

2018 Presentation Descriptions



Wednesday, November 14th

Tying the Strongest Knots: Building an Organizational Culture of Risk Management

Steve Smith – Experiential Consulting, LLC

The goals of this workshop are to (1) Explore how the concept of "Safety Culture" has evolved throughout the ages; (2) Identify organizational steps that can help foster a culture of risk management; (3) Apply these steps and theories to participants' own programs in small-group exercises and scenarios. This presentation outlines a brief history of safety theory through the ages, identifies major events that signaled changes in how we think about safety management in various industries, shows how theories have evolved over time and looks at current thinking regarding ways to build a culture of risk management. We will use videos, scenarios, stories, and small group discussions to explore the concepts, and end with a "cheat sheet" of steps to foster a culture of risk management in your program.

Mental Health/Mentoring Students to Manage Stress

Ben Koch – Field Director, New Vision Wilderness

Jed Brensinger – Logistics Coordinator, New Vision Wilderness

When working with youth in Wilderness environments, we can anticipate that students will undergo stress. The natural environment, weather, animal interactions, close-knit group experiences or inter-group conflict, strange food, outdoor activities – all of these can lead to stressful experiences and dysregulated behavior from students. Dysregulated, or irrational, student behavior can be a significant risk to an individual and to a group, and so effective and safe management of student stress responses and dysregulation is a key piece for any outdoor leader. This workshop will explore student dysregulation, providing both a brief overview of the psychology of dysregulation as well as specific tools for intervening throughout all stages of dysregulation. This workshop aims to increase the toolkit for working with dysregulation as well as focus in on the role that the mentor/leader can play in maintaining an environment that is perceived as safe.

Key Takeaways:

- Dysregulated behavior is a common stress response for humans and something we can anticipate when we provide novel experiences to youth. Dysregulated behavior greatly increases the risk of all wilderness environments.
- Focusing pre, during and post stress and providing basic tools can help students effectively manage stress and support minimization and effective management of dysregulated behaviors
- Co-regulation, or mentorship of effective tools through shared experience, with an adult leader, provides a baseline for student safety and can be an effective starting point for supporting groups

Physical Preparedness for Wilderness Contexts

Arthur D'Amato – Exercise Physiologist

The general American populace is less fit and healthy than they used to be, and participants are less likely to be prepared for the stress of wilderness travel. This workshop details what steps professionals can take to reduce the likelihood of injury via exercise interventions. You will learn what kinds of programs can be implemented in the wilderness and beforehand, how to deliver programs to participants, and how to measure changes in fitness before and after interventions.

Key Takeaways:

- How are American demographics changing to increase the risk to participants of soft tissue injury
- What types of exercise programs prepare participants for the wilderness
- How can organizations implement these programs

Why wilderness and why returning can be such a struggle

Kris Henker – Freelance Facilitator & Master's Degree in The Neuroscience of Leadership

Do you ever need to justify why your adventure trips take place in remote locations? Couldn't you get the same outcomes closer to home? In this session we will explore the value of 'getting away' to natural environments and being removed from the built-up environment of the front country. We will take a look at what natural environments do for our overall wellness, cognitive functions, perspectives of self and others and on self-awareness. We will also explore why returning to the front country after spending time in a wilderness setting can be such a challenge for staff and participants.

During this session participants will:

- Learn about the empirical research supporting nature's positive affect on human functioning,
- Explore some theories about how these effects take place,
- Discuss ideas and activities to help ease the transition back to the front country and assist with the transference of lessons learned.

Anyone, anywhere, anytime: 40 years of risk management centered on a culture of inclusion at Wilderness Inquiry

Paul Lovaas – Operations Manager for Hiring and Staffing, Wilderness Inquiry

Marshal Landrum – Program Coordinator, Wilderness Inquiry

Wilderness Inquiry has been bringing people of all abilities, ages, and backgrounds together in inclusive outdoor adventures since 1978. In 2018, our 40th year, Wilderness Inquiry is on track to serve over 40,000 individuals on hundreds of different outdoor trips and programs. Through the use of the Universal Program Participation Model (UPPM) each activity or trip can be optimized for specific populations to achieve individual and group goals in a way that combines group interest, ability, and risk management. In this session we will share and discuss the UPPM and other tools that Wilderness Inquiry uses in staff training to align our program, our mission, and our risk management culture.

Supporting Safety, Staff Development, and Retention through Training Progressions

Brad Little – Staffing & Training Director, Voyageur Outward Bound School

Emily Ten Eyck – Expedition Course Director, Voyageur Outward Bound School

In this workshop we'll explore how training can meet safety and program objectives while simultaneously supporting staff development and strengthening a connection to the organization. Whether meeting the needs of first year staff before they begin work or supporting the development of long-term staff, training plays an important yet sometimes overlooked role in retaining staff. Come prepared to share your experience with training in the field of outdoor education, either as a trainee or trainer. Emily and Brad will share their approach as staff trainers at Voyageur Outward Bound's Twin Cities Center and collectively we'll discuss some of the challenges facing organizations tasked with developing, retaining, and training high-quality staff.

Including Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Youth in Your Program

Amy Hadow – Summer Program Director, YMCA Camp Widjiwagan

Andy Sinykin – Outdoor Learning Program Director, YMCA Camp Ihduhapi

Many outdoor organizations are seeking guidance as they look to support trans and gender non-binary participants but best practices are only beginning to exist. We will be presenting current practices from outdoor organizations across the country. We are also hoping to collect information about the practices of organizations represented at this conference and to vision for a more inclusive future.

Thursday, November 15th

Stress Management: It's more than breathing exercises and getting enough sleep.

Travis Loeffler – Loss Prevention Representative, West Bend Mutual Insurance

Take a look into the root causes of stress for camp counselors and learn prevention/intervention techniques to manage 10 potential stressors. Managing stress doesn't have to be reactive anymore. If we listen to our staff and teach them how to identify the stress triggers, we can promote proactive measures to prevent it before it even begins.

Courage and Vulnerability: Enacting Social Justice as a Pillar of Effective Risk Management

Danny Frank – Assistant Professor, Northland College

This workshop highlights the importance of understanding one's own journey toward intercultural competence in any leadership situation, particularly when engaging with diverse audiences. Participants will be asked to reflect critically on their own intersectional identities in order to identify their own socially-rooted positions of privilege and disadvantage within their organizations, the field of outdoor education, and beyond. Furthermore, this workshop will address ways in which cultivating equity and inclusion create emotionally, socially, and physically safe learning environments. Workshop participants will leave with a deepening understanding of their own intersectional social positions, as well as strategies for promoting social justice in their work.

Supporting Struggling Participants: Managing Behavior and Mental Health Issues

Katie Baum Mettenbrink – Risk Services Manager, NOLS Risk Service

Managing behavior and mental health issues, and deciding who should stay or leave the field, can be intimidating and draining for field staff and administrators alike. This workshop aims to help you more effectively support struggling participants who can stay on your program, and identify those who should leave. We will explore continuums of behavior through scenarios, and provide a framework to define thresholds of acceptable behavior and corresponding management tools that fit your program. This workshop is targeted towards administrators and field staff in non-therapeutic programs.

Creating a Comprehensive Incident Database

Kathleen Floberg – Wilderness Program Director, YMCA Camp Widjiwagan

Kurt Simer – Program Director, BOLD & GOLD

This presentation will give your organization ideas for how to move from “that sounds like a good risk management decision” to “this is a good risk management decision because it's supported by years of data analysis.” Camp Widjiwagan has tracked incident and near miss data for 19 years. These data have been used to strengthen and guide its programming through a combination of data analysis and Committee review. Since its inception, this database has helped Widjiwagan improve in the following areas: staff training, administrative processes, field practices, and emergency planning and response.

Participants will leave with:

- Ideas for what types of data to collect
- Processes to analyze and review data
- Ways to move your staff culture towards a “pro-reporting” one

Keynote Panel

Moderated by Claire Dzierzak, YMCA Camp Menogyn

Our panelists represent a variety of outdoor and adventure education organizations. In their current roles, their approach to effective risk management must necessarily differ. Factors such as organizational mission and history, position responsibilities, past experiences, participant population, and external expectations (of parents, participants, supervisors, volunteers, etc.) all play a role in the risk-management related decisions of each of our panelists. Claire will ask the panelists a series of questions related to the theme “Organizational Culture” and we also invite the audience to participate and ask questions as well!