

DUMPING THE D'S



There has been an alarming rise in the rate of peer-to-peer violence among youth, especially among adolescents and teenagers. This trend includes negative behaviors such as physical and verbal assault, bullying, and harassment. We have witnessed nationally how a seemingly average, normal youth can level an entire community to its knees by bringing a handgun to school to settle a score with bullies. Each and every day our youth are exposed to violence and negative behavior. It's out there on the

internet, television, movies, song lyrics, video games, and all sorts of printed material. Exposure can happen anywhere- school, home, and even a safe place like a Scouting event. We all know that kids will imitate what they see and hear, so we as adults need to send a clear message to them that these types of behavior are unacceptable.

That is where the “No D’s” rule comes into effect. “No D’s” simply stated means that nobody is allowed to Demean, Diminish, or Disrespect another person. That includes both verbal and non-verbal behaviors. Put-Downs, bullying, fighting, intentionally embarrassing someone, name-calling, and whatever other negative behavior that lowers another person’s self-esteem is not allowed. We cannot make exceptions, or allow it some of the time. This rule needs to be applied in all situations. We must also be cautious not to joke about “D’s” or say “Just kidding” or “He/she knows I am joking”. Perhaps there is no harm to those involved in the joke, but to outside observers, you are condoning this type of behavior.

So, how do we deal with it when we see or hear it? To be effective and to bring credibility to this rule, we need to “flag” the behavior and call it out each time we see or hear it. Stop whatever you are doing. Let the boys see that it interrupted you. Use eye contact and effective body language to convey to them that their behavior was unacceptable. At first, we may have to explain to them what it means, or why it was inappropriate. Our goal is to make this behavior more noticeable and no longer invisible. Eventually, the boys will begin catching each other on it- that’s when you’ll know it is working.

Finally, we need to educate the youth on how to constructively criticize and disagree with one another. Tell them to describe to the other person what action or behavior it was that caused them to get angry or annoyed- instead of labeling that person with a derogatory comment. For example: Eric calls Justin a “Hog” for chewing with his mouth open during lunch. That is clearly a “D”. It also gives the other boys ammunition and permission to start referring to Justin as a “hog” which breeds resentment, fighting, and possibly poor self-esteem. Instead, Eric should say something like: “Eric, when you chew with your mouth open like that, it is really disgusting, and it’s bad manners- please stop.” Teach them that it’s ok to put a label to the behavior, but not the person doing it.

By implementing this rule, we also create a safer environment. Any Scouting activity should be made free from the “D’s”. After all, we need to lead by example, and teach them how the promise, law and oath apply to our daily lives.

Please join the Pennsylvania Dutch Council, and the Staff by adopting and enforcing the “No D’s” rule into your troop operation whether in camp or throughout the rest of the year. We are committed to putting an end to this most inappropriate behavior.