



Mission, Methods and Philosophy

How Project GO's mission is realized.

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Project Great Outdoors, Inc. is a California 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation. Our mission is to guide youth towards broader perspectives and self discovery through adventures in the great outdoors. Programs are offered to underserved youth in northern California and western Nevada.

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Preface

We are witness to the first generation of Americans that may not outlive its parents. Thirty years ago, pediatricians set broken bones and treated sprains. Today they treat obesity, diabetes and repetitive stress injuries from overuse of video-game joy-sticks. Young people don't play outside the way they used to, so have not had the benefit of the experiences had by their parents. It's interesting to note that all of this is happening during the largest increase in organized sports participation in history. Something is missing.

Our experience and emerging research indicate that the outdoors has become a void in the lives of young people. There are fewer open spaces. Kids aren't getting out to experience the open spaces that do exist, and let's face it: the corner lot doesn't have the same appeal as the latest TV show or video game. "Mostly, I like playing inside, because that's where all the electrical outlets are," has become the rallying cry of a whole generation.

We can be a part of the solution.

Introduction

Project Great Outdoors began in 1999 when three river guides wanted to share their love of rivers with those less fortunate. Over the years, the organization wrestled with its ultimate purpose. Was it to teach environmental ethics? Conservation? Just to have fun? Or was it something else entirely?

Our original mission statement was not a mission, but a confused shopping list. In 2007, armed with seven years in the field, on rivers and at challenge ropes courses, and with research to back our observations, we took a good hard look at our mission. We brought our own experiences into the mix. Why were our board and volunteers so engaged? What was it about floating down a river with new friends that had such an impact?

We learned that our experience was not unique, and that others had studied and even measured some of the outcomes that we'd witnessed and felt. The educational philosophies of John Dewey, Kurt Hahn, David Kolb, Jean Piaget, more recent empirical studies published in the *Journal of Experiential Education*, and the experiences gleaned through established outdoor programs like Outward Bound all helped us understand what it was that Project GO did best, and why it worked.

In short, Project GO is an experiential education program focusing on outdoor adventure. In the past, we relied on the "experience to speak for itself," and were educators almost by accident. Henceforth, our organization is dedicated to experiential education ON PURPOSE. This booklet has been prepared to provide a brief explanation of how Project GO will use established best practices in experiential and outdoor adventure education to "guide youth towards broader perspectives and self-discovery through adventures in the great outdoors."

Our Mission, Vision and Values

If you are involved in Project Great Outdoors, it is important that you be familiar with our mission, vision, and values, as these are what frame our organization and the decisions that we make. Whatever your role, from developing curriculum to guiding a raft to leading a closing activity to serving on the board, you will from time to time be asked to make some kind of decision. This booklet explains the framework you should use for making these decisions to ensure that they meet our organizational objectives.

The mission of Project Great Outdoors is to guide youth towards broader perspectives and self-discovery through adventures in the great outdoors.

Our mission (and therefore its articulation as a statement) is important enough to be worth a few additional words. We want all volunteers and supporters of Project GO to understand our ultimate motivation, and how the decisions that we make and actions that we take serve the mission.

The directive to "guide youth" is a reflection of our belief in the efficacy of "experiential education." Rather than "telling," "reading" or "preaching," we're inviting young people to EXPERIENCE. By "guiding" young people, we are allowing them to learn of their own volition, by direct experience, and with the help of guided reflection. We place special emphasis on the "reflection" aspect, as this is what helps lessons learned on the river transfer to regular life.

The affective outcomes our program strives towards fall into two categories. "Self-discovery" includes intrapersonal outcomes like improved self-confidence, increased willingness to take risks, enhanced leadership, increased logical thinking and greater reflective thinking. "Broader perspectives" include interpersonal outcomes like enhanced cooperation, more effective communication, greater trust in others, increased sharing of decision making, new ways to resolve conflicts, improved problem solving and enhanced leadership.

There are a number of reasons that we've chosen "the great outdoors" as the venue for our pursuits. New environments create a contrast with the familiar, allowing young people to see old behavior patterns in a new light, and to notice behavior patterns that may have been overlooked in familiar environments. Unfamiliar environments may allow young people to "try on" new behaviors in an environment without the fears or limitations found in their regular environment. Additionally, unfamiliar environments act as an "equalizer," placing learners on a par with one another. As no one has experience in the outdoors, no one is seen as the "expert." So preexisting hierarchies may be put aside, allowing people to think for themselves.

Finally, we believe in the value of "adventure." Adventure involves both risk and challenge, both of which, if at an appropriate level, have been shown to increase the longevity of experiential learning, and the transference of lessons gleaned.

Our vision is a world in which no young person is denied the opportunity to learn through adventure in the great outdoors.

There are many programs available to those with the means to pay for them. Project GO works towards our vision by providing programs to those who cannot afford them. Frequently, these are the young people most in need of what the great outdoors has to offer!

In addition to our mission and vision, there are a number of values that Project GO takes very seriously.

It is important that the diversity of our clients be reflected in our staff and volunteers.

Part of "broader perspectives" is allowing our clients to recognize that outdoor pursuits are not just for "those people." If young people are to believe that they too can enjoy the bounty of the outdoors, they must have role models they can identify with. To help us realize this value, we are focusing our volunteer recruitment efforts on the neighborhoods our program serves. In addition we are offering scholarships and even small stipends to deserving community youth leaders who have the desire, but not the means to be a part of our efforts.

Our volunteers feel rewarded and fulfilled when donating their time and effort to Project GO, and desire to give more.

Project GO is unique among outdoor adventure programs in that we have no paid leaders. The volunteers who lead our programs do it because it feels right. It feels good. Project GO could not exist without our volunteers. We are working to make volunteering easier by systemizing tasks, improving our communication infrastructure, and by conducting volunteer surveys to learn how and where we can improve the volunteer experience.

We're dedicated to providing opportunities for the ongoing training and improvement of our volunteers.

We are offering more frequent and higher quality training programs than at any time in the past. Swiftwater rescue, first aid and CPR certifications, as well as workshops on facilitation, initiatives, and individual guide skills are offered regularly throughout the season. Our written training materials are carefully researched and prepared, and are recognized as among the best of their sort.

We are committed to recognized best practices in experiential education, and in the particular activities that we participate in.

We are members of the Association for Experiential Education and have a goal of full accreditation by 2010. The AEE is the world's leading association of experiential educators, and most would agree that it is the recognized designator of "best practices." As new research and methods are published, we incorporate it into our programs and trainings. Best practices for whitewater rafting include compliance with accepted risk-management standards.

We believe that young people take risks in order to test boundaries and see where they fit in the world. We believe that adventure based outdoor programs are a healthy outlet for this risk-taking behavior.

Whitewater rafting is the ideal mix of challenge, adventure and risk in an unfamiliar environment. And it sure beats many of the usual risks young people take today!

We are good stewards of resources, natural and financial.

Project GO is not an "environmental" organization, but an experiential education organization. Nevertheless, we recognize that the natural world is an asset we cannot do without, so we respect the environment and do everything we can to ensure that our practices are in harmony with the natural world. Our financial resources are also precious, as money is entrusted to us by individuals who believe in the work that we do. We strive to use these funds in the most effective way.

We believe that our programs are more effective when offered as part of an ongoing program allowing multiple contacts with clients and the great outdoors.

While there is research indicating that well-designed and implemented single-day programs can have a positive and long-lasting impact, we believe that multiple and longer-lasting contacts increase effectiveness. In recognition of this, we give preference in our application process to groups who will use our program as

part of a larger program allowing multiple contacts with the great outdoors. Additionally, we have designed two new programs, each of which builds on the previous, so that the same group can participate in our program three times in a single year, and get a richer and more challenging experience each time.

We respect and strive to be respected by: peer organizations, appropriate governing bodies, and governmental agencies with jurisdiction over our activities.

We don't operate in a vacuum, and in order to be respected by others, we must act in a manner worthy of respect, and must respect the needs, desires and requirements of others.

Why Whitewater Rafting?

The "Outward Bound" model says that experiential learning happens when learners are placed in a state of "adaptive dissonance." That is, learners are placed into a situation where their understanding of themselves and their abilities are in direct conflict with observed reality. The learning happens as they "rebalance" their expectations. The Outward Bound philosophy also suggests that this state of dissonance is more readily achieved in unfamiliar environments, and that the lessons are more powerful when the "rebalancing" requires that risks be faced, and challenges overcome.

Whitewater rafting certainly fits the bill, offering an unfamiliar environment, perceived risk, and a level of challenge that can be controlled by the guide/facilitator to some degree. Of course a ropes course, a climbing gym or rock wall, or a backpacking trip could serve up the same basic mix. Why not offer these things? Three reasons:

First, there are many ropes courses that offer discounted services to underserved youth. There are a reasonably large number of climbing and backpacking programs as well. We think it unwise to duplicate effort. Because whitewater rafting requires a high degree of skill and training, and requires expensive equipment, there are very few whitewater rafting programs that seek to serve underserved youth. Moreover, we are not aware of any rafting program, other than ours, that seriously embraces the experiential education model. In short, our program is unique.

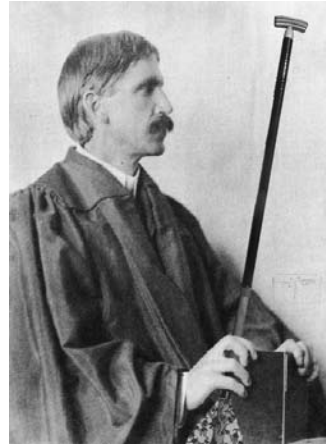
Second, we're good at it. Because we have so much institutional knowledge and experience with whitewater activities, it is not especially challenging for us to develop, deploy and follow sound policies. We know what "best practices" for whitewater rafting are, and we'd have to start all over to build a program around another activity. Our energy is better spent providing and improving the program we know how offer. And while we think it important that young people have other adventures in the great outdoors than just ours, the best way for this to happen is to partner with organizations who are good at what THEY do.

Finally, rafting has both a strong team component, allowing us to focus on the interpersonal (teamwork, leadership, communication etc.), and a strong "individual" component, allowing us to focus on the intrapersonal (confidence, resiliency, etc.). Our mission is well served by whitewater rafting.



Experiential Education

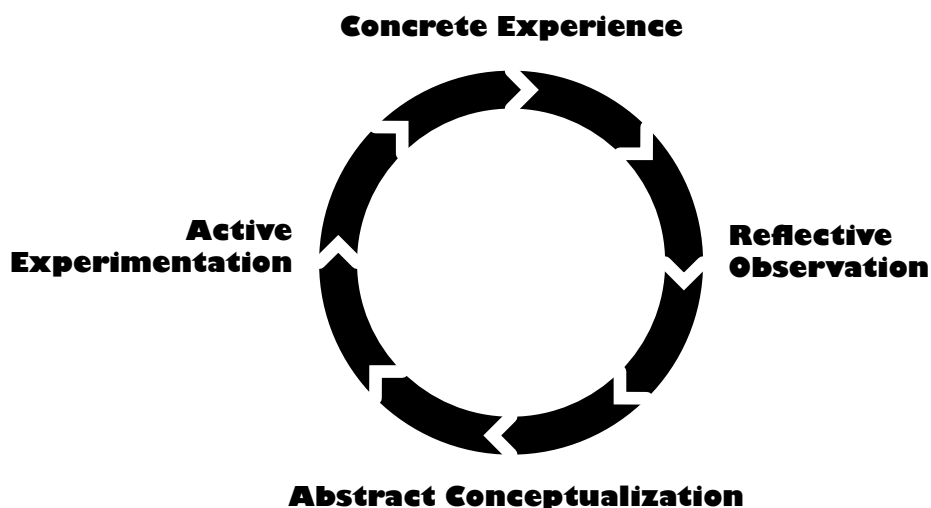
The most concise definition of experiential learning we've found comes from Simon Priest and Mike Gass. They provided the following definition of experiential education: "learning by doing with reflection." This pretty much sums up what project GO does, and what most experiential educators try to do. Priest and Gass are among the most prolific experiential education authors of the last decade or so. They have contributed much to our understanding of experiential education, but we suspect that they'd agree that they "stood on the shoulders of giants."



Experiential education was born out of the educational philosophy of John Dewey. His 1938 work, "Experience and Education" pointed out that the authoritarian delivery of pre-ordained knowledge common in schools at the time was too concerned with "delivering" knowledge, and not concerned enough with relevance of that knowledge to students' actual needs. He is widely considered the most influential educational thinker to the 20th century, and theory of experience is discussed widely, not only in education, but also in psychology and philosophy. We won't try to describe the entire body of this work and all of its ramifications here, but instead will offer an overview of the aspects most applicable to Project GO.

Those of you familiar with Project GO's whitewater guide training will recall the three stage model: Input, Process and Practice. It turns out to be a very basic summation of Dewey's philosophy. Have an experience (input). Think about the experience (process), and use the resulting learning (practice). It's been noted that the resulting practice is likely to lead to other experiences, starting the whole process over again. This observation leads to the first of many "education cycle models."

David Kolb proposed another way of viewing experiential learning in 1984. He believed that "Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience." Experiential learning, then, applies information received from an educator to the experiences of a learner. The learner's knowledge comes not from the teacher, but rather through the process of testing information provided against his or her own experience. Kolb's model is comprised of four phases. They are arranged in a circle, because he believed that learning was continuous, and could begin at any point in the circle. This model is called the "Kolb Cycle," and it is central to most experiential learning models

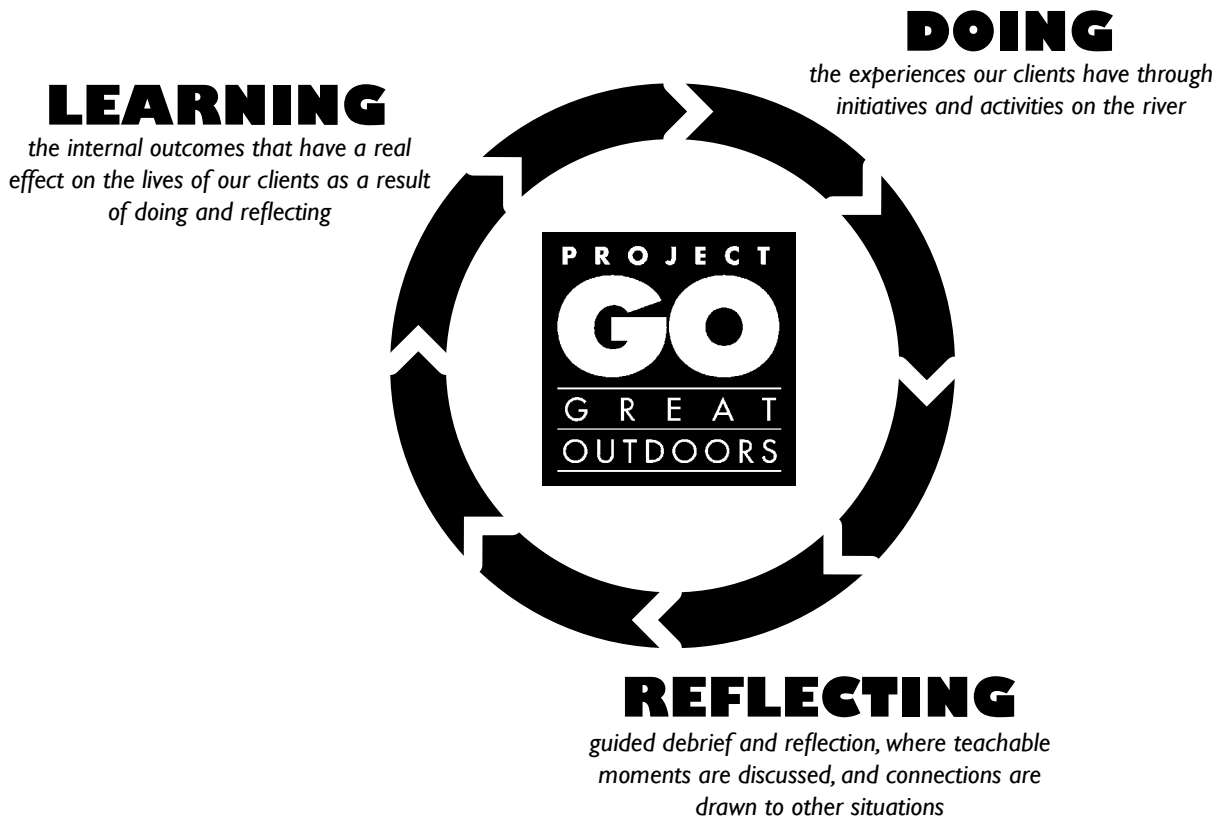


In the first phase, the educator involves the learners in a concrete experience. In our program this could be swimming a rapid, guiding a raft, rescuing someone or participating in a game or initiative. In the second phase, "reflective observation" learners are asked to review the experience with questions like, "What happened?" and "What did you observe?" In the third phase, abstract conceptualization, learners tie this experience to others, and look for patterns. "How do you account for what you observed?" "How

is it significant?" and "Are there any general principals you can derive from this?" are the sort of questions asked. The fourth phase of the Kolb cycle is active experimentation. The learners suggest ways that they can apply the principles they have learned, and then try it. This, of course, requires another experience, which increases the amount of information available to a learner, and continues the cycle.

It seems that today scholars and educators are falling all over themselves to add additional steps to this model. Beard and Wilson proposed the most comprehensive model we've seen to date in their "learning combination lock." It suggests that to achieve the perfect experiential learning experience, many elements need to be aligned. The model includes two elements of the "external environment" connected to three elements of the "internal environment" through the filter of one's senses. There are six factors in each element, and six sensors, which yields over 46,000 possible combinations. While very comprehensive, and a useful tool for the study of experiential education, it's a bit much for the average Project GO volunteer to carry around in his or her noggin.

We're much fonder of simpler models. This is not to suggest that a deeper understanding of experiential education is not important, just that it is unrealistic to expect our program volunteers to have all of it in their head. A model that is easy to communicate and understand is much more likely to be used. With that in mind, consider the original definition of experiential education as "Learning by doing with reflection." We've turned this into the "Project GO experiential education cycle."



The Importance of Reflection

In 1980, Outward Bound leader Thomas James wrote an article entitled "Can The Mountains Speak for Themselves?" in which he described the tension between two competing schools of thought in Outward Bound. On one side were "rock-jocks" - leaders with considerable technical skill who believed that just having an experience was sufficient, and on the other side were "touchie-feelies" who thought it best to explore the experience deeper; through group discussions, journaling and the like. While many outdoor leaders of the time fell into one camp or the other, James made a compelling case that both were needed.

Research since then has consistently indicated that learning from outdoor experiences is more profound and longer lasting when experience are followed up with some opportunity to reflect. We are certainly concerned with the profundity and staying power of learning that happen through our program, so naturally, we want there to be some measure of reflection.

It is important that lessons learned from experiences about inter- and intra-personal relationships transfer to the regular life of our clients, and it is the goal of our guided reflection to help this "transference" happen. We have developed a number of tools to help our volunteers facilitate this transference. These tools are not a "reflection panacea," nor are they the only or necessarily the best way to guide reflection. We hope you will avail yourself of many the resources in the world to improve your skill as a facilitator -- books, school, trainings offered by Project GO and by other organizations, and of course your own experiences. That said, the tools are a good place to start, and their use ensures that our programs will help serve our mission.

The 5-question debrief

This material was adapted from the book "Open to Outcome," by Micah Jacobson and Mari Ruddy, and we gratefully acknowledge the author for permission to use the material in this way. If you find this material helpful, you will find the user-friendly book much more so, and you are heartily encouraged to purchase it.

The "five questions" help individuals recognize a learning experience, and guides them through an evaluation of that experience that touches on the primary stages recognized in experiential education: from concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and finally active experimentation. The five questions require a few things before they are employed, however.

First, they require a "teachable moment" - some experience that the entire group participated in. It could be successfully completing (or not completing) a dry-land initiative. Rescuing a swimmer. Hitting a big wave or hole. Being brave enough to go for a swim... or just about anything else. Second, it requires your careful observation. In order to guide clients towards some learning, you must be aware of what is going on. How did participants react? Did someone assume a leadership role? Did the group communicate? How? Was there fear? Was it overcome? Finally, it requires a genuine sense of curiosity. When you ask the questions, it is important that you really want to know the answers. Listen to the answers, as they will help frame the next questions.

When engaging in group reflection, it's best that everyone be in a circle, and free from distraction. In a boat, ask everyone to stow their paddles and sit facing inward.

The questions:

- 1) Did you notice....?
- 2) Why did that happen?
- 3) Does that happen in life?
- 4) Why does that happen?
- 5) How can you use that?

Did you notice...

The first question is intended to call attention to an observation made by the facilitator: Notice that it is a yes/no question, making it very easy and safe for a participant to answer. A nod is all that is required to get things rolling. What you ask them to have noticed should be something you noticed. You'll be noticing things all the time, of course, and not every experience can or should be debriefed. How then do you choose the right one? The group we're working with may have come with some specific goals. If so, the Project GO lead facilitator for the day and/or the trip leader will clue you in to these at the pre-trip meeting. Whenever possible choose teachable moments that will help address those goals. In working with the

group, you may have noticed particular challenges that individuals or your crew have. Choose moments that will help you address these issues.

Did you notice that your eyes were closed when we hit the wave? Did you notice that everyone was apprehensive about getting into the water? Did you notice that people paddled better later in the day than earlier? These are examples of questions you might ask on the river. Be an active observer, and you'll notice many things that can start the conversation.

There are three basic kinds of observations that you should be alert for. The first is objective. How long did something take? Who contributed? Was the objective reached? The second is anthropological. Who had the power in the group? How was the power acquired? Are there rules that the group operates under? Who established them? Were they followed? Which rules were broken? Finally there's the psychological. Why did someone assume a leadership role? Who was the most focused on completing the task? Why was that person so focused? Did anyone display strong emotions?

Any of these are fodder for the first question.

Why did that happen?

The second question is about interpretation, the first piece of "reflective observation." After asking the first question, your crew probably replayed the moment in question back through their mind. You also received some kind of a "starting point" for a conversation... they said yes or no, or nodded or shook their heads. If your observation was a good one, they most likely said yes. If they said no, the second question still works! Just rephrase from "Why did that happen," to "Why did you not notice?" With this question, we're working towards abstract conceptualization. Listen to the answer. You're not concerned with whether the response matches your expectations... you're looking for a response that is real, and connected to the actual observation. If you don't get answers that seem real and/or connected, it is perfectly acceptable to re-ask the second question in a different way, i.e. "why did that REALLY happen?"

Remember that you are interested in moving the conversation forward. The word "No" from a facilitator can stop reflection in its tracks. Even if the answer you get to the second question comes from left field, try to avoid saying "no." Instead, try to acknowledge their response while soliciting another answer. What else? Were there any other reasons? Yes, and....

Once there is a general consensus - a working theory for "why that happened," it's time to move towards abstract conceptualization.

Does that happen in life?

All the questions are important, of course, but this one gets to the heart of what Project GO is trying to accomplish. If our clients are to transfer learning from the river to home, we must help them connect their experience to regular life. This connection may not be an easy one for participants to make. Try to avoid providing an answer for them. Whether your answer is right or wrong, it will not be real to participants: they must draw the connection themselves.

Why does that happen?

This is really moving backwards a bit: simply restating the second question. Your goal here is to help participants explore their answer to question three, and to help them anchor the answer more securely to their home life. It is more abstract conceptualization, but is beginning to move towards active experimentation i.e. the actual application of the learning experience to life.

How can you use that?

This is the cornerstone of experiential learning as practiced by Project GO. The last three questions help place experience into a context where it can have relevance to life. This question nails it into place.

Working through challenges in conversation

The questions seem easy enough to ask. The challenge is that you can't predict or control the answers (or the lack thereof). Experience will be a great guide for you in this, and as an experiential educator, you will appreciate the futility of substituting a few paragraphs in a manual for that experience. Please use all of the resources available to you to gain the experience that will let you do this well. Read this, and then read it again. Participate in as many Project GO workshops and trainings as you can. Finally, get out there and get

the experience. When you are challenged by a question, answer, conversation or situation, try to remember that challenge, and bring it up in the post-trip feedback meeting. This will help everyone improve! Here are a (very) few ideas for your tool-box.

Silence can be a normal part of any conversation, and as a project GO facilitator you should expect it from time to time. Here are a few ideas, in order, for working with it.

- 1) Wait. Not forever; but maybe for ten seconds or so. The group may actually need the time to process and think. Your silence may create an air of expectancy that will draw something forth.
- 2) Repeat the question. Quite possibly, the silence was so deep that participants are afraid to break it. You can do it for them, and possibly draw out an answer that was ready to go, but afraid to have voice. And if it was a question worth asking, it will be worth asking again.
- 3) Rephrase the question. Ask the same question in a different way.
- 4) Ask one person by name to answer the question. Do so kindly, and simplify or rephrase it at the same time. This could be as simple as "What do you think, John?"
- 5) Change the question. At this point, it may be that the problem isn't with the group, but with the question. You may simply need to switch to plan B.
- 6) Talk about the silence. "Did you notice that it got really quiet in here?" Perhaps the silence itself is an experience worth debriefing. Your observation and curiosity must remain with you beyond the "experiential" portion of the program!

Is the answer you received too short to work with? Remember that you are genuinely curious, and say "tell me more!" That may be all it takes.

"I don't know." can be answered with "What if you did know? Take a guess." The guess may or may not be a real and connected answer, but it does give you something to work with. By phrasing the answer as a "guess," ownership of the idea is removed from the individual, making it less dangerous to offer.

What if your question was answered by another question? Turn it around. Ask it back to the group. "I'm not sure. What do you all think?"

Involving the reticent. Don't be afraid of this. Some individuals are simply quieter than others. That doesn't mean their thoughts, opinions and development is less important. Pay attention to who is speaking, and do what you reasonably can to involve everyone. Sometimes one or several individuals "hog the microphone," preventing quieter individuals from having their say. As the facilitator, you can be a "gatekeeper" allowing everyone to speak. "Have you seen that too, Jane?" or "What do you think, Ben?"



Guide Commands for Life Card.

Ever notice that to guides, the river has become a metaphor for life? What connections have you drawn between your time on the river, and your "grown-up" life? Think about the following on river situations for a moment, and we bet you can think of an analogous real-life situation

- Showing up late, and "missing the bubble,"
- Going for a swim, and not being able to "self-rescue"
- Getting "worked in a hole," and having to swim to the side, or even down to escape.

At some level, your experience on the river has impacted who you are, and how you see the world. We know from experience that the young people we work with "remember" their time on the river. Our objective is to help them draw larger lessons.

The "Guide Commands for Life," created by 2006 program director Fran Matthew, is a take-away item that may serve to remind individuals of their time on the river.

FORWARD! When you know where you want to go, put your whole self into it and charge!

BACKPADDLE! When you're heading for trouble or need time to figure something out, slow down or take a step back.

TURN! If you don't like the direction things are going, change your direction! You can do it by yourself (like the guide) but it's easier if you have a team who will all do their part to help.

STOP! Know when enough is enough & give yourself a break.

BUMP! In the river of life, we all hit rocks. Who and what do you hang on to so you can keep your amazing self safe and centered?

HIGHSIDE! When things start going wrong, look for the positive, helpful place to put yourself and move it!

SWIMMER! When you're in trouble, keep your head up, look forward, and help people to help you. When someone else is in trouble, get yourself to a place where you can help them safely, reach down, grab hold and help them up!

PADDLES UP! Take time celebrate achievements big and small!



Closing Activities

Each boat carries a "letter-writing kit," with pens, paper, envelopes and writing surfaces. In small groups, while the boats are drying, each participant is asked to write a self-addressed letter highlighting three specific things. 1) A specific memory of the trip, or their favorite part of the day, 2) Something they noticed about themselves, and 3) something they noticed about their whole group. The questions and potential answers are discussed in the small group. The letters are sealed into envelopes, self-addressed, and collected by project GO. Project GO applies postage, and sends these letters approximately one month after the trip.

When the entire group gathers together in a circle, one last time. They are asked to compose a message to the next group that goes rafting with Project GO. "What do you wish you would have known this morning when you first arrived?" what would you pay more attention to, or do differently if you could do it all again?" Once a brief message is composed and written, it is signed by all the participants, and sealed into a bottle. The bottle will be unsealed and read out-loud by a program participant at our next trip.

Feedback

Feedback is often viewed as a dichotomy: "Positive and Negative," "Plus and Delta," "What We Did Well and What Needs Improvement," "Positive and Constructive." It's been axiomatic that 50% of all feedback is "negative," and this language can make it difficult to give and receive effective feedback. Correcting this may simply be a matter of changing our language. In Project GO, it is hoped that all feedback is constructive. Period. Whether provided or received, it is understood that the purpose of feedback is to help one grow or to increase proficiency in a skill.

Feedback is also frequently seen as "directional," i.e. "from Me to You," and this is another paradigm that we'd like to change. Please think of your feedback as a circle, or loop, where everyone involved in the situation has the opportunity to grow or improve. Think of feedback as a conversation between equals and among friends, not as an argument from authority.

Feedback may be given formally or informally in a number of situations in Project GO. Our purpose here is not to define every such situation, but to help understand how that feedback should happen in order for it to be productive and appropriate. The reader is directed to Project GO's "Basic Whitewater Training Manual" for information on how feedback is incorporated into guide training.

- Limit your feedback to one or two specific, concise, and well thought out points. By limiting feedback, all parties will focus on those items that are most important. Another way to look at this: Focus on the amount of information the receiver can use, not on the amount that the provider would like to give. To overload a person with information is to reduce the likelihood that the information, however salient, will be used. When we give more than can be used, we are satisfying some need in ourselves rather than helping the other person.
- Many feedback sessions are more effective when started with a self evaluation by the person receiving feedback, and ended with a summary of take home points he or she has learned.
- Prepare your feedback in order to prevent rambling. If you don't have any feedback to offer, it is quite all right to "pass." Do not repeat points that have already been stated. Develop a method of agreement, a thumbs up, a hand shake, etc. to agree with a statement that someone else makes.
- Focus on observations rather than inferences. Observations refer to what we can see or hear in the behavior of another person, while inferences refer to our interpretations of the behavior (as in "you were defensive" or "you were pushy"). The sharing of inferences or conclusions may be valuable, but it is important that they be so identified.
- Focus on behavior rather than the person. It is important that we refer to what a person does rather than on what we imagine he or she is. This focus on behavior further implies that we use adverbs (which relate to actions) rather than adjectives (which relate to qualities) when referring to a person. Thus we might say a person "lead decisively on the water," rather than that a person is a "bossy leader."
- Focus on the sharing of ideas and information rather than on giving advice. By sharing ideas and information, we leave the receiver free to decide for herself or himself, in the light of her or his goals in a particular situation at a particular time, how to use the ideas and information. When we give advice, we tell the individual what to do with the information, and in that sense, we take away from the individual's freedom to determine for himself or herself what is the most appropriate course of action, as well as reducing the individual's personal responsibility for his or her own behavior.
- Focus on time and place so that the personal data can be shared at appropriate times. Because the reception and use of personal feedback involves many possible emotional reactions, it is important to be sensitive to when it is appropriate to provide information. Excellent information presented at an inappropriate time may do more harm than good.
- Focus on what is said rather than why it is said. The aspects of information which relate to the what, how, when, and where of what is said are observable characteristics. The why of what is said or done takes us from the observable to the inferred and brings up questions of "motive." To make assumptions about the motives of the person giving information may prevent us from hearing or cause us to distort what is said. In short, if I question "why" a person gives me feedback I may not hear what she or he says.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Books

Jacobson, Micah and Ruddy, Ruddy. *Open to Outcome*. Oklahoma City, OK: Wood 'N' Barnes Publishing and Distribution.

Beard, Colin and Wilson, John P. *Experiential Learning, Second Edition, A Best Practice Handbook for Educators and Trainers*. London, United Kingdom: Kogan Page.

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Organizations

AEE, The Association for Experiential Education, 3773 Iris Avenue, Suite #4m Boulder, CO 80301.
(866) 522-08337, www.aee.org

PA, Project Adventure, P.O. Box 100, Hamilton, MA 01936.
(508) 468-7981

The Boomerang Project, PO Box 600, Santa Cruz, CA 95061
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Websites

www.wilderdom.com

www.learningfromexperience.com

www.bawt.org

www.stewardshipcouncil.org

