

Understanding the Girl Box

Learning Goals:

- To provide an opportunity for those new to or not associated with Girls on the Run to learn more about the program
- To introduce the philosophical foundation of the program
- To introduce the various components of each lesson

Materials:

- ❑ One piece of poster board with the words ***“In the Girl Box”*** written on it
- ❑ One piece of poster board with the words ***“Out of the Girl Box”*** written on it
- ❑ One piece of poster board with the words ***“Unable to tell whether in or out of the Girl Box based on this behavior.”***
- ❑ A piece of paper and marker/pencil for each girl

Introduction:

- *“Today I am hoping that you get a chance to learn what the Girls on the Run program is all about. I think you will be surprised to learn that you don’t have to be a good runner or even to LIKE to run, to love Girls on the Run.”*
- Ask the group participants for a show of hands in response to the following questions:
 - *“How many of you love to run?”*
 - *“How many of you don’t like to run?”*
 - *“How many of you are somewhere in between?”*
- After participants share their responses, take a minute or two and reveal a little bit about you: some of your likes and dislikes, why you do or do not like to run (if you do not run, what do you like to do in your free time), and what you hope to learn from being involved with Girls on the Run.

- *“Now we are going to do a visualization. A visualization is where you envision something in your imagination. It is almost like you are actually experiencing it just as you are thinking about it or “seeing” it in your head. We are going to do a visualization together. Here is the visualization:*
 - *First of all picture a bright white light that rests just on the inside of your body—maybe right where your heart is. That light is so bright and when we are feeling good about ourselves it just shines out of us—through our eyes, our fingertips, in the way we walk and stand up tall and straight. That white light is the very essence of who we are. It is what makes us special, unique and beautiful on the inside.*
 - *Now picture a large socket in the top of your head. It is like a socket that is in the wall where you plug in an electrical appliance. Can you see it in the top of your head? Now, imagine a huge cord going into that socket. This cord is really yucky—it has gooey, sticky very slow-moving mucky liquid flowing through it. And also coming in through this cord are some messages we might get sometimes. Some of these messages are “You are not thin enough”, “you are not pretty enough”, “you are not sporty enough”, “you don’t have cool clothes”, “you are not very smart” or “you shouldn’t ever get angry” or “it is not okay to cry”. When this brown stuff and these messages go into our brains and oozes down into our body we feel yuck. The brown stuff begins to put out that bright light, like syrup oozing down on your pancakes in the morning. When this happens, we do not stand up as tall, we might feel sad a lot or might not try some exciting activities we are interested in. We just don’t feel good about ourselves with this brown cord coming into our spirits.*
 - *Now, here’s the fun part. We each need to take our right hand and gently pull that cord right out of our heads. Pull it out and throw it right behind you, somewhere far away. Now I want you to plug in the Girls on the Run cord. I can see into this cord and it is bright, multi-colored and sparkly. The liquid in it is bubbly and moves freely down into*

your body and makes the light inside of your heart...the light that is YOU...sparkle, glitter and become brighter and stronger...so strong that you begin to have light coming out of your fingertips, your mouth, your nose, your toes and your eyes! The Girls on the Run cord helps us stand up tall and believe in ourselves. We express everything we are feeling. We know that we are wonderful. We can look all people right into their eyes and we feel absolutely NO shame about who we are! We know that "we are perfect just the way we are!" This is what Girls on the Run is all about! Helping all of us, including ME, realize how special we are, each as individuals, but also as a wonderful team together!!!

- *So anytime we are having a brown, murky chord kind of day we need to promise to each other that we will ask each other to help us unplug from those negative messages and feelings and let the colorful, sparkly, positive light in each of us shine. Can we promise this to each other?'*

Getting on Board:

- *"Now we are going to do a little Getting on Board that helps us understand what the Girl Box is."*
- Tell a story about a girl you have known (it might even be about yourself) who was very outgoing, vivacious and full of life and how around the age of 5th grade she started to become overly concerned with what other people thought of her. This describes the phrase we have coined at Girls on the Run as the "Girl Box". It is a place girls go around middle school where they turn in on themselves and morph into what they think others want them to be instead of who they really are.
- Now ask the participants to respond to the following questions out loud:
 - *"Can you think of characters in movies that were girls OUT of the GIRL Box?"*
 - *"Can you name some characters in movies that were girls IN the GIRL Box?"*
 - *"Girls in the Girl Box have which cord going into their heads?"*
 - *"Girls out of the Girl Box have which cord going into their heads?"*

Warm-up:

- *“Now we are going to do a fun game. You can walk, skip, or run in this game. You never should feel like you HAVE to run in Girls on the Run. I believe that you will do what is best for your body!”*
- Place the two pieces of poster board (“in the Girl Box” and “out of the Girl Box) about fifty yards apart and line the girls up in a straight line near the poster board labeled “unable to tell whether in or out of the Girl Box based on this behavior”.
- *“I am going to call out a behavior and you have to decide whether that behavior refers to a girl in the girl box or a girl out of the box. If you can not tell whether she is in or out of the Girl Box, stay where you are. Once you decide if the behavior is in or out of the Girl Box, run (or walk) to that piece of poster board.”* Make sure everyone understands the point of the game before proceeding.
- Now call out the following behaviors one at a time and let the participants go to the appropriate sign. After they have run to a sign for one of the behaviors, call them back to the starting point and then call out another behavior.

BEHAVIORS:

People pleasing/doing what she thinks other people want her to do (in the Girl Box)

Speaking positively of others (out of the Girl Box)

Dieting all the time (in the Girl Box)

Bullying either verbally or physically (in the Girl Box)

Follows through on promises she has made (out of the Girl Box)

Manages stress through healthy exercise (out of the Girl Box)

Has tattoos (unable to tell whether in or out of the box)

Takes quiet time for herself everyday (out of the Girl Box)

Highlights her hair (unable to tell whether in or out of the box)

Has a lot of money (unable to tell whether in or out of the box)

Is comfortable in her own skin (out of the Girl Box)

Always compares herself to other girls (in the Girl Box)

Wants to be a model (unable to tell whether in or out of the box”

Smokes cigarettes (in the Girl Box)

Manages stress by sharing feelings with a reliable adult (out of the Girl Box)

Gossips (in the Girl Box)

Is pretty (unable to tell whether in or out of the Girl Box)

Stands up for what she believes in (out of the Girl Box)

Is thin (unable to tell whether in or out of the Girl Box)

Celebrates her gifts and talents (out of the Girl Box)

- Bring all of the girls back to a circle and ask the following questions.
 - ***“Can you think of any other behaviors that would go in the Girl Box?”***
 - ***Can you think of any other behaviors that would go out of the Girl Box?***
- Be VERY careful here not to use any kind of physically distinguishing characteristic as criteria for being in or out of the Girl Box. Ironically, if you do use physical characteristics (money, body size, piercings, tattoos etc.) then you are exhibiting a behavior of a girl IN the Girl Box!
- ***“My hope is that you experience what it is like to be “out of the Girl Box” each time you come to Girls on the Run. You won’t be judged here, or put down. We want every girl to re-discover just how wonderful she is at Girls on the Run, regardless of how well you run, the size of your body, the color of your hair or skin or how much money you have.”***
- Take a minute or two and go through some standard running stretches with the girls.

Work-Out:

- Hand each girl a piece of paper and have her write her name at the top of it. If space permits, for this activity, have the girls run this activity (on a track or athletic field). Have each girl place

her piece of paper at a spot she designates. With the remaining time, have the girl walk/run/skip/hop laps. She can walk with a friend or group of friends or by herself. Every time she completes a lap, she should write down on the piece of paper something she has always wanted to do, but either been afraid to do...OR hasn't had the opportunity to do. If space doesn't permit, have them jot them down on their paper.

- When you have ten minutes remaining, ask the girls to stop and take up the papers. Read out loud some of the "always wanted to do" comments.
- *"We are a very exciting group of girls. Would anyone like to share out loud one of the items on her list?" I would like for everyone to take these home with you and put them in a prominent place in your house. At Girls on the Run, we believe that we can create a wonderful life for ourselves, by believing in ourselves. Today you have created an intentional to-do list for yourself that portrays the power of positive thinking."*
- Have the girls form a circle and everyone put their hands in the middle, one on top of the other. On the count of three shout out, "Girls on the Run is So much FUN!" Congratulate everyone on a job well-done!