

MARCH – THE GUIDED DISCOVERY PROCESS

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BRYAN: Hey, welcome to ScoutCast for March, everybody. I'm *Scouting* magazine blogger Bryan Wendell, and with me as always, Lee Shaw, team lead of National Alliance. We're so glad you stopped by.

LEE: We absolutely are. So in this episode, we'll be exploring the Guided Discovery Process or how to be an adult leader and motivate the youth leaders – without taking over the meeting.

BRYAN: Now, Lee, when you said, "Guided Discovery Process," it reminded me of that old saying, "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime." That is, unless he doesn't like sushi, in which case I guess you have to teach him how to cook too. I don't know... anyway...

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BRYAN: Guiding us through this Guided Discovery Process discussion about teaching the kids to fish, as it were, is Larry Greene. Now, 30 years ago, Larry founded Troop 888 in North Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, where he served as Scoutmaster. Now, he's still assisting the troop today, but he also serves as chapter advisor and Ordeal advisor for Santee Lodge 116 and he's Camping Chairman for Pee Dee Area Council. If that's not enough, he's also a member of the Boy Scout Development Task Force. Larry, welcome to ScoutCast.

LARRY: Thank you very much, Bryan.

BRYAN: Now, the Guided Discovery Process... that sounds like a fancy term. So what exactly is that?

LARRY: Guided Discovery is an approach where Scouts are asked a question which leads them to examine a situation and then discover the best way to proceed. Put another way, Guided Discovery enables Scouts to think for themselves in order to solve problems and find solutions. This approach is Scout-based, Bryan. By that I mean, we focus on the learning and the Scout and not so much on the teaching and the teacher.

Asking a question is a big part of this process. Asking the right questions takes as much skill as giving the right answers. The idea is, the right kind of question is going to get the Scouts thinking. It's their thinking that leads them through a path of discovery where they can figure out for themselves what they need to do.

When a Scout is faced with a challenge or has a problem, we don't just spoon-feed them the answers. Instead, in order to guide them through this path of discovery, we present them with a counter question, a question which requires them to find their best answer by applying what they know, using their resources and coming up with their own valuable conclusions because whatever a Scout learns through a process of discovery is his. It's something he's arrived at through his own efforts, so he owns it.

BRYAN: Okay, so that's Guided Discovery. What's the process?

LARRY: So let's talk about a brand new troop where we want to enable the newly-elected SPL to run things. With the Guided Discovery Process, the first thing he needs is a vision, a picture of the Troop involved with an exciting

program that reflects what they want. They're learning, they're advancing, and they're having a lot of fun, too. And also, everything is planned and carried out by them. In this vision, the only time the Scoutmaster is in front of them is for a minute at the end of the meeting. The rest of the time it's all up to them.

Now, once the Scout is given a vision like this, the second thing he needs is a strong desire to make it happen. The third necessary thing any junior leader needs are the prerequisite tools to carry out their job, and here it's the Scoutmaster's responsibility to make sure they learn or at least have access to these necessary tools. For example, the new SPL needs to know that putting up the Scout Sign is a means of getting the troop's attention. This is a basic tool. Now, discovering how to use the tool most effectively is gained through Guided Discovery.

Maybe the SPL had a terrible time at a meeting to get his troop quiet when he held up the sign. After the meeting, the Scoutmaster might ask, "Well, how do you think things went tonight? Were you able to control the troop the way you'd like?" And the SPL might answer, "The troop doesn't ever really get quiet when the sign goes up." So the Scoutmaster might then ask a guiding question like, "Well, you hold up the sign. What do you think the Scouts see when you do that? What do you want them to see?" And that should invite him to get his wheels turning a little bit more. He can start zooming in and find his own answer. If he pictures the troop as he's holding up the sign, he might remember how even some of his own leaders were still carrying on. Aha! He's got to make it clear to his leaders that as soon as he puts up his sign, they need to quickly get quiet and put up theirs. This way, the rest of the troop is going to have a good example to follow. So, what's important here is that he comes to the conclusion on his own. He was guided to find a solution for himself, but it's actually his discovery.

LEE: One of the challenges might be the Scoutmaster being able to shift the attention off himself to the Senior Patrol Leader. What would you say about that?

LARRY: If it's not a matter of health and safety, then reflecting the situation back onto the SPL with a question is shifting the attention off of himself. For the rest of the troop, have you ever seen t-shirts for the adults with the back saying, "Ask the Senior Patrol Leader"?

BRYAN: So, the Scoutmaster has all this knowledge and expertise and it sounds like he doesn't just give a lecture to the Senior Patrol Leader to convey that knowledge, so what is, what is the process there?

LARRY: First by inspiring him with the shared vision, encouraging him wherever appropriate, and then by providing him with all the necessary resources so he can do things independently. And along the way, the Scoutmaster serves as a mentor, but a Scoutmaster really needs to lead by following one step behind. Can you picture that?

BRYAN: Yeah.

LARRY: That means he knows where the SLP and the troop are heading and what they need, but from there he can enable them to discover things on their own.

LEE: Larry, you know, last year we did a ScoutCast about guiding boys to make a Plan B because sometimes things just happen, right? Can you give us any other examples of the Guided Discovery Process?

LARRY: That's the December ScoutCast, addresses the advantages of always having a Plan B. I loved it. Plan "Be" Prepared, right?

LEE: (Laughs) That's right.

LARRY: A perfect example of a Guided Discovery question that will get a Scout thinking is, "What if?" "What if" is a good way to get them thinking about alternatives, and then also getting them to develop their troop's resources. Recently I videoed a troop and saw two Scouts carrying a third through a four-foot-wide track as part of an activity. Are you guys familiar with the Handicap Obstacle Course?

LEE: Yes, I am.

LARRY: Anyway, these two Scouts were struggling to carry the third. They hadn't learned the two-handed carry or the four-seated carry, so after their struggle I could see how they needed to learn a little bit about these carries. Ask them, "How would you like to find out how to carry an injured person a whole lot easier, even if he was a whole lot heavier?" And then guide them, "Where can you see how to do this in your own handbooks?" They're most likely going to want to check this out because after what they just went through, they're definitely ready to learn something better than what they did. But the emphasis is on them to discover it themselves. See, when we pour ourselves into finding our own solutions, we become invested in the process.

LEE: Absolutely.

LARRY: Here's another scenario. It's about using woods tools to prepare tinder and kindling and then build and light a fire. As Scout leaders, before a Scout tries anything where safety enters the picture, you must make sure they have the necessary tools. In this case, the prerequisite tools are knowing how to safely use woods tools and knowing how to be careful with fire.

So here is a Scout, and we observe he knows how to properly use a knife and an ax and he has prepared all the tinder and kindling he needs to start and feed a cooking fire. He's got a safe area, he's got a proper surface, a fire bucket's nearby, but before he tries to light a fire, he mixes together all the tinder and kindling into a fire pit and then tries to put a match to this mess. So he finds he can't light a fire. He comes face to face with a stumbling block and he recognizes this. He's definitely ready to learn what needs to be done next.

Guided Discovery happens when we ask questions, so here we might ask something like, "Why do you think this fire won't stay lit?" Let him think about it. A follow-up question might be, "Looking at all of your tinder and kindling here, what will burn the easiest when you touch a match to it?" Now after getting him thinking about what needs to be done, he should be given the opportunity to explain what he's going to do. If his explanation is good, then let him do it.

BRYAN: So, if they got their Scout Handbook and you as the Scoutmaster knows that it's on page 115 of the handbook or whatever, would you say, "The answer is on page 115," or if you're going to ask a question, "Did you know the answer is on 115?" Or would you say, "Have you tried looking at it in your handbook?" Like how specific do you want to get with this Guided Discovery?

LARRY: A question like "Do you know where in your handbook..." it brings it home to them that they have something themselves that will give them the answer to a problem that they just went through. They're going to be rewarded with something that's going to make things easier for them and make a whole lot of sense and be useful.

BRYAN: And the next time maybe they don't even ask you because they know, hey, I should check my handbook first.

LEE: Larry, with your experience, the Guided Discovery Process seems like it's second nature, but what resources are available to assist Scoutmasters and Advisors on how to facilitate leadership, those who may not have the experience that you have but absolutely need to understand this entire process?

LARRY: There's some good resources. Wood Badge goes more deeply into communication and leadership. Introduction to Leadership Skills for Troops serves as an invaluable resource. There are also some books out there that are all about youth leadership training and working with the Patrol Method and they're filled with really good stuff. And here's one more really good resource and that's Scout leaders who themselves have well-run, successful troops. Most any Scoutmaster or Assistant Scoutmaster who is passionate about what he does, loves to talk about his troop, especially when it comes to talking about what his Scouts do to run things well.

BRYAN: Now, Larry, I've a scenario for you that I'd like you to ponder. So, if you're an Assistant Scoutmaster in a troop and you've listened to this podcast, you're thinking, Larry is right, that this Guided Discovery Process would work in our troop, but your Scoutmaster, maybe he's not so onboard with that. He takes a lot more than a minute at telling his troop what to do, not guiding them. How would you recommend an Assistant Scoutmaster guide his or her Scoutmaster to kind of back off a little bit and use some of what you're saying here?

LARRY: I find that asking questions is always a very good tool to use when you want someone to think about something. When you want to have someone come to a conclusion. So, if the Assistant Scoutmaster sees that the troop is

getting bored or that the troop is feeling uncomfortable he might ask the Scoutmaster something to the effect of, "Mr. Scoutmaster, what do you think we can do so that our Scouts feel more involved with our meeting and look like they're less bored?" or something to that effect.

BRYAN: So they think they came up with it on their own; that's pretty genius actually. Now, what about the Senior Patrol Leader? What if he's not the best at this process? Is it a matter of getting him more training, sending him to NYLT? How do we make sure the Senior Patrol Leader buys into this Guided Discovery Process as well?

LARRY: When you've enabled a Senior Patrol Leader to actually run the troop effectively, he's gained some techniques. And if he's learned them through Guided Discovery that means he owns them. Then he's going to be successful at what he does. He's going to have a good meeting, and if he's having good meetings and he's doing a good job, he's going to feel more confident. And when he's confident, then he can use something called initiative, and it's amazing when that happens.

LEE: Is there anything else about the Guided Discovery Process that we haven't talked about that you think ought to be shared with the listeners?

LARRY: Let's refer to the three basic roles of the Scoutmaster. Number one, it's to make sure that the rules of the BSA and chartered partner are followed. Two, the Scoutmaster should be a good mentor and a positive role model. But the big one here is, number three, placing the emphasis on training and guiding Scout leaders. The Guided Discovery Process actually does this by asking the right kinds of questions and then getting out of the way.

Guided Discovery provides the framework within which Scouts can lead themselves to realize the vision they have. Provide the Scouts the objective,

equip them with the tools and the skills or the resources to learn how to use them and turn them loose. Scouts will learn to lead by practicing leading and experiencing the results of their hands-on leadership efforts. Why and how questions enhance the Scout's ability to make decisions, which is one of the central goals of empowerment. A troop run by motivated Scouts who have the right skills and the right techniques has good membership and the highest retention rate as well.

BRYAN: You know, Lee, I love these kinds of discussions where we really get into those intangible aspects of Scouting, don't you think? I mean, it's just great.

LEE: It is.

BRYAN: Larry, we want to thank you for coming on ScoutCast and guiding us through the Guided Discovery Process.

LARRY: Thank you very much for having me. It's been a pleasure.

LEE: Let's step behind the curtain of the March CubCast and then we'll be right back with Reminders and Tips.

(Cubcast: Cub Scouting – The Family Program)

LEE: And now, as promised, Reminders and Tips.

BRYAN: Be sure to start finalizing details for your summer camping opportunities now. Make sure you have all the equipment checked out so everything is

working properly, and be sure that each Scout is current on his scheduled camp payments. Summer will be here before you know it.

LEE: If you haven't already done so, be sure that everyone has their proper training. Hazardous Weather training is required by at least one person before any campout. Other trainings such as Safe Swim Defense and Safety Afloat may be required depending on your activities. Contact your local council for training dates.

BRYAN: And speaking of training, the March-April issue of *Scouting* magazine educates us on the difference between regular first-aid training and wilderness first-aid training, and why it should be required before taking any high-adventure trip. *Boys' Life* magazine takes you to a Magic Camporee in Connecticut where Scouts learn how to dazzle their friends with a series of some pretty outrageous magic tricks, and they'll even learn how some of those tricks are done.

LEE: And one last thing. Have you supported your council financially? Be sure to participate in a Friends of Scouting, or FOS, campaign or other fundraiser. Remember, financial donations don't always mean cold, hard cash, so see what gifts in-kind you may be able to provide.

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LEE: Our March episode has come to an end. Thanks to our guest, Larry Greene.

BRYAN: And thank you. Don't forget, you can send us your ideas and comments to scoutcast@scouting.org or just tweet us. We're @bsascoutcast. Not going to camp this summer? Be sure to tune in next month as we explore other activities for your troop or crew in your community. For now, thanks for listening, everybody. I'm Bryan Wendell.

LEE: And I'm Lee Shaw with one final tip: go to iTunes on your smartphone or tablet and subscribe to BSAScoutCast, on the podcast app. This way, you won't miss a single episode. You'll be glad you did.

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