Mission Sisterhood Journey – Two Leaders’ thoughts on this journey

Overview: This journey is pretty good. The theme gives you a lot of flexibility in picking a sisterhood project – including working with younger Girl Scouts. Most of the activities are reasonably good, and they are short. So if they aren’t working well, they are over quickly. You should jazz up some activities. Have the girls lead most of the activities as “guide-its.” Try to be as hands off as possible on the sisterhood project. We guided the girls in their discussion of sisterhood issues and their selection of a project. Then, the adults literally left the room. The girls did the rest completely themselves.

We ran mission sisterhood for two different groups, for a total of 25 girls.

GENERAL COMMENTS: We followed the leader guide pretty well, with the major difference being that we were having 3 hour meetings, so we did two “sessions” at each meeting.

We looked through the leader guide, and selected which activities we’d do as girl “Guide-Its”. A Guide-Its is a tool in the Girltopia Journey. Explained in Girltopia girl’s book page 53 and leader’s book pages 40-41. You don’t need to have done Girltopia to understand Guide-Its. In general, a Guide-It allows a girl to present a short topic or activity to a small group of peers. It is an introduction to leading a group and does not have to be long, complicated or perfect.

For the Guide-It activities, we just photocopied pages from the leader book, and handed them out. Generally, the girls were receptive and did a good job. We did stress that they don’t need to overprepare and stress about it. We strongly recommend that you do this (but not necessarily to all the activities). Some of the activities seem overly simplistic to a leader. But having a girl lead them adds some interest and they will do it “by the book” better than many adults.

We surveyed the girls at the end of the journey about the activities. The least favorite activities (and the ones you should consider trying to jazz up) were: meditation, talking about symbols of friendship, body language charades, moving into your social style, friendship role-play, sisterhood is, and putting a value on friendship. These activities didn’t rate badly, but they are the weaker activities in the journey. Fortunately, most of these are relatively quick. We did many of these on our first day. It did feel like things were dragging, and the girls commented that there was too much talking. So, it’s fine if these activities are fast – and if it’s dragging – move on.

Do not feel that you need to do every activity precisely as written. Nor, do you need to do every activity. We customized the journey activities to try to make them more engaging. If you have an idea for how to make something more interesting – go for it.

It’s really good to have either a flip chart or white board for all the group discussions.

We were concerned about how the discussion of sisterhood issues and selecting a sisterhood project would go. The leaders led the girls through a discussion of:

- Sisterhood issues that they care about
- Narrowing that list down to 3-4
- What makes a good sisterhood project (using SMART Goal model – Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely)
- Defining/selecting a sisterhood project

We spread the discussions out, as they are done in the leader book. To keep track of the ongoing discussion we used a large flip chart. The girls actually settled on a project pretty quickly. This was largely due to the time constraints of our journey workshop – they needed to select something that could be done in a couple of days.

Once the girls picked a project, the leaders left the room, and left it totally to the girls. The whole energy level kicked up when they knew it was totally theirs to run. They were organized and responsible, particularly because they were motivated to finish in a limited time period. It was a
great reminder that senior girls (largely girls entering 9th grade plus a few older) really can lead group projects and work as a team.

It was hard to incorporate the girl book directly into the journey. The adult book shows the girl book connections on the left/right margins. You have to work at it. One tip to get the girls reading the book on their own is to encourage the girls to really make the book their own. We gave them markers and told them to doodle, color, journal, and take notes in the book. They did. Their books were their own – no one else looked at them. Permanent markers are needed for the book cover, water-based work well inside.

Generally, the girls enjoyed the crafts, particularly if they were new. So, if you have a new craft that has a logical friendship/sisterhood connection, consider adding it to the journey. For example, we had the girls make yellow roses from tissue paper because yellow roses are for friendship (This replaced the potpourri craft from the girl book).

The journey should take about ten 1 to 1.5 hour sessions, or 5 three hour sessions. Our groups were meeting for 3 hour sessions on sequential days. One group pushed hard to finish in four three hour sessions. The other group finished in five three hour sessions. Five was better — they weren’t as rushed, and we fit in a couple more activities. Girls this age are totally able to work on the journey for 3 hours in a row — as long as you break it up with snack, and mix things up. Our girls were all motivated to complete the journey as a gold award pre-requisite, so they were focused. If you do this in regular troop meetings, things might not go as smoothly. But, if you have the girls all day, like on a camping trip, you could probably do 3-4 sessions of the journey.

Specific comments about specific activities are listed below:

**Laughter circle**: This was a so-so activity when done as described in the book. It worked better when we had the girls lie down on their backs, and one would put her head on the next girl’s stomach. It’s a little tricky to successfully make a circle this way, but you can make wiggly lines and we did manage to make a five girl circle once. You don’t have to make a circle for this to succeed, so don’t worry about that too much.

**Modern game of telephone**: When the girls did this with one cell phone for every girl in a circle of 12 girls, it literally took 45 minutes to do this activity. If you’re going to do it this way, I’d suggest that you break them into groups of 6-8 girls, else the activity will take a really long time. The other group did the paper version of this. It was shorter and made the same point.

**Moving into your social style**: Make sure that the girls understand that this activity is cumulative. That after their first step, they stay where they are and start from there for the next step. They don’t return to the starting point after each question/step.

**Button Bracelets**: We were skeptical about this activity, but the girls generally liked it. You need to buy a container of colorful buttons to supplement what the girls bring. Chances are, the girls won’t bring enough buttons, nor interesting enough buttons. We’d suggest that you have 2-3 colors of elastic, some narrow and some wide, with matching thread. Bring lots of needles with wide eyes – easier to thread.

**Putting a value on friendship**: It helps to jazz up this activity by having them write their three friendship values on cute pieces of paper, rather than on index cards. We used papers that looked like cows. Then when they were taped to the wall in groups, we had different sized herds of cows. It is worth the minor expense to buy a cute pad of paper for this activity.

**Collage – the Visual Smorgasbord**: Although the girls were skeptical when they started, they generally enjoyed making the collage. You should have various craft supplies (stickers, ribbon) for them to add to the collage. Glue sticks work better than liquid glue. The girls will generally bring
teen or fashion/entertainment magazines. That works well enough, but try to add some multi-cultural or multi-generational images from other sources.

**Symbols of Friendship:** Many of the girls brought pieces of jewelry as their friendship symbol. This inspired us to have them make earrings – one pair to keep and one pair to give to a friend. This was a very popular activity, added a hands-on craft, and was consistent with the journey’s theme. The discussion of symbols of friendship didn’t rate very well in the survey, but it was relatively quick. The earring-making activity was one of the top rated activities.

**Friends and our health:** We let the girls choose the activity and had girls run this as a Guide-it. One group chose playing manhunt outdoors at night. They had a great time, ran a lot, and it required no prep whatsoever. We had 2 girls lead the activity. For the other group, they chose one of our suggestions, which was to have a record-setters contest. Girls could choose to compete in up to 5 different events (most entered 2-3) and the record-setter was the winner. They did jump rope, hula hooping, skip-it, basketball layups, and DDR. This was more complex to manage since we were running 2-3 of the activities simultaneously. But, it was very successful. By having 5 different activities, most girls had a couple they wanted to enter. Since some girls can hula hoop for hours, they had to continuously hula hoop while competing in a walking race. This worked well and produced a winner quickly. Both of these approaches worked well. When your girls discuss these options, do suggest manhunt – it was fun, fast, and easy, as well as record setters.

**Sisterhood Snacks:** The leader guide tells you to have every girl bring a friendship snack for the same date. We spread this out and had four girls bring a friendship snack for each meeting, so we did this for three meetings rather than once, as suggested in the book. This worked well. We had enough and varied snacks each time. And the girls were really choosing the snacks that they brought. Consequently, we didn’t do some of the other snack ideas in the leader’s book.

**Friendship Role-Play:** Do this as a girl Guide-It and it will be relatively quick and painless. This was hard for some of the girls because they didn’t really know how to play their role. Try to recruit volunteers for the role-plays. Not all girls are comfortable with acting/improvisation.

**Body – Language Charades:** Do this as a Guide-It. The things they need to act out are really easy, so it goes quickly and isn’t particularly embarrassing. They don’t even need to stand up to do these.

**Conga Line** – This feels a little stupid to an adult, so it works better if it is a Guide-It. The girl’s enjoyed it.

**Salsa Activity** – We did this as a Guide-It. It worked pretty well as a group activity, but the salsa wasn’t all that popular. So, have some alternative snacks too.

**Sisterhood Circle** – paper cutting a sisterhood circle: We almost fit this one in, but we ran out of time. The girls were interested in doing it. Get pretty patterned paper for this to make it more appealing. Large scrapbooking paper works well for a wall hanging instead of a greeting card.

**Plan how we will celebrate:** Do this as a Guide-It. Basically, the girls picked the food. They didn’t want parents and didn’t want an adult styled ceremony. We had offered some extra fun activities, and they chose some of these for their final day.

**Sisterhood Stories** – They weren’t interested in doing this one. We offered them an alternative to tell the story of their doing the sisterhood journey together – basically to make a video about what the journey is like. In effect, they are telling a communal sisterhood story. And this is something that other leaders & girls might like to see, to give them a positive and clearer impression of this journey.
**Meditation** – Do this as a Guide-It. Do it as a personal meditation – it didn’t work to ask the girls to answer out loud in a large group.

**Sisterhood project**: Both groups chose to make videos. That was because we were meeting 4-5 days in a row for 3 hours. So, they had fewer options available in terms of the type of project that they could do. Nevertheless, making videos worked well. The girls provided all the cameras and laptops, and technical know-how. They are posting their videos on youtube or Facebook, and promoting them through their social networks. We did get photo releases for the girls. These videos were TOTALLY girl led/organized/run. We did make sure we looked at the videos at the very end to be sure they weren’t objectionable.

**Outdoor Adventure**: We had the girls do a team outdoor adventure – with puzzle clues to lead them from place to place, with challenge activities at many of the stations. This was a good team exercise, to have them see how they worked in a team, in a fun way. They take a large amount of time to set up, but it was a good end for the journey. It might have been better to do this at the beginning of the journey to get the girls to know each other – we were running the journey for a mixed group of girls from multiple troops. Some girls did not know any of the other girls; others came with 1 or 2 friends. This activity was very successful for creating sisterhood and was one of the most popular.