

## **SEPTEMBER – CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

### **Music Full then under**

AMY: Welcome, everyone, to the September CubCast. I'm Amy Hutcherson, Membership Growth Coach for the Northeast Region. Joining me as always is Aaron Derr, Senior Writer for *Boys Life* magazine. So, Aaron, tell the folks what's coming up.

AARON: An email came into the CubCast mailbox from Katherine Drahmann who asked for an episode on resolving conflicts between den members. She points out that sometimes events occur outside the meeting and are then continued in the meeting.

AMY: Over the past few months we've talked about school access and first-nighters, so if all of the members of your den go to the same school, there's a possibility that a conflict started at school could trickle over into the den or pack meeting.

### **Music Fades**

AMY: Joining us for this discussion on resolving conflict is Grace Davidson. Grace has been a very active volunteer with the Circle 10 Council in Dallas, Texas, since 2000. She has served a, as everything from den leader, Director of Day Camp, and Den Chief Trainer to Merit Badge Counselor and Troop Chaplain, and everything in between pretty much. Her bio is really quite amazing. We are so happy that she found time to join us for what is sure to be a fascinating discussion on conflict resolution in a den and pack. Welcome to CubCast, Grace.

GRACE: I am so happy to be here!

AMY: Okay, to get started, let's set up a scenario. So, something's happened at school or the playground and that disruptive the behavior has carried over into your meeting. What do you do?

GRACE: The first thing to do is to carefully consider that you may not know what happened. Unless you have some other parent or a teacher who races over to your den meeting – probably not likely – you are not going to know the content of what happened. So, at this point remind yourself you are not the end-all or the person who is going to completely resolve it. If it happened at school, that's still going to lie in the hands of the administrators or the school counselor or the teacher; whomever is in charge of that situation. It could be the playground monitor. But, you do have to consider that whatever is being brought into your den meeting does require your careful attention, and thoughtfulness.

AARON: What about parents? You may have parents at your den meeting. Do you try to get them involved and what if they don't step in - what do you do then?

GRACE: Depends on the situation. If it's a parent of a child who was possibly implicated, then they may know something about it already because maybe they were up at school. If it's just another parent who doesn't know anything else, then I could engage them and ask them to please stay for the meeting I may need another extra set of eyes and hands, At this point I would really like to have three adults in the room, and if I had a den chief that would even be more spectacular.

AARON: There ya go.

AMY: Absolutely. So, how does a den leader cope with trying to resolve this conflict and at the same time being responsible for the den meeting?

GRACE: You put your focus on being responsible for the den meeting AND going back to what your schedule was. That's first and foremost. This is what these youth are expecting. They're expecting to come into a meeting and to have their Cub time – not a continuation of what might have been happening at school. Now, that's not to say I would ignore it. If it comes up, then we would have to address it briefly. It would be very different if it were a Tiger or a Wolf. They may not even be completely cognizant or they may be ready to just move on to the next activity. Now, Webelos are different because they usually can sit, discuss, think, plan ahead, so they may be more apt to bring up questions or try on their own to talk about it or resolve it. But I would put myself in the role of facilitator rather than "We're going to solve the problem," because it didn't happen in the den meeting. It happened someplace else. So, my job would be let's manage the behavior, let's manage the feelings that emerge in the den meeting, not necessarily resolve that conflict.

**PU AMY:** So, what if one of the boys or girls involved in the conflict is actually your child?

GRACE: That's a great question; what I always remember is that when I'm in the den meeting I'm the den leader. I am not mom of this child or that child. I am the den leader.

AARON: Right.

GRACE: I would treat the situation the same. Now, because if it were my child I would know the dynamics a little bit better instantly and I may have some guesses about what might have happened, but that's not the time for me to pull a child aside and start giving them a little therapy session or lesson or, castigating them in front of everybody. I would try to treat it the same way. Usually if you are creating a safe environment, those children want to be there, and they know that you have their best interests at hand.

AARON: Is there anything you can do before the den meeting even starts if, say, you've gotten word that there's been some sort of conflict? Would you ever try to do something, sort of take proactive action and do something before the meeting even starts?

GRACE: If there were parents around and it was in a situation where it wasn't interfering with the boys coming in, or the girls because, as you know, gathering activity; got to be present for that.

AARON: Right.

GRACE: But if it was pre-gathering, before the children came in, then I might talk with the parents and see what they knew, just to get more information.

AARON: Just some investigative –

GRACE: Some investigative, but again, not with the intent that I'm going to solve it, but just that we're gonna manage it as best we can and practice the Scout Oath and Law in action and use those to guide the feelings and the behaviors that might emerge in the den meeting.

AMY: Is there any guidance or recommendations in writing a den or a pack kind of like code of conduct?

GRACE: Absolutely. The first thing you do is to look at the Scout Oath and Law because that's the values that we want to put in action. This is what we're doing, and to write it in that frame. Now, the other thing about writing a den code of conduct is to make sure that it's positive. In other words, you don't make a list of don'ts; you make a list of do's; "do this, do that, be respectful, keep your hands to yourself, wait for your turn." Children do not respond to don'ts, because it doesn't guide them as to what they're supposed to do and you definitely want to do that very early on in the first or second meeting, and have that posted and have that always a frame of reference. When I was a den leader we had it posted. and if someone was having trouble, we could reflect and say, "Which point here are we struggling with?" and then have them look at that. When something comes in live, you've got a teachable moment there. It's really kind of exciting.

AARON: Now, are there resources for den leaders who would like to learn more about conflict resolution to, so they can be prepared for a situation like that if it ever comes up? Are there resources, places they can go for more information?

GRACE: The first place would be to look at your den leader handbooks. There will be some mention of that. And the second place would be to attend Cub Scout position-specific leader training. So, in a live training situation, the nice thing about that is that you have an opportunity to ask questions and learn from experienced den leaders. The other places - roundtables.

AMY: Yay!

GRACE: Yay for roundtables! Everyone let's go! That's again another place to look, to ask the question and get advice from very, very seasoned Scout leaders.

AMY: Yeah.

AMY: I value the different perspectives and different solutions.

GRACE: The other resource, and some of the Cub leaders may not be aware, is to attend Advanced Leader Training such as Wood Badge. We devote a very large part of the training to conflict management. "Managing Conflict" is the name of one of the presentations. And it is a very valuable teaching because you get to apply it. You don't just hear the material presented orally and take notes. You actually get to engage in those opportunities and then you also learn about team development and how conflicts arise in that. It's really normalizing that conflict is part of our lives and that we can't avoid it. We can prepare for it as best we can, but we can't avoid those situations. They're teachable moments.

AMY: Yeah. I know our listeners are gonna to really appreciate this advice that you've given to us. Is there anything else at all that you can think of that we might ought to share with our listeners?

GRACE: One very easy prescription for managing conflict or resolving it is to think back to what is the most basic thing we do as human beings, and that is communicate, so communication is key. Communication in the den meeting amongst the leaders, between leaders and children, is a way of modeling respectfulness and modeling differences of opinion, so just learning to listen – and, again, that’s part of the Advanced Leader Training that we get in Wood Badge. So, it’s there all over the Boy Scouts of America training; you just have to continue to seek it and learn it, and as you experience it and get more comfortable you just get better. And then you can turn around and teach the others around you who need some help.

AMY: Fantastic. Well, these conflicts that occur outside the meeting can really escalate into a bigger problem if brought into the meeting and not handled properly, so Grace, thank you so much for joining us on CubCast giving these great techniques is really a valuable tool.

GRACE: Thank you.

AARON: Stay tuned. September Reminders and Tips are coming up right after this brief Safety Moment.

**(Safety Moment – Generators)**

AARON: Moving on to Reminders and Tips: Your pack school night or Roundup should be held soon, if you haven’t done so already. And don’t forget to submit all new youth and adult applications and registration fees to the Council Service Center, which you can now do online!

AMY: Remember, for every adult interested in joining Scouting, Youth Protection Training is a requirement. If you can't attend a council-led training session to get your Youth Protection Training Certificate, you can take the training online. Absolutely anyone, especially parents, can take the online training by creating a My.Scouting account. Just go to Scouting.org and click the My.Scouting tab at the top of the page.

AARON: Now this is an ongoing piece of business. Remember to turn in your Advancement Reports every month. The March 2017 episode explores Internet Advancement and Scout Book – tools designed to make the advancement process quick and easy.

AMY: It's very important that you turn in Advancement Reports so that the Cub Scouts receive advancement credit in a timely manner. Cub Scouts should be recognized as soon as possible at their next meeting.

AARON: Now, we all know that Cub Scouts love the Pinewood Derby, Space Derby, and Rain Gutter Regatta, and now is the time to begin planning those events. Not next month, not next week – now.

AMY: It's also a good time to start the ball rolling on the Blue and Gold Banquet, which usually occurs in February. Sure. That seems like a long time from now, but we all know that time zips by, and the sooner you plan for these events, the better they are, and the more the Cub Scouts and their families will enjoy the occasion.

**Begin music under:**

AMY: And now this CubCast has come to an end. Thanks again to our guest, Grace Davidson, and thank you for listening. Be sure to come back next month as we discuss everything you need to know about advancement.

AARON: If there are topics that you like to hear about or just want to let us know how we're doing, send us an email at [Cubcast@Scouting.org](mailto:Cubcast@Scouting.org), or tweet to [@Cubcast](https://twitter.com/Cubcast). Katherine Drahmann did, and you can too. With that, I am Aaron Derr.

AMY: And I am Amy Hutcherson. As a mom and a Cub Leader, I feel compelled to end this episode with two little words – play nice!

**Music Full Finish**