Emotional Disability & Trauma Leader Training

Created as part of "Girl Scouts for ALL Abilities" Gold Award Project by Alyssa Lee
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Training Guide Contents

This training guide is intended to support troop leaders in providing the best Girl Scout experience for girls of all abilities. If you have a scout in your troop or service unit who have an Emotional Disability or Trauma, this training guide will:

- Define Emotional Disability and Trauma
- Explain difficulties your scout might encounter during meetings, outings, and overnight trips.
- Provide a list of strategies, techniques, or equipment that will assist you in providing the best Girl Scout experience for a scout with Emotional Disabilities and/or Trauma.
- Provide a list of other resources that might be helpful.

Create a Welcoming Girl Scout Troop

Every scout brings unique strengths and energy to the group. By providing structure, flexibility, and opportunities for movement and engagement, troop leaders can create an environment where scouts with ADHD feel successful, included, and valued.

What is an Emotional Disability?

An emotional disability is a condition that affects a person's ability to manage emotions, build relationships, and respond appropriately in different situations. It may impact mood, behavior, and social interactions over time.

Scouts with an emotional disability may experience strong emotions, difficulty regulating feelings, or challenges interacting with peers. These behaviors are not intentional but are connected to how the individual processes emotions and experiences.

What is Trauma?

Trauma is the emotional response to a distressing or overwhelming experience. Trauma can result from a single event or ongoing experiences and may affect how a person feels, reacts, and interacts with others.

Scouts who have experienced trauma may be especially sensitive to stress, change, or perceived threats. Their responses are often based on past experiences and are ways their brain has learned to stay safe.





Impacts of Emotional Disability and Trauma

Emotional disability and trauma can affect participation in troop meetings, activities, outings, and overnight trips in a variety of ways.

A scout may:

- Experience strong emotional reactions (anger, anxiety, sadness)
- Have difficulty calming down once upset
- Struggle with peer relationships or trusting others
- React quickly or unexpectedly to situations that feel overwhelming
- Need support with transitions, changes in routine, or new environments

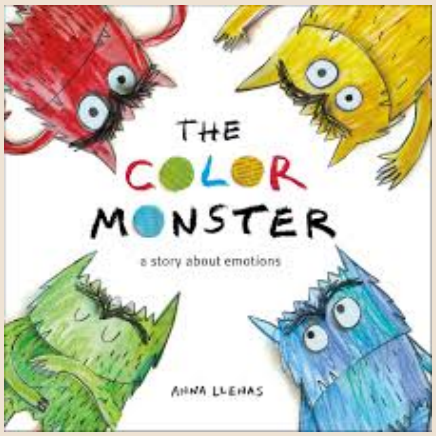
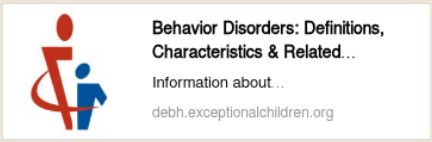
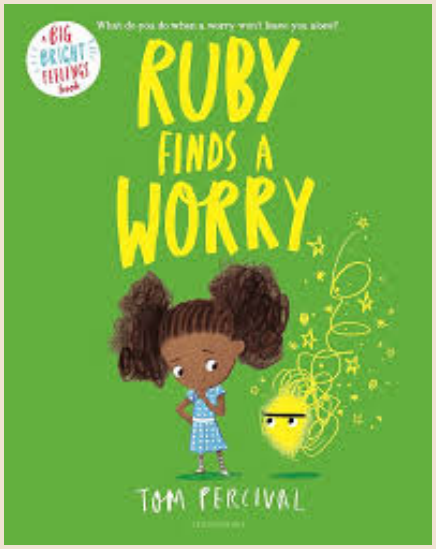
In group settings, busy environments, unstructured time, or unexpected changes may increase stress. It is important to remember that behaviors are often a form of communication and not intentional misbehavior.

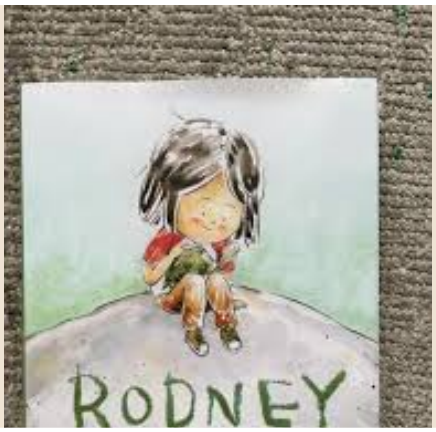
How to Help Mitigate Challenges Realated to Emotional Disability and Trauma

In order to provide a scout with an emotional disability or trauma-related needs equal access to being a Girl Scout, here are some helpful strategies:

1. **Communicate with the scout and her family** to understand her needs, triggers, and supports that are most effective.
2. **Build strong, positive relationships** by creating a safe, supportive, and predictable environment.
3. **Maintain consistent routines and clear expectations**, while preparing the scout for transitions or changes.
4. **Use calm, clear communication**, especially during times of stress or escalation.
5. **Provide opportunities for regulation**, such as breaks, quiet spaces, or calming activities.
6. **Teach and model coping strategies**, such as deep breathing, taking space, or using words to express feelings.
7. **Respond with patience and understanding**, recognizing that behavior is often linked to emotional needs.

Additional Resources for Leading Scouts with Emotional Disabilities and Trauma

Books	Video Links	Websites
The Color Monster by Anna Llenas  (Children's book)	 How to Control BIG Emotions (Children's Resource)	 Behavior Disorders (Adult Resource)
Ruby Finds a Worry by Tom Percival  (Children's Book)	 How to Help Children Regulate Emotions (Adult resource)	 Helping Children Cope After a Traumatic Event (Adult Resource)
Rodney was a Tortoise By Nan Forler	 Behavioral and Emotional Disorders in Children	



(Adult Resource)



Conclusion

The Girl Scout experience should be accessible for girls of all abilities. If you need additional support to help with inclusion, please contact your local service unit or council.



Girl Scouts for ALL Abilities

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