Alan Tindell

I'd first learned about Outward Bound in 1976 when I was 14 when I saw a National Geographic documentary about an OB team that mountaineered in the Andes.  I sent away for information and resolved to go.  But it took a lot longer than I thought.  Years went by, college and military service came and went, marriage, kids, working and never finding the combination of time and money to go.  The stars aligned though and in 2005, at age 43, I was able to attend a week-long Adult Renewal Outward Bound course rafting Idaho's Salmon River.

Joining six other team members from around the country and our two guides, we were a diverse group but we immediately bonded together for the challenge.  And it was far more challenging than I would've ever imagined.  On Day 3 of the expedition another team member and I wrecked our pontoon raft in the worst rapids on the river and came close to getting ourselves killed.  Only though a tremendous amount of teamwork and ingenuity were we able to get ourselves out of that dangerous situation---stranded atop a boulder in the middle of the rapids.

While the physical demands of the course were exciting, the emotional ties the team wove together were even more exciting.  Each evening we engaged in group discussions that ended up becoming extremely intimate, people sharing things about themselves that they might not have even shared with their spouses or closest friends.  It was a tremendous emotional high and it showed me that the inner journey that Outward Bound offers is far more powerful than the outward journey, whether sailing, rafting a river or climbing a mountain.

I thought it would be impossible for Outward Bound to live up to the 29 years of expectations I'd built up.  But sitting in the van awaiting the trip back to Lewiston, Idaho, I was in tears.  Without a doubt my Outward Bound experience was one of the absolute highlights of my life and one of the most important things I've ever done.  It made me a better person.