

Human Rights Activities for RE

*from the Girl Scouts of America badge, "Our Rights, Our Responsibilities"

http://www.girlscouts.org/program/gs_central/insignia/online/participation_patches/our_rights/

These activities will help you gain a greater awareness of human rights and why they are essential for children worldwide. The activities encourage you to take constructive responsibility for claiming basic rights for yourselves and for others. In the process, you will be empowered to become effective citizens in your local and global communities.

This initiative, "Our Rights, Our Responsibilities," is based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, a human rights treaty adopted in September 1990. The treaty was designed to encourage countries around the world to safeguard the rights of children. The convention highlights the need to protect children from abuse, violence, and exploitation, as well as to provide access to adequate nutrition, healthcare, and primary education.

Complete at least one activity from each of the six theme areas:

- The right to be me
- The right to learn
- The right to be heard
- The right to live in peace
- The right to be happy
- The right to work together

1. The Right to Be Me

People from many ethnic, racial, and cultural backgrounds reside in the United States. Find a child who celebrates a traditional cultural activity or event, such as a song, dance, or special holiday other than one you celebrate, and ask her to share it with you.

Review the list of basic human rights found in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. (<http://www.unicef.org/crc/>) Discuss them as they relate to your own life. Which of these rights would be the most difficult for you to live without? Why?

Play the Wants and Needs game on the UK Children's Rights Web site (<http://www.tagd.org.uk/Document.ashx?ID=568> – p.2 of this packet) or make up your own game having to do with the difference between "wants" (things you'd like to have) and "needs" (basic rights that every child should have).

2. The Right to Learn

The education of girls is not encouraged in some parts of the world. Discuss with others why you think girls need to be educated. Talk about how you would feel if only boys could go to school.

Read a book that describes life for a child in another country. Share your book with others in a book fair or book group, or at an event that promotes explorations of other cultures, such as World Thinking Day.

Share a folktale from a culture other than yours. In your group discuss what the tale is trying to teach.

3. The Right to Be Heard

Attend or view a public hearing on an issue that is important to you and your community, such as the need for a new library, a new stop sign, or a school district meeting. Discuss with others why such a hearing is important and, if possible, find out how the issue is resolved.

Find out what concerns children in other countries. Visit the Voices of Youth Web site (www.unicef.org/voy) with an adult and explore some of the issues youth from around the world are discussing.

Plan to speak up on an issue you are concerned about, whether at school, home, in your group, or in your community. The goal should be to create a change in how others perceive an issue. Organize your thoughts and focus on making your points clearly. Suggest some ways your audience can effectively address the issue. Following the event, review your presentation and your feelings about the issue with a friend or with your group. Do you feel your speech achieved the desired result? What would you change in your speech, if anything?

4. The Right to Live in Peace

What does peace mean to you? How do you think you could make a more peaceful community?

Visit Planet Tolerance online (www.tolerance.org/pt) with an adult. Do at least two of the activities for kids and discuss what you learn.

Whether the conflict is a civil war or an argument between best friends, there are certain things all conflicts have in common.

What are some of the basic reasons conflicts arise? Could the president of a country at war and a teacher mediating a conflict among her students use some of the same skills to bring about peace? Brainstorm a list of what some of those skills would be.

5. The Right to Be Happy

Find out what it is like to live in another country or culture as a child. How is your life the same or different from that of a child in another country or culture? Share your discoveries with others.

Plan a celebration of happiness for yourself or others. It might be a birthday party or a ceremony to mark a special achievement. Design an invitation, activities, and menu for the occasion.

Have a recipe-for-happiness party! Ask each student to create her own recipe for happiness. Think about the ingredients that should go into the recipe, that is, the actions you must take to create happiness. Share your recipe with the other girls and talk about the similarities and differences that you find.

6. The Right to Work Together

Think of a big task that must be accomplished to make a difference in your community or school, such as keeping your school clean or planting a community garden. Take five minutes and list all of the things that you would do to accomplish this task by yourself. Then sit down with others who have been focusing on the same task and record how you would approach the same problem as a group.

With other students, organize a display about an issue of national or international concern: for example, hunger, the fight against HIV/AIDS, or homelessness. Pay particular attention to how this issue might affect children. Find a way to address educating others about the issue, with possible actions that they might take in their own community.

Think of a time when you got something you really did not need as a gift. How did you feel? Would the gift have been different if you had been asked what you wanted or if you had gone shopping with the person who gave you the gift? Or think of a service someone provided for you that wasn't really what you wanted or needed. Discuss ways that the recipient can be involved with the person giving the gift or providing the service in the decision-making about the kind of help or gift to be offered. Can you apply what you discover from this discussion to helping others in another country or here in the United States? Identify some programs that involve the recipient of the gift of service in the process.