

The Unofficial Young Guider's Guide to Survival

This guide is a result of the session "Young Guiders - Meeting our Challenges" at the Ontario Provincial Annual Meeting and Conference held in Ottawa, May 23-25, 1997. Please distribute and disseminate this guide as widely as possible. The session participants were Rachel Collishaw (session leader), Traci Hubbert, Kathy Forsythe, Nicole Veroude, Jenn Melville, Lorraine Yantha, Mickie Stone, Julie Hawke and Wanda Adams. The participants were asked to brainstorm about the difficulties they face as young Guiders and then to brainstorm solutions to those difficulties. This is by no means a finished product; continue to add, to share, to discuss and above all, find solutions and push for change. There is change happening in the hierarchy, but it needs to become consistent at *all levels* (Unit, District, Division, Area, Province and National) to keep young women, especially those who have completed the Senior Branches program, involved and active in Guiding.

Step One - Small Scale Problem-Solving

Problem - Some parents have little faith in someone who is not themselves a parent, or one who is legally an adult, but may not yet look the part.

Solutions:

- Have an information session with the parents where they can ask you about your experience.
- Don't be shy about sharing your accomplishments: successful camps, school or work-related, Guiding awards, etc.
- Ask parents to help out, they may trust you more if they can see you in action.
- Engage them in small talk at drop-off or pick-up time.
- Hold parent-daughter events, hikes, etc.
- Invite them to observe meetings.

Problem - Unit planning can sometimes be difficult for a young Guider/ Senior Branches member who is not invited to planning meetings. Or, her time available can be over or under-estimated by the other Guiders.

Solutions:

- Be sure you are included in planning meetings.
- Discuss who is good at /would like to do what.
- Discuss how to share responsibilities with regard to time available. i.e.: school, work, family, social life outside of Guiding.
- Keep the lines of communication open. Be receptive even when it seems that others are not. (Smile and sing even under difficulty?)
- DELEGATE!
- Be patient.

Problem - District/other Guiding meetings can be frustrating if there is a group of older women who use it as a social atmosphere where you are excluded.

Solutions:

- Make them aware (gently) that they are off-topic.
- Change the topic of conversation: i.e., from grandchildren to Guiding.
- Input your experiences as a granddaughter or daughter (our point of view) on these topics.
- Let other Guiders know of your accomplishments.
- Be proud of yourself.
- Badger them to give you recognition.
- VOLUNTEER to do something - you will have a voice on council and the other Guiders may give you a little more credit.
- Don't be afraid to voice your experience and opinions, loudly if necessary!
- Keep yourself involved and volunteer to do activities when able.
- Show them that you can do things by setting up activities - years don't count for everything.
- Don't let people assume for you or about you.
- Keep yourself educated - KNOW YOUR P.O.R.!
- Don't be afraid of change.
- Accept and promote new ideas.
- Network with other young Guiders - Many of these ideas are being discussed on an [email mailing list](#) .

Step Two -Wider Change within the Movement

Problem - At present, the transition from Senior Branches Member to Adult Member is not broadly recognized as such. In fact, in the 1992 Senior Branches Handbook, the only option presented to Senior Branches was Link, and "when their lives become more settled, they often return to the Organization as Guiders." This statement implies that young adults are not very good Guiders, when in fact we are the people who were trained our whole lives for the job.

Solutions:

- Have Senior Branches work on adult training
- Invite Senior Branches to District meetings, trainings and other adult events.
- Have equivalency or continuity between Senior Branches and Adult Leadership Record.
- Have a ceremony to welcome Senior Branches to adult positions.

- At present, completion of the Senior Branch program counts for Stage I training, but only if the member has been out of Guiding for less than 2 years. For goodness sakes - don't have a time limit!

Problem - There is very little equivalency with other organizations (i.e.: a B. Ed, B.S.W., canoeing qualifications, other camping qualifications, etc., don't seem to count for anything) and information about it is not widely distributed.

Solutions:

- Badger people in the hierarchy.
- Join a committee that's working on the problem.
- If there isn't a committee, START ONE!
- Write letters to Province, National, Area anyone who will listen.
- Talk it up.
- Convince someone of your abilities.
- Sell yourself and your abilities.
- Work consciously and deliberately for change.

Problem - The Provincial Senior Branch Adviser has been eliminated, but they have added a Trefoil Guild Adviser. What does this say to the girls?

Solutions:

- Have at least one Senior Branches person on the resource committee.
- Do not eliminate Senior Branches Coordinators at Area.
- Re-create the position at Province.

Problem - It's really difficult to register as a Link member. Does this encourage them to stay?

Solutions:

- Speed up the process of (membership) lists getting to the Areas.
- Clarify the process.
- Have better sharing of information between Areas.
- Some type of central database.
- email communication (Link listserv?)
- Inter-university courier.
- Re-create Provincial Link Adviser so we can have provincial news.

Problem - Most young Guiders are not able to make long-term commitments for additional responsibilities. Three years is a long time for a university student or a young mother.

Solutions:

- Make Area, Division, and District positions 1 year terms renewable for 5 years maximum.
- Encourage young Guiders and Senior Branches members to sit on committees.
- Try to have at least one on every committee.
- If you are a young Guider, do more stuff on councils and committees - have your voice heard.
- Job-sharing, Co-advisers - WHY NOT?

When you're up to your neck in alligators, it's hard to remember that your original objective was to drain the swamp.

Don't let the alligators get you down, and remember to keep draining the swamp!