



2018 National Order of the Arrow Conference

## Advising 101: Working Effectively with Youth Traits of Highly Effective Advisers

### Session Length: 48 Minutes

Through this session, you will:

**Explain** the characteristics of highly effective advisers.

**Demonstrate** how to adopt traits to positively interact with youth Arrowmen.

**Guide** participants in developing their own traits through a practical exercise.

**Enable** participants to take the knowledge imparted from this session back to their home lodge where they can utilize their new-found skills.

**Learning Outcomes:** After completing this session, learners will:

- Be able to recognize the stage of relationship between the adviser and youth.
- Be able to apply the guiding principles of highly effective advisers when interacting with their youth

### Theme Connection:

The theme of NOAC 2018 is “Decide Your Destiny,” emphasizing the message that today’s decisions shape tomorrow’s reality. This session will relay this theme by providing advisers with information they can choose to apply to their specific adviser/youth relationship.

This session is not directly focused on improving a chapter’s, lodge’s or section’s score in any of its specific JTE requirements, but rather improving the abilities of an adviser to coach and mentor his advisee, thereby strengthening the advisee’s leadership abilities.

### Required Materials:

- Laptop and projector
- Printed scenario handouts



## TRAINER PREPARATION

**Type of Trainer:** The trainer should be an adult, well-experienced Arrowman. The trainer should also be highly energetic, enthusiastic and leverage his past training experiences in order to create enthusiasm and inspire the participants.

**Audience:** This session is focused entirely on an adult audience. All advisers—young, experienced, new or old—will all appreciate the content from this session, and will walk away with an improved understanding of how to develop youth leaders.

**Follow the Syllabus:** It is vitally important that the syllabus be closely followed. Although this session narrative is written in the first person, trainers should not read directly from the syllabus, but should develop their own style of delivery while maintaining the integrity of the content. Specific points are noted throughout the syllabus where the trainer can deviate from the narrative while keeping the content intact.

**Trainer Preparation Checklist:**

- 1. Study this syllabus
- 2. Gather required materials
- 3. Choose audio/visual delivery method and prepare accordingly
- 4. Print handouts

## Session Narrative

Introduction

3 minutes

**Trainer Instructions:** The session trainer should introduce himself, tell what lodge and city he is from, provide brief information on his Order of the Arrow experience, and any other relevant items of interest. Although this session narrative is written in the first person, trainers should not read directly from the syllabus, but should develop their own style of delivery while maintaining the integrity of the content.

In this session we will discuss the traits of a highly effective adviser. We will start by discussing what it means to be “highly effective”. We will explore the four stages of team development and how they apply to the Adviser/Youth relationship. We will next examine some principles that apply to our relationships with youth which when used properly will aid us in being more effective



advisers. We will wrap up with a scenario-based group exercise that will explore the stage of team development between a youth and his adviser and what principles would be the most effective to apply.

### What does it mean to be “Highly Effective”?

**7 min**

The term “highly effective” can also be synonymous with “high performing.” An adviser should understand the stages of team development and how these stages apply to their relationships with their youth:

- **Forming** – This stage is often seen the first time a youth chairman/officer meets their adviser. There is most likely some apprehension by both the adviser and youth about the requirements of their jobs and the type of relationship required to be effective. The youth will look to the adviser for guidance and advice.
- **Storming** – The youth chairman or officer is growing in confidence in his position but tends to resist the demands of the position or job. They oftentimes ignore or challenge external authorities. Advisers become frustrated with themselves and their youth when they perceive their advice is not heeded.
- **Norming** – The adviser and youth begin to recognize friction and inefficiencies in their relationship and are able to discuss how to perform better as a team. Enthusiasm increases and they begin to discuss how to move forward with accomplishing their goals.
- **Performing** – Both youth and adviser understand and share the common vision for completing their tasks. Enthusiasm for the job is high and tasks are being accomplished efficiently.

### Guiding Principles for Highly Effective Advisers

**20 minutes**

An adviser should always remind him/herself that the youth with whom they will be involved are adolescent young men (and women) who are still developing reasoning and cognitive skills as a result of normal brain development. The following principles are geared toward building relationships with adolescent youth and should be applied by an adviser in order to aid in moving through the stages of team development:

#### 1. Anything they can do, they should do

If there is a task that the youth are capable of doing, you must step back and let them do it. Even if they do not do it the way you would, or as well as you would. Even if it takes them longer than it should, or if they make mistakes along the way. Even if there is a risk of failure. This is actually the hardest part of teaching leadership for most adults. The temptation to step in and “do it right” or “show them how” is incredibly powerful. Yet that is exactly what you must do.

Here are some phrases for you to practice asking your advisee:

- “What are you going to do about it?”
- “Let me know what you decide to do.”



## 2. Earn their respect

Your first priority when working with a youth must always be to earn their respect. The reason for this is simple: If you fail to earn their respect, they will not learn from you, and you will be wasting your time. If you do earn their respect, not only will they learn from you, they will actually end up liking you as well. Of course, this raises an interesting question: How do you earn the respect of a youth?

First and foremost, recognize that you must earn their respect. You must prove to be worthy of it. You can't just expect it, you can't demand it, and you can't just insist on the trappings of respect (like insisting they call you "Sir" or "Ma'am"). You have to prove that you deserve to be respected, and be willing to work to earn it.

"Well, I'll earn your respect as long as you earn mine." As the adult in the relationship, it is your job to always strive to earn respect, regardless of what the youth does or says.

## 3. Thou shalt not lie

Never, never, never lie to the youth you are working with. Every word you say to them must be what you truly mean and feel and believe to the very best of your ability. Sincerity is everything.

Here are some phrases for you to practice:

- "I'm sorry, I cannot answer that question because..."
- "I consider that a personal question, ask me something else..."
- "I may be wrong, but I truly believe..."

## 4. Let them fail

Adults often struggle with discerning when to allow the youth to learn from failure and when there are potentially-larger consequences the lodge may experience if an event fails horribly.

**Trainer Instructions:** Share this statement with the participants: "Skinned knees are OK. Broken necks are not." They may find this phrase helpful when thinking about when and how to intervene when a youth is struggling with a task.

Your job really starts after a mistake has been made. Not with lectures or criticism (they're probably feeling bad enough anyway). Start with the question: "What would you have done differently?"

Here are some phrases for you to practice:

- "You may want to consider..."
- "Are you sure you want to...?"
- "Have you considered...?"
- "It seems to me that ... might happen, but it's your decision."

And after failure:



- “What would you have done differently?”
- “How do you feel about how things went?”
- “That was a problem, true – but look at the good things that happened.”

### **5. Admit your hypocrisies**

Young people hate hypocrisy. Maybe it’s a holdover from childhood when kids believe in the tooth fairy, in fairness, and that the good guys always win. This poses a challenge because unless you happen to be a practicing saint, you aren’t perfect. We’re all at least a little bit of a hypocrite. But here’s the thing – so are the teens. So your challenge is not to be perfect – they know you aren’t perfect just as they know they aren’t perfect. They spend much of their time stressing over how imperfect they are. Your job is to set an example of how to deal with that hypocrisy, and the best policy is to face it head on. Don’t pretend to be something you are not. If they call you on a mistake, apologize and move on. Having the confidence to face your own errors and weaknesses sets a wonderful example and will give them the courage to do the same. And they will respect you infinitely more than they will if you try to fake it.

Here are some phrases for you to practice:

- “I’m not nearly as good at ... as I should be.”
- “I know I should be doing ... It’s one of my personal failures. Hopefully I’ll do better.”

### **6. Role modeling is everything**

When you teach leadership, the single most important lesson to teach is the value of setting an example. Here’s a situation that illustrates this:

One day a group was holding a discussion outdoors near a basketball court. One of the leaders of the group got up and started shooting baskets (which was quite annoying to the other leaders, and was definitely both a temptation and distraction to the rest of the group). As the leader’s adviser, I got up and pulled him over to talk. I explained to him that because he is a leader, when he does something, he is effectively giving permission for everyone else to do the same - even inviting them to join him. The question a leader must ask is: “If everyone does what I want to do, would that be a good thing?” In this case, he realized that if everyone joined him, the discussion would stop – which is definitely not what he intended. So he returned to the group – lesson learned (at least for the moment).

When young people think of leadership, they think of making speeches, giving orders and having everyone listen to and respect them. They don’t necessarily think of being a role model – yet that is the single most important aspect of leadership. This applies to adults as well.

Even though you, as an adviser, are taking a back seat to letting a youth take on a leadership role, it is critically important that you conduct yourself as a role model. Make no mistake, if you earn their respect, they will listen to you. They will remember what you say (even offhand comments that you won’t remember saying). And your words and actions will have an impact.



What does this mean in practice?

- **Don't forget the little things** – the way you dress, shake hands, and relate to both teens and other adults.
- **Remember the big things** – punctuality, keeping your commitments and promises, the way you treat others. Be sure to treat the teens as you would want them to treat you – with respect.
- **Tell them positive things that you've done in your life** (but please, try to avoid the phrase “when I was a chief” as much as possible when doing so).
- **What you post on social networking websites is forever** – so either be careful what you post, or do not “friend” young people or allow them to access any of your personal information.

### 7. You really don't know best

As an adult, there will be many times where the teens you work with will propose something that you think is absolutely nuts – that won't work, that won't be fun, or that will fail miserably. There will also be times where you will hear of some problem and you'll be absolutely convinced that you have exactly the right advice and know exactly what they should do. And you'll be right – about half the time. It is shocking the degree to which adults tend to be condescending towards young people. There seems to be a natural assumption that just because you are older and more experienced, you know best. Young people are used to being treated that way, and all too often buy into it.

The truth is not so simple:

Statistically speaking, unless you are particularly brilliant, about half of the young people you deal with will be smarter than you are. This means that despite their youth and lack of experience, their problem-solving skills may well be better than yours. No matter what your experience, they have better knowledge of their own situation, likes and dislikes than you do.

What this means in practice is simple: don't assume that you know best. Take the time to ask questions and listen to their reasoning. Feel free to offer suggestions, but unless it is a matter of health and safety or a rules violation, let them make the call. You will be astonished to find that, more often than not, things work out just fine – and sometimes far better than you would ever expect.

### 8. Be there

Often the best thing you can do at a youth group event is absolutely nothing. Just showing up matters. When you show up, you are demonstrating that you believe the group and what the young people are doing is important. Your time is valuable (and it's OK to say so now and then). But being there is a worthwhile use of your time (and it's OK to say that as well). Some people talk about “quality time”. The problem with the idea of quality time is that you have no idea when that time will be. The only way to have those quality time moments is to spend plenty of “quantity time” – to be around when those golden moments happen when you can really have an impact.



Just being there helps group leaders do the right thing. I remember overhearing one conversation in which a chapter leader explained that the group could not do something because the adviser was watching. In fact, the adviser would absolutely have let them do it – the leaders were using the adviser as an excuse, and that was just fine. Just having an adult present makes a huge difference in moderating group behavior – even if you say nothing.

### Highly Effective Advisers are Caring Adults

5 minutes

**Trainer Instructions:** Ask participants, “What do youth need from us?” Call on several participants to solicit their feedback to your question.

So, what is it that young people need from us? – TO BE CARING ADULTS.

Young people benefit from a network of caring adults. Caring adults create strong teenagers. Parent figures and a network of responsible and caring adults provide important resources that contribute to healthy adolescent development. Adults such as neighbors, youth workers, advisers and leaders of youth organizations, coaches, business people, teachers and religious leaders can serve as positive role models for teens.

Teens need a diverse and helpful team of caring adults who get involved in their lives. Caring adults, other than parents, play a vital role in providing teens with a different perspective and guiding their participation in constructive activities. They also help teens develop a consistent sense of boundaries and responsibility.

By helping integrate teens into the larger community, adults promote positive character traits (trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship) related to helping others and caring about social issues. Unfortunately, our society is age-segregated and offers few outlets for teens to practice adult behaviors and roles. Many teens lack a sense of connection with the adult community and are left to struggle with problems on their own or with each other. However, Scouting, and the Order of the Arrow, effectively utilize adult interaction as a method to develop young people.

Every interaction with a responsible, caring adult can provide a teen with affirmation, appropriate boundaries, constructive time use and belonging.

**Trainer Instructions:** After discussing young people’s need for a caring adult, transition the discussion to focus on how caring adults provide affirmation, appropriate boundaries, constructive time use and belonging.



### Understanding teens' new thinking skills

- Be patient when teens “test drive” their newly acquired reasoning skills, and encourage healthy, respectful debate by “setting rules of engagement.”
- Disrespect should never be tolerated by either the adolescent or the adult.
- Never correct or put down adolescents' logic, simply listen to and acknowledge what they say. A good strategy is to ask how they arrived at the thoughts or conclusions they are expressing. Don't take to heart when teens criticize adult opinions and behaviors. They may challenge you, but they still need you.
- Not every disagreement is a conflict.

### Cognition Ignition

Caring adults, especially those acting in an adviser capacity, are responsible for supporting a young person's cognitive development. As a result, advisers become more effective in mentoring and coaching their youth.

Here are a few strategies for fostering cognitive development.

- Ask open-ended questions that invite thought and debate.
- Never subject youth to public criticism or mockery of their thoughts or ideas.
- Encourage a deeper understanding of issues and topics an adolescent brings up by pointing them to accurate, factual information.
- Realize teens bring a variety of strengths – logic, common sense, creative approaches – the decision-making process.

### Exercise

**10 min**

**Trainer Instructions:** The purpose of this exercise is to stimulate the participants into thinking about the stages of team development and to discuss how advising principles could be utilized in dealing with the scenarios provided at the end of this syllabus.

Break the class into two groups and give each group a copy of a scenario. The groups will have 5 minutes to discuss the scenario they were given amongst themselves. Tell the group to select a spokesperson who will debrief the other group on the results of their discussion.

### Takeaway Challenge

**3 minutes**

Recognizing the status of the relationship that you as an adviser have with your advisee is key to knowing how to improve your performance as an adviser.

**Trainer Instructions:** In the remaining minutes in this session, ask the participants to write down the guiding principles in the numbered list below, and ask them to think about how they can apply them to their current or next advising job.



1. **Anything they can do, they should do**
2. **Earn their respect**
3. **Thou shalt not lie**
4. **Let them fail**
5. **Admit your hypocrisies**
6. **Role modeling is everything**
7. **You really don't know best**
8. **Be there**

By becoming a better adviser, you have an opportunity to shape a young person's leadership and management skills not only for the OA but for their lifetime. Let that be your destiny...

## Appendix 1: Resources and Source Material

- Appleman, D. (2011). *Developing teen leadership: A practical guide for youth group advisors, teachers, and parents* (Kindle ed.). San Jose, CA: Desaware Publishing
- Tuckman, Bruce W (1965). "Developmental sequence in small groups". *Psychological Bulletin*. 63 (6): 384–399.

## Appendix 2: Exercise Scenarios

### Scenario 1:

You have just been asked to take over as the adviser to the Spring Ordeal chairman. You find out that the chairman, also newly appointed is having some school issues which, in your estimate, may cause some time management challenges in preparing and executing the Ordeal. Your chairman is enthusiastic but does not acknowledge his school issues.

### Scenario 2:

You are the Lodge Adviser for Run-A-Muck Lodge. You, your Lodge Chief, and your Scout Executive established a goal for your lodge to hold two service days, one camp focused, one community focused, before the end of your lodge year. Your camp service day has been planned and all the arrangements have been made by your Service Chairman. However, you do not know of any plans that have been made for the community service day. People are calling you as this event is scheduled for 1 month from today.