



## **Girl Scouts of Greater Atlanta Our Own Councils' "WHAT IF I COULDN'T?" Girl Scout Brownie Try-It**

Life can be extra-challenging for a kid with special needs. Meeting people and making friends can be tough. But kids who use a wheelchair or have lots of health problems want friends just like you do. Some friendly things you might do are to carry the person's books, open a door, or ask him or her to join you and your friends at lunch. Be sure to tell a teacher if you see someone being bullied or teased. But don't be "overly helpful" when no help is needed! Why? Because just like you, kids with special needs like to be as independent as they can be. As you get to know them, they may help you understand what it's like to be in their shoes. And you'll be helping fill a very special need, one that everybody has — the need for good friends.

**To earn this Try-It, choose and complete 4 activities, including #1, which is required\*.**

### **\*1. "If I...Could I Still?"**

To play this game, you'll need to:

- Put the phrases below on individual cards or strips of paper.
- Put the "If I..." cards into one paper bag and the "Could I Still" cards into another paper bag. (Or put them in two piles, face down.)
- Take turns picking one card from each bag and answering the question the best you can. For example: "If I...couldn't see/Could I still...celebrate my birthday?" (Yes!) If you answer "No" to a question, talk it over with your friends or family and see if you can think of a way to change your answer to "yes." You may find a way, or you may decide that *nothing* can be done and the answer will still be "No."
- At the end of the game, decide, "If a girl has a disability, could she still be a Girl Scout? (Yes!) Could she be a good friend?" (Yes!)

### **IF I...**

couldn't hear  
couldn't see  
had only one leg  
couldn't speak clearly  
had seizures sometimes  
had trouble reading  
couldn't see or hear  
used an asthma inhaler  
used a feeding tube

used a wheelchair  
used crutches  
had only one arm  
couldn't use my legs  
couldn't use my hands  
stuttered  
had trouble making friends  
had trouble sitting still  
learned new things very slowly

### **COULD I STILL...?**

watch TV  
talk to my friends  
fly a kite  
go to school  
day dream  
go to parties  
ride a bike  
play with my pet  
feel sad  
go swimming  
write a letter

celebrate my birthday  
be in a school play  
play games with my friends  
cry when my feelings are hurt  
fly in an airplane  
play a musical instrument  
spend the night at a friend's  
eat my favorite ice cream  
hate doing a lot of homework  
help bake cookies  
read a book

## **2. How Does She Do That?**

Do you wonder how people with disabilities do certain things? For example, how does a girl who is blind match her clothes? How does a girl who uses a wheelchair go on a hike in the woods? How does a girl who cannot read or write do her school work? You can find the answers to these questions by talking to people with disabilities, by going online (with an adult's permission) or by looking in books. Then challenge yourself by doing these activities where you *simulate* (pretend to have) a disability:

- color a picture or write your name without using your hands.
- eat a meal or play a game while blindfolded
- communicate with a friend without using spoken or written words
- write the Girl Scout Motto, "Be Prepared." using your left hand if your are right-handed, or your right hand if you are left-handed.

## **3. Where's My Chair?**

People who use a wheelchair to move around don't stay in their chair all the time! They may *transfer*, or move, from their wheelchair to their bed, the toilet, a regular chair, the floor, or a car, etc. Try this transfer activity for yourself: you'll need 2 chairs, one lower than the other, placed side by side. Move from one chair to the other and back without standing on your feet. *Talk about:* What would happen if someone moved the first chair before you could transfer back? Why should you never move a wheelchair when a person isn't using it? Why *shouldn't* you lean on a wheelchair when a person is using it? Why *shouldn't* you push a wheelchair with asking permission first? (Not sure? Ask a person who uses a wheelchair, or look up "wheelchair etiquette" online or in a book.)

#### **4. Just Like Anyone Else**

Some children have a disability that affects the way their brain works. It may make it hard for them to learn, to pay attention, or to make friends. Play this game to help you understand how they might feel sometimes. Your leader will help you set up the game:

- Ask about 1 out of every 6 girls in the group to leave the room with another leader.
- While she (or they) are out of the room, the other leader teaches the rest of the girls a new activity or game.
- When that group is sure they know how to do the new activity, the other girls come back into the room.
- The leader asks *all* the girls do the new activity without any explanation for the girls who were out of the room. No one may help them with the activity.
- Afterward, talk about how it feels to join in an activity without understanding the rules; how it feels when no one tries to help you.
- What could you do to help the next time you see someone who is confused or unsure about a game or activity?

#### **5. Be a Disabilities Detective**

Invite a person with a disability to your troop meeting (or go to their school or place of work.) Prepare a list of questions to ask her that will help you better understand having a disability. For example:

- How did your disability come about?
- Is there anything you can't do because of your disability?
- What can you do that most people think you can't do?
- What are some ways are you treated that you don't like?
- What can people do to help you?

**Or** meet with a person who works with children or adults with disabilities. Ask her about “people first” language and for friendly ways to meet and talk to people who have a disability.

## 6. Girl Scouts Is For All Girls!

Did you know that Juliette (Daisy) Gordon Low, the woman who started the Girl Scouts in America was deaf? Daisy didn't let deafness keep her from being a Girl Scout leader! Find ways to let girls with disabilities know they can be Girl Scouts, too. You might invite a girl your age who has a disability or special needs to visit one of your troop meetings or go on a field trip with your troop. Help her see that she can be a Girl Scout too.

Being friendly to kids with special needs is one of the best ways to be helpful. As you get to know them, they may help you understand what it's like to be in their shoes. And you'll be helping fill a very special need, one that everybody has — the need for good friends.

## HELPS FOR LEADERS

### Try-It Activity 2: How Does She Do That?

*This activity is designed to build empathy and understanding. If girls are curious about **why** someone couldn't use their hands, see, speak or write, some possible disabilities are listed below:*

- color a picture or write your name without using your hands: *amputation, born without hands, hands are affected by an illness such as cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, or juvenile arthritis.*
- eat a meal or play a game while blindfolded: *born with low vision or blindness, eyes or optic nerves damaged by illness or injury, or removed because of cancer.*
- communicate with a friend without using spoken or written words: *speech disorders, deafness, cerebral palsy, developmental delays, brain injuries, and language disorders.*
- write the Girl Scout Motto, “Be Prepared.” using your left hand if your are right-handed, or your right hand if you are left-handed: *learning disabilities, such as dyslexia; fine motor or perceptual disabilities; brain injuries. **Tip:** If your Brownies don't understand the terms “right-handed” or “left-handed”, just ask them to write “Be prepared” then ask them to write it again using the other hand.*

### **Try-It Activity 3: Where's My Chair?**

*This activity is designed to help girls understand that people are not "confined" to a wheelchair. Some wheelchair users can get in and out of their chair by themselves while other may need help, but they are not restricted to being in a wheelchair 24 hours a day! Basic wheelchair etiquette includes:*

- Always ask the person using the wheelchair if she or he would like assistance BEFORE you help – it may not be needed or wanted.
- Don't hang or lean on a person's wheelchair because it is part of that person's personal body space.
- If a conversation with a person in a wheelchair lasts more than a few minutes, sit or kneel down so you're both on the same level. If the person in the wheelchair has to keep looking up, it hurts her neck!
- When a person using a wheelchair "transfers" out of the wheelchair to a chair, toilet, car or bed, do not move the wheelchair out of reaching distance.

### **Try-It Activity 4: Just Like Anyone Else**

*This activity is designed to build empathy and understanding. All people have feelings. They are sensitive about how they look and what they can do. They may feel bad if they look different from other people or if they can't do what others are able to do. They may be hurt when people point out their inability or make fun of their appearance.*

- What could you do to help the next time you see someone who is confused or unsure about a game or activity? Ask, "Do you need some help?" "Would you be my buddy?" "Would you like me to show you what to do next." "Don't worry – I'll help you."

This is a good opportunity to put the Girl Scout Law into action:

*I will do my best to be  
friendly and helpful,  
considerate and caring  
a sister to every Girl Scout*

### **RESOURCES:**

- [http://kidshealth.org/kid/feeling/friend/special\\_needs.html](http://kidshealth.org/kid/feeling/friend/special_needs.html) (written FOR kids!)
- <http://www.childrenwithspecialneeds.com/> (run by parents, for parents)