys, what are your greatest concerns?**

Write the responses on a flipchart and post the pages. Among the answers you may receive are that leaders may lose control, that Scouts won't have fun, that older troop members may tease younger boys, etc. (In a large group, this activity may be done by patrols.)

#### **Instructors' Note**

*If answers to this question are not forthcoming, instructors can generate discussion by sharing some of their own experiences. Other ways to give meaning to this discussion is to write the questions on flipchart pages, then cross out each question as the group discusses a satisfactory answer.*

Ask participants to turn in *The Scoutmaster Handbook* to the opening of Chapter 3, "The Boy-Led Troop." Invite someone to read aloud the sentences in the box at the end of the first paragraph:

One of your most important challenges as Scoutmaster is to train boy leaders to run the troop by providing direction, coaching, and support. They will make mistakes now and then and will rely upon you to guide them. But only through real hands-on experience as leaders can boys learn to lead.

— *The Scoutmaster Handbook*,  
Chapter 3, "The Boy-Led Troop."

Much of our discussion to this point in Scoutmaster and Assistant Scoutmaster Leader Specific Training has focused on the framework and mechanics of a Scout troop—how a troop is organized, how meetings are planned and run, where Scoutmasters can find written resources and other adults to help make a troop a success.

Throughout those discussions, we have made many references to the fact that a troop should be *boy-led*. We have emphasized that a boy-led troop offers the richest experiences for troop members and, in the long run, for adult leaders, too.

Now let's talk about some of the specific skills that you can use to work with boys, skills that will strive to ensure a safe environment for Scouting and that can empower boys to have the greatest success in planning and leading the programs of their troops.

### ***A Key to Troop Leadership***

Here's a basic fact of being a Scoutmaster: *Leadership is often a matter of providing what is missing.*

Let's say that again. *Leadership is often a matter of providing what is missing.*

Imagine a Scout troop lost in the woods. What do they need from a leader? Solicit responses from the participants and use their answers to guide the discussion, touching upon these ideas:

- Perhaps the Scouts need to be directed to go a certain way. If there is a storm coming or night is falling and their safety is at stake, a Scoutmaster's best course of action may be to step to the front of the line and get everyone quickly to shelter.
- Perhaps the Scouts need to be coached in using their maps and their compasses to figure out where they are and to chart their own course back to a known location.
- Perhaps the Scouts simply need to be supported in determining their own solution to the problem and then carrying it out.
- With some groups, a Scoutmaster may find it best to delegate to the senior patrol leader or other boy leaders the responsibility for managing the situation, then staying in the background ready to offer positive reinforcement or further guidance in the form of coaching or support.

In each of these situations, something was missing from the group. It might have been a lack of skill on the part of the Scouts or an inability to understand how to apply the skills they did possess. It may have been a lack of clear direction from the boy leaders of the troop to address the situation, or perhaps simply the need for encouragement to motivate them to draw upon the strengths they already possess.

Whatever the case, you as Scoutmasters can be most effective by adjusting your leadership styles to match the needs of your troop. Rather than taking the lead yourself in situations where the boys are capable of finding their own way, you can coach and support them in providing their own leadership. And when they do need more hands-on direction from you to teach them a skill, to set a boundary, or to move them to a new level of their development, you can do that, too.

In other words, you are providing your Scouts with what is missing.

But how do you discover what the missing elements are? The easiest way is also the most essential ... by being a good listener.

Session 1, slide 17

### ***Listening***

One of your most powerful tools as a Scoutmaster is also one of the simplest—be a good listener. Why? What is it about listening that is so important to leadership?

Many of your most effective moments as a leader will occur when you are simply paying close attention to the words and actions of your Scouts.

- One value of listening is that it lets boys know that you care. You are valuing their thoughts. You are giving weight to their ideas. You are opening lines of communication that can lead to fresh ways of doing things. For many boys, having an adult pay attention to them through careful listening is a tremendously important experience.
- A second value of listening is that it will give you information about the current status of each boy in your troop. It can help you understand the stage of development of the troop itself.

Listen to the Scouts in your troop. Make yourself available to them during Scoutmaster conferences, on hikes and campouts, and on other occasions when they want to talk. Often they will simply be eager to share the excitement of a moment or the pride of having learned a new skill or completed a requirement. At other times they may have concerns about something happening in the troop or in their lives. Train yourself to pay attention to what they are saying and to listen without passing judgment. When you are willing to hear what they want to share, you can address issues in ways that are coherent, meaningful, and effective.

— *The Scoutmaster Handbook*,  
Chapter 11, "Working with Boys"

### ***Positive Reinforcement***

It is impossible to underestimate the effects of positive reinforcement. Seek out opportunities to "catch Scouts doing something good" and then praise them for it. Help them realize when they have done worthwhile deeds, and acknowledge their acts of kindness, good will, and sincere effort.

The role of positive reinforcement is itself reinforced through the BSA's advancement program, recognizing Scouts who have achieved specific goals along the trail to Eagle. Just as important, though, is the sincere support that adults can offer young people throughout their experience within and beyond Scouting.

Another way to look at positive reinforcement is to consider its place in the larger context of Scouting. A Scout is Friendly. A Scout is Kind. A Scout is Trustworthy. In the way we treat others, be they boys in a troop, fellow adult leaders, or individuals with no connection to the BSA, our pledge to conduct our lives according to the Scout Law provides us with the guidance to offer the best possible support to those around us.

### ***Matching Leadership Styles to the Needs of Scouts, Patrols, and Troops***

By listening well and by paying attention to other clues provided by Scouts, a Scoutmaster can get a sense of the style of leadership needed in a given situation by a boy, by a patrol, and by a troop.

One way to think about approaches to leadership is this progression of styles:

- Directing
- Coaching
- Supporting
- Delegating

Each fills a particular need. Each can supply what is missing in a given situation or to an individual or team at a certain point in their development.

#### **DIRECTING**

For a boy new to Scouting, for a Scout taking on a new leadership position, or for a troop undertaking a fresh challenge, what is often missing is a sense of structure and an understanding of what Scouts are supposed to do. A Scoutmaster can fill that need through **directing**—that is, giving clear guidelines. Telling Scouts, "Have the members of your patrol use buckets of water to put out the campfire, and then we can remove any traces that it was here," is one example of directing.

#### **COACHING**

As Scouts, patrols, and a troop are becoming more comfortable with their new roles and activities, a Scoutmaster can begin step to the sidelines and allow boys to assume more responsibilities. Through **coaching**, the Scoutmaster contin-

ues to provide guidance and praise, but also gives Scouts more room to initiate action, exercise their own judgment, and learn from their own mistakes.

Here's one way coaching works. A Scoutmaster shows a Scout how to do a skill, then the Scout demonstrates his growing mastery of the skill by demonstrating it to the Scoutmaster. The Scoutmaster can provide feedback that encourages learning, ensures that the Scout understands the skill, and helps him understand why some things are done a certain way. In simple terms, coaching can often be a form of "show and do."

### **SUPPORTING**

Over time, the youth leaders of the troop should become efficient, confident, and independent. That growth will be reflected in patrols and a troop that are developing into more productive teams. A Scoutmaster's leadership recognizes this evolution by shifting from coaching to **supporting**—providing Scouts with the resources and opportunities they need to succeed, then stepping out of the way to let them thrive. Whenever necessary, the Scoutmaster provides supportive guidance, suggests alternative ways of doing things, and offers positive reinforcement, but he or she also makes it clear that the boys themselves are in charge and that the responsibility for much of what happens in the troop is up to them.

### **DELEGATING**

As individuals and as a team, members of a Scout troop can reach a stage of high productivity. Youth leaders plan and carry out worthwhile troop meetings that lead to exciting outdoor adventures and other troop events, and have the sense that "we did it ourselves." A Scoutmaster who has helped a troop reach this stage can again shift leadership styles, this time to **delegating**. The Scoutmaster is shifting most of the responsibility for the success of the troop to the boy leaders.

## Video No. 4—Leadership Styles

The video gives brief illustrations of a Scoutmaster using four styles of leadership:

- Directing
- Coaching
- Supporting
- Delegating

These are presented with four mini-scenarios in which Scouts have a few sentences to suggest the stage of development of their team (i.e., patrol or troop), followed by the Scoutmaster's response using the appropriate leadership style.

### DISCUSSION OF VIDEO NO. 4

Lead participants in a discussion of what they have just seen, using their questions and observations to reinforce the idea of matching leadership styles to the needs and developmental stages of individuals, patrols, and the troop.

A Scoutmaster will be continually challenged to provide the appropriate leadership style for the situation. By listening carefully and observing the actions and attitudes of Scouts, a Scoutmaster will have the greatest possibility of using a leadership style that is appropriate for the situation and effective in advancing the development of individuals and of patrols and the troop.

Note that a Scoutmaster's leadership styles will not always follow a steady progression from directing to coaching to supporting to delegating. New boys will always be joining the troop. Scouts should regularly be assuming new leadership positions. Unexpected challenges both within and outside of Scouting can have significant effects on the boys in a troop. Scoutmasters should not be surprised to find themselves moving forward and backward through the progression of leadership styles.

### *What Scouting Can Provide a Boy*

In bringing this presentation to a close, let's turn to *The Scoutmaster Handbook*, Chapter 11, "Working With Boys," and the passage titled "What Scouting Can Provide a Boy."

As we discuss leadership skills and Scoutmaster responsibilities and all the rest, it's important to remind ourselves now and then that our efforts to do the best we can as leaders

have great rewards. Among the most important are what Scouting can provide a boy.

(Ask a participant to read this passage aloud.)

### What Scouting Can Provide a Boy

- The sense of belonging to a group
- Achievement and recognition
- Self-esteem
- Confidence in himself
- Self-discipline
- Self-reliance
- Healthy interactions with others
- Importance and effectiveness of teamwork

— *The Scoutmaster Handbook*,  
Chapter 11, "Working With Boys"

There are many approaches that Scoutmasters can use to help Scouting provide the most for boys. Listening well is the beginning. Providing an appropriate style of leadership is valuable, as well. But underlying it all is the willingness to seek out good in young people and to support them with positive reinforcement.

**Open the discussion to questions and comments relating specifically to the material covered in this presentation.**

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