

# Coping Skills

Coping skills are a powerful way for Girl Scouts to build resilience, self-awareness, and self-regulatory skills as they face the stressors of life. Learning how to positively cope empowers them to be self-reflective and take responsibility for their actions. Most importantly, these skills are ones that will benefit them all life long.

## **Teach girl scouts to identify their stressors.**

It's helpful for Girl scouts to learn to identify how they feel and why they feel that way. Have them identify individually the things that make them stressed, upset, and sad by writing in a private notebook.

Afterward, they can verbally share stressors with each other to start building a community of trust where they feel safe and heard.

It is okay share your own stressors to set the tone of the activity as one that is inclusive and judgment free.

## **Identify what they normally do when presented with stressors.**

Have the Girl scouts write down their instinctive and initial reaction to each stressor without stopping to think about whether it's good or bad, or breaks some sort of societal rule.

Total honesty is needed during this step in order for them to start developing self-awareness. Share examples from your own life to break down barriers.

Then have them rate their reactions on a Likert scale, where 1 = Worst Reaction and 5 = Best Reaction.

Have each Girl Scout share one of their Likert ratings, along with an explanation for their rating. Using the Likert scale teaches them to objectively look at and evaluate their actions.

## **Brainstorm alternative ways to respond to stressors.**

Introduce the idea of coping skills—conscious efforts to minimize stress or conflict in a positive and constructive way. Once they identify their feelings and stressors, learning how to channel their emotions is next.

Each Girl Scout should compile a list of five coping strategies that could work for them. You can also make a coping skills poster for the troop. Having a huge list of various coping strategies is a great visual reminder of positive reactions to stressors and gives them ideas they might not have thought of on their own.

## Coping Skills

Girl scouts next revisit their original reaction to a stressor and use their list to replace it with a more positive coping skill. This step is very powerful because it shows them how to take charge of their reactions instead of being controlled by situations and their emotions. They're empowered to take responsibility for their actions and practice self-regulation skills instead of blaming outside factors. They can share why this new way of coping is more beneficial than their old response and how it could change the outcome of a situation.

Not all coping skills have to be structured or prescriptive. It's important to make sure everyone understands that strategies are unique and individualized.

### **The 5 Minute Fix**

Allocate 5 minutes from every troop meeting for practice. Girl scouts can share how they've used their coping skills in real-life situations. They can ask for feedback and advice from peers or provide suggestions to those who are struggling. Most importantly, the community is strengthened by these check-ins.

The most important idea to convey during this maintenance period is that coping skills are fluid and flexible. If one skill doesn't work or they want to try something new, encourage them to do so. It's important they don't get caught up in thinking they can only use certain skills since that can become a new source of stress.

Adapted from: <http://www.edutopia.org/article/4-step-process-building-student-resilience>