



SECTION LEADERSHIP SEMINAR  
**ORDER OF THE ARROW**

## Bridging the Youth Adult Gap



Duration: 50 minutes

Facilitator: Young Adult, preferably age 21-30 with recent youth leadership experience and some advising experience

Learning Outcomes:

- Understand how young people view adult advisers
- Learn characteristics of different generations
- Identify strategies for breaking down barriers and building trust
- Practice methods to bridge age gaps

Supplies:

- Post it notes and pens on tables

### **I. Introduction (2 minutes)**

Welcome to Bridging the Youth Adult Gap. My name is TRAINER NAME. I am a member of LODGE NAME from CITY AND STATE. My current OA role is POSITION, and I am excited to be here with you today.

By the end of this session, you should have learned:

- Understand how young people view adult advisers
- Learn characteristics of different generations
- Identify strategies for breaking down barriers and building trust
- Practice methods to bridge age gaps

### **II. How young people view adult advisers (10 minutes)**

We are going to start by trying to identify how the typical young person views the typical adult advisers. We are going to start with a brainstorming board. On your table, you'll find post



notes and pens. In just a moment, we are going to start shouting out words or phrases that you think a young person, someone under 21, would use to describe an adult adviser. I would ask that if you shout out a word or phrase, you also write it on a post-it note at the same time and hold it up for me to come around and collect. Ready...set...go!

*Allow learners time to shout out any ideas and phrases. Have fun here - maybe make it like a game show. You may need to prompt or make some suggestions like "old," "outdated," or "wise" to get learners going. Try to allow all ideas to come out, but if needed cut this off after you have 15-20 notes.*

Before I post these notes on the wall, did anyone notice any common themes? Was there one common theme or several themes?

*Write down common themes on a white board, poster board, or on post it notes if you only have wall. Use a marker so the common words stand out from other post it notes.*

Finally, let's organize the ideas you had around these common themes.

*Go through the post-it notes from participants and group by themes, posting them on the wall or white board as you go.*

This is an interesting profile of how a young person views their adviser. As we wrap-up this section, we should take a minute to think about whether this viewpoint is accurate. Take a look around the room at the type of people here. Think about what words you used and whether they matched the words of everyone else.

*Talk briefly about your personal perspective and what ideas resonated most with you to wrap up this section.*

### **III. Characteristics of Generations (8 minutes)**

When we talk about youth and adult gaps, we often think of a generation gap. This isn't quite accurate though - generations are not a fixed timeframe. While there are widely regarded age ranges for each generation, there are often blended characteristics in the middle of these generations. So why do we sometimes notice a gap? Babies!

Yes, we notice a gap because by human nature, there will be at least 15 and sometimes as much as 40 or more years between parents and children. While we wish that every young adult would stay involved as advisers, we tend to notice peaks in OA participation for teenagers - the youth cohort - and their parents - the adult cohort. As a result, instead of seeing a gradual transition between generational characteristics, we tend to see a large gap.

Let's take some time to discuss the current living generations, their characteristics, and identify the current "generational gap."

*Refer to the slide in the power point and discuss. Try to highlight the current generational gap, and then if time allows discuss how this gap will change in the next 5-10 years, emphasizing it isn't static.*

#### **IV. Strategies for breaking down barriers and building trust (15 minutes)**

How do we break down the gap between generations? Let's start by testing your skills. You are now all on silence - no verbal communication, no hand signals, no writing down. No loopholes here - Scout's honor for being on silence.

Now, please line yourself up from youngest to oldest.

*Give some direction to assist, but otherwise try to have the participants accomplish this task without talking. When participants seem to be set, hand each one a post it note and check their ages without giving it away to other participants. If correct, congratulate them and move on. If not correct, allow them each to have one communication method other than explicitly stating their age - googling a picture from their youth, using hand signals, etc. - and give them a second chance. If still not correct, go ahead and fix any mistakes.*

Great work all! It was interesting to see how even in that activity age differences shined through. Now, we're going to divide up in groups by counting off 1, 2, 3, 4, etc. starting from the youngest to the oldest. *(Aim for groups of 3-4 people and adjust the count so that this is achieved by dividing the total number of people by 3 or 4, aiming for large age gaps between people. Make groups smaller if 2-3 people will be similar in age, such as when there is a large bubble around one age range.)*

Now that you have smaller groups, take some time to discuss how you had to build trust when you were unable to use common language.



*Give groups a few minutes to discuss, then display slang terms on the screen.*

You might notice some slang terms on the screen. Believe it or not, these are all a common language, even if some of these terms seem foreign to you. Am I suggesting you adopt the youth slang? No. What I'm suggesting is that you remember that every generation has developed a way to communicate. Just like in the lining-up exercise, sometimes it takes finding alternate ways to communicate to build trust and break down barriers. Don't rely on only the methods of communication that work best for you to communicate, or else you might not achieve the common purpose. At the end of the day, the best way to break down barriers and build trust is to establish communication, even when it seems impossible.

#### **V. Methods to bridge age gaps (10 minutes)**

Unfortunately, even great communication will not automatically bridge the age gap. I want to first acknowledge that age gaps are not all bad. Some age gaps are a result of differences in maturity, which is part of the reason why we have advisers in OA. We are after all, selected capable adults for a reason - because we have the maturity needed to advise youth leaders lacking in maturity.

Don't let me get you too excited - it's not all about us. In fact, it's really all about the youth in OA. We as advisers have an important job of putting the youth in the forward position. Young people will be naturally skeptical of us, so it is unlikely that they will be the first to try to bridge the age gap. So how do we connect with youth in a way that lets us both be better?

Here are a few concepts:

- Establish a common vision for the future
- Find commonality
- Show up
- Respect space

Let's have a group discussion about each of these concepts and what you have seen work and not work in your advising relationships.

*Guide learners through these concepts. Avoid long diatribes, but this is a great time to allow people to share some "war stories." Avoid letting 1-2 advisers dominate the conversation.*



**VI. Wrap-Up (5 minutes)**

As a reminder, the main points of this session were to:

- Understand how young people view adult advisers
- Learn characteristics of different generations
- Identify strategies for breaking down barriers and building trust
- Practice methods to bridge age gaps

*Briefly dwell on these main points and ask for concrete examples or tie-ins that correspond to what was learned.*

I hope you have enjoyed learning with me today, and thank you for your attention and participation. If you have any questions, please find me during a break, or my contact information is on the screen. This was Bridging the Youth Adult Gap.