

#leave_it_to_me

Rangers Branch Activity Pack 2022

Mental empowerment for teenagers and young adults in the post-Covid era



"Reach high, for the stars lie hidden in your soul. Dream deep, for every dream precedes the goal."

Langston Hughes

Dear Leaders welcome,

#leave_it_to_me! is a mental empowerment activity pack specially designed for adolescents and young adults.

Its aim is to make today's youth, which was severely affected by the recent COVID-19 pandemic, more resilient, self-confident and compassionate in the post-pandemic era. Through group discussions, creative exercises and lots of games, teenagers and young adults learn how to deal with small (and seemingly unimportant) everyday issues, how to improve their emotional balance and self-image, leading to better communication, enhanced leadership skills and increased problem-solving capacity.

In this particular, condensed version, activities are divided into three sections:

1. Efficient time management

2. Mindfulness

3. Building self-confidence

Without a doubt, the adolescents of today are the leaders of tomorrow, with self-governance being the first step towards active civic involvement. Having this in mind, #leave_it_to_me! is created in such a way that it can be run by the Rangers themselves and can be tailored to the needs of each individual. All the suggested activities can be done at random, either by larger or smaller Groups/Units, both in real life as online, depending on the conditions at the time.

Needless to say, for any mental-empowerment programme to be fun and effective, a safe environment is needed. It is essential for all the participants, being adolescents or young adults, to feel secure and valued.

A Brave Space Agreement, included in the activity pack, signed by all the participants at the beginning of the first meeting will build trust and respect. The WAGGGS guidelines for "Maintaining a Safe and Brave Space" are also good way to ensure this happens: <https://www.wagggs.org/en/what-we-do/returning-girl-guiding-and-girl-scouting/maintaining-safe-and-brave-space/>

We hope you all have fun exploring the activities. As Andrew Carnegie observed, "Team-work is the ability to work together toward a common vision, the ability to direct individual accomplishments toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results." In other words: Together We Thrive!

Enjoy!

Rangers Branch, The Greek Guiding Association 2022



Brave Space Agreement

(You will need a piece of paper or cardboard & I-2 markers)

Dialogue, as a means of understanding between people with different backgrounds, life experiences and perspectives, is the key to building mutual trust. Having this in mind, some of the activities of *#leave_it_to_me!* will encourage participants to reveal their own beliefs, perceptions and opinions. It is a basic condition that this can be done in a context where there will be no fear of prejudice, conflict and negative criticism.

Before your Group/Unit begins to run the activities, it is important to create a safe space where all participants will feel that they can speak with courage, get out of their “safety zone”, really listen to each other’s stories and show confidence in others who listen to them.

As a Group/Unit set out some clear guidelines to promote respect and honesty from and to everyone and agree on how you will follow these guidelines. Write them on a piece of paper or cardboard and sign your names underneath.

As Leaders, consider the following:

- 1.** Make it clear that this is a safe place for all who wish to participate.
- 2.** Emphasize the importance of confidentiality: everything that happens in the Group/Unit stays in the Group/Unit.
- 3.** Be aware of what is happening in your community and the world that may affect your Group/Unit members.
- 4.** Pay attention to the coordination approach (your own or others’) to make sure all voices have room to be heard.
- 5.** Be prepared to make small adjustments. If the Group/Unit gets involved into an intense discussion, the original Brave Space Agreement may have to be changed so that they have more time to process this discussion.
- 6.** Avoid making generalizations when talking about different issues.
- 7.** Plan how you will support your Group/Unit members to speak openly or seek support if they do not feel safe and contact you as Leaders for help.



*“The bad news is time flies.
The good news is you’re the pilot”*

Michael Altshuler

Efficient Time Management

Does this scenario sound familiar? (It could be a narration, a sketch or an audio message, used to start a Rangers meeting)

It’s Sunday today, you have the full day ahead of you. Math test is next Tuesday. There is a large number of exercises to work on, but there is no need to worry whether you make it on time. After all, you have the whole day to do the exercises. Things will be fine!

You sit at your desk, tidy up, gather your books and notes. You fetch a drink, make a phone call, then you read the questions once more, you play with your dog, take a photo of it playing with a ball, you text to a friend. Back to the exercises, rechecking your notes.

You go for lunch, then you return to your desk, you have homework to do, the test is difficult. You need something stimulating so you make hot chocolate. You start doing some calculations, then you stand up to stretch your legs on the veranda.

You say hello to a friend passing by. You return to your desk. You realize time is running out and not even half of your homework is done. The day is almost over and you have a busy programme at school tomorrow. Now you are stressed... What have you been doing all day?

Does this situation sound familiar?

Remember: It is those who make the worst use of their time that complain of its shortness.

1st Step:

Main part of Rangers meeting

2nd Step:

Every Ranger is asked to define the meaning of the term “time” in its wider sense, besides the use of watches. It can be recorded on a mobile phone; it can be a text/audio message or can be written on a piece of paper.

You can offer some help if needed. For example, how do we define time according to our activities?

Every Ranger will then share their opinion with the Group/Unit about how they perceive the meaning of “time”.

Split the Group/Unit in two. One half writes on a piece of paper the disadvantages of wrong time management, the other the advantages of correct time management.

Some of the disadvantages are: increased stress, lack of free time, middle or bottom performance at work, pressure, bad mood, disappointment etc.

Some of the advantages are: less stress, particularly during an exam period, more independence and responsibility, implementation of balanced decision-making, quality time to spend with family and friends, being good at school and other activities, etc.

Post the notes on the wall. A conversation follows on what has been written down. Focus on what a person misses every day if their time goes underexploited.

3rd Step:

Between yourselves, choose one or more “tools” and techniques for smart management and time planning.

A) Make a planner with the week’s commitments marking the time needed for each one, in order to organize them properly (this is done independently). It can be written on paper so as to have it on your desk or as an app on your phone. At the end of the week mark how you have responded to your commitments. If not, what has prevented you? Write down in which way you think you can do better next time.

B) Make a time chart with “cells”. The idea is to fill in your commitments in the “cells” and classify them according to their importance and the time allotted to each one of them. Then you place the “cells” on the available days. Paint the “cells” in different colours. Give a different colour to the “cells” marked as urgent and a different one to those marked as important. What is urgent? What is important? How are you going to differentiate between these two and classify them?

Urgent = what should be done right away

Important = what is based on commitments, values, targets but also on wishes.

C) A different idea is to make a “burger” of coloured paper (although this is not recommended as a healthy diet option) with all your commitments as ingredients. What is your most important commitment that will provide extra “flavour to your “burger”? Add or remove coloured paper (=commitments) according to how you like your “burger”.

D) More “tools”: lists, agendas, on an A4 paper using huge letters, drawings, mind map, on a music sheet by the notes, on the computer. Imagination has no limits, just choose what suits you best.

Give each member of the Group/ Unit the following phrase on a piece of paper:

“Set a goal that will help you to achieve better time management and commit yourself to.....”

Write down your goal and commitment and place the paper in a box.

At the next meeting, as an opening, each Ranger reads aloud their notes and right-fully evaluates the efforts made to achieve their particular goal. What were the difficulties?

“Be where you are, not where you think you should be.”

Unknown

Mindfulness

Another interesting concept - even if we have never thought about it - is what we call “Mindfulness” or awareness of the mind.

Think about it, how many times have you eaten a whole bag of chips while fooling around on social media and you don't remember it? When was the last time you did absolutely nothing for 10 minutes? Would it seem strange to you not to look at your cell phone or watch TV for a while? Do you have the opportunity to be alone with your thoughts and feelings? How often does your mind travel while your body stays in place? Do you work on autopilot and feel that sometimes the days pass you by?

So, what exactly is Mindfulness?

We all pretty much have some degree of anxiety. It seems to be a feature of our time. One of the ways to reduce stress, increase our happiness and focus our attention on both spirituality and positive psychology, is the concept of consciousness or “Mindfulness”.

More specifically, awareness of the mind is to turn your attention voluntarily to the present moment and without criticism. This means that with your five senses and your thoughts and feelings, you just observe what is happening to you without wanting to change anything at that time. For example, while absent-minded, you easily eat a whole box of sweets or the person who claims to be close to you, probably only irritates you in the end. If we want to manage our attention positively (what am I doing now), then our mind must fully observe the current moment and everything that is happening. At first glance, this may seem insignificant... What could be so important about paying attention and not criticizing? Let's find out!

Note: the activities do not need to be done all together and can be done both individually and in a group. After all, if we want to be able to function as a team, it is necessary to know ourselves! Remember that a key component of success is dialogue and internal review after the end of activities. Silent reflection, accompanied by calm music, will relax us, reduce our stress and make us more efficient.

1st Step:

Listen to your breath (for de-stressing and relaxation)

This activity is recommended to be done at the beginning of the meeting or at any time during the meeting when we want to relax and refocus.

We ask the Rangers to sit comfortably but with their backs straight and to close their eyes. In complete silence, for 2 minutes, we just listen to the rhythm of our breath. Inhaling... exhaling... like a boat going up and down gently in the waves... inhaling... exhaling... When the time has passed, we open our eyes and discuss if we need more time to listen to our breath and its rhythm. How did we feel? Were we able to concentrate? How many times a day do we really observe the rhythm of our breath?

2nd Step:

Think positive (for Groups/Units that know each other well)

The Rangers make two concentric circles, the inner circle looking outwards. In the inner circle the Rangers are the positive side of life and in the outer circle they are the negative side of life. During the activity music is heard and the inner circle makes positive comments to the outer circle and the outer circle makes negative ones. When the music stops, the outer circle moves one position clockwise. The activity continues until we are in the same position or as long as the Group/Unit wishes. After completing the cycle, we discuss how we experienced the fact that we heard only negative or only positive comments. Were we happy? Were we nervous? Did we keep our cool?

In smaller Groups/Units this activity can be done with alternating pairs.

(Suggested music: playlist of songs that will make you dance)

3rd Step:

Find the balance (can we really concentrate?)

This activity does not have a set time. We ask the Rangers to get in a straight line and stand on one leg. We explain that we can stand on one leg until we feel confident and that nothing topples us. Even if we fall, we try again. It is important to be completely focused on the moment and what we want to do. We can go one step further, with a Group/Unit member trying to distract the Rangers by making annoying noises. After the first round of the activity, we discuss with the Group/Unit if we succeeded and what was difficult for us. Did the noise play a role? Then we try again, but this time we are focused on our breathing and its rhythm, as we saw in the 1st Step.



4th Step:

Get in line

(for Groups/Units that want to improve communication among their members)

First of all, we ask the Group/Unit to be absolutely quiet and not to speak during this activity. Otherwise, it will not succeed. The Rangers must therefore form a straight line, one after the other, each time we ask them to do so, depending on the characteristics that we will say. For example, we ask them to be in alphabetical order, chronological order, height order and ascending order depending on the size of their shoe. How difficult was it? How did we feel that we could not communicate verbally? Did we find other ways to communicate?

5th Step:

Cross the line

(game of consciousness and trust)

We form a straight line on the floor (using rope/chalk/paper tape, etc.) and ask the Rangers to stand behind it. Then we ask them to cross the line at the same time all together, but without being able to communicate this verbally. No one gives the order, but the Group/Unit will have to find a way to cross the line at the same time. Does it sound easy? How did it seem to you in practice? Did Mindfulness play a role?

5th Step:

Write what you want to hear

(The ... - - - ... jar)

We give the Rangers 5 minutes to think of a phrase they would like to hear when they are having a difficult time. We ask them to write this phrase on a piece of paper and then place all the pieces folded in a jar. If one wishes, one can write more than one sentence. The jar is placed in a prominent place in your guiding home and every time someone needs a note of optimism, they take out a piece of paper and place a new one in the jar. For example:

“The past is a lighthouse, not a port” (popular saying)

“Do not let what you cannot do interfere with what you can do.”

John Wooden

Building Self-Confidence

1st Step:

My Self Box

(meeting opening or main part - for Groups/ Units that want to emphasize introspection)

(You will need shoe boxes, magazines, films, ribbons, markers, paints, etc.)

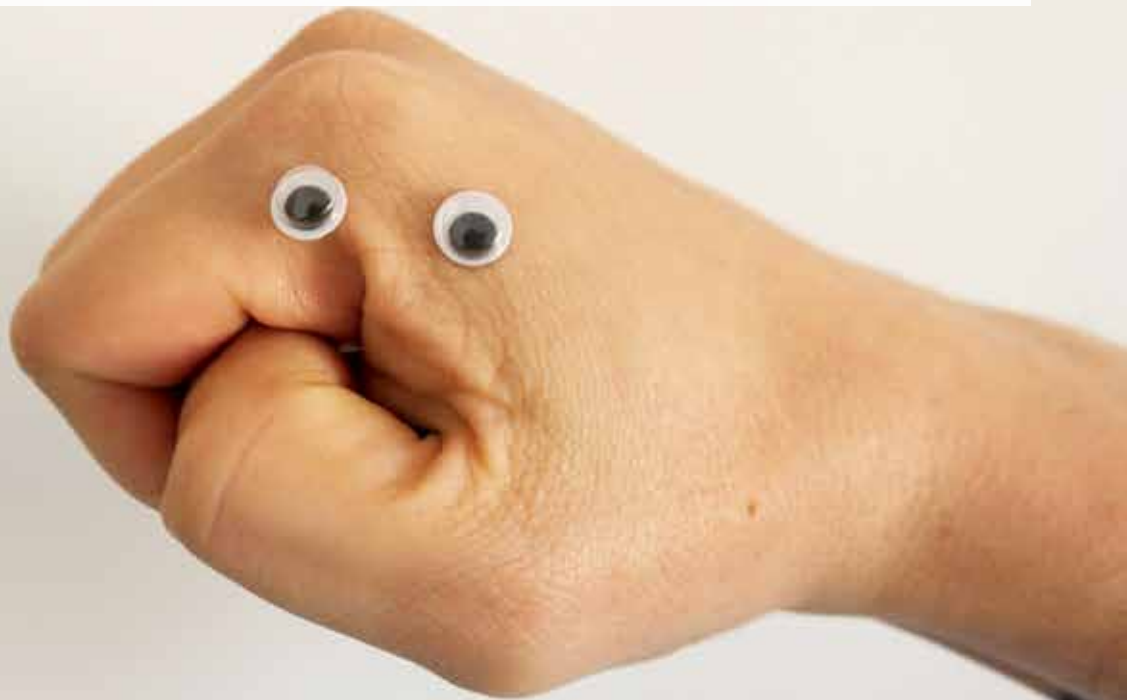
A shoe box is needed for each participant. This box reflects ourselves. Ask everyone to stick pictures, words, magazine clippings, anything that represents how others see them on the outside of the box. Next, ask them to continue inside the box, representing how they see themselves. Once they have completed the box, discuss: how the inside is different from the outside, and why.

2nd Step:

Success / Failure

(main part - for Groups/Units that want to emphasize positive thinking)

The Rangers are divided into pairs. One member shares a “negative” experience with their interlocutor, and then the interlocutor repeats the same story, with a version that focuses only on the positive aspects of that experience. Discuss the differences and the results these have on your self-confidence.





3rd Step:

Body language

(main part - for Groups/Units that want to emphasize positive thinking)

Spread out in the space. Ask the Rangers to assume a position that shows lack of confidence. Tell them to observe themselves: the posture of their torso, their hands, their gaze. They may be looking down, their arms crossed, their shoulders stooped. Ask them to walk around the room, holding their posture, and greet each other. Discuss: how did this posture make you feel? How do you feel when someone greets you in this way?

Then ask them to assume a position that shows confidence. They may look up, pull their shoulders back or extend their arms or place them on their hips. Ask them again to turn around and say hello. Discuss again: how did this posture make you feel? How do you feel when someone greets you in a positive way?

Remind the Rangers that we are all important and have the right to express ourselves and speak our minds - and our self-confidence helps us feel strong. Encourage them to try these postures when they feel stressed or insecure, to help their confidence.

4th Step:

Building with me (from Action on Body Confidence by WAGGGS, main Part - for Groups/Units that want to focus on body image)

Give each Ranger 3 pieces of post-it, and everyone writes on each piece:

- 1. Eyes:** Something you are proud of or appreciate about how your body is (no need to say why!)
- 2. Heart:** Something you like in your character, or a trait of yours, for example, you are funny or you care about others
- 3. Feet:** Something you can do with your body and you are proud of or you enjoy - anything, for example, that you walk to school, cook, play a sport, dance, do gardening

Draw a human outline on a piece of paper (it could be someone from the Group/Unit!). Bring all eyes, hearts and feet together. One by one, the Rangers choose a piece of paper, and read it aloud. Then they try to "guess" who wrote it. If they guess correctly, they play again. If they answer incorrectly, then the one who wrote the paper takes the turn. Each time, we stick the paper to the corresponding point on the contour of the body on the floor (eyes-heart-feet).

Once the game is over, discuss: is it important to talk about what we like about ourselves? Why? Is it important to talk about more than just our appearance? Do you think that worrying about how we look prevents us from appreciating ourselves and feeling confident?

A person is holding a large, plain cardboard box behind their back with both arms. The person is wearing a light-colored, long-sleeved button-down shirt. The background is a neutral, light gray. Overlaid on the image are two text boxes. The first box, in the upper left, has a brown background and white text. The second box, in the center, has a white background and brown text. A third box, at the bottom, has a white background and brown text.

5th Step:

The fan of compliments

(can be done in the main part or for closing the meeting)

Sit in a circle. Everyone takes a piece of paper, folds it under and over (about 5 cm wide) until the whole piece of paper is folded like a fan. Next, everyone writes their name on the outside, and gives their fan to the one next to them. Whoever gets the fan, writes on one of the folds something positive for the fan owner! (It can be something as simple as a positive comment about their outfit or something they admire about their personality). The fans continue going round and once the fans return to their owner, take a minute for everyone to read their compliments!

Definitions

Self-esteem:

Self-esteem refers to the image we have of ourselves and the value we attach to it. A good self-esteem is the feeling that "I deserve to be who I am, and I am loved by the people close to me, despite my shortcomings or my mistakes."

Confidence:

Confidence is about how we act and how confident or not we feel about what we are going to do. It is strengthened when we achieve what we have aimed for.



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