

The Lighthouse Statement User Handbook

A fearless look at how to be “for girls”
when no one’s there telling you what to do.

First Edition
2018



GIRL GUIDES
AUSTRALIA
VICTORIA

We're for Girls

If you attended Girls Rock 2018, or heard about it from others, you already know that our Lighthouse Statement came from a series of interviews with Girl Guides from all over Australia.

To understand what makes our organisation distinctive, we asked the girls

“What do you think about Girl Guides being girls only?”

They had a lot to say. Once we got over a few “adult” obstacles, the girls’ messages came through loud and clear.

The 4 Obstacles

Obstacle #1: Adult World Baggage

There's a lot of discussion in the world today about girls, equal rights, what feminism means, and what we should be doing about it. And there's a lot of history and emotion attached to all of that conversation. But when you're eight or eleven or even fifteen, you are largely free of this adult baggage. This freedom is a secret power that allows you to see possibilities someone burdened with all those "shoulds" simply cannot see. So, we decided to put history and politics on the shelf for a bit. Turns out, those things are about women, not girls.

Obstacle #2: Anti-Language

The easiest way to describe something is often to say what that thing is *not*. Salt is not sugar. This doesn't give us a single clue as to what salt actually is. We called this the "anti-space." You're in the anti-space when you compare or contrast girls with boys. *Unlike boys* we do this ... *without boys* girls can do that ... it's not for boys ... not scouts ... not like school. Here's the thing. Girl Guides is so much more than being not like the boys. So, as we looked at the girls responses, we resolved not to get tangled up in what we're not.

Obstacle #3: Apologetics

The third obstacle is something many of us were taught to do as young girls. It's about being polite and acceptable ... as opposed to bold and opinionated. Apologetics is saying things like, "I *just* want to say ..." before you say what you want to say. A lot of us don't even realize we're using apologetics; they can sneak into our conversation when we least expect it. So we agreed to talk about *what is*, instead of what could, might, possibly be, if it doesn't offend anyone too much.

Obstacle #4: Borrowed Words & Phrases

The fourth obstacle was pure laziness. It had to do with borrowing words from the boys instead of choosing words that capture the distinctive nature of girls. Borrowed words are the flip side of anti-language. Instead of saying what girls *aren't* we say girls are *just like* boys. Girls are strong, gritty, powerful, etc. Sure, girls *can* be strong and powerful. But isn't strong a little different when it comes from a girl? Finding our own language helps us understand *how* girls are strong.



Once we leapt over these four obstacles, we were able to distil what the girls in those interviews were telling us. And that's when things got interesting. The girls said they value a free space of their own where they can try out *all* the different ways of being, not just what others think they should be. They love being among other girls. They love being able to focus and get into a flow. They like exploring and discovering things for themselves. They like the feeling they get when they connect a few dots and come up with something new. And they like not feeling like they have boundaries.

Next, we put all of the girls' answers together in one simple statement. This statement is a message from the girls to you, their leaders. It's not a marketing message to shout to the world. It's a personal tool that you can use to know whether you're thinking and acting in the girls' best interest. To know whether what you're bringing to the party will resonate and reflect the newly emerging role for girls in our world.

The Lighthouse Statement

“When curious, clever girls are free to revel in all their possibilities, the world opens up.”

Congratulations. You’ve got a Lighthouse Statement. Now what?

As the name implies, this statement is meant to be a guiding light. Unlike our trusty torches, the lighthouse light spins around, shedding light in all directions. No matter your role or position in Girl Guides Victoria, referring to this statement will help you shift your thoughts, conversations, and actions. If we all do this together, our combined efforts will transform Girl Guides Victoria into the most popular girl on the block.

“Yes, but how am I supposed to use it?” you ask. That’s the question this guide is designed to answer. If you attended Girls Rock 2018, you may recognise some of the examples and insights, which were inspired by the afternoon session scenario challenge workshop.

The 5 Questions

One of the easiest ways to use the statement is to break it down and ask yourself questions that correspond with each of its parts. The next time you need to take an action or make a decision – no matter how big or small – try asking yourself ...

1. How will this spark CURIOSITY for the girls?

Can I make it more intriguing or mysterious? How can I inspire the girls to explore rather than telling them how things are? This question is about leaving something out for the girls to discover of their own accord. What can I hint at but not give away? Where can I push a little further, ask why or how, look deeper, and notice nuances I might otherwise miss?

2. How will this encourage CLEVERNESS?

Can I add some fun challenges or hurdles? Give them something to figure out or explore? What else is this activity like? What does it compare to that the girls are already doing? And hey, can we build a story around it? Cleverness is about finding connections between two or more disparate things. It doesn't require special academic prowess. You can usually find cleverness wherever you find surprise and delight.

3. How can I bring more REVELLING into this?

Am I allowing time and space for the girls to play, to roll around in their discoveries and celebrate their finds? This question is about feelings and emotions. How can I give the girls a chance to feel the joy and excitement of an activity more deeply? To see, articulate, and understand their fears and turn that energy into excitement? How can I help them express these emotions more fully?

4. What can I do to open up more POSSIBILITIES?

Am I giving the girls opportunities to come up with more than one answer? To go in more than one direction? How can I infuse this with endless possibilities? This question is about allowing yourself to suspend reality long enough to discover something new. **FIRST**, brainstorm wildly without judgement or editing of any kind. Get it all out there. Don't go back and look at what you have so far. Keep going. Push it to its "silliest edges." **THEN** consider practicalities, resources, and appropriateness. (If you worry about all those things first, you'll never get to the good ideas.)

5. How can I bring GIRLS into the centre of this?

What's unique to girls in this decision or activity? How can I make that aspect more prominent? How will this "bring out the girl" in their lives outside of Girl Guides? This is one area where comparing against all boys or mixed groups of boys and girls can be a bit useful. Look for the things you would eliminate when you add boys into the mix. Those are your nuggets of girl-dom, what makes Girl Guides Victoria so special.

Girls Who Rock Workshops

At Girls Rock 2018, over 240 of the most magnificent girls from Victoria and around Australia put their heads together to play with the 5 Questions and see where that play led them.

In that challenge, we explored how the 5 Questions might change our approach to typical Girl Guides scenarios ...

Having Meetings & Discussions

Post the Lighthouse Statement on the wall in your meeting room, make it a slide in your presentation, put it on the cover of your deck. Then use the five questions to enrich and guide deep discussions about what you're doing and how you're doing it. Got a tough decision to make? Not sure which way to go? Bouncing it off the 5 Questions will ensure your outcome honours what girls want from Girl Guides Victoria.

Example: Making group decisions the old way often involved voting. When you apply the Lighthouse Statement, you can discover all sorts of new ways to decide what to do. Card sorting, for example, where every girl writes an idea on a card, the group discusses their pros and cons for each idea, comes to a mutual conclusion, and then presents it to the leader. Drilling down – repeatedly asking why or how – is another way to access curiosity and increase possibilities.

Winning Over Parents & Families

Families need to see the value that Girl Guides Victoria offers their girls. The girls may have joined for one particular reason (bullying in school, shyness, social interaction) but the families need lots of reasons to stay. One way to do that is by *showing* them. Instead of telling them everything you're doing, invite them to participate just as you do with the girls. Use the 5 Questions to stir their curiosity, encourage them to consider a wider range of possibilities, and revel with them when their girls put cleverness into action. It's important to remember too that girl-led guiding isn't some crazy, isolated idea. Schools are also shifting to a more student-guided curriculum for the simple reason that we learn better when the subject matter resonates.

Example: When talking with families, we're used to emphasizing adult-centric outcomes such as empowerment, resilience, and responsibility. Using the Lighthouse Statement, we can also give them insight into the Girl Guides Victoria process. Free from the constraints of school and the responsibilities of home, girls in Girl Guides Victoria enjoy a dazzling array of experiences. They are free to consider all of the possibilities, mixing and combining activities, and revelling in every one. One way to bring this to life for parents could be to have the girls put together a skit or a video called "If I could do anything, I would do everything."

Doing Programs & Activities

Take a fresh look at the programs and activities you've been using for the past few years. Could they use a Lighthouse Statement makeover? Are they encouraging girls to look beyond the obvious for new possibilities? To think deeper and maybe a little more magically? To challenge the impossible? Is there time in the program for getting giggly and excited? Time for rolling the ideas around and revelling in them? Is the activity even relevant to their lives? Are the girls actively *doing* something, as opposed to being told about it?

Example: Bring girls into the centre of a community service activity by including them in the process of deciding which organisation to serve. What community services are relevant to their lives? As adults, we might see homelessness or serving the elderly as important. The girls might choose to do something about bullying, animal welfare, or cleaning up a beach or park where they like to go. During and after the activity, allow time and space to revel in the emotions ... from embarrassment and fears to appreciation, connection, concern, and pride in having helped out. Make something tangible that represents those emotions.

Example: Say you've got a craft project on the agenda for next Tuesday. Before the Lighthouse Statement, you might have chosen a craft, gathered the materials, provided specific instructions for doing the craft, and shared and praised the results. Now, you might provide a range of supplies and see what clever ideas *they* have for using those supplies. Then discuss what makes the results important, fun, or useful in their world.

Example: When it comes to camping, girls think about who they'll be tenting with, where they'll charge their smartphones, the comforts of home, and doing things they're not allowed/able to do elsewhere. Try setting the mood by putting up a tent in your meeting space or using sleeping bags to sit on. Ask the girls to explore all of the possibilities for things they can't do at home or school, even the crazy, impossible ones. After a while, they just might come up with a bigger idea than paddling. At camp, ask them to use their smartphones to photograph curious things in nature, take videos of each other talking, which you can all share later. Could they write clever new words to a song they always sing? Make up a new badge? What would make them want to skip shopping to be at the camp instead?

Example: Turn maintenance tasks from a chore into a competition, a story, or a game. Break a task into parts that challenge the girls' cleverness. Pair up and have one girl teach the task to the other, step by step, while the learner pretends to be an alien from another planet. Pretend you're dishwashing robots from the future. Use only one hand. Sing songs. Do the task using silly voices. Pretend you're characters in a favourite story or make up a story of your own. Take pictures or videos and make something with them that you can share.

Example: Cooking is full of possibilities that go far beyond choosing a recipe, buying the ingredients, and preparing the dish. Have mystery boxes of ingredients and let the girls explore clever ways to serve them up. Use curiosity on a scavenger hunt through the market to find out what things cost. Makeup a dish with the sole objective being to share the recipe, instructions, and photos on the internet. Have the girls choose ingredients or recipes for other groups. Pair them up and have them prepare the same recipe with one ingredient removed or changed for each pair. Revel in the smells, taste and satisfaction of the results.

Working With Partners

Organisations that partner with Girl Guides Victoria are getting something out of the arrangement. You can ensure they are giving in equal measure by asking them to consider the 5 Questions when they design their programs.

Example: If you're partnering with a bank, you might add to their standard financial learning program with an accompanying activity that sparks more curiosity (what does "rich mean?"), brings out girls' cleverness (what do money and music have in common?), opens up the possibilities (how many different ways can you think of to make money?), and encourages revelling in the money they've saved, the imaginary stocks they've collected, a crypto-currency they would like to invent, and more.

Communicating With Others

Whether you're firing off an email or writing a blog, your message comes alive when you apply the 5 Questions. Yes, sometimes this means literally using the words "curious" and "clever." Other times it might mean changing the tone of your message or flipping the subject matter from something that adds constraints to something that opens up possibilities.

Example: Articles about resilience often evoke the feeling of being victimized or weak. How could you flip that around and still deliver your message but leave the reader feeling strong? Email messages are rife with apologies that aren't really necessary and diminish the sender's importance. Could you skip the "sorry this is late" and simply say, "Tadaaaa, here it is!" After you've written what you want to say, go back through and look for opportunities to tweak the tone or dispense with any of the 4 Obstacles that slipped in while you weren't looking. Then read your writing aloud ... will the words make the recipient feel excited, challenged, giddy about the possibilities?

Getting the Word Out

Speaking of communicating with others, PR is critical to reinvigorating Girl Guides Victoria. So encouraging and equipping girls to advocate with their peers, younger or older school girls, adults, and potential community partners is important. But good PR isn't as simple as telling people about yourselves. The best PR is about emotions ... about creating a desire to be involved in something others are involved in. Very often inspiring that curiosity means *not telling* the whole story. It's about just giving people a sneak peek, a glimpse, or an inkling that Girl Guides Victoria might be doing something they don't want to miss out on.

Example: The best PR is word of mouth, so here's another chance to get the girls involved. Have a brainstorming session to think of clever ways you can build anticipation and curiosity among girls and adults outside of Girl Guides. Participating in community events you don't normally participate in is one way to go. People will wonder ... "What are the Girl Guides doing here?" You could also use social media. Have the girls ask followers to guess what you're doing next Tuesday and give away little hints. How can you make it all about GIRLS?

Doing Fundraising

When it comes to Girl Guides and money, most people think, “Biscuits!” But there are a kajillion other ways to generate funding. Why not brainstorm to the “silly edges” with the girls to find other opportunities ... making something to sell, offering a needed service, asking people you wouldn’t normally ask. Next, consider how to make the fundraiser more relevant to girls. We’ve all seen the bored girl standing in front of the supermarket repeating, “Biscuits, get your biscuits here,” to no one in particular. Could you do a role play at your next meeting to dramatize savvy selling? Make it silly and fun? Show video clips with girls cleverly persuading their parents to do something?

Carrying on Traditions

Ceremonies and traditions hold deep meaning for us as adults in ways that only we can fully appreciate and understand. How can you make them equally as meaningful for the girls? Could you do something clever and new with an old tradition? Could you turn a staid ceremony into a curious game? How can you make it less about the adults and more about the girls? Are there unexplored possibilities, such as a new venue, room décor, inviting speakers, adding music? What feeling and emotions does this tradition or ceremony invoke? How can the girls revel in those emotions?

Example: Consider having the girls come up with a special theme for the next ceremony and work the theme into the event. If “surfing” were your theme, you could serve beach-related foods, using surfing terms in the announcements, etc. Let the girls choose the theme and help plan how to pull it off. Could you get temporary tattoos that illustrate the theme? Do a skit? Translate a part of the ceremony into another language (Arabic, Vietnamese, Mandarin, Cantonese, French, Japanese, Italian, German) and have older girls from the community teach everyone how to pronounce them?

Really Good Questions

Q: We're women, for goodness sake. We've earned the right to be called that. Why insist on referring to us as girls?

A: Firstly, because *girls* isn't a dirty word; it's part of our name. Secondly, because the core of our problem – the #1 reason we're losing members – is that we have lost sight of the girls. We love our organisation so much, we made it about ourselves. We're proud of the women we've become ... and we're trying to force our girls to be that too. But today's girls have access to much more information than we did when we were their age. They are glimpsing a very different world in their future. They know it's not the future we faced. Their parents know it too. If we want to be of service to today's girls – to be the models of empowerment, responsibility, and resilience – we need an ever-present reminder that “We're for Girls.”

Q: What if what the girls want to do doesn't work?

A: Before you nix an idea because you just know it won't work (it's too expensive, physically impossible, too time consuming), consider whether the failure will teach the girls something greater than the success. If failure is an option, go ahead and let them fail. Then revel with them in the messy aftermath. If failure isn't an option, don't tell them ... help them figure it out for themselves with leading questions – How much money do we have? How much does this cost? Hmm. What happens when something that heavy falls from this high up? How much time do you think it'll take? What else could we do for that amount of money, in that time, from this height?

Questions to ask yourself: Am I worried that the girls will be disappointed in the activity? If so, how can I make even failure fun and inspiring? Am I worried the girls will think less of me as their leader? If so, how can I express that with honesty so they understand my concern.

Q: How do we let go with confidence and also consider policies and procedures?

A: The best way to do this is to go for the outer limits first, then narrow it down. When you brainstorm, go way out beyond the practicalities. If there were no constraints, what would the girls do? You'll find there are things out there on the edges that can work within your guidelines. Sometimes, if you ask, guidelines can be stretched. If all else fails, look for an allowable activity that evokes the same emotions.

Not allowed to go outside? Have an indoor camp and pretend you are outside. Don't forget the cricket sound effects. Not enough time? Ask the parents if you can schedule extra time, have two meetings back-to-back. Or leave a piece of the activity to be finished at home. Too risky? Find a way to feel the same thrill without the risk. Taking risks is all about the feeling, the rush, you get. Could you get this particular rush another way?

If the girls want to do something that costs too much money, get them involved in finding the resources or getting it for free. Could they write a letter asking for a free pass? Could they offer to promote the service in exchange for limited access? Could they find a “sponsor”?

Let's say the girls want to go to a water park but the rules don't allow it. How can you bring the water park experience inside? Have a water-themed party at your meeting hall? Take crazy photos of water drops and splashes and make something useful with the images? Design a new water park that's better than the real one? Take fake photos that make it look like they were at a water park?

Q: So, are we supposed to just throw out all of our history and traditions?

A: Traditions and history are grounding. They are the roots that get you through tough and confusing times. Girl Guides has survived for over 100 years because of this, so blindly throwing away traditions would be foolish. But that doesn't mean you should rest on your laurels either. It's wise for any organisation to constantly assess and reassess whether its traditions are moving the organisation forward or holding it back. Sometimes the answers mean evolving or tweaking the way you do things to make way for the future.

Q: How do we teach skills and knowledge if the girls are in charge?

A: Girl-led doesn't mean the girls are suddenly the bosses and you're just sitting in the corner with nothing to do. As their guide, your job is to hold the space and let them own it. That means the skills they are learning and the knowledge they are gaining is relevant to them, not just you. Yes, it's neat that you know how to tie knots and they don't. But if the girls see no relevance between knots and their lives – that's about you, not them. The topic shouldn't start with something you know; it should start with something they want to learn. If they want to learn to contour makeup, and you've never done it before, you can guide them in how to learn it together. ("Hey, lets' hop on Google and find out what resources there are!") Along the way, they'll acquire the artistic skill of seeing light and shadow ... and you will too.

Remember too that you are not the girls' sole source of enlightenment. They have many influencers: parents, teachers, older siblings, wiser peers, family members, community support, coaches, and more. Yes, maybe the girls need to learn a particular skill or lesson. But you don't have to be the one to teach it to them. Believe it or not, most of us find a way to learn what we need to learn when the time and circumstances are right.

Q: What if the girls don't know what they want?

A: They won't. Just as we did with the "girls only" interviews, you have to ask probing (but not leading) questions and peel away the 4 Obstacles (the things they think you want them to say, the anti-language, etc.) The girls will also come up with ideas that seem frivolous and purely about fun. It's up to you, the leader, to introduce learning opportunities without muffling their giggles. Don't overlook the fact that social interaction, which can seem like mere child's play, is a must-have skill in today's world.

Here's an example. Instead of asking, "What do you want to do on the camping trip?" (Which will probably net you a repeat of the trip they took the last time.) Try asking, "Can you think of 100 things we've never done before on a camping trip?" Let's say you're trying to figure out where to go. Instead of "Where do you want to go?" (Which will net you all the places they've already been.) Get out a map and ask, "Where have you never been on this map?"

Q: If we start going with the girls' whims, won't we lose all respect?

A: How the community thinks about respect and how it is earned has changed from even ten years ago. So we need to make sure that our ideas of respect are based on today's (and tomorrow's) standards. What do we want, girls, parents, family members, and community members to think of us? That we're doing things because we've always done them like this? Or that we're the sparks of innovation and inspiration that will drive the future?

Girl-led guiding doesn't mean foregoing respect, it means redefining and reinvigorating it. Hold the space, let the girls own the space. When you feel judged, remind yourself that a program defined by control, compliance, and constraints would be doing a serious disservice to the girls.

Q: How do we give the girls the lead without losing control?

A: Not feeling in control can be uncomfortable, especially for people whose identities are tied to leadership roles. What's important to understand here is that true leadership isn't about you ... and it isn't about control. With apologies to Lao Tzu: "A leader is best when people barely know she exists, when her work is done, her aim fulfilled, the girls will say: we did it ourselves." On letting go of control, he adds, "Nothing is softer or more flexible than water, yet nothing can resist it." Girl-led guiding is about creating a soft, flexible space in which the girls lead themselves, achieve the aim, and get to own the results.

Q: How can we do all this in the time allotted?

A: Girl-led guiding should mean you spend less of your time planning and preparing *for* the girls and focus more on the time you have *with* the girls. Yes, doing things you've never done before might take a little more paperwork, or different paperwork, or phone calls and emails to rally support. Girl-led guiding may also mean that you don't do everything you'd hoped to do this year, but you do other things you hadn't realized were options. Remember, Girl Guides Victoria isn't a factory where we spit out exact replicas of the experience every girl who came before had. It's dynamic, and exciting, and unpredictable. And sometimes there isn't enough time to do it all. That's okay as long as the time you had was about and for the girls.

Q: How do we promote "We're For Girls?"

A: We didn't make "We're For Girls" into an official Girl Guides Victoria symbol for a very good reason: we want anyone who's for girls to be able to use it freely in their lives. So how do you spread the word? Make it your favourite hashtag. Plaster it on t-shirts. Do really creative chalk art. Make a movie short called "We're for Girls." Better yet, have a competition to see who can come up with the best creative expression of "We're For Girls." Shorten it to WFG and send it in a secret-coded text. Add it to your email signature. Write a poem or a song. Put it on a bumper sticker. Tweet your favourite singer and ask her to write a song for girls.

Q: How do I prepare the girls for a future that's unknown?

A: You've probably heard the phrase "get comfortable with being uncomfortable." That's certainly true in this case. Discomfort with change and facing the unknown is about fear. The more we focus on those fears, the more we create a vision in our heads of the worst case scenario. How do you turn that vision into a best case scenario that you can aim for and tweak and adjust along the way? Take the energy that fuels your fear of the unknown and decide to turn it into excitement. This take a little mental practice at first. Practice daily. Before long you'll be an expert.

Read articles and books and listen to podcasts about new technologies, discoveries, and ideas. Wonder how those discoveries might impact today's girls. Picture a world where those things have come true in the very best way. Make it the most perfect vision of the future you can imagine. What changes for girls between our current world and that ideal future? Do all girls even need to work for a living? If so, what do girls do? If not, what do girls do with their time? When you practice picturing all the real and unreal possibilities, a weight is lifted, the unknown is exciting, and you get in touch with your inner girl.

Q: How do I apply this to different age groups?

A: The concepts in the Lighthouse Statement and 5 Questions are ageless. With younger groups who still have strong imaginations, you may need to do less prompting and more corralling. As the girls enter their teens, fears and embarrassment come into the picture, so you'll need to push them to explore the "silly edges" of their imaginations.

Q: My girls are used to the way things are. How can I get them to change?

A: Top-down teaching, compliance, and following the leader are all techniques that worked in the past to get things done. These techniques still work on girls who respect and admire their elders. But is using them responsible leadership? What happens when those same girls grow up, go out into the world, learn that things are different now, and feel cheated or unprepared? As comfortable as we are in our set routines, we need to ch-ch-change.

Shifting to girl-led guiding less about "getting" the girls do something and more about removing constraints and judgment. Most of the adults in their lives have taught them the comfort of compliance, of waiting to be told what to think, say, and do. Let Girl Guides Victoria be the one place where they feel their own power to imagine, explore, and decide. Yes, they will resist at first. There will be some long silences while they wait for you to give them the answers and you help them understand the tension they are feeling. You'll ask a few more questions. Then, suddenly they'll break free.

Q: How am I supposed to do all this? I'm already doing so much and expectations on leaders can be enormous.

A: Trust us, we get it. You put so much heart and energy into Girl Guides. Most of the time it's exhilarating. But it can also be exhausting and downright frustrating. Some days it feels thankless, like no one has noticed how much you do ... or even what you do. Changing things takes extra effort, mental energy you're not sure you have. You're wondering if you should quit, do something else, try something different. We hope you won't. We'd like to believe that if you've read this far you really kind of into us. And we want you to feel good about all you've done and all you can do. We really hope that once you start down this path won't mean more effort, it will mean different and might even end up meaning less. So here's what we recommend.

Get a notebook. Not an old bent, curly one. A fresh, new notebook with clean pages. Write down everything you've done in Girl Guides from the very start. Your accomplishments, joyful moments, failures you can laugh about now. Spend 15 minutes adding to this list every day for a week. When you run out of ideas, ask your girls or another leader you've worked with to help you come up with more. That's where you've been.

Now, skip a page, and make a new list. What new things you could do with this girl-led direction? Who could you talk with to brainstorm ideas? What places could you visit? What would you want if you were age seven, eleven, thirteen? Write down the things girls can't do in school. The things they don't have time for at home. Keep writing. Things girls can do now that they weren't allowed to do 20 years ago. Write down girls who have inspired you and how and why. Make a list of books by and for girls who rock, podcasts featuring inspiring girl role models, blogs that are written by and for girls. When you hear a clever saying about girls, add it to your notebook. See? You can do this.

Q: How do we make sure this works for ALL girls?

A: This is a two-pronged question. The first part is, how do we attract more girls and keep them all happy? The answer is, yes, the world is full of girls with very different needs and requirements. Trying to please all of them all, however, is not practical. Girl Guides Victoria is for a particular type of girl who thrives in a girls-only space. That means we need to be okay with some girls being better suited to scouts or other extracurricular programs.

The second prong of the question has to do with inclusiveness. Even among the girls who come to Girl Guides they are different and care about different things. Your job is to hold your space for them to try on different possibilities. Make it a place where girls who may have thought they were shy, timid, or slow discover that they're not. Set an exciting, participatory, positive tone and charge ahead.

Q: How can this work if some leaders refuse to change?

A: Maybe those who know our traditions and history the best, have the most invested in them, are the ideal people to drive change. To ask which traditions still serve a real purpose? Which ones don't? Can they be tweaked to be more relevant? Which ones serve only the adults and not the girls? However, some grown up girls won't be able to find a comfort zone in this strange new world. Not everyone will be willing to come with you into that future. And that's okay.

Q: How exactly do I channel my inner girl?

A: Girl Guides is a safe place for adults too. A place where you can escape your inhibitions and be a beginner again. Close your eyes and let yourself feel the energy that's baked into the idea of revelling. Can't feel it yet? Try pretending for a while. Find a role model and mirror her energy. Get curious about curiosity. Ask questions. Then ask questions about the answers you get. Dig deeper. Look closer. Try connecting the dots between different things. That's where cleverness hides. Let go of the boundaries and rules for a while and imagine 100 or 1000 unedited possibilities, more than you've ever allowed yourself to imagine before. Ask "what if" as often as possible. Take things apart, turn things inside out, upside down, and backwards. Try doing things you do all the time in a new way, just to see what happens. You might be surprised.

Q: How do we keep the momentum going?

A: One of the most distinctive qualities of girls is our drive to interact, exchange ideas, and work together to achieve our goals. Let's use that strength, that asset, that super power, to reboot Girl Guides Victoria.

Keeping and building the Girls Rock 2018 momentum means you need to keep on talking. Give each other weekly challenges. Bet another member that you can come up with more ideas. Share new things you've tried, your successes and failures. Next week, call someone different and do it all over again. Most of all, keep talking to anyone who will listen. An interested parent might decide to help out. A curious community member might finally volunteer. If you run into organisational roadblocks, get two other members – or rally the girls – to help you make a case for change. Find out who you need to talk to. Schedule a meeting and go for it.

The girls can get into on the growth push too. Make it your goal to brainstorm ways to invite and win at least two new girls each month. Pull out all the stops. Serve cake if you have to! New members with fresh minds won't feel the constraints of how things were. The more new girls you get, the more the momentum you will build.

We're for Girls

As of July 2017, there were 290,384 females enrolled in Victoria government schools and several thousand more in private schools. Yet only 6,000 of them know the beauty and wonder of Girl Guides Victoria.

There's comfort in routine and sameness. When you feel comfortable, think of those other 284,384 girls who don't have Girl Guides in their lives. When you feel the rhythm of the routine, the snuggly softness of familiarity and keeping things the way they are, let it frighten you a bit. Like an eerie quietness, let it stir you into action. Excite you. Inspire you to mix it up. And rock the world like a girl.

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