

**Narragansett Council, BSA**  
**March 2021 Cub Scout Breakout Talking Points**

***Dealing with Difficult Parents***

*[This month should be a guided discussion with participation from the attendees. Give examples from your Scouting experience and ask participants to share their experiences.]*

- Sometimes problems occur among adult leaders or adult leaders and parents of Cub Scouts as they try to communicate and manage the program.
- Identify who the difficult adult is in the situation.
  - It “takes two to tango” and there is a possibility each party may be contributing to the situation in some fashion.
  - If you are involved in the conflict, look at yourself first
    - Look inward and do a self-assessment as to the reason for your actions.
    - If time permits, identify three or more people you respect and admire but aren’t emotionally involved in the situation and ask them “What one area do you think I should devote my attention to in dealing with people?”
      - If you can’t think of three people you admire and can learn from you just might be the difficult one.
  - Try to understand others
    - Most people don’t want to be difficult.
    - They may have a different way of thinking about or approaching things.
    - When are people most likely to respond positively to you? *[Ask for answers from the participants.]*
      - Possible answers:
        - a. When they trust you.
        - b. If they have experience with you and know you to be a reliable leader.
        - c. When they understand you are making decisions for the good of the group.
        - d. When they sense you genuinely care about them.
    - Most difficult situations arise from miscommunication and the “difficult” person just wants to be heard.
      - Listening is simple but difficult.
      - Without making a conscious effort to listen you may miss vital facts and beliefs that could lead to a satisfactory resolution.
      - Remember the Golden Rule and treat the parent the way you’d like to be treated.

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- Listen to understand not to respond
- Paraphrase what was told to you to make sure you understand their perspective.
  - a. If the statement or question is too outrageous to be taken seriously instead of paraphrasing you can try "I'm not sure I'm following you."
- Working toward a solution.
  - Sometimes the heat of the moment is not the time to discuss an issue as our emotions can be clouding our judgment. Schedule a specific time and place to have a discussion.
  - Ask questions. Remember tone is equally important as the questions asked.
    - Start with a direct question that will help you better see the other people's point of view and may help them focus on what their real needs are—"What do you want?"
    - Follow up with a couple of questions putting responsibility on that person to examine where they are and find a solution. Some variations of "What are you doing to get what you want?" and "Is what you're doing working?"
    - Finish with a question to encourage a cooperative effort-"Do you want to figure out another way?"
- Here's a scenario:
  - You are the Cubmaster of the pack, at the end of a meeting as you trying to pack up and head home a parent approaches and confronts you regarding the funding of the pack. She states that she and other parents (although she doesn't specify which ones) don't see where all the money they spend on Scouts is going. You feel she is insinuating that you or other pack leaders may be improperly using pack funds.
  - You know that the pack committee meets monthly and go over the budget at each meeting. The budget is also distributed with the monthly pack newsletter.
  - This parent does not attend the committee meetings and it seems like at least once a month she has something negative to say about the way the pack is run.
  - How do you handle the situation?
- Some tips on engaging with difficult parents
  - You cannot control other people. You can only control how you respond to them.
  - Be polite and respectful. When you wear the uniform you are the face of the BSA.

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- Do some honest introspection to make sure you're not the difficult one.
- Listen to understand.
- Don't take comments personally. Take criticism and suggestions of what you should be doing as offers to help.
- Separate the person from the behavior. When you find someone difficult, you may think that you do not like the person, but it's actually their behavior that you don't like.
- Don't react, act. While not intentional, your reaction may give more power to the difficult person by acknowledging they bother you.