

# Authentic Girl Scout Leadership





# Authentic Girl Scout Leadership – A new look for 2021

Authentic Girl Scout Leadership, previously known as Leadership from the Inside Out has been a GSACPC practice since 2006. Circle, Reflection, Ceremony and Co-Generational Community reflect the spirit and traditions of Girl Scouting, and nurture the unique heart and spirit of each member. The Leadership from the Inside Out program started with adults, transitioned to include girls, and is still reflected in practices in many areas of our Council. A new generation is eager to be introduced to the powerful practices.

The Authentic Leadership Community (ALC) has held part of this work for staff and volunteers for the past decade. The focus over the past three years has been to build a strong core of staff and volunteers to deliver retreats and workshops introducing the Leadership from the Inside Out practices.

The ALC, in deepening our relationship to the work, revisited the Leadership from the Inside Out materials. Over several months we tapped our collective experience of integrating the practices at the staff and volunteer level and reviewed the work through the lens of our Authentic Leadership work. Additionally, we identified the need for the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion work of the Council to be integrated.

Our vision is to honor the previous work with a respectful update to an interactive document, available online and in a print format.

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# Introduction

Welcome. The information in this workbook is designed to support and enrich your volunteer experience so that you may create opportunities for Girl Scouts to learn about and practice their own leadership. It draws on the history and traditions of Girl Scouting and models the Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE) framework of discover, connect, and take action.

- **Discover:** Girls understand themselves and their values and use their knowledge and skills to explore the world.
- **Connect:** Girls care about, inspire, and team with others locally and globally.
- **Take Action:** Girls act to make the world a better place.

This workbook has five parts: **circle; reflection; ceremony; co-generational community;** and **diversity, equity, and inclusion.** Each of these elements of Girl Scouting have been core to the program since its founding by Juliette Gordon Low in 1912. These core elements are woven together within the framework of the Girl Scout **Promise and Law.**

## Girl Scout Promise and Law

The Girl Scout Promise and Law have not changed much over the 100+ year history of the program. The spirit of Girl Scouts is embedded in the words we stand and speak together. “On my honor, I will try...” These words represent self-dedication and personal integrity, skills that draw on our inner strength to meet the challenges of the day. The Law also represents integrity and the importance of relationships with ourselves and others. Combined, the Promise and Law unite us in a vision of what a girl can be and become and asks us to look inward to the strengths we bring forth in the world. Authentic Girl Scout Leadership supports girls and adults as they reflect and gain perspective on the promise and law and what it means to them as individuals throughout their lives.

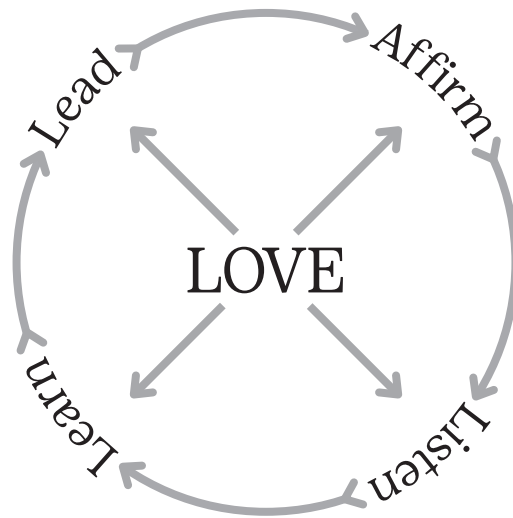
- **Circles** – how we sit and come together with each other as we create and experience together to ensure everyone is welcome and engaged.
- **Reflection** – deliberately taking time to reflect on our experience, in moments of silence and journaling exercises, to strengthen our learning.
- **Ceremony** – creating ceremonies together and acknowledging special moments in our lives as rites of passage help to develop a sense of belonging.
- **Co-Generational Community** – assures girls of all ages are witnesses and affirmed by all members of our community, especially elders.
- **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion** – welcomes all girls and creates a place for everyone.

# Part 1 – Circles

## Circles of Belonging

Girl Scouting offers girls the tools to be successful leaders now and throughout their lives. Girl Scout Leaders are a critical part of creating the environment where girls feel they belong and are safe physically, emotionally, and spiritually. As a Girl Scout Leader, the love and nurturing you freely share helps girls to develop courage, confidence, and character.

The circle of belonging creates the safe conditions for girls to discover, connect and take action.



From a place of love as leaders we:

- Affirm** our girls' value and being.
- Listen** to their dreams and concerns.
- Learn** from and support their inner strength.
- Lead** them to be all that they can be.

Ever since people first gathered to talk, sit around the fire, and hold ceremonies, they have sat in circle. In Girl Scouting there is a long tradition of gathering in circle, whether it is a Brownie circle, a Friendship Circle, or a circle around the campfire.

In a circle:

- Everyone has equal status. There's no hierarchy and no one is in or out. Everyone belongs in the unbroken circle of wholeness.
- We can all see each other's faces and we can see everyone at once. No one is hidden or invisible, and every person is important.
- We have a dedicated, enclosed space that is safe from the outside world. It is a space that is protected and kept by those in the circle.
- We hold space for each other and focus our awareness on compassion for one another or being there for one another.

## Circle Practices

### 1. **Setting the Center**

The circle creates a safe container for all to be fully present. The center of the circle is a special space that can hold symbols that have meaning to the group or represent a theme. The center is also a place for each member to gaze, a place to calm anxious eyes, and a visual reminder of the connection to the circle.

### 2. **Closing the Circle**

Once everyone is present the circle is closed to indicate a safe space is being created. Closing the circle can be as simple as calling all to be present with voice or chime for a **full stop moment**. It can reinforce slowing down, listening, and thoughtful response. This is a good time to let people know what to expect in the circle to help them feel more comfortable.

### 3. **Check-In**

Check-in is an opportunity for every voice to be heard. Each member of the circle is invited to speak, while others listen respectfully without interruption. A **talking stick** can be used to help bring order to the check-in. Only the person with the talking stick is invited to speak at any one time. It is then passed or signaled to be sent along to the next speaker. The check-in can be based around a question or theme posed at the beginning, or just one word to describe their day.

### 4. **Conversation/Activity**

This is the time for group discussions or instructions for the next activity.

### 5. **Check-Out**

As the meeting draws to a close, it is time again for each voice to be heard. Everyone can respond to a specific question, or just share a highlight from their time in circle.

### 6. **Opening the Circle**

At the close of each circle, the circle is opened. This can be anything that will consciously bring the time to an end. It may be a song, a Friendship Circle, or symbolically taking apart the center. It is an opportunity mark the end of the circle until the next gathering.

## Circle Agreements

Circle practice creates the opportunity for leaders and girls to work together and create group agreements around their time in circle. For example, your agreements might include:

- Keep what is said in circle confidential. Each may share about themselves and their experience, but not anyone else's. Please note that leaders may be required to break confidentiality in certain situations.
- Use a bell or chime to signal the closing and opening of the circle, and full stop moments.
- Use a talking stick or other symbolic item. Only the participant holding the stick or symbol may speak.
- Listen with the intent to understand and not to judge.
- Speak my truth and take responsibility for my views.
- Respect others' needs, views, and experience.
- Keep cell phones muted or off.

Intentional circle practice helps leaders and girls discover themselves, connect with others, and take action to make the world a better place.

### Ideas to enhance your Circle Practices:

**Discover** – Now that you've read about circle practices, give your Girl Scout troop a chance to explore circle practices together during a troop meeting.

**Connect** – Once your Girl Scouts have had a chance to try out circle practices, encourage them to decide together what kind of circle practice to do at each meeting. Give them the chance to create their own talking stick and circle guidelines.

**Take Action** – Invite your Girl Scouts to engage in their circle practice during each meeting and decide together who will prepare each aspect of it. Have conversations about what worked and what they would like to do differently next time.






## Part 2 – Reflection

Taking the time to pause and reflect is an excellent skill for self-discovery; its purpose is not only to expand awareness, but to increase our sense of individual and collective agency. Becoming aware of what is going on inside ourselves helps inform us and help us choose how we show up in the world. When we reflect, we see that our actions are driven by our thinking and feelings. When we are not aware of this connection, this can result in behavior that does not meet our needs or the needs of those around us. Reflection provides a means to shape our behavior before and during situations that in that past may have baffled us. Reflection helps us discover, connect, and take action in a conscious manner that is aligned with our core values.

*More time reflecting = More self-awareness + awareness of others  
The more aware we are, the more grateful we are.*

### Theory of Action

	FRAME	UNIT	APPROACH	DRIVER	RESULT
Management	What	Task	Instruction	Ego	<b>Discover</b>
	How	Tactics	Design	Group	<b>Connect</b>
	Why	Mission	Goals	Community	<b>Take Action</b>
	Leadership	Who	Unique Self-Calling	Values/Beliefs	Spirit/Sense of Purpose

The chart illustrates the balance necessary to produce a comprehensive leadership model capable of creating “girls of courage, confidence, and character who make the world a better place,” and the volunteers needed to facilitate the process.

- The **what** frame concentrates on the specific task. This frame provides the first step in discovering confidence as tasks are completed. If a girl accomplishes a task well, she feels good about herself.

- The **how** frame is not what we do, but how we do it. It takes into account how leadership is developed. This frame provides a process for the initial formation of a troop, and the girl within the group setting. Troops provide the way in which girls interact with each other. They are the blueprint for girls to build confidence in a supportive, collaborative setting and incorporate the skills they need to develop healthy, interactive relationships.
- The **why** frame cultivates a sense of mission. It fosters the development of goals that extend into the broader community. The why brings a sense of empowerment and determination to take action in the girl's own life and beyond.
- At GSACPC we add the **who** frame. We believe in enduring change. The who frame connects a person with the spirit or deep sense of purpose that inspires her with the courage to lead her own life. It asks the question, "Who am I, and what is mine to do?" When we are aware of this connection, our capacity for making the world a better place grows.

## Reflection

The Girl Scout framework of discover, connect, and take action is not a linear process, but a circle in which each person continually comes back to discovering herself.

Over 100 years ago, the founder of Girl Scouting, Juliette Gordon Low, clearly stated that the Girl Scout Movement is a spiritual one. Helping girls connect with their internal compass related to their life's purpose and our deeply held values is core to our work. Reflective practice is one of the tools with which to do it. It is a powerful practice for both girls and adults.

## Reflective Practices

The word reflection means "to look again" or to "turn back to" and it refers to the practice of taking a second look at what we have said, done, felt, or experienced in order to learn. Reflective processes are critical to girls and adults to develop their own self-awareness. When we are more self-aware, we can lead in a more authentic way.

The following reflective practices are used in our council and across the world. You are encouraged to use them – in troop meetings, Service Unit meetings, and all aspects of your program. You and your troop can create your own practices, too! A helpful list of reflective questions is included.

### Full Stop Moment

A full stop moment is designed to allow you to arrive in your own inner space of silence—the place that is always still, no matter what is going on in the world or in you. Effective leaders use this practice to ensure they are acting, not reacting. Full stop moments might start a meeting, provide a pause for a group that has lost its

way, or to bring an individual back in balance in the face of difficult circumstances. A full stop moment requires little fanfare; it might look like individuals or groups are simply taking a breath.

It is helpful to practice reaching your inner place of silence. In the middle of a busy activity or when there is a lot of noise around you, take a moment to stop, be still, and quiet your mind and feelings. Sitting in circle, you can invite the group to take a full stop. This pause can help to set intention, ponder a particular topic, or just quiet the mind. Signal the beginning of the full stop with the ringing of a chime or bell. Let the sound and vibration resonate as you focus on your breath. To prompt attention back to the room, simply ring the chime again. This can also help you and others manage their thoughts better after the quietness; by experiencing a full stop, they can often release themselves from the grip of negative thinking just by becoming aware of the present moment. Finally, silence has the power to remind everyone of their own values and purpose.

### **Check-In**

Create an opportunity for each voice to be heard each time you meet. At the start of each gathering or meeting, take time for participants to reflect on what is on their mind, how they are feeling emotionally or physically, or what personal news they want to bring to the group. Check-in provides an opportunity for everyone to say what will help them be fully present. This reflective time allows the community to become aware of what each person is thinking or feeling, to build stronger relationships voice by voice, and help each member to be fully present.

### **Reflective Discussion/Evaluation/Storytelling**

Create a place of safety for girls to share something from their lives or evaluate an event or experience in order to encourage learning and insight. Sitting in circle, ask participants to listen with their full attention, speak with thoughtful intent, and seek to contribute to the well-being of the whole group. This is an opportunity for each person to speak her personal story or experience, have her story witnessed, and learn from herself and others. You might invite each girl to think of an experience that was important to her and that she would like to share—an experience or story where she experienced learning or that she would like to think about in a new way. It could be a difficult moment she remembers, a situation in which she did not know what to do, an achievement of which she is proud, or simply a family or school story she would like to share.

### **Journaling / Artistic Expression**

Make space for quiet time to capture thoughts and feelings on paper. By recording reflections about events, turning points, choices, etc., whether in a group or by yourself, you can see how you as an individual think, create, learn, and feel. When you put something on paper a new perspective is gained, and you can see how

you're thinking differently and work with your thoughts in new ways. You can break through old habitual patterns because you can see them, and you can gain access to your innate wisdom and creativity. Journaling is not limited to words. A variety of art supplies allow for creative expression through words, images, and color. Many who have developed the practice of journaling report it has transformed their lives.

Journaling can operate like a full stop moment. At the end of a meeting or after a group activity, invite everyone to take time to journal. Guide them with reflective questions (see below) or just let them write or draw about what they have been doing and then ask what they learned by putting their experiences on paper.

### **Walking the Labyrinths—a special place for reflective practice**

At each of the GSACPC camps, a labyrinth has been built. The labyrinth is an ancient symbol that relates to wholeness and celebrates both the inner and outer self. It combines the imagery of both the circle and the spiral into a meandering but purposeful path. Walking the labyrinth allows for a reflective journey on a path traveled by many.

As you begin your walk to the center of the labyrinth, let yourself quiet down and bring to mind people for whom you care, an aspect of your life that needs reflection or attention, or simply be silent inside yourself. Some set an intention or reflect on a reading. As you reach the center, stand there for a while and see what comes to you. As you walk back out of the labyrinth, let yourself become aware of coming into the world again and think of what you might need to do or who might need your help and attention and what you could do for them.

## Reflective Questions

### **A way to help guide reflective practices**

Each reflective practice can be enhanced by a thoughtful guiding question. Questions can be selected to suit the situation, the practice you are using, and the age of the participants. The questions below are just a sampling to help guide reflective discussion, journaling, check-in, or a journey through the labyrinth. The key to a good reflective question is that it prompts the person to pause and draw on experience to answer.

- What did I learn about myself during today's activity?
- What seem to be the patterns in the way I approach activities or meetings?
- What energizes or inspires me?
- Looking back over this past year, when was I the happiest?
- When I think about my future, what frightens me?
- What holds me back or prevents me from being what/who I want to be?

- When do I feel most alive?
- What has the most heartfelt meaning for me? Why?

In Girl Scouting there are many activities that connect experiential learning with reflection. A helpful step-by-step group approach involves:

- Introducing participants to an activity
- Demonstrating the activity as you introduce it
- Inviting exploration and expansive reflection by asking questions that lead participants to reflect on their experience. For example: What worked? What didn't work? How did you feel when you did that?
- Helping to make tacit knowledge explicit and transferable to other settings and situations. For example: What did you learn by doing that? How might you apply what you've learned in other parts of your life?

Through reflective practices girls develop positive values and expand their capacity for critical thinking.



## Part 3 – Ceremony

*“With all the art forms and the gift of our imaginations, we weave ceremony to mark important times of healing and transition. Ceremonies heighten our sense of where we have been and inspire and energize us toward the ever-beckoning future.”*

*–Ceremonialist Linda Sussman*

Ceremony is indigenous to all cultures and spiritual traditions and can be found in most organizations. The Girl Scout culture has a rich legacy of ceremony that has sustained the thread of tradition over many decades.

There are many traditional ceremonies in Girl Scouting. Here are some examples:

- **Investiture/Rededication** The investiture is for all new members, whether they are girls or adults. It welcomes new members into Girl Scouting and gives them their membership pin. The rededication often takes place during the investiture and is an opportunity for existing girl and adult members to renew their commitment to Girl Scouting.
- **Bridging** This ceremony is for girls to move up to the next Girl Scout level upon completion of bridging requirements. It involves the crossing of a real or symbolic bridge.
- **Candle Lighting** This ceremony is for girls and adults who want to reflect on each part of the Girl Scout Promise and Law. Each candle represents a value in Girl Scouting. The promise is represented by three large candles; the law is represented by ten other candles.
- **Arch of Silence** In one or more pairs, girls (or adults) form an arch with their arms over their heads and their fingertips touching one another. Once the arch has been passed through, participants are silent. This can be used for flag ceremony or other special occasions.
- **Friendship Circle** Girl Scouts form a circle with their arms crossed right over left to link hands with those next to them. This is a good time to sing “Make New Friends” or another Girl Scout song. Then one person begins the friendship squeeze by squeezing the hand of the person next to her while also putting one foot forward

in the circle. Once the friendship squeeze goes all the way around the circle, everyone lifts their arms and turns the circle inside out.

- **Passing the Ashes of a Camp Bonfire** This Girl Scout tradition is reserved for those who have taken part in a Girl Scout bonfire the night before. Once the ashes are cool and dry, they are gathered up in a small container and then sprinkled into other Girl Scout bonfires so that each bonfire carries with it part of all the ones that have come before it.
- **Singing Girl Scout Songs** Singing together, with or without musical accompaniment, can forge bonds, foster memories, and nurture shared values. Songbooks of traditional Girl Scout songs are available at the GSACPC Shop. A lifetime Girl Scout member and Troop Leader, Melinda Carroll, has created numerous albums full of Girl Scout songs. There are also Girl Scout songs available through sites like YouTube.

Girls often describe ceremonies outside of Girl Scouting in which they have participated, but in most cases, those ceremonies have been planned by others. These guidelines help adults and girls co-create Girl Scout ceremonies together to mark their special events.

## Before We Begin: Creating Containers

Just as with circles and reflective practices, ceremonies are most effective when conducted in a place that is safe physically, emotionally, and spiritually. As a leader, you are the key to creating these conditions. Our Council refers to this as creating a safe container.

**Safe container** is the term we use to describe a consistently safe space that allows each girl to show up as her authentic self without fear of judgment. The atmosphere you and the girls co-create is intended to build a space where all girls feel welcomed, appreciated, seen, and heard for who they are. It is a place of authentic belonging—a place of love. Because it is a space that you co-create with Girl Scouts, the act of building the safe container requires intentional openness to and honoring those in the group: their unique stories, backgrounds, preferences, and needs.

Many of us have experienced a safe container, one in which we were active participants, in which we shaped and embodied the safe space through our open-hearted intention. We may have participated in an experience that left us feeling supported, connected, and loved. We left fulfilled and looking forward to return.

Unfortunately, many of us have also had the experience of being in an unsafe container. These experiences often left us confused, angry, afraid, and in some cases, even wounded.

In Girl Scouting, we are committed to cultivating safe containers and we believe it is the cornerstone that enables girls to discover, connect, and take action to make the world a better place.



Our hope for Girl Scout Leaders is that they become aware of the container they and others are creating, notice how they are impacting the girls, and learn more about them.

Once the safe container is established, ceremonies can be developed and carried out from that context.

## The Ceremonial Beginning: Separating from the Familiar

Effective ceremonies have a beginning, a middle, and an end. The beginning of the ceremony separates the occasion from “business as usual,” the familiar pacing and habits of our daily lives. This can be accomplished by making participants aware of what is happening—for example, by signifying the difference by saying, “This is a different/special occasion,” or demonstrating the difference by beginning with an arch of silence. A change of atmosphere can be marked by inviting participants to wear a specific kind of clothing, playing particular music, or decorating the space in an out-of-the-ordinary way. A chosen person could say or do something that sets the tone and expectation of the ceremony, either through words or actions. This could be the reciting of a prayer or poem, the raising of a flag, the singing of a song, the lighting of a candle or a bonfire. It could be a full stop moment in which the participants are allowed, at the chiming of a bell, to bask in the silence of the present moment.

The girl or adult guiding the occasion thanks participants for coming into this special space. The welcoming of those present can extend to those who are not present in person, but who are very much present in our hearts.

The leader of the ceremony then speaks to the occasion, speaking of why everyone has gathered and how the ceremony will unfold.

## The Ceremonial Middle: Making the Change

This is where the focus for the event comes to light. Whether it is the acknowledgment of someone’s movement to a new level of experience in her life, the completion of an important journey, or the marking of a change in someone’s relationship with herself, others, or the community, it will likely bring a shift. This is often not outwardly dramatic, but it penetrates to a place within the person’s heart. In some way, there is a shift from who you were to who you are becoming. Some examples might include:

- Making a commitment in front of witnesses
- Stating an intention in the community
- Speaking your own truth directly and succinctly
- Honoring someone else with genuine, loving, and affirming words
- Giving or receiving gifts
- Being alone in silence

- Listening with full presence to another
- Deliberately stepping over a symbolic line that demonstrates movement from one state to another

In other words, a present state is described, and a new state that is opening is acknowledged. In Girl Scouting, a ceremony often marks the beginning of a new program. In this case the participants may symbolically join the larger community at the beginning of the new cycle, and honor Juliette Gordon Low's original intent for the growth and development of girls.

This is followed by an acknowledgment of what has happened or the state that is passing. Often there is some kind of recognition of the change that has occurred from those present, using their own words.

Finally, someone honors or blesses the occasion. In organizational or community ceremonies of the Girl Scouts, that is often done by someone who is loved and respected by the person or people participating in the ceremony. It could be an elder from the council or the Troop Leader. It could be a simple, appropriate acknowledgment of the shift that has occurred, and an expressed wish for the future well-being of the participants or community.

## The Ceremonial Ending: Reconnecting to the World

The closing of a ceremony is equally important as the opening. It may be simple and short, but no matter what, it is intentional. The closing often connects those involved in the transition back into their community or larger world. This could involve:

- Statements about what this experience might contribute back into the community: the joy with her friends and family that a maturing young woman might experience
- Feedback or reflection from the witnesses, such as words spoken from the heart briefly and spontaneously
- A symbolic turning outwards towards the world, as in the Girl Scout tradition of singing together in a circle, arms crossed and holding hands, then turning to face outwards

Ceremony without a clear ending is like a sentence without a period. Is it done or is there more to come? Take the time with your Girl Scouts to plan any ceremony from a clear beginning to a clear end. By doing so, the rhythm of ceremony settles into the participant so when the day comes for them to lead, they will have a natural understanding of the process.

Customary ceremonies are often appropriate, provided they do not consist of merely repetitive behavior. They are kept alive through participants' willingness to engage with intention and openness in each step in the ceremony. When weaving a new ceremony, it

is best to keep it simple and heartfelt. The life of the ceremony comes from establishing a safe container, clearly expressing an intention for the event, giving attention to detail in the planning, and making it possible for all participants to engage in a fully present way during the event.

Through ceremony, girls experience the power of creating an intentional space in which they celebrate their own or each other's achievements, commit to something new or to service in the community, mark a change, or highlight that which requires special attention.

## Reflection:

- Reflect on your own life experience and identify times where you experience safe container. What were the key components? What were those who created the container focused on.
- Close your eyes and think back to when you were a child, maybe between five and eight years old. Think of a ceremony that you participated in. What do you remember? What do you smell? What do you hear? What do you feel? What do you taste? What do you see? What stands out most clearly about the memory? What is hardest to recall? In light of this memory of ceremony, what stands out for you as particularly important in a well-woven ceremony?



# Part 4 – Co-Generational Community

The term **co-generational** was coined by a young Girl Scout who sought to describe the potential for interaction between girls and adults of all ages. “Co-generational” implies community cooperation and co-creation that affects and influences each of us.

## Background

The longevity of Girl Scouting is dependent on those who generously give of their time to witness, support, guide, mentor, and lead girls. It is important that this community consist of people of all ages, including elders, adults, and young women. The more co-generational the environment is, the richer the experience will be for each girl.

In Girl Scouting, when we think of co-generational environments, we think not only of adults working with girls, but also of girls from different levels working together. Some examples of co-generational environments include:

- Council-wide gatherings such as the **High Awards** ceremony, the **Religious Awards** Recognitions ceremony, **World Thinking Day**, and the **Annual Meeting**
- Gatherings of girls and adults at council camps, from Service Unit encampments to summer camp
- Inter-troop gatherings such as a Cadette troop teaching a Brownie troop flag ceremony, or older girls in a multi-level troop teaching younger girls must-know camp songs or skits
- Any gathering in which girls of various levels, as well as adults (both newer volunteers and seasoned elders) are invited to come to the table and offer their presence and experience as a vital part of the collective story

In any open-hearted exchange between girls and adults, there is mutual giving and receiving. This requires the willingness to be influenced by the views and different perspectives of the other. Genuine interest may be demonstrated by open inquiry and by listening that seeks to understand the other.

In a co-generational community, no one ever outgrows her potential to contribute and belong. There is a place for all, whether they are young or mature in age and substance. Each decade of experience in the life cycle of a woman has its own distinct voice and authentic contribution to bring to the whole.

## Journey

All of us are on journey as we grow and develop into our unique selves. Sometimes growing and changing can be overwhelming, and prompt feelings of aloneness. As our bodies grow and develop, so does the heart-mind connection. Authentic Girl Scout Leadership, and the major tenets of its practice, help all girls and women on their unique journey. Learning to embrace yourself, and others, connects us to our common humanity. We each experience physical and emotion milestones. Authentic Girl Scout Leadership gives us strength and wisdom to gain perspective and tools to navigate our way. As members of different generations explore their individual identities and the unique gifts of their age or stage in life, their voices become more distinct and valued in the community. Each generation, from girls to elders, has a gift for those older and younger than themselves.

## Elder Circles

At GSACPC, we use the term **elder** to describe those members of our community who possess a wealth of wisdom and perspective as a result of their life experience. The title of elder may be self-adopted but it may also be bestowed by other generations.

Curiosity is the beginning of wisdom. As an elder reflects on her own life, her willingness to share her authentic experience becomes a wellspring of wisdom. This includes the hard-won growth that comes from years of leaning into vulnerability: from making hard choices, from the normal trials of everyday life, from making mistakes, from wrestling with pressures to please others, from grieving a loss, from the challenges of being in relationship, and from the search for meaning and purpose.

Elders' gifts no longer lie in doing just the organizational work but rather lie in the power of their presence. Presence is conveyed through the non-judgmental quality of listening and storytelling and through deep interest in and willingness to understand the experience of the girls. Presence is expressed by the flow of love and witnessing that comes in "showing up" with an open heart.

Elder circles are groups of elders who meet regularly to connect and reflect together and to prepare to serve the community. Elders show up as mentors, surrogate grandparents, women and men who honor and witness girls at points of transition in their lives. Elders may mark these moments with ceremony. They can also simply offer their reassuring presence in crises such as the death of a loved one, in leadership transitions, or times of organizational change when steadiness and a sense of continuity are needed.

Elders are an integral part of our Girl Scout co-generational community. When elders embrace this role, they may discover a renewed sense of purpose. When elders share their gift of presence by connecting with others co-generationally, they and the newer generations can engage in an on-going exchange that reflects mutual concern and deep caring.

# Storytelling

One of the important ways for co-generational community to interact is through storytelling. Ever since humans have gathered together, telling stories was how humans learned, remembered, and connected at a deeper level. Storytelling introduces the “currency” of the heart.

**Storytelling** serves many purposes:

- to pass on family lore, values, and beliefs, as well as common history and heritage
- to teach factual and conceptual information
- to entertain
- to form bonds of friendship and understanding among different generations and peoples
- to connect with one’s inner self as one expresses the unfolding story

Storytelling helps us to be active in presenting, listening, and responding—all of which are vital skills in communicating. Storytelling is an ancient art that strengthens and enhances skills such as sharing ideas and building upon them. By developing the ability to tell our own stories clearly and compellingly, we reinforce and develop our own understanding of these important times. Our true voices and our lived experiences come alive when we share stories.

The process can be as simple as sitting in circle together so that there is a safe space, and then inviting each girl (or adult) “to share with us a time when you felt truly yourself;” or to tell a story about “something that you remember and treasure from when you were very little.” As you prepare girls to tell their stories, invite them to try out some of the elements storytellers use to make their stories come alive:

- **Theme** – What is the main theme of the story and how does it develop?
- **Purpose** – What is the main story you want to bring out?
- **Setting** – Where and when did the story happen?
- **Mood** – Do you want the story to be serious, reflective, lighthearted, or humorous?
- **Characters** – Who is the story about? How might you bring the people to life?

In the end, the most important part is that the story comes from heart and helps the girl (or adult) connect with who she is and how to communicate her story to others.

## Growing Side by Side

Troop Leaders help create this co-generational community. You can consider having a co-leader from a different generation than the one you represent. If your troop is holding a special event or has a special need, call the Girl Scout office and ask about the

possibility of having an elder join your event to witness and support the girls. Elders are also available to join multiple troop events and to share their Girl Scout story.

The purpose of Girl Scouting is to actualize the potential of girls. This cannot happen without adults who lead the way by realizing their own value and contribution. The key to co-generational sustainability is the willingness of adults to examine their own lives. It is therefore important for adult leaders and elders to embrace self-discovery. When they do, the younger women and girls are naturally drawn to them, because they can see how they're living an authentic leadership experience. This may require the adult to be open to other generational values and boundaries. When an adult has reflected on her past, she can draw on a lifetime of wisdom to bring to the circle of Girl Scouts.

At the heart of a co-generational community are girls and adults involved in programs focused on self-discovery together. This side-by-side exploration of self can have a profound effect on the whole of the community.

By participating in a co-generational community, girls can advance diversity and inclusion in a multicultural, multi-generational world and feel connected to their local and global communities.



# Part 5 – Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

## Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Racial Justice Policy

The Girl Scout Movement was founded to help all girls reach their full potential and to create a safe place for girls to foster their individual growth, character, self-sufficiency, and leadership. Girl Scouts–Arizona Cactus-Pine Council (GSACPC) values these founding principles and is committed to upholding them. GSACPC will not deny membership into the organization because of race, color, ethnicity, religious or spiritual beliefs, age, national origin, socioeconomic status, documentation status, disability, gender identity, or sexual orientation. GSACPC stands in alignment with Girl Scouts of the USA as an anti-racist organization, and we are committed to diversity, equity, inclusion, and racial justice as they are fundamental to achieving our mission. We believe every girl should have an opportunity to thrive, and every individual should have an opportunity to contribute. Our organization strives to foster an inclusive and welcoming environment where diverse perspectives are valued, systemic barriers are dismantled, and racial equity is actively pursued. We reject all forms of discrimination, bias, and unfair treatment, particularly those rooted in systemic racism. Through education, awareness, advocacy, and accountable actions, we work towards creating a just and equitable society where girls of courage, confidence, and character can make the world a better place.

## Background

Girl Scouts embody a rich diversity of backgrounds. Together in diversity, Girl Scouts form a sisterhood, united by the Girl Scout Promise and Law. GSACPC recognizes that honoring differences in a whole-hearted, authentic way can be challenging for both girls and the adults who guide them due to outside pressures to conform. In the Friendship Circle, however, Girl Scouts are free to be themselves authentically. All are equal, all have a voice, and all are included. When it comes to diversity, equity, and inclusion, Girl Scouts are go-getters, innovators, risk-takers, and leaders.

The movement toward diversity, equity, and inclusion includes some terminology that may not resonate with everyone the same way, so below are some definitions for the sake of a shared vocabulary.

## **Diversity**

Diversity in a Girl Scout context may be defined as all that makes any person or group different, unique, or special in the company of any other person or group. In the Girl Scout Daisy curriculum, diversity is explored through the differences of the Flower Friends. Each Flower Friend is different in some way from every other Flower Friend, but each Flower Friend is equally and genuinely valuable and valued. As girls progress through each level of the Girl Scout program, understanding of diversity is deepened and broadened according to the maturity and concerns of Girl Scouts, helped by the intentional embrace of differences of all kinds by Girl Scout adult members.

## **Equity**

Equity may be defined as the intentional inclusion of every girl, her family, and all volunteers, no matter what her/their background or circumstance. We as Girl Scouts achieve equity when systemic, institutional, and historical barriers around identity are dismantled and overcome. To use an example, imagine three girls standing at a tall wooden fence to watch a women's soccer game. In this fence are three holes, each at about six feet above the ground. One of the girls is six feet tall, one is five feet tall, and the third is four feet tall. Equality would be giving each girl a box twelve inches high to stand on. The box would be wasted on the six-foot girl, would be helpful to the five-foot girl, and would not adequately help the four-foot girl. Equity, in contrast, would be to give each girl what she needs in order to bring her to the height of the hole in the fence. The five-foot girl would get a box twelve inches high, the six-foot girl would not need a box, and the four-foot girl would get two boxes of twelve inches in order to reach the hole in the fence. In other words, to pursue equity is to observe, hear, acknowledge, and honor what each individual and community needs—and then it is to be willing to meet those unique needs. Girl Scouts are innovators, able and willing to seek unprecedented and creative solutions to problems as awareness and understanding of community and personal needs emerge.

## **Inclusion**

Inclusion may be defined as the practice of ensuring that every girl (as well as every adult member) feels that they belong and that their input is valued by the whole (whether the troop, the Service Unit, the council, or the organization as a whole). In Girl Scouting, we practice inclusion when we organize ourselves in circle, situating all equally close to the center and giving all the opportunity to use their voice (e.g. with the passing of the troop talking stick). Inclusion is the proactive valuing of the unique characteristics of each member.

# Connect

## **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.

Every Girl Scout learns the three-fold promise and ties her honor to that promise.

Girl Scouts call God by many names and honor God in many ways. Some of us are Christian, some are Muslim, some are Jewish; others of us are Sikh, Unitarian, Hindu, Buddhist, Pagan, Thean; still more are multi-religious, honoring the sacred in a variety of ways. We honor the sacred not only by practicing and deepening our own faith, but by seeking to understand and honor the faith of others. When Girl Scouts say the Girl Scout Promise, there is flexibility in how it is said—in place of "God," Girl Scouts may insert a name for the divine from their own faith tradition or omit completely. All faith traditions and spiritualities may serve as wells of wisdom on the Girl Scout's journey.

Girl Scouts also come from a variety of countries—indeed, Girl Scouts and Girl Guides cover the globe. Every World Thinking Day, Girl Scouts honor and learn about the wisdom of different cultures in order to help others, to respect herself and others, and to make the world a better place.

Living by the Girl Scout Law is an agreement that all Girl Scouts share. The Law is the creed and compass of the Girl Scout sisterhood, a guidepost for measuring actions and intentions.

## **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,  
and make the world a better place.

## **I Will Do My Best**

The Girl Scout Law begins with a declaration of good faith effort: "I will do my best." When exploring diversity, equity, and inclusion, one way Girl Scouts can practice doing their best is by practicing active listening. Instead of spending time preparing a

response to what my Girl Scout sister is saying while she's talking, I can choose instead to be fully present to her with open ears, open body language, and a well-cultivated desire to understand. The tradition of the Talking stick can facilitate this.

## **Honest and Fair**

Girl Scouts honor diversity, equity, and inclusion when they honor their own honest feelings and thoughts, and when they honor the honest feelings and thought of others. In the Friendship Circle, girls have the opportunity to practice the art of vulnerability. This can be helped along by beginning each circle with a full-stop moment, which is a silent moment of deep presence in which we can check in with ourselves before opening up to those in the circle. In the Friendship Circle, fairness is embodied by giving each member of the circle an opportunity to speak her truth, even if that truth is difficult for others to receive. By centering ourselves in the full stop moment, we also ready ourselves to hear difficult truths which may surprise us in uncomfortable ways. By practicing this open-hearted commitment to honesty and fairness, we open ourselves to the possibility of forging deep and long-lasting bonds with our Girl Scout sisters.

## **Friendly and Helpful**

Whether we are gathering in circle with our Girl Scout sisters or taking action in the community, Girl Scouts approach all people with the willingness to be friendly and helpful. If someone at school is sitting alone in the lunchroom or on the playground, a Girl Scout may risk going outside her comfort zone by striking up a conversation with that person and spending time getting to know them. If someone is struggling in some way, a Girl Scout may practice innovation by offering a new solution to the problem, and she may practice leadership by offering to help bring that solution to fruition.

## **Considerate and Caring**

Being considerate and caring may be as simple and as challenging as holding space for another person so that they may practice authentic presence. For Girl Scouts who participate in or benefit from one or more facets of dominant culture (i.e. culture which is deemed by society to be normative), holding space for another person may mean listening quietly and humbly to those who do not benefit from being part of the dominant culture, whether in terms of skin color, sexuality, religion, socio-economic background, physical ability, size, age, academic ability, etc. Those who do not participate in dominant culture may not feel safe being authentic in circle; in Girl Scouts, deep commitment to the authentic stories of all in our circle can help overcome and heal the rifts that exist among us.

## **Courageous and Strong**

Authenticity among strangers takes inner strength; standing up for another's right to be true to herself takes just as much inner strength. Anytime we honor another's unique story, we build up the strength of our entire Girl Scout circle.

## **Responsible for What I Say and Do**

A great deal of literature exists that discusses the way girls bully one another. Girl Scouts declare their commitment to be responsible for what they say and do in two ways: by doing and saying what is right, and by being open to hearing that a joke they made was quite hurtful. Like all humans, Girl Scouts may not anticipate all the ways in which their words or deeds could be hurtful to others, but Girl Scouts can stand apart by being open to hearing how they've been hurtful to others and to commit to doing better going forward. Girl Scouts choose openness over defensiveness and a desire to grow over a desire to have the last word.

## **Respect Myself and Others**

Respect, for Girl Scouts, begins with respect of self. We're charged with respecting our own boundaries, our own wishes, and our own dreams so that we may better respect the boundaries, wishes, and dreams of others.

## **Respect Authority**

Authority may mean a Girl Scout's parents, her teachers, public safety personnel, Girl Scout leaders—anyone who takes responsibility for the well-being and safety of others is someone worthy of a Girl Scout's respect. Girl Scouts can learn to appreciate the value of respecting authority by volunteering to help or learn from those who regularly take responsibility for the well-being and safety of others. Perhaps the troop could take part in a CPR/First Aid class together, or perhaps an IGM (Independent Girl Member) could join a junior firefighter academy. Learning to respect authority is the first step on the journey to earning the respect of others.

## **Use Resources Wisely**

Girl Scouts practice sisterhood not only with other Girl Scouts but with all the world. When we practice using resources wisely, we are treating the earth as our dear mother or sister and ensuring a better future for our future daughters.

## **Make the World a Better Place**

Making the world a better place begins with our own willingness to discover inequities around us, connect with those who experience prejudice and unjust treatment, and take action to right those wrongs. That could mean listening attentively when another person tells us how we've offended or hurt them, and then seeking to make amends by apologizing and asking how we can make it right for the future.

## **Be a Sister to Every Girl Scout**

The Friendship Circle is more than the name implies; it is a sacred sisterhood. Girl Scouts belong to one another as sisters do; they care for one another and dream together the way sisters do. When one sister is hurting, the other sisters lift her up. When one sister is celebrating, all of them have reason to shout for joy.

## Take Action

As Girl Scouts discover and rediscover what it means to live the Girl Scout Promise and Law, they will discover new and unexpected needs for fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion in their lives and the world around them.

Borrowing from the wisdom of cultural anthropologist Angeles Arrien, Girl Scouts may use the following principles to help them remember how to live out the Girl Scout Promise and Law:

1. Show up and choose to be present.
2. Pay attention to what has heart and meaning.
3. Speak the truth without blame or judgment.
4. Be open to outcome, not attached to outcome.

# Girl Scouts–Arizona Cactus-Pine Council

## Agreed Upon Policy Definitions

### **Diversity**

Diversity includes all the ways in which people differ, encompassing the different characteristics that make one individual or group different from another. While diversity is often used in reference to race, ethnicity, and gender, we embrace a broader definition of diversity that also includes age, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language and physical appearance. [The] definition also includes diversity of thought: ideas, perspectives, and values. [Additionally] individuals affiliated with multiple identities.

### **Inclusion**

Inclusion is an approach and an attitude, rather than a set of guidelines. Inclusion is about belonging, about all girls being offered the same opportunities, about respect and dignity, and about honoring the uniqueness of and differences among us all.

### **Pluralism**

Pluralism involves inclusive systems and respectful relationships among individuals or groups differing in background, experiences, and includes a preservation of one's distinctive cultural heritage.

### **Equity**

Equity is the fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all people, while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups. [This is achieved by] increasing justice and fairness within the procedures and processes of institutions or systems [within GSACPC], as well as in [our] distribution of resources.



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