

"What If I Couldn't...?"

Girl Scout BROWNIE Enrichment Patch on Understanding Disabilities



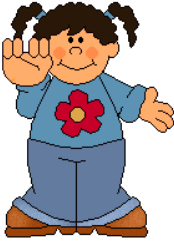
*This approximately 1 ½" x 2 ½" patch is worn on the **back** of the Brownie vest or sash. It was inspired by the "International Symbol of Acceptance," also known as the "wheelchair-heart logo" (below), a symbol of society accepting people with disabilities as equals and a symbol that people with disabilities accept their challenges and even embrace them. It can be a symbol for people with any disability or impairment. It represents the person, not society's perception of him or her.*


girl scouts
of greater atlanta
5601 North Allen Road
Mableton, GA 30126
770-702-9100/1-800-771-4046

www.gsgatl.org

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"What If I Couldn't...?"

Girl Scout BROWNIE Council Enrichment Patch

Connect Outcome 4 for Brownies: Girls begin to understand the idea of diversity and strengthen their appreciation of differences. They don't make fun – and may encourage others not to make fun – of those who look/talk/ behave differently from themselves.



Do you know a person who has a *disability*? A disability is anything that that limits a person's movements, senses, or activities. When most people think of the word "disability" they immediately picture someone in a wheelchair (like the one on our patch!) But there are many different types of disability. They include:

- people who are blind or partially sighted
- people with learning or intellectual disabilities
- people who are deaf or hearing impaired
- people with a physical disability
- people with long term illnesses
- people with mental health or psychological difficulties
- people with an acquired brain injury

Some people are born with a disability, and some people acquire a disability because of an accident or illnesses. Often, if you have a disability, you have *special needs*; for example, you may need a wheelchair to get around in, or need a computer that talks for you, or need extra time to finish a project.

Life can be extra-challenging for a girl with special needs. Meeting people and making friends can be tough. But a girl who uses a wheelchair, or has lots of health problems, wants friends just like you do – and you can be a big help!

How? By *being* a friend. Say "Hi" when you see her, talk to her in class or at Girl Scouts, invite her to join you and your friends at lunch. If you see her being bullied or teased, stand up for her, or tell an adult. Be thoughtful about things like opening a door for a girl who uses a wheelchair or walker, but don't be "overly helpful" when no help is needed. Why? Because just like you, a girl with a disability likes to do things for herself and be as independent as possible! As you get to know a girl with special needs, she may help you understand what it's like to live with a disability.

This patch is called "What If I Couldn't...?" because it asks you to imagine what your life would be like if *you* couldn't do certain things you do now – hear, for example, or see, or use both your hands. Would you still be able to do the things you enjoy now? Would you have the same friends? Could you still be a Girl Scout?

To earn this patch, start by doing Activity # 1 – a game called, "If I...Could I Still?" Then choose and complete at least *four* more activities. Order your patch from the Badge & Sash Store.

1. "If I...Could I Still?"

To play this game, you'll need to:

- Put the phrases below on individual cards or strips of paper.
- Put the "If I..." cards into one paper bag and the "Could I Still" cards into another paper bag. (Or put them in two piles, face down.)
- Take turns picking one card from each bag and answering the question the best you can. For example: "If I...couldn't see/Could I still...celebrate my birthday?" (Yes!) If you answer "No" to a question, talk it over with your friends or family and see if you can think of a way to change your answer to "yes." You may find a way, or you may decide that *nothing* can be done and the answer will still be "No."
- At the end of the game, decide, "If a girl has a disability, could she still be a Girl Scout? (Yes!) Could she be a good friend?" (Yes!)

IF I...

couldn't hear
couldn't see
had only one leg
couldn't speak clearly
had seizures sometimes
had trouble reading
couldn't see or hear
used an asthma inhaler
used a feeding tube

used a wheelchair
used crutches
had only one arm
couldn't use my legs
couldn't use my hands
stuttered
had trouble making friends
had trouble sitting still
learned new things very slowly

COULD I STILL...?

watch TV
talk to my friends
fly a kite
go to school
day dream
go to parties
ride a bike
play with my pet
feel sad

celebrate my birthday
be in a school play
play games with my friends
cry when my feelings are hurt
fly in an airplane
play a musical instrument
spend the night at a friend's
eat my favorite ice cream
hate doing a lot of homework

go swimming
write a letter

help bake cookies
read a book

2. How Does She Do That?

Do you wonder how people with disabilities do certain things? For example, how does a girl who is blind match her clothes? How does a girl who uses a wheelchair go on a hike in the woods? How does a girl who cannot read or write do her school work? Find the answers to these questions by talking to people with disabilities, by going online (with an adult's permission) or by looking in books. Then experience for yourself how person with a disability handles things by doing these activities where you *simulate* (pretend to have) a disability:

- color a picture or write your name without using your hands.
- eat a meal or play a game while blindfolded
- communicate with a friend without using spoken or written words
- write the Girl Scout Motto, "Be Prepared" using your left hand if you are right-handed, or your right hand if you are left-handed.

Talk it over! How did it feel to face this challenge? Did you find a creative way to do your activity? Did it help you understand how people with disabilities learn to do things in a different way?

3. Where's My Chair?

People who use a wheelchair to move around don't stay in their chair all the time! They may *transfer*, or move, from their wheelchair to their bed, the toilet, a regular chair, the floor, or a car, etc. Try this transfer activity for yourself: you'll need 2 chairs, one lower than the other, placed side by side. Move from one chair to the other and back without standing on your feet. *Talk about:* What would happen if someone moved the first chair before you could transfer back? Why should you never move a wheelchair when a person isn't using it? Why *shouldn't* you lean on a wheelchair when a person is using it? Why *shouldn't* you push a wheelchair with asking permission first? (Not sure? Ask a person who uses a wheelchair, or look up "wheelchair etiquette" online or in a book.)

4. Just Like Anyone Else

Some children have a disability that affects the way their brain works. It may make it hard for them to learn, to pay attention, or to make friends. Play this game to help you understand how they might feel sometimes. Your leader will help you set up the game:

- Ask about 2 out of every 8 girls in the group to leave the room with another leader.

- While they are out of the room, the other leader teaches the rest of the girls a new activity or game.
- When that group is sure they know how to do the new activity, the other girls come back into the room.
- The leader asks *all* the girls do the new activity without any explanation for the girls who were out of the room. No one may help them with the activity.
- Afterward, talk about how it feels to join in an activity without understanding the rules; how it feels when no one tries to help you.
- What could you do to help the next time you see someone who is confused or unsure about a game or activity?

5. Be a Disabilities Detective

Invite a person with a disability to your troop meeting (or go to their school or place of work.) Prepare a list of questions to ask her that will help you better understand having a disability. For example:

- How did your disability come about? (Were you born with it? Did you have an accident?)
- Is there anything you can't do because of your disability?
- What can you do that most people think you *can't* do?
- What are some ways are you treated that you don't like?
- What can people do to help you?

Or - meet with a person who works with children or adults with disabilities. Ask her about "people first" language and for friendly ways to meet and talk to people who have a disability.

6. Girl Scouts Is For All Girls!

Did you know that Juliette (Daisy) Gordon Low, the woman who started the Girl Scouts in America was deaf? Daisy didn't let deafness keep her from being a Girl Scout leader! Find ways to let girls with disabilities know they can be Girl Scouts, too. You might invite a girl your age who has a disability or special needs to visit one of your troop meetings or go on a field trip with your troop. Help her see that she can be a Girl Scout too.

PATCH ACTIVITY RESOURCES:

Patch Activity 2: How Does She Do That?

*This activity is designed to build empathy and understanding. If girls are curious about **why** someone couldn't use their hands, see, speak or write, here are some possible causes:*

- color a picture or write your name without using your hands: *amputation, born without hands, hands are affected by an illness such as cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, or juvenile arthritis.*
- eat a meal or play a game while blindfolded: *born with low vision or blindness, eyes or optic nerves damaged by illness or injury, or removed because of cancer.*
- communicate with a friend without using spoken or written words: *speech disorders, deafness, cerebral palsy, developmental delays, brain injuries, and language disorders.*
- write the Girl Scout Motto, "Be Prepared." using your left hand if you are right-handed, or your right hand if you are left-handed: *learning disabilities, such as dyslexia; fine motor or perceptual disabilities; brain injuries. **Tip:** If your Brownies don't understand the terms "right-handed" or "left-handed", just ask them to write "Be prepared" then ask them to write it again using the other hand.*

Talking about or reflecting on this activity is an important step in helping girls understand why a person with a disability may "act that way" and also how people with disabilities can do many things for themselves.

Activity 3: Where's My Chair?

This activity is designed to help girls understand that people are not "confined" to a wheelchair. Some wheelchair users can get in and out of their chair by themselves while other may need help, but they are not restricted to being in a wheelchair 24 hours a day! Basic wheelchair etiquette includes:

- Always ask the person using the wheelchair if she or he would like assistance BEFORE you help – it may not be needed or wanted.
- Don't hang or lean on a person's wheelchair because it is part of that person's personal body space.
- If a conversation with a person in a wheelchair lasts more than a few minutes, sit or kneel down so you're both on the same level. If the person in the wheelchair has to keep looking up, it hurts her neck!
- When a person using a wheelchair "transfers" out of the wheelchair to a chair, toilet, car or bed, do not move the wheelchair out of reaching distance.

Activity 4: Just Like Anyone Else

This activity is designed to build empathy and understanding. All people have feelings. They are sensitive about how they look and what they can do. They may feel bad if they look different from other people or if they can't do what others are

able to do. They may be hurt when people point out their inability or make fun of their appearance.

- What could you do to help the next time you see someone who is confused or unsure about a game or activity? *Ask, "Do you need some help?" "Would you be my buddy?" "Would you like me to show you what to do next." "Don't worry - I'll help you."*

To order your patches: order by phone or in person from a Badge & Sash Girl Scout Store.