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THE OUTWARD BOUND TECHNIQUE

The following principles and techniques of training underlie an OUTWARD BOUND program:

1. A dramatic change of environment is sought. The ideal setting is one where nature dominates in its full beauty, grandeur and awe. The struggle of Man against Nature provides the central motivational force in involving students in experiences with excitement and adventure.
2. The program is residential, involving students totally, demanding new adjustment and an adaption to a changed social environment. For many it is the first time they have been away from home.
3. Physical fitness is stressed. Not only is it necessary for the safety and success of the program, but it is important for the mental health ramifications of physical health and exercise. Physical fitness for the sake of the soul, in Plato's words.
4. Activities that call for extreme attention to safety are planned. Challenging and exciting experiences are sought that demand total attention, caution, and complete involvement. The challenges are immediate, definite, concrete, and definable.
5. There are opportunities for genuine service through rescue training, firefighting, conservation, public works projects, creating an involvement in the community.
6. Stress is employed for its shock effect. Physical challenges and obstacles are designed for the psychological impact in situations of fear, exhaustion, hunger, and loneliness. Tension is viewed as a creative force demanding adjustment and reassessment by the individual.
7. Problems are encountered of graded difficulty. They are designed to be within the grasp of the individual or group - progress is obvious and immediate, and the confidence gained from the success in an area where failure would have been predicted leads a student to accept further challenges of progressive difficulty. Success reinforces success.
8. Competition is stressed. Not between individuals, but the individual is given opportunities to compete against himself and to see his own improvement. Standards of achievement are measured not against any objective standards but subjectively in terms of the individual. Growth and improvement is more important than absolute standards of achievement. Competition between groups is used not as a means of determining which group is best but rather as a means of promoting group cohesiveness and stimulating group challenges.

9. Heterogeneous grouping is used to give as diversified a group as it is possible to create. Age, education, athletic prowess, social, economic, and geographic background are taken into consideration to create as diverse a mix as possible. The positive association with well-motivated students provides inspiration for problem youth. The negative association with problem youth provides opportunities for leadership for the better adjusted. Groups are kept small so that in spite of the heterogeneity of the individuals, it is possible for a group identity and group cohesiveness to emerge.

10. Solitude is presented as a challenge and an opportunity, a challenge of the student's self-sufficiency and an opportunity for introspection and re-assessment.

11. Problem solving and decision making are thrust upon the students. Instruction is given where needed, but it is kept to the minimum possible and withdrawn gradually as students acquire increased skill, imposing increasing responsibility upon the individual.

12. Democratic processes of group functioning and decision making are not only taught but have to be lived. Situations are created which dramatize not only the responsibility for assuming leadership but the need for leadership to empathize with those in the group being led.

13. Skills are mastered not only because they are needed for success and safety in the program, but they are taught in such a way as to give a sense of mastery. The growth of confidence that takes place is the primary objective. It is more important to teach through the skills than for the skills.

14. Guidance and counseling opportunities are programmed, and throughout the course this is a most important function of the instructor. Guidance must be sympathetic, firm yet friendly. In dangerous activities, discipline is vital; but to make such a program truly educational self-discipline must be evoked.

15. Opportunities for verbalization are instituted to bring the experience to a conscious level. Group discussion properly handled is the most effective technique. Talks, assemblies, readings have their place.

Discovery of Character

The term "Character" is a generalization charged with philosophic assumptions and psychological implications. It involves value judgments, certain concepts of man. The OUTWARD BOUND experience has implications for the individual, first in terms of himself, second in terms of his relationship with Man, and finally in terms of his relationship with Nature, or God, or his orientation to the Universe.

In terms of Self, the OUTWARD BOUND experience suggests the following educational opportunities:

1. Through involvement in demanding, realistic, and dramatic activities, a youth can test himself and prove to himself that he can do more than he thought he could. He gains a new sense of his worth and potentiality.
2. There is a growth of courage, at least in a physical dimension, where he sees himself functioning in spite of fear. He learns to handle crisis and emergencies and to keep cool and to function in spite of frustration and tension.
3. Through experiences of endurance and exhaustion there is a testing of determination and willpower, an increased mastery of self, a growth of self-discipline.
4. Through being thrust into experiences demanding performance, there is a growth of independence, initiative, resourcefulness. The need to try produces the willingness to try and greater self-motivation.
5. He becomes more adaptable, receptive to change. While aspiring to change what he can, he learns to be content to live with what he cannot.
6. For many there is a more realistic appraisal of self, an understanding of one's own shortcomings, faults, and limitations, a sense of humility. Brought up against the stark realities of primitive existence youth has often for the first time a sense of the frailty of life, a sense of his own mortality.