

# 7 The role of the scout LEADERS







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# SCOUT LEADERS



## BEYOND THE TRADITIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON ADULT LEADERS

In order for the symbolic framework, the Patrol system, group life, objectives, activities, programme cycle and other elements laid out in this Handbook to produce the desired effects, the Unit needs Adult Leaders who are capable of implementing them with creativity and *giving life* to a Scout Unit.

The first thing we have to do to obtain these Leaders is to look beyond our traditional perspectives on leadership.

We usually picture a Scout Leader as a special person who shows the way, takes crucial decisions, musters the troops, solves problems everywhere at once and draws a mass of followers behind him or her. These leaders of our dreams are based on supposed parallels with other people's impotence, their lack of personal vision, their inability to solve problems for themselves, their lack of skill in handling processes of change – shortcomings which it might appear that only great leaders can remedy.

As we fail to recognize the great leaders of our dreams among the human resources we have available, we impose a cumbersome code of restraints and "regulations" on the actions of our leaders and run the risk of generating mere "programme operators", who have a routine approach and lack creativity. This lowers the level of the leaders we recruit, makes them more dependent on "instructions", reduces the relevance and excitement of the programme of activities and tires even the best and most enthusiastic Leaders.



## WHAT ARE THE LEADERS WE NEED REALLY LIKE?

Simply willing men and women,  
adults of different ages, who are mature and balanced,  
and know the Scout Method well enough to enjoy being free to innovate;  
they are able to share a project for the future,  
they can motivate others and generate commitments  
and they realize that they are responsible for an educational task  
that benefits young people  
and helps the Leaders themselves to grow as people.



## THE LEADERS DESIGN THE SCOUT UNIT



What do we mean by  
“designing” a Scout Unit?

The Scout Method is not a grid of boxes and arrows. It is not like the manual for an automatic washing machine with pre-set programmes, which shows us which button to press for the wash cycle we want. It is a set of inspiring principles and useful techniques that require to be understood as a totality and then adapted and integrated into the daily life of a Scout Unit, taking into account the particular environment of the Unit and the individuals who comprise it.

The essence of design consists of seeing how the parts fit together to work as an integrated whole in a determined situation. It is by nature an integrating activity, because its purpose is to make something work well in practice. It calls for knowledge, imagination and freedom.



A car that has the best engine, the best gears and the best seats, but cannot be safely driven on wet roads would not be well designed. The purpose of Unit design is to make the Scout Method work well on wet roads... or twisty lanes, on loose gravel or in heavy traffic.

Only the Unit Leaders hold the key to this “field” information. So –armed with a good knowledge of the Method and how it works- they alone have to use their imagination and apply the Method to suit the reality. There are no two identical situations nor two Units exactly the same. That is why we cannot expect recipes for instant success or magic formulas from people who do not know that reality. The most magical formula of all for the Unit is the one that is designed and built by its own Leaders.

### What tasks are involved in designing a Unit?

It is impossible to make an exhaustive list, since reality presents us with challenges that are changing constantly. We can provide some examples, however, that help to understand this first role of Scout Leaders.



Design includes, for example, the processes of *initiating and making changes*. In a small Unit that has recently been created, it may not be a priority to invest too much time in making sure that every element is working properly. These can be consolidated gradually as the Unit grows. But it *is* important to ensure that the Patrol System works well from the start, to create a “culture” that respects the autonomy of the small groups. In a longer established and more numerous Unit, which the leaders suddenly realize has always worked like one huge Patrol, the Patrol System will have to be established gradually otherwise the “shock” may threaten its stability. No rule book can tell us how to do this; rather, it is a process that has to be managed by Leaders with vision.



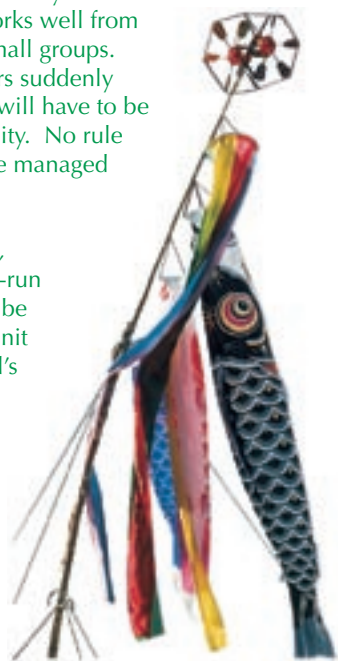
Designing means *adapting our expectations to the social, economic and cultural conditions in which we are acting*. A state-run school in a marginalized community in a low-income city cannot be expected to provide Patrol meeting places immediately after the Unit starts up, even if the meeting place is an essential part of the Patrol’s identity. It is necessary to “design” a means to earn that space, to build trust in the community and to think up alternatives in the meantime.



Designing a Unit entails *the ability to perceive subtleties that can account for certain situations*. For example, the Leaders of a Scout Unit in a Catholic parish who complain about the lack of support they receive from the priest, may have failed to realize that they have been programming most of their excursions on precisely the days when that community celebrates important religious festivals.



Design includes *assessing the actors and needs in each situation and implementing strategies which are suitable in terms of time and place*. It will be difficult to implement the Patrol System in an upper-middle class school if the Patrol Leaders are so influenced by the competitive social environment and so keen to see results that they fail to take the time to let the Patrol become a learning community.





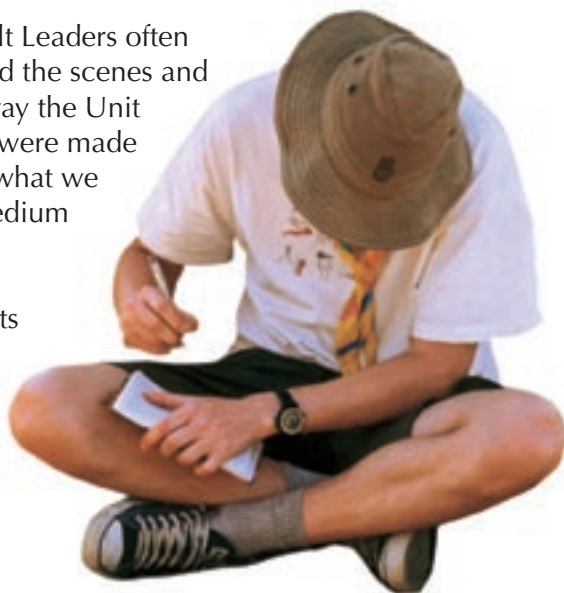
Design involves *preparing and improving the learning processes of the Patrol Leaders, adapting the processes to the situation of the people, to help them to learn to deal productively with critical situations*. Otherwise, the Adult Leaders will create a relationship of dependency from the start, in which they will be doing the tasks that the young people should be doing as part of their learning process. Handbooks and courses are no substitute for this aspect of designwork; however good their content, they cannot take account of the particular needs of the Patrol Leaders in any given Unit.



Design means *thinking out and implementing the changes that are involved in a Patrol's decision to be mixed or single-sex, or anticipating the effects of such a decision, or regulating the imbalances that are often caused by changes in the make-up of Patrols*, either when new members join or when old members leave to join the next Section.

Design is a responsibility that Adult Leaders often neglect. Design responsibilities are behind the scenes and have a relatively low profile. Just as the way the Unit works today is the result of decisions that were made or tasks that were carried out in the past, what we do today will yield benefits only in the medium term.

Those who like to see instant results will find the quiet and patient work of design rather unattractive. But there is no substitute for design and it rewards those who are persistent. And in design you have to be persistent, because it is not something you do "once and for all". It is an ongoing task, which obliges us to rethink and redesign every time circumstances make it necessary.



We have said that a full understanding of the Scout Method is essential for the success of the ongoing process of adaptation involved in design. Otherwise, these adaptations may easily become "diversions". It is fear of such diversions that sometimes prompt the Scout authorities to turn the Method into a cumbersome set of regulations, weighed down with rules about what we can and cannot do. This scares Leaders off, bores the young people and restricts the freedom of design. It places the Unit in danger of becoming obsolete.

Consequently, the first responsibility of the Team of Adult Leaders is design, and the task is ongoing. To design well it is necessary to:



*understand* the Scout Method in its entirety;



gauge the reality of the environment in order to *adapt* effectively;



know the members of the Unit to successfully *integrate* all the components of the Method.

## SCOUT LEADERS AS GUARDIANS OF THE MISSION



When we discussed the Scout Unit we said that young people are also involved in the mission of Scouting, but not consciously, since they do not join the Unit to find help in building their personality. They join Scouting because they are attracted to the adventure of exploring new territories with a group of friends. As they experience this adventure in the atmosphere of the Unit, the learning process –which is the mission of Scouting– follows as a natural consequence of that environment, in other words, of group life.

We already know that group life is achieved by applying the elements of the Scout Method in an integrated way. We have also said that group life is the responsibility of the Scout Unit, which constantly pinpoints the sense of what is being done and how it is being done.

**To say that the Unit is responsible for group life is the same as saying that the Leaders are responsible, since in the structure of the Unit they are the ones responsible for educational support. No other agent in the Unit can undertake this task. That is why we say that the Leaders are *guardians of the mission*.**



Being a guardian of the mission does not mean preaching it, promoting it with posters on the walls or getting the young people to recite it. That would be boring, inconsistent and not conducive to any kind of learning whatsoever. Overseeing the mission means overseeing that all the elements of the Method are applied fully, creating the conditions that generate group life.

Overseeing the mission also means being an example of it. No Scout Leader can conceivably believe that the Scout Law is applicable only to the young people. Scout Leaders cannot impose activities as they please or condense life in the outdoors to a couple of picnics because they do not like camping or have no time for it.



## SCOUT LEADERS ADMINISTER THE VISION

In chapter 5 we also mentioned that the *vision*—which is expressed in the Unit's yearly objectives—is the Scout Unit's image of its own future. We also said that when it is shared it becomes an impressively powerful force in the hearts of all its members, creating a shared link that infuses the Unit and affords consistency to all that it does.

The vision grows and expands like a self-reinforcing spiral of communication and energy. As we speak about the vision and more people adhere to it, it becomes clearer and enthusiasm grows. The first successes towards achieving the vision swell the enthusiasm. But the visionary process is not hitch-free and is necessarily subject to certain constraints:



As more people join in or Leaders change, more “future ideals” are added, the focus becomes hazier and conflicts may be generated. Leaders and Patrols ask themselves if the shared vision cannot be altered, if personal or Patrol visions are unimportant or if those who do not agree should change their standpoint.

Closing ourselves to all these possibilities slows the process of shared vision, brews conflicts and means that people only *accept* the group decision rather than really *sharing* it. The best approach is to investigate the diverging visions, give them space and allow the shared vision to be broadened or deepened, seeking to “harmonize” the diversity.



The gap that begins to be perceived between the vision and the reality is another limiting factor. The Unit Council may become discouraged by the apparent difficulty in making the vision a reality, which means that the Adult Leaders have to boost individual capacities to sustain adherence to the vision.



The vision can also wither away when the leaders feel overpowered by the “day-to-day” reality and lose sight of it. In this case, they need to spend less time on routine matters and hold more conversations about future projects.





In all these cases, the leaders act as “administrators” of the vision. They make sure that it grows in strength and tackle the factors that threaten to erode it. If the leaders neglect the vision, they run the risk that the Patrols forget their mutual bonds, which is when people begin to lobby for personal points of view or the action becomes routine or bureaucratic.

In order to play their part as administrators of the vision, the Unit Leaders must ensure that they never lose sight of the *history of purpose*, understood as the general explanation of why we are doing what we are doing, how the Unit needs to evolve and how that evolution is part of something bigger, part of a “wider” history. This gives the vision depth and creates a horizon where dreams and personal goals stand out as milestones on a longer journey.

History of purpose does not come from the universal values of Scouting alone. Other factors that are part of it include: the history of the Scout Group to which the Unit belongs, the values passed down from the sponsoring institution, the style of the community in which it acts, the struggles and conquests of the past, the “legends” that are passed on about the great moments of the Unit or Scout Group and many other things that are relevant to its development. History of purpose contextualizes the reason for what we are doing and maintains the stability of the Unit.

## SCOUT LEADERS MOTIVATE



Through their example and their many dialogues with the young people, the Leaders invite them to develop their behaviour in a certain way and pass on enthusiasm about the Unit’s shared vision and about exploring new territories, strengthening the Patrols, completing the programmes of activities and committing to their personal growth.

Through communication, understood as a process of sharing meanings, there is a gradual enchantment which generates accord (from *acordis*, a single heart) and which motivates the young people to act in a certain way (from *moto*, to move). In other words, to move as a single heart.



One of the areas in which the Leaders' role of motivating is most important is in promoting activities. The young people think up and propose Unit or Patrol activities, but often the Leaders have to stimulate their imagination, slip them ideas, suggest initiatives and help maintain the enthusiasm for the activity to be attractive, adventurous and exciting. And they have to do so without standing on the front line, leaving the spaces that correspond to the young people and reappearing when they are needed. It is of little use to a Leader to be an expert in the psychology of the age group and in the Scout Method if he or she has not built up skills for encouraging activities.



To act as a motivator it is necessary to prioritize relationships, genuinely helping others to understand and discover things for themselves, giving them full freedom to choose. The Scout Leader shows, reveals, invites, and smooths the way for others to discover for themselves.

For this to be an authentic relationship it must be free of any desire to impose. It means motivating without controlling or being demagogic. It means motivating without manipulating, without weaving an emotional trap into the proposal that makes it impossible for the other person to say no. It means motivating without adulating and without celebrating fictitious successes merely to gain adherence.

The image which most drastically contradicts what motivation should be is that of the Pied Piper of Hamelin, who bewitched the rats with his music drawing them out of the city to plunge into a river gorge.

The idea which best shows what a Scout Leader can be as a motivator was captured by the Lebanese poet Kahlil Gibran. Speaking about parents and children, he grasps the special sense of *responsibility without possessiveness*:

**Your children are not your children.  
They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself.  
They come through you but not from you,  
And though they are with you, yet they belong not to you.  
You may give them your love but not your thoughts.  
For they have their own thoughts.  
You may house their bodies but not their souls,  
For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow,  
which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.  
You may strive to be like them,  
but seek not to make them like you.  
For life goes not backward nor tarries with yesterday.  
You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth.  
The archer sees the mark upon the path of the infinite,  
and He bends you with His might that His arrows may go swift and far.  
Let your bending in the archer's hand be for gladness;  
For even as He loves the arrow that flies,  
so He loves also the bow that is stable.**



## THE SCOUT LEADER GENERATES COMMITMENTS

Motivation is in the Leaders' front line of action with the young people, but motivation is not enough. The objective of motivation is to get the young people to make choices freely.



Possible options for the young people arise at different levels:



Some options are objective and collective, such as *the option on the Unit's shared vision of the future*, through which the young person contributes his or her personal vision to the shared vision adopted by the Unit Assembly.



Other options are subjective and personal, such as *when to make one's Promise*, which will imply a commitment to the Scout Law. This is a key option within the young person's participation in Scouting.



Another option of this type is *to commit to educational objectives that will help him or her to grow as a person*. Here the Scout Method proposes a series of objectives to the young people, which are based on scout values and cover all the areas of their personality. They have the option of modifying or widening this proposal, until it fits what they want to achieve. They make this choice after considering it with the Patrol and the Adult Leader who monitors their progress. We will look at this in detail when we discuss the educational objectives.

✚ The young people also address operational options, such as *the activities they want to carry out*. These are the simplest options of all and take place in the heart of the Patrol and at the Unit Assembly.

The whole Scout Method represents a constant encouragement for the young person to exercise his or her capacity for choosing options and making decisions, such as which Patrol to join, the election of the Patrol authorities, the tasks to undertake in an activity and the proficiencies he or she will pursue.

Once an option is taken, the Leader tries to get the young people to make the shift from motivation to *commitment*, encouraging them to assimilate these options as part of their lives.

To achieve this commitment, the Leaders help the young person to constantly return to the *meaning* of the option they have taken. A job that has no meaning does not generate commitment; it might gain acceptance at the most. Like Sisyphus, whom Greek mythology condemns to push a rock up a hill eternally only to have it roll down again every time he reaches the summit.

Lastly, commitment is a word which implies reciprocity. It alludes to the creation of mutuality in the relationship. The etymology of the word –“together on a mission”– refers to precisely this reciprocity. The Scout Leader is not a professional “commitment-maker” who can remain apart from the commitment generated. On the contrary, to invite someone to undertake a commitment is to undertake it oneself. The one who “commits” the other undertakes the commitment of being an example of that which gives meaning to the commitment.

If you ask someone to adhere to a vision, there and then you are implicitly affirming your own commitment to that vision. When you invite young people to commit themselves to achieving the educational objectives for which they have opted, you are making a commitment to support them in their growth. When you ask for a task to be carried out responsibly, you make a commitment to work jointly to achieve that task. The young people’s commitment and leaders’ example are a single undertaking.

## THE SCOUT LEADER IS AN EDUCATOR



**This is the best known, central and most evident role of the Scout Leader, but it is not the only one and it is not carried out in isolation from the other roles. The Scout Leader acts as an educator as a culmination of his or her roles as designer, guardian of the mission, administrator of the vision, motivator and generator of commitments.**



Learning is not possible in a badly designed Unit, in which the proceedings are interrupted every five minutes because things have not been well thought out or done properly. There can be no learning in a Unit that lacks a sense of mission and an educational space that is generated by *group life*, in other words, by the interaction among all the elements of the Scout Method. The Scout educational process will not work if there is no shared vision of the future that we are building together. Likewise, there can be no learning if the young people are not motivated and do not make a voluntary commitment to their own personal growth. Thus the Scout Leader discharges the role of educator in combination with all the other roles.

Also, the Scout Leader's role as an educator cannot be exercised in the classic manner we are accustomed to seeing in other educational environments. When we analysed the Patrol as a learning community we said that all learning is a process of change. That is why acting as an educator makes the Scout Leader an agent of change.

## How does Scout education relate to change?

Participation and anticipation are both basic features of learning through the Scout Method.



*Participation* is understood to be a voluntary and momentum-gathering process of cooperation and dialogue between the young people in shared Patrol or Unit matters, in which they learn by discovering things “together”.



*Anticipation* implies a future perspective, a look ahead at events which are coming. It is expressed collectively as a vision and individually as a set of activities directed at the achievement of certain personal objectives.

This type of learning generates both integration and autonomy, which are two poles of the same axis. Through *integration* the young person learns to live in society, and through *autonomy* he or she learns to differentiate him or herself from others, by means of a personal project that is conducive to self-fulfilment.

Unlike traditional learning, which is largely targeted at adapting people to their environment and preparing them to resolve known situations, Scout learning revolves around change, renovation, restructuring and reformulation of problems. This prepares the young people to act in the new situations that arise in a world which is constantly changing. Hence the close relationship between change and Scout learning.

To bring about this innovative learning, as well as encouraging commitment, the Scout Leader generates a certain tension between the reality and the future ideal. This tension prompts the young person to act in pursuit of a vision of a better future, of a better way of being.

This *creative tension* is present in everything that attempts to move human beings in a certain direction. There is no change without clarity of mission and vision. If there is no mission, why change? If there is no vision, where would change take us?

On 28 August 1963, at the mass civil rights rally at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, the Baptist Pastor Martin Luther King began his historic speech with the words “I have a dream”. He went on to unfold his vision of the egalitarian American society of which he dreamt. The tension that King created between the reality of the time and his shared dream led to the United States Government passing the Civil Rights Act in favour of racial minorities in 1964.

By means of the creative tension they generate in the young people, Scout Leaders show them the future and make it possible. In the words of Martin Luther King, it consists of “making the issue too dramatic to ignore any more”. Educating is affording importance to the issue of personal growth. Educating is showing possible futures, accompanying the young people towards what they can and want to be. It is passing on the values they need to gain access to the future, to change the present reality.

By generating this creative tension in the young people, the Leader sows in them the capacity to enter the desired future by themselves. There is no need to push them, hurry them or pressure them towards that future, just accompany them. In this sense the role of the Scout Leader is to *transcend*, by getting the young people to make progress as a result of the conditions that have been created, but by their own efforts.



If they are to educate through anticipation and generate a creative tension between the present and the future, the Team of Leaders cannot consist only of people close in age to the Scouts. It must include adults of different ages who have enough experience of life to give them a “preview” of what is coming.

However, if the Team is formed exclusively of older leaders, activities may be less dynamic and it may be difficult to establish a horizontal relationship with the young people. It is therefore advisable to form multigenerational teams, to generate a balance between the different skills that are required.





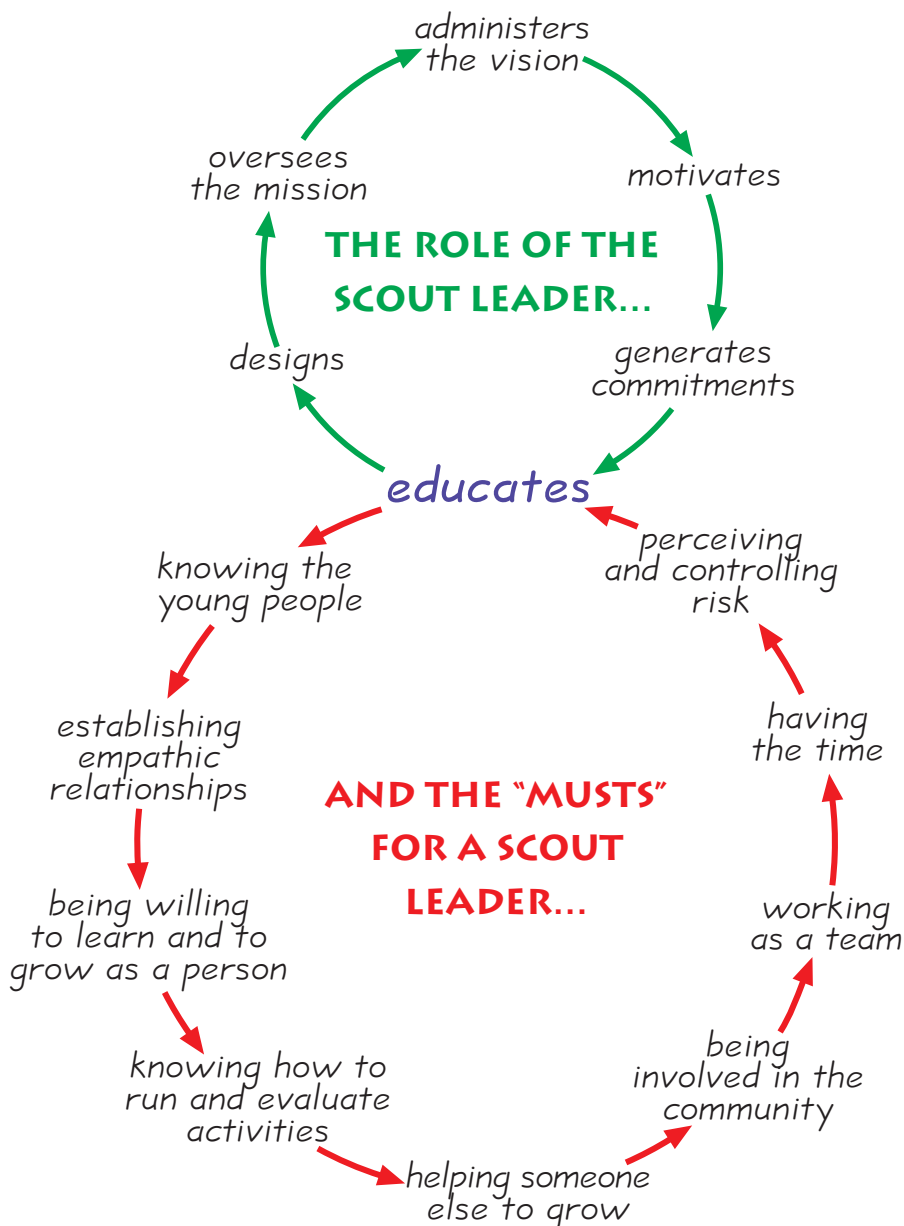
# SCOUT LEADERS AS EDUCATORS

## THERE ARE SOME BASIC REQUIREMENTS



must have or acquire certain prerequisites or basic conditions of an educational nature that will enable them to undertake the functions we have described.

To be able to carry out their responsibilities, Leaders





## KNOWING THE YOUNG PEOPLE



Knowledge of the young people involves two aspects: first, the general characteristics of girls and boys between the ages of 11 and 15, in all the dimensions of their personality; and second, the individual and unique way of being of each young person, which depends on innumerable factors relating to their nature, their family, the environment in which they act and their personal history.



## BEING ABLE TO ESTABLISH EMPATHIC RELATIONSHIPS

*Empathy* is the ability to feel someone else's feelings and thus understand both the feelings and the person by "putting yourself in their place".

**A relationship based on empathy supposes above all inner silence, time and willingness to listen. It also requires maturity and personal balance to understand and value what you are hearing. It requires the ability to observe and, above all, to control anxiety and let the other person take the initiative.**







**Empathy with young people also involves the ability to share their amazement about things, be enthusiastic about their projects and “get into the spirit”, identifying with them and revelling in the atmosphere of exploration which imbues the Unit. This ability is necessary in order to be able to enter into the game without losing one’s adult status, and without becoming confused with the young people. While sharing in the adventure with them, the Leader helps them to see things that they might not have seen otherwise.**

Empathy also means letting the young people take the time they need to progress. You must resist giving in to frustration or aggressiveness, or to feeling that you have failed. You have to be willing to start again, and try over and over again. As we have seen, you have to know how to *disappear* when you are not needed and be ready to *reappear* at the right time.

## **BEING WILLING TO LEARN AND TO GROW AS A PERSON**



**In a learning-centred system like the Scout Method, those who apply it should be the**

**first to demonstrate their willingness to learn all the time. Fortunately, we never stop learning and everything in life offers us the opportunity to do so, so it is to a large extent up to us to learn, unlearn and relearn continually, thinking about our task in a self-critical way.**

The *attitude* of learning gradually forms *educational ability*, which is reflected not only in the information we know, but also in our skills for sharing meaning, listening, coordinating processes and doing things well. Not just getting better at the job, but growing as a person, for the sake of the young people and your own.

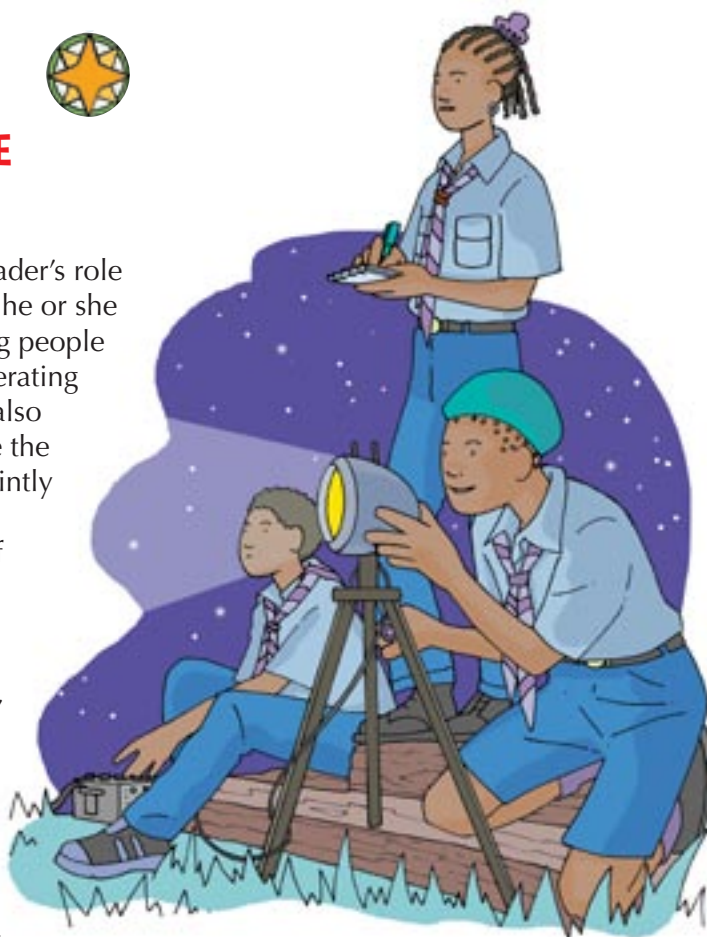
This continuous learning is achieved by learning from the young people themselves, from other leaders, from the parents, the Association’s training system, the community, social realities, from what you read and from your experiences.

## KNOWING HOW TO RUN AND EVALUATE ACTIVITIES



When we discussed the Leader's role as a motivator we said that he or she had to encourage the young people to take the initiative in generating activities. He or she must also be able to run and evaluate the young people's activities jointly with them. This adds the requirement for the skills of organization and analysis.

In particular, it is not only these skills that are needed, but also the ability to help others to organize themselves and to learn to conduct and evaluate activities by themselves. This implies learning to keep up the young people's efforts while generating the individual and team abilities to make them progressively more autonomous.



The activities that the young people carry out give them personal experiences. Over time, these experiences lead to the achievement of the educational objectives in a gradual, sequential and cumulative manner. But this process is neither automatic nor unconscious. The young person needs the dialogue, company and support of peer group, family and Scout Leaders.



## HELPING SOMEONE ELSE TO GROW

This means that the Leader needs to have the ability to help the young people in many tasks such as setting personal objectives, keeping up the effort to achieve them, knowing how to admit and acknowledge shortcomings and progress, tolerating failures and being willing to start over. In short, to have certain attitudes and skills that enable young people to recognize and accept him or her as a valid interlocutor with respect to their personal growth. Clearly, this also calls for personal development on the part of the Leader.





## BEING INVOLVED WITH THE COMMUNITY

When we spoke of the Patrols we said that they do not learn in isolation, but that the Scout Method invites them to become involved in the nearby community and take an interest in the wider community, the globalized world in which we live today.

The Leaders who serve as a model for these Patrols have to set an example of this proposition. How can we expect young people to take an interest in the world and play a constructive role in society if the Leaders themselves are not actively involved in the community?

People who have failed to reach maturity and use their Scout leadership as a way to compensate for unresolved personal frustrations have nothing to offer Scouting. Neither do people who have no commitment to developing society. Still less is Scout leadership suited to people who do not even play an active role in society, however small, and who appear to need to escape their responsibilities by taking refuge in what they perceive as the sheltered environment of Scouting.



## WORKING AS A TEAM

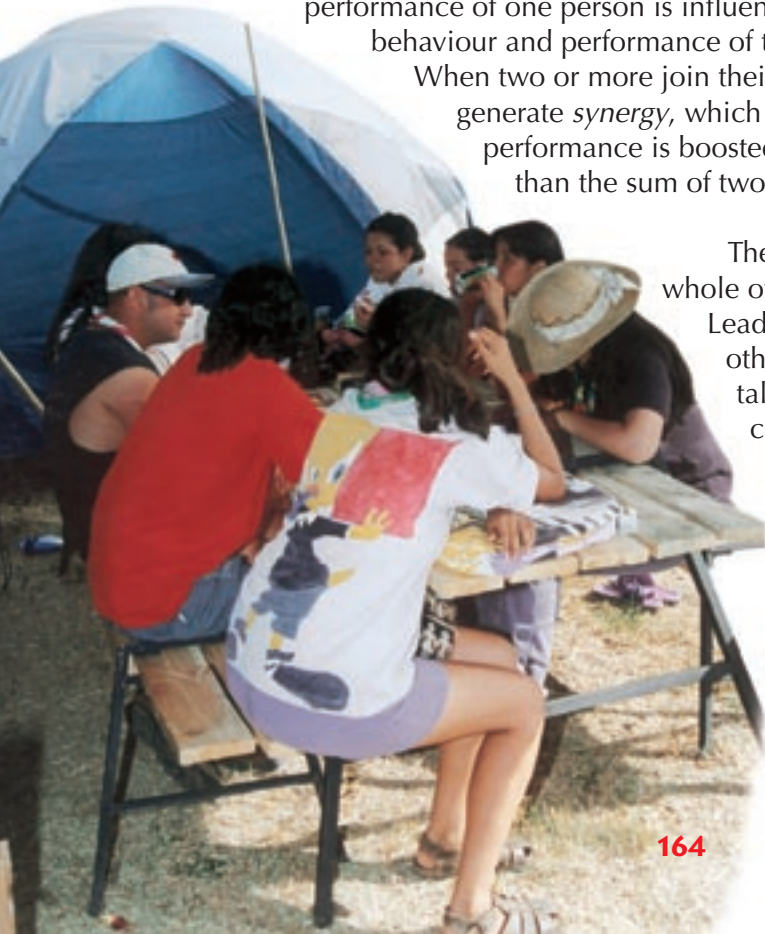
A team is a group in which the behaviour and performance of one person is influenced by the behaviour and performance of the others.

When two or more join their efforts they generate *synergy*, which means that performance is boosted, and the result is more than the sum of two individual performances.



The team dynamic cuts across the whole of the Scout Method. So a Scout Leader must be capable of working with others, contributing his or her personal talents and accepting and valuing the contributions of the others.

Working as a team is not just working alongside others, but working in an integrated manner with them. This requires the personal ability to tolerate and handle differences and ultimately to make individual points of view converge.





## HAVING THE TIME



The tasks of the Leader in a Scout Unit demand time. This needs to be quality time, freely given. Try not to have other things on your mind, and you will be able to give the best of yourself, without doing things by halves, falling behind or doing things hurriedly or unprepared.

A Leader should make a commitment to the post for a pre-established period, ideally for 3 years. This will give the work continuity, produce palpable results and enable better observation of the personal development of the young people you monitor and assess. On a personal level, it will enable you to “grow into the job” and enjoy doing it better and better.

A stable Team of Leaders gives the Unit stability.

## PERCEIVING AND CONTROLLING RISK



Like in any human undertaking, the activities of the Unit are subject to a certain level of risk. Even more so in a system of trust, which encourages the young people to learn by letting them use their liberty more freely. Outside the limits of their normal controls, young people become more independent, but this does not mean that they have the autonomy to handle that independence. Of course, there can be no question of experimenting with trial-and-error learning in any situation which could imply physical or life-threatening risk.

Scout Leaders must take the time to imagine and detect potential risks in their activities, by identifying risk-minimizing conducts and establishing clear limits.

Limits should be clearly defined in the Scout Unit, in order to reduce risk to the minimum. To achieve this, the Leaders must transfer to the young people the ability to perceive and control risks themselves, and to respect the limits absolutely.





Baden-Powell said that the role of a leader is to “...put him or herself on the level of the older brother or sister, that is, to see things from the young people’s point of view, and to lead and guide and give enthusiasm in the right direction.” (*Aids to Scoutmastership*, 1919).

It would be difficult to find a better image that the “older brother or sister” to represent the educational role of the Scout Leader: encouraging adventure, setting an example of values, and accompanying growth.

An older brother or sister shares the adventures of their younger siblings without pretending to be younger than they are, without being childish, and with the admirable capacity to reduce their own strengths so the younger ones can develop theirs. Older siblings always want the best for the younger ones, so while they play they give guidance and protection and correct without punishing. And an older brother or sister is always admired because of the model they represent: the younger ones aspire to share adventures with them, they love them, respect what they say and feel they can open their hearts to them.

We must never forget that young people do not come to the Scout Unit to learn subject matter nor to receive grades; they go to school for that. They don’t come to receive fatherly love or bask in maternal affection; they have their home for that. They don’t come to receive religious instruction; they have their place of worship for that. They don’t join the Unit to develop competitive physical skills; for that they can join a sports club. They don’t come to learn rigid discipline or obey orders; if they wanted that they would join a military organization.

**This is why Baden-Powell said that the role of the Scout Leader is not that of a teacher, nor a parent, nor a pastor, nor a sports instructor, and still less a military officer. It is much more akin to a big brother or sister.**

People who work with youngsters are not only responsible from an educational point of view. They are also obliged by law to respect certain rights and duties.

Young Scouts are legal minors, and they have rights that must be respected. Anyone who violates those rights or is negligent in any way must take full responsibility for his or her acts before the law. Therefore, the members of the Team of Leaders must all be at least 18 years of age.

Before bringing a new person into the Team of Leaders, adequate checks must be made on their: a) mental health; b) emotional stability; c) moral suitability; d) control of aggressiveness; e) lack of authoritarian tendencies; and f) respectful and tactful treatment of others, especially young people.

