Handbook for Leaders of the SCOUT SECTION

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INTRODUCTION

Why has Scouting been so successful across different cultures and through the generations? What forces have helped to make it the world's largest non-governmental educational youth organization, with 28 million members in 216 countries and territories?

Undoubtedly, the universal nature of Scouting's values and the adaptability of its method hold part of the answer. There are other, more compelling reasons, however. Does not every teenage boy or girl, in every culture, nationality and social class, crave the friendship of a small peer group with whom to discover the world around him or her?

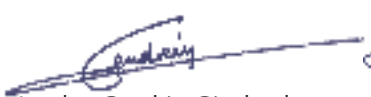
All adolescents long to be part of a team, explore new territories and have adventures. Right from the beginning, Scouting has responded to these urges. It has been able to capture the essence of the young spirit and satisfy its fundamental needs. Let it not be forgotten that Scouting expanded unaided as thousands of youngsters became avid readers of *Scouting for boys* and clamoured to join in. Just a few short years after Baden-Powell organized the first trial camp at Brownsea, in August 1907, with a score of 11 to 15-year-olds, the Scouts already numbered over 100,000 in Great Britain. The key to success lies in the fact that young people become involved of their own volition.

This book recaptures that early spirit and projects it outwards and onwards. It rediscovers the original symbolic framework that Baden-Powell developed and offered to young people – being a Scout, an explorer of new worlds. It recovers and elevates the true significance of the Patrol system, as a process by which an informal group of friends becomes a small educational community, giving its members a broad and effective role in decision-making. It restores meaning to the expression "learning by doing", by offering young people the opportunity to use their creativity, experience authentic roles and grow through their experiences. It proposes an attractive system of personal progress, based on the precept of giving each young person the opportunity to build and evaluate his or her own educational objectives. It re-establishes the Scout Promise and Law as portals to a system of universal values that serve to forge profound human relationships and deepen the substance of life in society.

The timing of the publication of the *Handbook for Leaders of the Scout Section* gives it added significance, as the World Organization of the Scout Movement prepares to adopt a new, response-centred strategy based on the needs of adolescents. In addition, it continues the process of youth programme renovation and modernization under the auspices of which the international edition of the *Handbook for Cub Scout Leaders* was published in 1999.

These handbooks are not intended to impose a standard programme on all National Scout Organizations regardless of their culture and traditions. The strength of Scouting also lies in its ability to adapt to many different forms of expression. The Handbooks are intended to offer reference tools to help each Association rediscover the original force of Scouting, which can provide just as effective and valid a response to the needs of young people in the third millennium as it did in the early twentieth century.

We trust that the wide dissemination of this book will contribute to the birth of new vocations for Scout educators, as genuine programme designers, and thus promote "better Scouting for more young people" all over the world.



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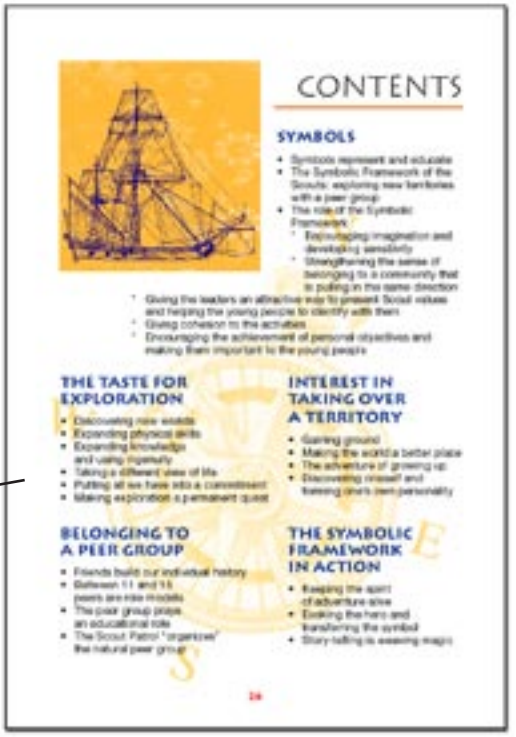
Geneva, July 2002

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book has 12 chapters. On the reverse of the flyleaf of each chapter is a summary of its contents, which lists the subjects that will be dealt with in each section and subsection.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SYMBOLS

THE TASTE FOR EXPLORATION

INTEREST IN TAKING OVER A TERRITORY

BELONGING TO A PEER GROUP

THE SYMBOLIC FRAMEWORK IN ACTION

The reader who wishes to access the book's contents quickly can read through these summaries or flick through the titles of the sections.

TAKING A DIFFERENT VIEW OF LIFE

The text in blue draws attention to the most important concepts involved in a particular subject.

The text in black corresponds to the basic information that is required on a subject.

The text in green is considered to be complementary. It is recommended further reading that deals with the subject in greater depth.

This design is intended to help the reader become familiar with the Handbook and consult it easily and often, according to his or her needs and interests.

1
Young
people
from
11 TO 15

CONTENTS

BASICS CONCEPTS

- Adolescence, a stage of growth and of personal progress
- The duration and characteristics of adolescence vary from one person to another
- Puberty marks the beginning of adolescence

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- Developing self-esteem
- Affirming the sexual role
- Developing new forms of thought
- Learning to handle changing emotions
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- Beginning the search for identity, opening up to society around them and building a life plan

A PROFILE OF GIRLS AND BOYS BY DIMENSIONS OF THE PERSONALITY

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- Emerging ideas
- Values of their own
- Contradictory emotions
- Friends for life
- A personal faith

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- Two age groups can be distinguished in the first stage of adolescence: 11 to 13 and 13 to 15
- Boys and girls are the same but different too
- Educating in equality of conditions, but taking the differences into account
- Each girl and boy has their own story and unique life plan

BASIC CONCEPTS

ADOLESCENCE, A STAGE OF GROWTH AND OF PERSONAL PROGRESS

In a general sense, by adolescence we understand the period of our lives that begins with the biological changes of puberty and finishes upon entry into the adult world.

Two hundred years ago, this period did not exist or went by unnoticed. The word "adolescence" was not even used and the only distinction made was between "children" and "adults". The advent of the physiological ability to procreate, which we call *puberty*, marked the boundary between these two stages.

The emergence of the adolescent stage of sexual and social maturity has been determined by the growing complexity of society. As social functions became more diversified, they required more demanding qualifications for the world of labour and gave rise to the development of schools. In parallel, the prohibition of child labour, increase in life expectancy, and other factors that have transformed society have contributed to the consolidation of adolescence as a stage of development.

For a long time adolescence was referred to as a stage of "transition": no more than a part of the passage to adulthood and one, moreover, that was troubled by restlessness and instability. Although the disturbed adolescent is not representative of the age group, adolescence was very readily alluded to as a troublesome period of emotional instability and an excessive emphasis was placed on youthful rebelliousness.

Today, with greater scientific knowledge of the process young people experience, adolescence is widely viewed as a period of vigorous growth and personal progress. Growth not only in the purely biological aspects of puberty, but also those mental and social changes that help to shape the adult personality.

Adolescence is much more than an unavoidable evil. It is a period of our life cycle with its own nature and features that clearly set it apart from both childhood and adulthood. It is a time full of possibilities that has to be lived and lived to the full. It is so rich in life events that it cannot be dismissed as a mere "step on the way" to the next stage. Young people need to be considered as such, not as "former children" or "future adults".

The rebelliousness we attribute to young people is an appreciation from an adult perspective rather than an objective characteristic of the age group. Really, this so-called rebelliousness is nothing more than a young person's self-affirmation of his or her difference, and it is indispensable for the gradual formation of his or her own personality.

The main development tasks of adolescence, encompassing all ages from puberty to the entry to the adult world, can be summarized as follows:

- Reaching sexual maturity, in all its dimensions, not just biologically.
- Consolidating an identity.
- Considering a life plan of one's own.

And so we could say that adolescence begins with biology and ends with culture. Its begins with the appearance of body changes that serve as indications of biological masculinity and femininity. As adolescence progresses, new ways of thinking help the young person to understand events in a more global way. Then comes the search for being oneself in a coherent and consistent way, and the stage concludes when the young person becomes integrated into the adult world with his or her own life plan, or at least the conviction that choices need to be made in life and that he or she is capable of making them.

THE DURATION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF ADOLESCENCE VARY FROM ONE PERSON TO ANOTHER

Although in general terms adolescence begins between the ages of 11 and 13 and finishes around 20, the exact ages of its onset and conclusion vary enormously. These depend basically on the nature of each individual, his or her personal history and the social and cultural characteristics of the community in which he or she lives.

Adolescence is a long period, as the challenges of contemporary society impose ever greater demands on young people, who face ever increasing competition to satisfy them, and this takes time. The very length of the period makes adolescents prone to states of ambiguity and contradiction, advances and retreats, which are necessary processes for young people to find their own identity and the meaning of their lives.

In addition, the nature of adolescence is neither fixed nor unchangeable. It depends on the characteristics of each person, on the community situation and, above all, the extent to which the young person has been able to develop psychological and social resources during earlier periods. Quality of life during childhood strongly affects the experience and outcome of the adolescent period.

PUBERTY MARKS THE BEGINNING OF ADOLESCENCE

The onset of puberty cannot be identified with a fixed age, and there is no infallible definition of this first part of adolescence. Major parts of the body and the personality are changing, and this happens at different ages and at different rates. Rather than chronological ages, it is preferable to consider *personal maturity and development histories.*

In a very general way, it can be said that puberty begins between the ages of 10 and 12 in girls and between 11 and 13 in boys.

When certain hormones of the pituitary gland are activated and become present in greater concentrations, ovules begin to mature and be released regularly and spermatozoids begin to be produced, the primary and secondary sexual characteristics appear, there are changes in some non-sexual physiological functions and changes in size, weight, body proportions, strength, coordination and muscular skill.

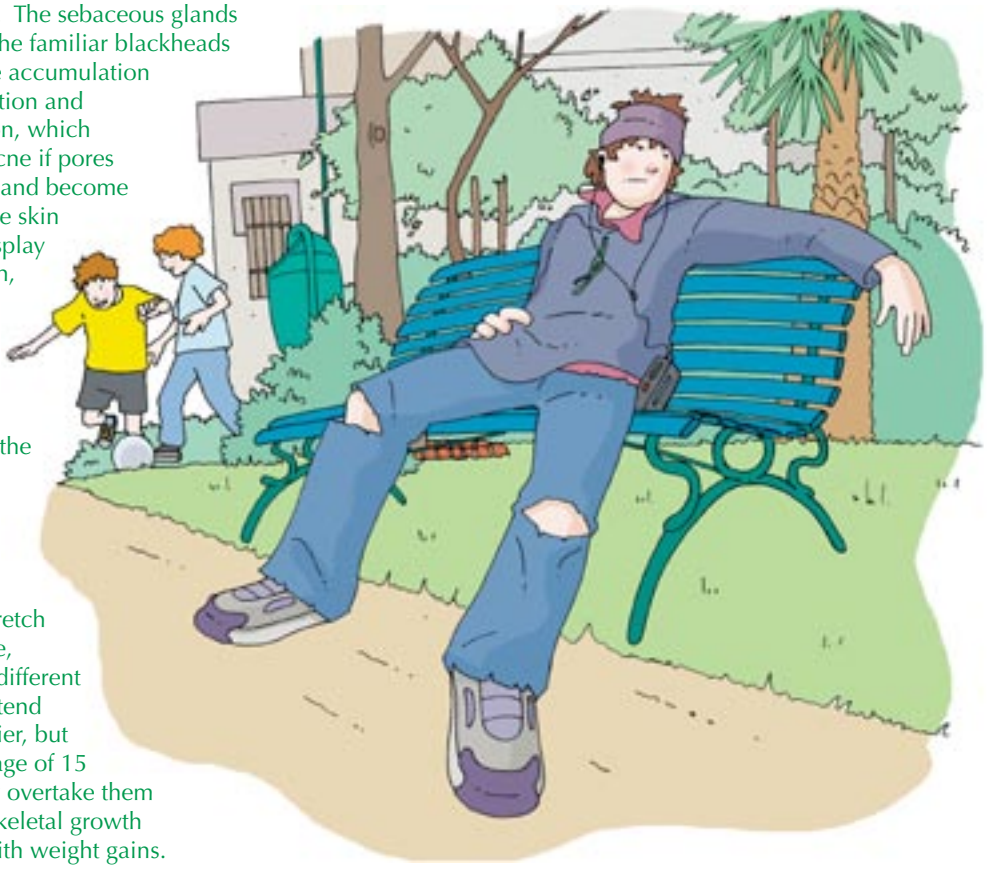
The *primary sexual characteristics* refer to the make-up of the sexual organs involved in copulation and reproduction. During childhood these organs are less developed than other systems of organs. During puberty the penis, testicles, uterus, vagina, clitoris and the major and minor genital labia begin to grow.

The ability to procreate is not simultaneous with the onset of menstruation in girls or the first emission of semen in boys, which are very early phases in the process of sexual maturity. However, the ability to engender offspring develops before physical growth has been completed, which is one of the reasons why teenage pregnancy is considered to be a serious risk for both mother and child.

The *secondary sexual characteristics* refer to the changes in the body that serve to indicate biological masculinity and femininity. Pubic hair –from the Latin *pubes*, meaning "body hair", which gives puberty its name– appears around the genitals and underarms of both sexes, more markedly in boys. In boys it also grows on the chest and the face. In girls, the development of breasts is often the first sign of the onset of puberty.

In both sexes, the larynx alters between the ages of 14 and 15 approximately, causing the typical changes in the voice, which are most noticeable in boys.

The sebaceous glands and sudoriferous or sweat glands also develop. The sweat glands begin to give young people the characteristic odour of underarm perspiration. The sebaceous glands give rise to the familiar blackheads owing to the accumulation of oily secretion and dust retention, which can cause acne if pores are blocked and become infected. The skin begins to display pigmentation, darkening certain areas of the body such as the nipples and the genitals.



In general, skeletal and muscular structures stretch and elongate, although at different rates. Girls tend to grow earlier, but around the age of 15 boys usually overtake them in height. Skeletal growth alternates with weight gains.

THE MAIN DEVELOPMENT TASKS BETWEEN THE AGES OF 11 AND 15

FORMING A BODY IMAGE

Bodily changes are the most obvious transformation that young people experience between the ages of 11 and 15. Their *body image*, which is the mental picture we have of our own body, is confused by these changes.

During childhood, alterations are gradual and so children can easily integrate them into their body image as they occur. In adolescence, however, the speed and intensity of the changes make it difficult for the young person to assimilate them and maintain a sense of stability and familiarity with his or her body.

DEVELOPING SELF-ESTEEM

Body changes follow an irregular pattern and the physical appearance tends to lose the harmony of the childhood years. Since body image is not an objective appreciation, but is imbued with subjective values, the irregularity of these changes strongly influences the image boys and girls have of themselves and, consequently, their *self-esteem*. In addition, while in childhood self-esteem depends almost exclusively on what family members or other adults in positions of authority say, now it depends on their own experience of themselves and the opinions of their peers. This causes insecurity and the desire to assert their attractiveness and their social and affective acceptance.

AFFIRMING THE SEXUAL ROLE

The changes in the body are associated with the process of *sexual maturity*. During childhood, sexuality was almost a game. It was expressed basically as curiosity and self-stimulation for one's own pleasure. But when sexual impulses burst into adolescence, problems of sex and love appear at the conscious level and tensions accumulate as a result of the demands of sexual development.

The resolution of those tensions depends on the strength of the impulses, the skill in assessing reality and the extent to which the cultural environment facilitates or prohibits it, the values that shape the character, personality-control mechanisms, personal history and the particular circumstances of life.

Throughout this period, sexual development leads to a gradual and proper *affirmation of the sexual role*. This is contingent upon a strong and positive identification with the paternal or maternal figure –whether that person is the same-sex parent or a substitute figure–, on gratifying experiences with the opposite sex and identification with other young people of the same sex. This is the period in which boys grow closer to their fathers and their male friends, and girls to their mothers and their female friends. Only as they pass the age of 13, do they begin to form links and friendships with their peers of the other sex, at first occasionally and then more frequently. This is particularly relevant to the option between mixed or single-sex patrols, as we will discuss in detail later.

DEVELOPING NEW FORMS OF THOUGHT

At the same time, an *intellectual transformation* takes place throughout adolescence. New ways of thinking enable a more comprehensive and integrated understanding of events. The formal intellectual operations of generalization and abstraction develop in an increasingly stable way. As they gain in experience and practice, young people become better able to make logical judgements based on causal reasoning. "Allowing them more effectively to understand and coordinate abstract ideas, to think about possibilities, to try out hypotheses, to think ahead, to think about thinking, and to construct philosophies" (Raising Teens: A Synthesis of Research and a Foundation for Action, A. Rae Simpson, PhD, Center for Health Communication, Harvard School of Public Health, Boston, 2001).

A 7-year-old child will play with matches without stopping to think that he or she may cause a fire. A child of this age is incapable of establishing causal relationships and therefore cannot foresee consequences. A young person of 12, however, can understand symbolic representations, anticipate a situation which has not yet occurred and knows that the house may catch fire under certain conditions, even if there is no fire at the time when he or she makes that link.

If a group of 7 to 9-year-olds are playing in the street and their ball goes across to the other side of an intersection, they will try to recover it at all costs, without realizing the risk involved. Young people of 11 to 13 in those same circumstances, however, are able to size up time and space, distance and depth, and therefore appreciate the risk involved in trying to reach the lost ball. Nevertheless, these skills are acquired gradually, so we must not assume that young people of this age are in a position to assess all the risks that they may face.

In all probability, a 7-year-old playing tennis will do little more than respond to the shots that come his or her way and try to get the ball back over the net. From the age of around 11 he or she will begin to acknowledge the formal rules of the game and, based on these and on observation of the opposing player's style, he or she will perceive the patterns of play and of mistakes and be able to generate a strategic response. The child has learned to take an abstract approach, to generalize, establish causal links and, therefore, produce more valid answers.

These examples help us to understand that something similar happens in the domain of abstract concepts and values. This is why teenagers often come up with unforeseen "strategic responses", leaving parents and teachers disconcerted. Rather as if the tennis player of our example surprised us with an outstanding passing shot in the middle of a relaxed knock-about.

LEARNING TO HANDLE CHANGING EMOTIONS

This period is also marked by typical emotional alterations, which are associated with or are a consequence of hormonal and intellectual changes. It is a time of confused feelings, when young people want to "be grown up" and independent, and yet long for the old security and warmth of childhood. Prodigious initiatives come one after the other only to be abruptly interrupted by periods of apathy, laziness and pensiveness. Moments of uncontainable joy can suddenly give way to sadness or even tears. Periods of intense awe and thoughtfulness at the awakening of their own sexuality often develop into anxiety, before shifting towards curiosity and the discovery of similar processes in the other sex.

Young people of this age do not make linear progress towards adulthood. Childish impulses and needs reappear along the way, and coexist with the desire for a new position in the world. Time and patience are required, especially from the adults around them, who too often look for a quick answer and fail to behave consistently with the young person. One minute we say "you're not a child anymore", and the next we remind them "you're not grown up yet". This can easily generate anxiety and encourage them to seek premature adaptive solutions to the natural tensions of the period. However, anxiety plays a positive role by encouraging learning, increasing the ability to do things and raising the level of expectations.

Our own confusions and contradictions as adults are reflected in our thinking, and young people can perceive this more clearly now than they did in childhood. This adds a new factor of uncertainty to the anxieties they experience in their attempt to interpret and interact with the world in a coherent way. Young people therefore tend to emulate adults whom they perceive as having a defined system of values.

LEARNING TO PUT ONESELF IN SOMEONE ELSE'S PLACE AND BUILD RULES BY CONSENSUS

Adolescents gradually develop and apply "a more complex level of perspective taking, having learned to 'put themselves in another person's shoes'" (Harvard, idem). This new and powerful ability to understand human relations helps them to solve the problems and conflicts that arise in their relationships.

These new skills are also reflected in a shift from unilateral respect for rules that adults have made to mutual respect for rules on which they have reached a consensus with their peers. This is why young people of this age need to be given the space to question and even reject the rules that are imposed by adults, so that they can rebuild them or establish new ones that they can internalize. We will come back to this topic in more detail in chapter 6, when we talk about the formation of rules in young people and the Scout Law.

BEGINNING THE SEARCH FOR IDENTITY, OPENING UP TO SOCIETY AROUND THEM AND BUILDING A LIFE PLAN

This ability for reflective thought, for looking at their own way of thinking and that of others, leads young people to question the guidelines that come from their childhood and that were formed largely within the family group. These are the first signs of the step from childlike dependency to adult autonomy, which will increase in pace as adolescence becomes more advanced.

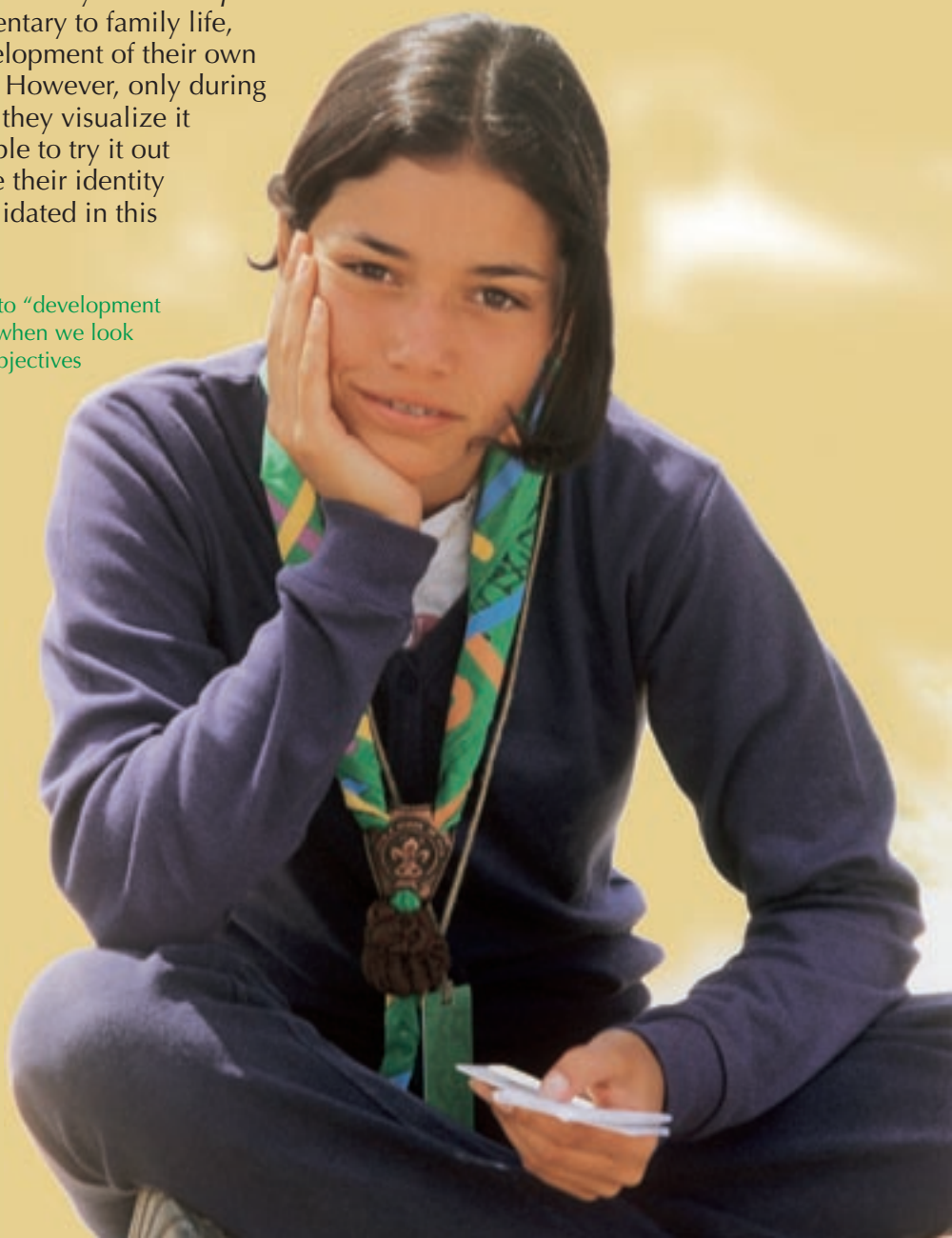
Opportunities and the appreciation of others increasingly depend more on the outside world than on the family environment. Thus, like at other stages of life, a conflict arises between past and future. The opinions of their peers begin to carry more weight than those of their family or of other adults. Changes in the body and intellect oblige young people to seek new kinds of social adaptation. They begin to construct their *identity* by means of a synthesis between their childhood identity and the new impulses and abilities, as they seek to establish a sense of continuity.

The process of identity-building does not finish during this period, however, nor will it during adolescence, since it continues to be structured over the years of young adulthood. But in this period boys and girls clearly manifest a desire to be considered not as dependent children, but as individuals who are capable of making their own differentiated contributions, to their own lives and that of the adults around them, based on their self-awareness.

On the social front new interpersonal relations appear, and boys and girls seek to act in a way that will let them express themselves in a wider social sphere than the family group. However, the social sphere does not yet open with the width, questioning and concerns that it will in later stages of adolescence.

Finally, boys and girls begin to make the shift from a style and *life plan* that is complementary to family life, towards the development of their own existential plan. However, only during later phases will they visualize it clearly and be able to try it out in practice, since their identity is still not consolidated in this period.

We will come back to "development tasks" in chapter 9, when we look at the educational objectives for this age group. However, it is well worthwhile studying all this information in greater depth in order to encourage young people in their activities and especially to assess their personal growth. Good texts on the psychology of education will be helpful to broaden and build on the information contained here.



A PROFILE OF GIRLS AND BOYS BY DIMENSIONS OF THE PERSONALITY

This section examines some of the characteristics of this period in the different growth areas. Many of these will be familiar to you and will remind you of young people in your Unit.

A NEW BODY

They discover their bodies anew every day, and their bodies are renewed every day. Things happen to their bodies that disconcert them, but that also encourage them to explore, to push themselves to their limits. The changes in their bodies reveal beauty, make them feel shy, exceed all proportions, matter too much or too little, make them glad or sad, hurt, give pleasure and are part of the process of becoming a man or a woman.

They always seem to be tired, and only perk up at the suggestion of food. Tidiness is not their strong point, they are drawn to sport, their appearance worries them, their clothes don't fit them, and if they do fit they don't like them. The day is too short to do everything they want to do and too long when there is too little to do.

Everything is constantly changing, growing and developing. So much so that it is difficult for them to pin down an image of themselves.

EMERGING IDEAS

The world is beginning to expand and change too. There are new concepts that do not necessarily need to be tied to reality. Ideas have a life of their own and can be combined with each other to make new ideas.

And this world of ideas, little by little, displaces the real, practical and concrete world in importance. Making things happen and "getting them to put two feet on the ground" is always a challenge. It is even difficult for them to put what they feel and what they think into words.

Questions that they used to address to the outside world are now turned inwards. "Who am I?" and "What am I like?" are questions that will not be fully answered for a few more years, but they push young people to question everything, especially things they used to accept as immovable truths.

VALUES OF THEIR OWN

The world of right and wrong is also the target of doubts and questions. Young people analyse, create, backtrack and start again, they change as quickly as they change ideas and concepts. They suddenly develop a powerful ability to put themselves in someone else's place and everything can now be questioned from "another" point of view, in an exercise that is apparently endless.

This is the starting point for constructing a code of conduct that begins to be assimilated personally. This code no longer depends on family opinion –which is seldom taken into consideration now- and is based instead on their own beliefs and especially on the ongoing dialogue with other young people of the same age.

CONTRADICTORY EMOTIONS

The inner world grows in importance. Sensations, emotions and feelings come one after another, in waves that pile up or contradict each other, always intense and much more lasting than during childhood. Feelings flood in, fill them up, disconcert them, make them lose control, and become the central axis of their lives. Learning to recognize, handle and control these feelings are some of the development tasks for this period.

Loving love, hating hate, being friends with their friends and enemies of their enemies are typical features of young people, who are too big to be children and too small to be adults.

As they attempt to find themselves and define their own identity, adolescents sometimes seem like children to us and sometimes like adults. This duality occasionally makes us lose our patience with them, but mostly it shows us how they are growing day by day and gives us the satisfaction of knowing that our efforts to support them are worthwhile.

FRIENDS FOR LIFE

Friends are for trusting, for believing in. Young people rely on their friends, and draw renewed strength from them. They have fewer friends now, but the ones they have are closer. They form a tight-knit circle that helps them all to grow. Friends act as a mirror and as an engine of development.

And sometimes it seems that the family does not really understand, that the parents are too close or, perhaps, too far away. Young people always seem to feel that family means too little freedom and too many responsibilities.

The constant struggle between being with others or being with oneself, between company and being alone, between the inner and outer self, is an apparently endless tug-of-war.

Young people move back and forth between the family and discovery of society around them and the confrontations that arise along that axis. They still have no real concept of everything that global society means, however, and still less do they question it.

A PERSONAL FAITH

Living the transition between a child's faith, given by the family like a gift that illuminates their childhood, and an adult faith that is personal, intimate and consistent with one's acts, is also a process that begins in this stage and will not end until later. Much later, in most cases.

This transition is marked by the duality between a continual criticism of form and a constant search for meaning; and by a questioning by which they attempt to differentiate the adult belief that is imposed from "outside" and their own belief built from "inside".

Discovering that transcendence is essential to human existence is something that takes time and effort, on the part of both young people and the adults who accompany them in this process.

OTHER ASPECTS

TWO AGE GROUPS CAN BE DISTINGUISHED IN THE FIRST STAGE OF ADOLESCENCE: 11 TO 13 AND 13 TO 15

Two age groups can be distinguished between the ages of 11 and 15, based on the abrupt sexual maturing experienced by young people, the rapid growth that follows, the mental changes that are associated with the biological transformations and the resulting demands that society makes on them.

In the first of these stages, from approximately 11 to 13, the adolescent is usually concerned mainly with the biological aspects of the self. Young people have difficulty in adjusting to the incredible speed of biological maturing and become introverted. As they feel insecure, they are not very interested in their peers of the other sex, do not seek them out and may even tend to avoid them. This attitude changes around the age of 13, however, as young people adapt to the new conditions, consolidate their body image and gain security. A shift from same-sex to mixed groups of friends therefore occurs as they develop.

On the physical level, we must remember that the "growth spurt" –the rapid increase in height and weight that follows sexual maturity– occurs at different times in boys and girls.

In girls, development starts to accelerate between the ages of 10 and 11 on average. They grow most quickly around 12 and at about 13 growth slows rapidly to rates similar to those seen before the growth spurt, although they will continue to grow slowly and steadily for several years more. By contrast, growth in boys usually accelerates just before the age of 13, is most rapid around 14 and shortly afterwards slows to pre-growth spurt rates.

The fact that girls tend to reach their adult height and weight about two years earlier than boys feeds the common misapprehension that "girls mature faster than boys". This is an erroneous assumption, as the process of reaching maturity involves the whole personality, not just physical development.

In both boys and girls muscular development progresses in pace with their gain in height and is fastest just after they have reached their maximum height. Muscular growth in boys, however, is faster than in girls. The total increase in boys' muscular tissue and strength is also greater, a characteristic that carries over into adulthood. It is important to consider this when designing educational activities and games, especially when working with mixed Patrols or Units.

Sexual maturity and physical changes are followed by psychological changes. As young people develop their identity, they gain an awareness of the self as something distinct or separate from others, while also finding and savouring a certain feeling of consistency over time, both in relation to themselves and to others. These aspects of adjustment occur simultaneously with sexual maturity and the growth spurt, but take more time to become integrated, as individual identity is slow to form. Although the rate of physical growth may have decreased, psychological aspects such as independence from the family and the shift towards the peer group as the main source of security and status are thus more marked from the ages of 13 to 15 and even beyond.

From the ages of 13 to 15, in general, the cognitive development that is associated with physical changes gathers momentum. Young people move more clearly into the stage of formal operations or abstract thought, which consists of the capacity to think about affirmations that are not related to concrete objects in the real world. At this age, young people demonstrate a greater capacity to formulate and try out hypotheses and to think about what could be as well as what is. This makes them more introspective and analytical. Their desire to demonstrate their new cognitive skills is manifested in an increasing use of irony, the ability to criticize and even a taste for double meanings.

The pace at which these new intellectual skills develop intensifies as society makes increasing demands on 13 to 15 year-olds, especially in terms of education, vocation and independence. This gradually alters their relationship with adults and speeds their integration into the peer group.

From the point of view of the Scout Programme, these two age groups generate two different columns of objectives. Although they are aimed at the same final objectives, these two columns take into account the particular features of each age group as we have described it.

BOYS AND GIRLS ARE THE SAME BUT DIFFERENT TOO

As we have discussed, the hormonal changes that trigger the awakening of adolescence mark physical and motor differences and rates of growth that are different in boys and girls.

We also see affective and cognitive changes, which refer to the characteristics, behaviour patterns, attitudes and interests of boys and girls. Whether these differences are attributable to non-physical aspects of the personality has been extensively debated, but today it is generally accepted that men and women acquire their forms of behaviour almost entirely as a function of the environment in which they have been educated and the models around them, which represent an “inherited” pattern of manhood or womanhood.

The strongly "cultural" origin of these differences is closely related to certain stereotypes that prevail in our society. Although much progress has been made towards equality of rights and opportunities for women and men –especially at the theoretical level- quite marked stereotypes of what can be considered feminine and masculine are still widely prevalent.

Given the characteristic need to affirm their sexual identity in this period, young people tend to seek out members of their own sex to establish friendships: boys with boys and girls with girls. Natural groups therefore tend to be single-sex, particularly in the first part of this age group, from about 11 to 13. Although young people may begin to feel an impulse to explore the relationship with members of the other sex, this tends not to be resolved at this initial stage. The urgency of dealing with their own inner changes is stronger and even generates a certain "defensive" distance between the two sexes. From about the age of 13, depending on the environment and personal characteristics, young people become more familiar with their new impulses and can handle them better. They are therefore in a better position to turn their interest to members of the other sex.

Care should therefore be taken over the ages and sexes of the members when forming Patrols. It is also important to be aware of stereotypes, which tend to be reinforced in single-sex groups. Correct use of the Scout Method helps to compensate for this tendency and maintain a balance among the young people. Even in very open societies, like the Scandinavian ones, there is still a tendency to propagate stereotypes by educating girls in skills of personal relations, consensus and negotiation, and boys in skills of competition, confrontation and assertiveness.

We must try to avoid being conditioned by these stereotypes in our Unit. For example, we should guard against the tendency to encourage only boys to carry out activities that involve challenge and leadership and give the girls more passive activities and service tasks.

On the other hand, the need to affirm gender equality should not make us forget the differences between the sexes and their natural complementarities.

That is why we say that boys and girls are *the same, but different too.*

EDUCATING IN EQUALITY OF CONDITIONS, BUT TAKING THE DIFFERENCES INTO ACCOUNT

The educational process should therefore *educate in equality of conditions* so that young people really learn about and experience equality of rights between men and women, guaranteeing both sexes the same opportunity to develop their full potential. This means encouraging them to get to know each other, learn to respect their particular features and the complementary nature of the two sexes.

At the same time, we should *educate taking the differences into consideration,* picking out and highlighting the infinite potential of being a man or being a woman. This means that each young person should be free to develop their individual skills and interests in the Unit, without any particular kind of behaviour being prematurely defined as inappropriate for their sex.

The differences between the sexes should not imply antagonism of any kind or the superiority of one sex over another, but equality of opportunities does not have to mean uniformity or symmetry.

In order to achieve an educational process that respects both equality and difference, it is essential that parents, teachers and youth leaders act in agreement with each other. This is the only way of overcoming the male chauvinist tendency that subsists in our culture and the rather ideological reaction of feminism, of the kind that is pitted against male chauvinism as a kind of inverse version of it.

EACH GIRL AND BOY HAS THEIR OWN STORY AND UNIQUE LIFE PLAN

Knowing the general characteristics of boys and girls from 11 to 15 and recognizing them as the same but different is essential for our work as free-time voluntary educators.

However, despite the similarities, young people are obviously not all the same and do not all face the same demands from their environment. A young person from an economically deprived area, who lives in poor housing conditions or in a segregated neighbourhood has problems that are vastly different from the difficulties faced by an adolescent from a well-off, united and protective family living in a privileged neighbourhood.

All adolescents have a number of experiences and problems in common. They all go through the physical and physiological changes of puberty and the growth that follows. They all face the need to establish their identity and make their own way as independent members of society. But there is no set model that we can label "the adolescent" or the "youth of today", despite the discourses that are frequently heard. Both elated references to "the country's future" and negative allusions to "everything that's wrong with our society" are unfair and misleading simplifications.

An overview of the features of adolescents is therefore not enough. In a stage of growth marked by major, irregular and individual changes, it is also necessary to know each boy and girl personally. It is not enough to know what adolescence and puberty or even what the challenges of this period are.

To learn what a boy or girl is like as a person, it is essential to observe the particular features that make his or her personality unique. These depend on their genetic make-up, the home they were born into, their place in the order of their siblings, the school they attend, their friends, their environment and how their life has developed. Each boy and girl has his or her own story and individual reality.

No books, courses or manuals will ever be enough to give you this sort of information about the boys and girls in your Unit – especially the ones whose development you monitor and assess. The only way is to spend time with them and observe them, get to know their environment, share moments with them, witness their reactions, understand their frustrations, listen to their feelings, unravel their dreams, in short, to discover each one as a person.

This effort is your first task and your success depends on the quality of the relationship you build up with each young person - an educational relationship, which demands interest, respect and love.