horizons

Issue 72 Winter 2015

professional development for outdoor practitioners

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- Active Ageing and the Outdoors











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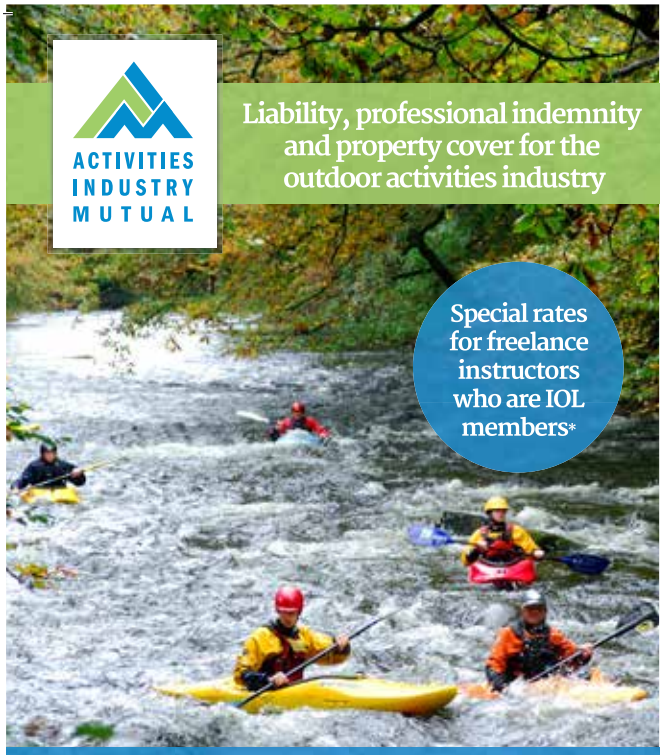
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Editorial

Welcome to the winter issue of 2015

The world of Outdoor Learning continues to develop as the range of people we include in our practice continues to expand. The discussion about delivering outdoor learning to adults and families continues to evolve as people share their practice; and we have two articles responding to the challenge in Horizons 71 to develop outdoor provision for the older generations.

The range of activities that we might include in our programmes is also expanding. I had an interesting postbag after the last issue, the photo on the front cover caused a few people to put finger to keyboard. Some asked if we had used the image deliberately and noted that this challenged their thinking - to which my reply is 'Yes' and 'Great'. (We did also get the odd comment that we had made a mistake!) As a profession we should be involved in any debate around outdoor practice and as APs and LPs we should be leading the way in reflection and innovation. I am very pleased Horizons challenged some thinking and illustrated an accessible activity which is appealing to many, including some who choose to reject the traditional outdoor activities. (To fill in the gaps: the photo was of a SUP session at the last IOL National Conference; the pond must have been all of three feet deep and ten feet across and, for normal recreational use of SUPs, PPE is an ankle leash not a buoyancy aid.) One aim of the session was to illustrate that it does not need lots of complicated clothing, rules and regulations in order to enable an individual to 'be amazed' at what they can achieve outdoors in a few minutes.

Horizons aim is practitioner development and as professionals we need to be aware of what is developing elsewhere beyond the confines of our practice. Some sports like rowing, dragon boating and surf boarding do not generally use buoyancy aids, others like canoeing, sailing and windsurfing do. There is a danger in not being open to new ways of doing things, so 'do not knock it until you have tried it!'. The debate about buoyancy aids is likely to remain an active one for some time and one that will hopefully continue to challenge our thinking. The debate about what clothing is appropriate for outdoor activity participation I will leave for another time. If we stop being challenged then we have stopped seeking learning.

It is great to know that readers at least look at the pictures, I hope you enjoy reading the articles too.

Elspeth Mason



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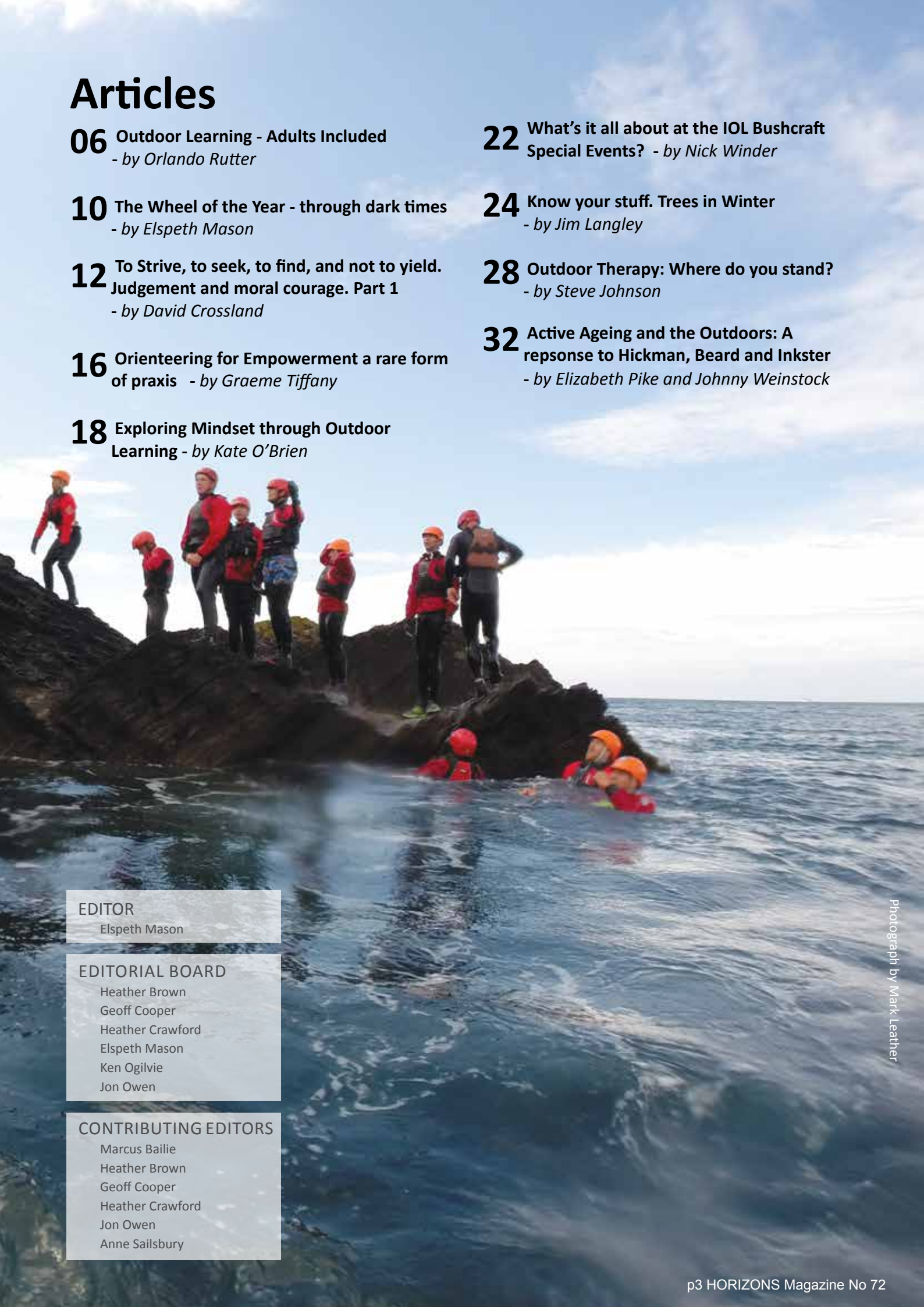
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RESEARCH ARTICLES

Latest research articles in the Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning (JAOEL) - Vol 15, Issue 4, 2015

The official journal of the Institute for Outdoor Learning

- Students' experiences with/in integrated Environmental Studies Programs in Ontario
  Mary Breunig, Jocelyn Murtell & Constance Russell
- A four-year follow-up of means-end outcomes from outdoor adventure programs
  Marni Goldenberg & Katherine E. Soule
- An Australian perspective of a forest school: shaping a sense of place to support learning
  Fiona Cumming & Melanie Nash
- Moral relations in encounters with nature
  Karin Andersson & Johan Öhman
- 'Touched by the Earth': a place-based outdoor learning programme incorporating the Arts
  Tonia Gray & Carol Birrell
- Connecting to the Good Life through outdoor adventure leadership experiences designed for Indigenous youth
  Stephen D. Ritchie, Mary Jo Wabano, Rita G. Corbiere, Brenda M. Restoule, Keith C. Russell & Nancy L. Young

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Photograph by Fiona Exon

Professional Matters

Neal Anderson
IOL Professional Standards Manager

At a meeting this week I was asked 'What makes a professional in Outdoor Learning?' We had been discussing the range of people involved in outdoor learning and the role of the Institute in championing and supporting individuals and organisations. Our initial debate centred on recognising the large variety of provision throughout the members of the Institute.

Valuing the history, diversity and potential within outdoor learning is at the heart of IOL and the accreditation processes. The first APIOL criterion asks for candidates to "Have a reasonable breadth of knowledge about the way in which the field of outdoor learning has developed and an understanding of its current scope. (1.1)" There can be many ways a person can start to answer this question. For example, at the recent IOL Leadership Workshop the delegates were able to identify six broad categories where outdoor learning might focus.

- **Outdoor Education** – Meeting the curriculum based outcomes of primary schools, secondary schools, colleges, universities, etc.
- **Personal Development** – Supporting individual growth through youth work, development training, expeditions, scouts, guides, cadets, etc.
- **Professional Development** – Assisting individuals and teams through management / leadership training, apprentice, graduate inductions, etc.
- **Outdoor Sport** – Developing knowledge, skills, competence, experience and performance in a particular outdoor sport or activity.
- **Adventure Tourism** – Providing opportunities to explore, learn about, enjoy and connect with the natural world on adventures, expeditions, etc.
- **Therapeutic Adventure** – Using the outdoors to support health, fitness and wellbeing in GP referral, wilderness therapy, adventure therapy, etc.

Of course, this is not intended as a definitive or prescriptive list. It is one way of looking at the types of outdoor learning an individual or organisation may be involved in. There will undoubtedly be some provision that does not neatly fit into one of the areas above – if that is the case, is it more valuable to have broader definitions or additional categories?

In looking at these six areas, several reflective questions come to mind:

- Which area(s) of outdoor learning have featured in your career so far?
- In which area(s) do you have future aspirations?
- In which area(s) have you developed competence and expertise?
- What areas of outdoor learning does your organisation support?
- Which areas of outdoor learning are declining/growing for you?
- Which area(s) of outdoor learning truly inspire you?

One aspect of being a professional in outdoor learning is understanding how your past experiences have shaped your current practice. Perhaps these six areas can act as a guide for exploring where you can effectively apply your skills, knowledge and experience, and where you can not, yet. ■

Outdoor learning – adults included!

by Orlando Rutter



This article started as a reflection on the article in Horizons 70 by Hickman, Beard and Inkster[1] about ageing populations and the outdoor sector's response. Whilst Dartmoor National Park Authority does offer specific activities and opportunities by demographic – for young people, for women, for older participants, for people with disabilities etc. - this article will focus on our intergenerational offer and explore some of the learning journeys undertaken by adults whilst engaged alongside children as equal learning partners.

Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA) is one of 15 UK National Parks. DNPA's Learning and Outreach service provides both formal and informal learning opportunities. One of the informal learning offers is the 'Ranger Ralph Club' with outdoor learning activities **for families** with children between the ages of 5 and 12. Although activities appear primarily aimed at children, it is important to emphasise that parents are seen as equal participants rather than passive observers. In many cases there are three generations involved in a variety of relational contexts: grandparents with grandchildren; grandparents, parents and children – and sometimes four generations with babies coming along as well! Evidence that adults as well as children benefit from activities is provided by both user surveys and informal conversation with adults at events over 15 years. This inclusive approach to activity provision is carried through to inclusion of all participants at final evaluations.



In recent years more intensive summer holiday programmes have allowed staff to work with cohorts of parents and children in order to deepen their relationships with Dartmoor 'the place'. We used the John Muir Award to encourage people of all ages and backgrounds to connect with, enjoy, and care for wild places. The John Muir Award provided an excellent framework for these programmes which can be clearly understood by all participants. The use of the Family Award category gave focus to our activities, deepened relationship with the natural environment and provided a way to celebrate achievement.

The more focussed summer programme also enabled us as outdoor learning practitioners to evaluate in more depth responses to Dartmoor, its wildlife and cultural heritage, and to the learning experience using a suite of structured questions to elicit responses from children and adults. Contrasting the two sets of responses provides further thoughts for practice and in particular illustrates some of the adults' learning journeys.

In this case the evaluation of the family learning was summative to determine the structured activities' success and individuals' achievement; and also formative, so that negative feedback was used to redesign delivery for future programmes. Importantly it was not an assessment of attainment but an evaluation which, being open, allowed co-construction of meaning. Some of the tensions between assessing for attainment and outdoor learning evaluations are explored in more depth in Waite et al 2015[2]. In this evaluation open questions were used to elicit responses that were defined by and in the language of the participant. A number of themes emerged which were broadly categorised.

The most popular 'liked best' for children was the opportunity to interact with wildlife, with practical conservation tasks and 'adventure' being equal second placed.
Examples of children's responses, verbatim:

"I liked finding the dormice best"

"My best day was sowing grass seeds to repair fire damage"

For adults, the interpersonal learning was important, both with their own children but also with other participants, young and old. Adults in particular expressed surprise at this ability to form bonds so quickly with 'strangers'.

Some extracted examples of the verbatim responses illustrate this:

"The wonderful group of like-minded people – being with the children with no distractions."

We structured the activities so all were equal learning participants and this parity of relationship between adults and children was also highlighted in the evaluation:

"Equality between adults and children."

Many adults also made reference to time – the perceived lack of time in their day-to-day lives and the way this structured environmentally immersive programme allowed them to relate to the natural world; a couple of examples illustrate this:

"Time to slow down and 'get back to nature'."

"The chance to stop and commune with nature."

In our time pressured society this opportunity to make connections, to develop relationships and discover meaning – both with others and with the natural world – illustrates a particular value that our practice in outdoor learning may bring especially to older participants. This increased time spent making personal connections to the natural world also provided the opportunity for some participants to undergo a deeper learning experience. For some adults the experience was transformative:

"The adventure began. I found that I was not a spectator but a participant walking side by side with the young souls all keen to find out a different meaning to life – an alternative view on the world we share."

…and at the end, the same individual:

"…returning to the norms of life I have lived for years, I notice a change. I see more clearly than before. I hear nature even in the concrete surroundings of a town trying its best to encroach upon the green that needs so much to be preserved."

In the example above the individual expressed a level of change or level of learning that Sterling 2010[3] would consider to be third order change or third order learning – 'transformative'; which is also expressed as 'seeing things differently'. This is in contrast to first order change: 'doing things better' or second order change 'doing better things'. Sterling's paper argues that if we are to make a difference in terms of education for sustainable development we need to move beyond first and second order change and learning. He argues that only by creating conditions for a paradigm shift – a change in perspective can people start to think, behave and act differently…and more sustainably.

In addition there is an implicit assumption that 'the future belongs to the young' and that education for sustainability needs to engage young people. However it is the actions of adults and older generations that have created the world in which we live and it is these adults who also have the capacity and capability to effect the most immediate change. Thus providing adults the opportunity for third order change, paradigm shift and engagement with finding solutions to the challenges of a sustainable future is another opportunity we as outdoor learning practitioners can, and should, offer older participants.

A further dimension elicited during evaluation was the comparison between other significant life experiences. The following illustrates the compared impact between 'playing games on Dartmoor' with what many may consider to be a more significant life experience, again verbatim:

"This was a fabulous experience – one of the best of my life; comparable to sailing across the Atlantic."

Creating space and time for adults to develop relationships with nature, with other people and perhaps with themselves to help them explore their current perspectives and to provide opportunities for change is clearly a rich area for development. Doing this with generations other than their own creates yet further dimensions for learning and can provide precisely the paradigm shift that third order learning requires – a change in the way of seeing the world, perhaps through the eyes of a child, may create opportunities for engaging this older generation with the sustainability debate.

Some thoughts on evaluation…

As part of the intensive summer programme evaluation was a critical component and provided the resource for the 'different voices' above. In addition the evaluation process highlighted some further areas for reflection.

The feedback received was important in shaping the future offer and although the learning by participants was noted, this was not the focus or purpose of the assessment activities. In this case, where staff, adults and children were all participants, the diversity of perceived learning outcomes was clearly evident. Inevitably parents' use of language was more complex, as were the thoughts and themes reflected. This complexity of parental response illustrated a more co-constructed understanding of the activity and meant the evaluation was more of a shared process between learner and teacher. For further detail about the differences between 'assessment of learning' compared to 'assessment for learning' and 'assessment as learning' - see Dann 2014[4]. This co-constructed meaning, shared through reviews at the end of daily activities, changed over the course of the programme with adults showing increased questioning of their previous perspectives and this provided evidence, in some cases, of paradigm shift.

The diversity of outcomes presented by participants also calls into question the usefulness for outdoor learning of assessment which focuses only on predefined results and this focus is one which preoccupies formal education with the language of 'attainment' and 'testing' being prevalent; see for example Truss, 2014[5]. Additionally some of the language used in this area can be confusing – is it review or evaluation or assessment? Perhaps the subject for further reading, see for example Pierce 2015[6] and Waite et al, forthcoming[7].

Although there are increasing pressures to 'justify' what we do, as outdoor learning practitioners we are often very aware of and open to unintended learning outcomes – and perhaps that is the beauty, the magic and the wonder of learning outdoors: sometimes we just don't know quite where we will end up. Possibly rather than trying to 'justify' our practice by trying to fit it into the neat and tidy regimes used for in-school assessment we need to become more articulate or perhaps more confident in what we provide and how we measure our impact if we are to be able to demonstrate the richness, the diversity and the value of our work. Evaluations with adults can help here – their use of language, references to wider life experiences, subtlety and complexity can all add precisely the richness and depth that will help us demonstrate value.

Our outdoor practitioner approach to open ended, co-constructed understanding following our work with people provides exactly the qualitative depth – the challenge is getting that recognised. ■





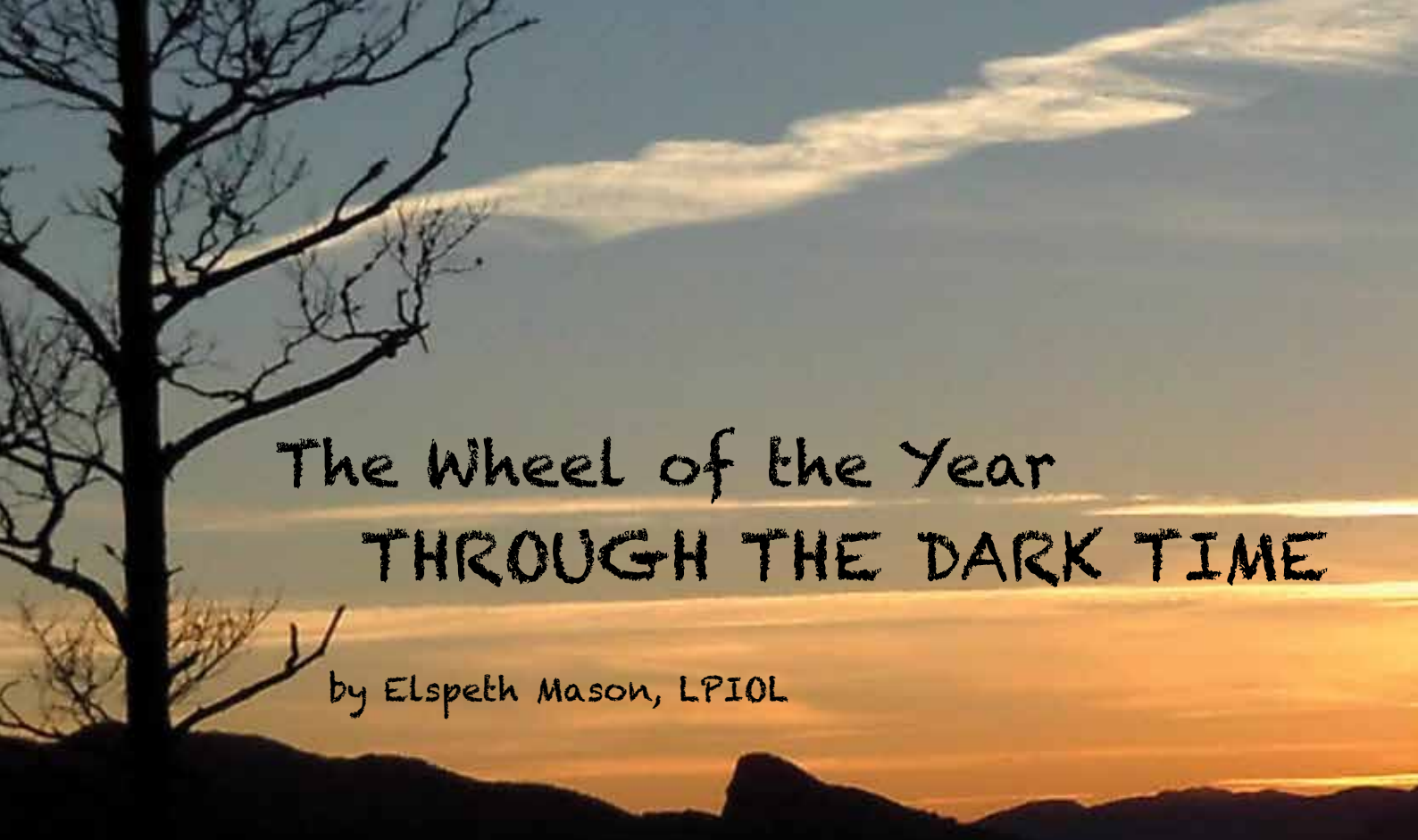
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About the Author

Orlando Rutter LPIOL, Senior Learning & Outreach Officer, Dartmoor National Park Authority. Orlando has worked for nearly thirty years in environmental education for a number of wildlife and environmental education charities as well as in local government facilitating community dialogues for a sustainable future.



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The Wheel of the Year
THROUGH THE DARK TIME

by Elspeth Mason, LPIOL

Into the Dark

The start of the natural cycle of the year for the Celtic people was at the start of November and this was a time of looking both forward and back, contemplating what has been gained and lost in the past year and of what might be done next year. It is also a time of planting seeds and ideas that can germinate in the dark days of winter. This is still called Hop-tu-naa in the Isle of Man, the same root name as the Hogmanay we associate with Jan 1st today.

As the leaves are stripped from the trees and the days turn short and dark there seems to be a need for firelight, shared meals, reflection and story-telling. We still have outdoor get-togethers in November now celebrated as Bonfire night*. This energy gives way to the calmer thanksgiving feast of Martinmas, and Armistice Day remembering the sacrifices of those who 'gave their lives that we may live', something which resonates with the ancient theme of life from death.

For much of this time from mid November to mid January three quarters of each 'day' is night, especially in the north. In a pre-industrial society with no electricity it was a time to sit around a fire for warmth and light, sharing the harvest and eating the food that would not keep long; filling the long evenings with stories and songs; drinking ale and trying not to fall out with each other while crowded indoors as the food got less and less interesting and the nights colder and colder.

The long Norse Yuletide started in mid November and continued until mid January when the light started to noticeably return. In these Isles we have many mid-winter traditions as each culture marked the winter as a key turning point in the year.

* which rather unpleasantly celebrates the torture and death of the catholic political dissenters rather than the older cleansing healing fires of Celtic culture on 31st October/1st November.

Midwinter and Yule

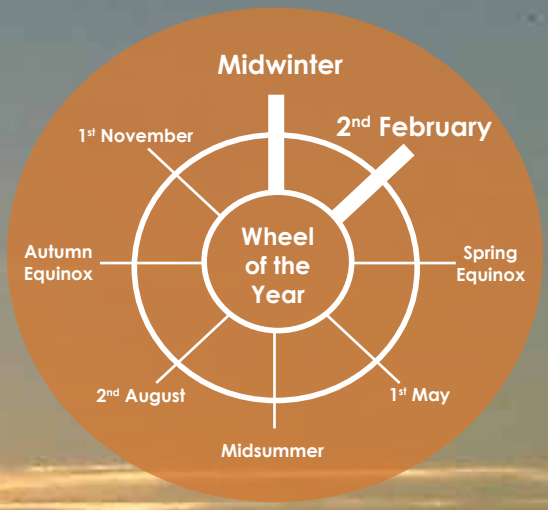
Our oldest stone circles and pre Celtic monuments from the Hebrides to Wiltshire seem to be built in relation to the mid winter sun; although what significance, if any, this has beyond the ability to mark the turning of the year is unclear. It is easy to see why, as the Wheel of the Year revolves beyond death and towards new light and new life, most cultures celebrated with myths of the re-birth of a sun or vegetation god. In the case of the Celts this was the re-birth of the Mabon, the divine child, but also of the Oak King, something that translated well into the celebration of the birth of a Christian saviour.

The twelve days of Christmas incorporates both the Norse Yuletide and the Celtic belief that the sun stood still for twelve days in the middle of winter, which it does seem to do before the days get noticeably lighter.

The role of evergreen trees figures much in our midwinter tradition and comes from both Norse and Celtic cultures. The classic Christmas tree was introduced by Prince Albert; however it probably re-kindled a memory of an older tree decorating habit. From the Celts we seem to have kept the importance of bringing evergreens into the house, but have forgotten that we do this to keep the fairy folk safe through the winter. We bring in Holly, Ivy and Mistletoe, each of which had its own superstition.

For the Celts the red berried Holly was King of Winter (the counterbalance to Oak the King of Summer) and Holly wreaths may have once been crowns although wreathes were also a Roman tradition. You will know if you go Holly hunting that many Holly trees do not have berries; the Holly has both male and female forms and it is, of course, the latter that bears the berries so the king of winter was actually a queen which would equate with later stories of the Queen of Winter.

We still know that Mistletoe relates to kissing but perhaps this is becoming rarer today. In Celtic culture the world was created by the red and the white dragon that fought endlessly, each trying to eat their own/each other's tail and so had no beginning and no end. The themes of white and red berries, of upright and twined plants and of eternal evergreen have all been seen as metaphors for male, female, light, dark, life, death, creation and rebirth.



The Yule Log for the Norse was a huge log of ash (as in the world tree), lit from a piece of last year's log that would burn for all the days of the feast. The Celts would bring in a ceremonial log decorated in evergreens which was lit to conquer the darkness, banish evil spirits and bring luck for the coming year. Our traditions of carol signing and mumming, going from place to place are Celtic, but from the Norse comes the Wassailing and singing to the apple trees. From the Norse we get some darker beliefs – those of old father time, who was Odin the long bearded All-Father who saw all and the idea of the wild hunt and of sacrifice of the old for the new.

Our jolly red gift-giving Santa most people know is an American Coca-cola reinvention based on St Nicholas who gave gifts in early December. However that glass of sherry or mince pie you leave are more akin to the Norse tradition of having to bribe 'old father time' (or Odin in disguise) with food and drink as he came visiting door to door. And the reindeer which appeared in the Victorian era are a half-remembered idea of the wild hunt of the Celtic horned wild nature god, whose head was adorned with proud deer antlers (not the later medieval Christian goat devil God) and who lead the winter hunt through the skies. The tiny elves, now Santa's helpers were once the Norse Nisse, friendly if sometimes awkward house spirits who gave gifts and helped around the farm for payment of a bowl of porridge.

New Light, New Hope

Perhaps the Celtic festival we most miss is that of the almost forgotten *Imbolc*, which translates as Ewes-Milk. Later known as St Brigit's day or Candlemas, it comes at the start of February when there is the first lifting of the grip of winter. It comes at a time when spirits are lowest after 12 weeks of darkness. Suddenly one morning dawns clear with a brief smell of spring in the air, it is just enough to give us hope before the weather returns to winters grip until the true spring arrives. Into this time come the snowdrops and the first lambs. This is also the time the Irish have the festival of St Bridget, previously the festival of the goddess of fire, poetry and creativity on the 2nd February.

If ever there was a time when we need an optimistic festival to lift our spirits in these northern islands it is the end of January, and perhaps this is one that Outdoor Learning can help re-introduce as we rebuild our connections with the nature's rhythms.

Wheel of the Year Activities

- ✔ Rummage deep in the leaf litter under some oak trees and look for the acorns germinating – the Oak King reborn.
- ✔ Weave wreaths from renewable resources like willow or honeysuckle then decorate with evergreens and berries to make the Holly King's crown. After the celebrations put this out for the birds.
- ✔ Compare the impact of a tree grown and harvested for Christmas compared to pruning small amounts from Ivy, Holly and other evergreens.
- ✔ Try a Holly hunt to see which trees in your area produce berries – these female trees are the kings!
- ✔ Discover how Mistletoe grows and see if you can germinate any seeds (for those south of the M62 – I do not know of any growing further north)
- ✔ As the daylight increases find some snowdrops, see how many different types you find, they can look like fairies dresses from the underneath. Visit some lambs. Collect some winter twigs and grasses and weave St Bridget's crosses.
- ✔ Light a winter campfire (indoor or out) create songs or stories perhaps simply from adjectives used to describe a winter tree, a snowdrop or a newborn lamb.
- ✔ Be thankful that winter is passing and that you have warmth and food to survive it. ■



"To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield."

Judgement and moral courage

Part 1 – 'making the right choice'

by David Crossland

It is easy to produce long lists of important qualities for a leader. However, the items on these lists are often contradictory and you will never find them all represented in a single individual. In this article I argue that there are two qualities, above all others, that are essential for an outdoor leader. It is said that the Duke of Wellington, when asked the test of a great general, replied 'To know when to retreat and to dare to do it'. This rather neatly expresses my two essential qualities: Judgement and Moral courage. Judgement (of, for example, self, students, environment, the appropriate and changing level of risk and benefit) is the essential prerequisite for sound decision making. Once you reach a sound decision then having the moral courage to implement it, often in the face of expectations, students, commercial pressures and possibly peers who have made a different choice, is the second essential. Judgement is needed on a daily basis, whereas moral courage is something that may only be required occasionally – but if lack of moral courage leads you to ignore or override your judgement, you are no longer an effective leader.

> Where you stand in relation to the group and any hazards in the environment, is crucial.

Clearly, leaders need experience and an appropriate level of technical skill in whatever activity they lead, but these are things that develop over time and are relative to the level of work. Judgement and moral courage are required from the outset, and at all levels; – the relatively inexperienced leader, with as yet only a modest level of technical ability, requires these two qualities just as much as the experienced guide.

But where do these essential qualities come from? They are not necessarily innate or instinctive; moral courage demands that we overcome our instinctive fight or flight response in order to 'do the right thing in adverse circumstances'. I think moral courage starts with accepting, as a fundamental truth, that we are responsible for our own actions and decisions; not parents, employers, trainers, national governing bodies or anyone else, but ourselves. We need to be able to sleep at night and be able to live with ourselves, while accepting that whatever followed from our decisions and actions is our responsibility. This is the basis of the strength to tell employers that they are



wrong and why, to tell students that they cannot do the thing they have set their heart on, and to act when your judgement tells you that you should act. In the next article I will look at moral courage and strategies for supporting and developing it. In the rest of this article I will consider how to improve judgement in the outdoor learning context.

Good judgement, being largely subjective, is one of those difficult things to define. Who decides what constitutes good judgement? Personally I think each individual needs to be comfortable that any choice they make is, and was, right for them and their group. I believe that, with a little honest reflection, most of us can work out when we 'got away' with a bad call. It has been said that 'good judgement comes from experience and experience is the result of bad judgement calls'. While there is truth in this, it would be useful if we could also learn from others and shortcut some of the more painful experiences. I believe that sound judgement is more likely if leaders work on developing the following seven habits.

Effective outdoor leaders have a 360o awareness of what is going on around them.

1. Awareness

Effective outdoor leaders have a 360^{o} awareness of what is going on around them. I have referred to this elsewhere as the 'leader's twitch' – the continual scanning of group and environment. This includes awareness of:

- The environment and conditions - how these are changing and the impact this may have on the planned session.
- The individuals within the group – how they are dealing with the environment and the activities, how they are feeling and whether they are they still engaged in learning.
- Yourself – whether you are engaged, or on autopilot; whether you are operating within your comfort zone and level of technical ability.
- The session – whether the planned content and delivery are still appropriate or need changing.

If leaders are involved in repetitive sessions, or working in very familiar environments, it is especially important to remain mentally alert and to avoid complacency.

Some part of a good leader's mind should always be asking:

Where is everyone?
How is everyone?
How is the environment?
How am I?
What is changing?'

2. Anticipation

During any outdoor learning experience, threats and opportunities will arise naturally. When leaders have good awareness, are attuned to the current state of things, and alert to changes as they occur, then they are able to identify these threats and opportunities in time to manage them. Threats can be dealt with, often by simply moving position or by minor changes in plan. Opportunities can be exploited and used to maximize participant learning.

For example, a leader with a group of young people in a foreign city sees a crowd developing at the edge of the market area – is this the beginning of a protest which may attract police and turn threatening or is it an excellent opportunity to experience some local culture - a threat to be avoided or an opportunity to be grasped?

Some part of a good leader's mind is always considering the question 'what if?' - doing this in both positive and negative ways. Identifying what in an environment can be used to facilitate learning as well as identifying options in case things go wrong.





3. Positioning

Where you stand in relation to the group, and any hazards in the environment, is crucial. From a facilitation point of view, if you stand to address the group with your back to the sun or to the beach volleyball match then your group will either not be able to concentrate on what you are telling them, because they will have the sun in their eyes, or not be interested in what you are telling them. From a safety point of view, unless you are using something like a rope for protection, you probably want to be between the group and any hazard. In safe environments your position in relation to the group will depend on many factors, you may be moving around to chat to each person, you may not even be present but be supervising remotely. However, when the environment requires your presence, or on a led journey, you probably want to arrive at any hazardous points first – your anticipation will enable you to do this.

4. Focus

Being 'aware' means you have all of your senses attuned to the environment and the group and that, even when focusing on a particular aspect of the session, some part of you remains conscious of the wider picture. However, what you choose to focus on, and when, is also important. Being an effective leader often means acting in counter-intuitive ways, and particularly so in terms of 'focus'. Examples of this include:

- On a climbing session instinct draws the eye to the climber but, unless the climber is leading, the belayer is the one whose mistake may be the most serious.
- On a mountain walk or scramble the instinct may be to focus on the slowest, clumsiest member of the group, whereas they may be at less risk of harm than the overconfident fairly capable person, striding on ahead.
- The instinct of a paddlesports coach may be to focus on the paddle, as the most visible thing, when the student's problem is actually being caused by what they do with their head or feet.

Another aspect of focus is what you get your students to focus on. Any canoe coach or mountain leader soon learns that if you say 'avoid that rock' it instantly becomes a magnet. If you want students to avoid something bad then get them to focus elsewhere and aim for something good.

5. Communication

Communication between leader and group is an enormous area, which is well beyond the scope of this single article. All I can do here is hint at a few key things:

- Body language: Both yours and your students – does your body language indicate confidence, mastery, enthusiasm, concern, empathy, openness etc? Does their body language indicate, trust, learning, enjoyment, growth?
- Listening: Being aware of what a student is really saying and not just the words they use.
- Voice: How you say things - Your voice is a tool and you need to be able to use it to achieve different things, such as encourage, inform, control or warn. The pitch, tone, and volume need to be adjusted to achieve the desired effect. Unless you are physically attached to a student your voice may be your only means of control and you may need to use it to stop a student from stepping on a fragile cornice, or undoing the wrong, critical, knot. You may also need to use a different voice to instil confidence and self-belief. The wrong tone or pitch of voice can cause a student to switch off and discount what you have to say or it can turn a bad situation into a worse one. The right voice can save a deteriorating situation, or keep your students confident, engaged and learning.
- Language: The words you use need to be appropriate to your group and the individuals within it. Some students will love, and soak up, technical jargon; others will hate it and only slowly become comfortable using it. Language is often the poorest form of communication yet the one we seem to use all the time. It is rare to see people say too little, but common to see them say too much. Before addressing a group, think carefully about what you want to say, why you want to say it, and whether it is worth saying. When briefing a student to do a task, and when giving feedback on their performance, make sure you stress the same things. Don't tell a novice paddler to concentrate on edging the boat in the next breakout, and then give them feedback on their paddle stroke – be consistent.
- Timing: As with the art of comedy so with outdoor leadership, much depends on timing. It is hard to describe good timing but some examples of bad timing may help to give the idea!
- Talking while you demonstrate something will confuse many students as very few people, if any, can concentrate on what you do and what you say at the same time.
- Talking to students while they attempt a new skill will distract them from their own internal feedback. So will talking to them as soon as they complete a task – don't give your feedback to them too soon, they will look towards you when they are ready to hear what you have to say.
- Talking all the time means some people will stop listening and so when you have something good to say they will miss it.
- Explaining something to the people around you on a walk means some of the group may not hear. If you have something important and useful to impart, make sure the whole group can hear you.
- Talking when a group is tired, hungry, thirsty, cold etc is a waste of time unless it is vital information in an emergency. Remember Maslow's hierarchy of needs – if I am cold and hungry I want warmth and food, not to be informed of the fascinating geology that has caught your attention.

6. Empathy

Being able to empathise with where your students are now means that you can more effectively teach, coach or lead them. This includes things like whether they are in the right frame of mind for the tasks/journey ahead, are they warm enough, fed and watered, awake, comfortable. An environment that you find comfortable may be one that scares them witless. I recall, as an example, a particularly challenging February day on the Cairngorm plateau, with a student who was terrified of the wind. Many people are frightened of heights and their attention will close down when exposed to height. Empathy also includes being able to identify what sort of learners the individuals are. There are many models of learning styles and all contain a kernel of truth – that individuals learn things in different



ways. There are 'parts-to-whole' learners and 'whole-to-parts' learners; there are those who favour the visual, the auditory or the kinaesthetic; there are those who need other people and the environment of group work, and those who just want to get on with the task on their own; there are those who want to know everything about a topic and those who want to know what is practically relevant; and then there are those who want to take what you show them and apply it in different contexts, to see where the limits are, to experiment. Being able to empathise with each person's needs and personal barriers to learning is the first step to being able to help them. Effective leaders are those who can do this and tailor their sessions and input to meet individual needs; as opposed to leaders who simply deliver what they always deliver.

Students will progress at different rates and will have different appetites for pushing the boundaries of their learning. Empathy helps leaders manage these by controlling the over enthusiastic and encouraging the under confident.

7. Flexibility

If empathy is the first step to effectively tailoring your delivery to individuals then flexibility is the next. To be flexible you need to have a large toolbox of tricks and approaches, of different ways to achieve the same ends for different people. Flexibility is also about making best use of the environment, the weather, and the conditions on the day. It is no use being fixated with an outcome or a programme that is not suitable, no matter how long you spent planning it. A colleague of mine once took a special needs group canoeing on the canal, in our usual location below a flight of locks. The youngsters were fascinated by the locks and by the movement of narrow boats, and utterly uninterested in the planned canoe session. Being a skilled practitioner the canoes were left on the bank while the group spent the day working various narrow boats up and down the locks (with the grateful thanks of their owners); becoming more and more skilled at the process and learning about science, engineering, history, the environment and sustainability in the process. Not at all what the session was supposed to be about but an excellent outcome thanks to the judgement of the leader.

If empathy is the first step to effectively tailoring your delivery to individuals then flexibility is the next.

On the face of things the first two habits of awareness and anticipation may seem the most directly relevant to developing judgement. However, for me, all seven are important. Without good positioning you cannot be appropriately aware. Without focus, awareness remains vague and without empathy, it is impersonal and limited. Without communication and flexibility, anticipation will be ineffective and of no practical use. Combine these habits and reflect on them in practice and you will have some of the tools to help you develop sound judgement and decision-making.

You may ask 'how can I do all of this without appearing paranoid and distracted to my students'? The analogy of the swan has been used to describe the effective leader. On the surface swans are calm and float effortlessly, under the water however their legs move constantly. It is the same for the effective leader. Your group sees the effortless ease with which you manage the session; they do not see that part of your attention is constantly elsewhere, working hard.

In this article I have focused on judgement; on, to refer back to the Tennyson quote of the title, 'seeking and finding' the right thing to do – making the right decision. Next time I will focus on moral courage – the strength to do the right thing 'and not to yield'. . ■

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Photos: Swans in flights by Barbara Eckstein

Orienteering for Empowerment a rare form of praxis?

by Graeme Tiffany

(Praxis is the process by which a theory, lesson, or skill is enacted, embodied, or realised. “Praxis” may also refer to the act of engaging, applying, exercising, realizing, or practicing ideas – Wikki)

Zaahir (not his real name) is in his early 20s. He has had a succession of short-term jobs interspersed with bouts of depression that have made it impossible for him to work. More recently his doctors have said he is suffering from a form of identity-related delusion. Zaahir is not really sure what this means. But one thing he is sure of is that he feels powerless.

In conversation, I ask him to consider what it means to be powerful. He finds it difficult to imagine. We discuss how expressing a choice, making a decision can reasonably be seen as a form of power. I recounted the tale of the imprisoned Mandela, who remarked that despite feeling like a chicken in a cage he could decide which corner of the cage to sleep in. Or the tale of him, shackled hand and foot, being escorted by prisoner officers to a meeting with the head of Robben Island. Four guards preceded him, four followed. Periodically, Mandela altered the speed of his shuffle, causing the first group to disappear off down the corridor and the others to fall over themselves behind. Mandela smiled; he was determined to exert what little power he had.

And so I took Zaahir orienteering, a sport he had no conception of. I sold it thus: “this is a sport for people who want to, and enjoy, making decisions; it’s for people who want to feel - and be - powerful”. I’m not sure he understood; like so much in life you have to get on and do things for them to make sense.

We stood at the corner of a football pitch, marked on the mapped area that was his local park. Like others who I had introduced to orienteering in this place, all of whom lived on the adjacent estate, I asked him how well he knew the park: zero for no idea, 10 for knowing it as well as one could imagine. His peers had all said “ten”, an orchestrated invitation for me to suggest I would show them otherwise - this being the type of challenge these lads seemed to respond to.

But Zaahir had said: “Five”, doubtless indicative of a weakened confidence. “Look here at the key and tell me what that is”, I demanded, pointing at the map. “A hedge, a hedge corner” he replied after a pause. “Where is it in relation to the football pitch?” “Just near the opposite corner”. “Off you go then; what way are you going to choose to go; what decisions are you going to make?”

Words in the context of knowledge gained from the experience of being with people can be powerful things.

I’d have gone straight for it, as it was diagonally opposite. But Zaahir decided to follow the perimeter of the pitch, to the opposite corner, and then, with a left turn, to the next. With another left turn, and perhaps a quarter of the way back again, he stood directly opposite the hedge corner, which was little more than a few metres away. Then his eyes lit up, for there he spied the small plastic kite I had put there earlier. He beamed, words unnecessary. “Well done”, I said; “now, how about a harder one?”

And so we went on, one leg at a time, each progressively more difficult - in the sense and reality of more and more complex decisions to make. After half a dozen, he asked for a break, some water. We discussed Ramadan and the concessions considered reasonable for those taking medication, for he was taking a lot. Again, in the context of decision-making. We chatted about the things that neither of us had control over but focused more on the small things that were tangible and possible to do (and, for me, might develop and repair a sense of autonomy).

Then I asked him if he fancied doing a short course, a start, three controls, and back again, using his new found skills. "Sure", he said. He found the first fine, and the second too. But on the last control headed off in the direction of one tree in preference to another. "What now?" I asked. "Bad decision", he said. "So make another one", I urged. Setting his map as he'd learnt to do beautifully, he spotted his mistake, and sped off in pursuit of the final kite. There, pinned to the tree, it was.

"Back now, to the finish; which way do you want to go now?" "Let's cut across this open area", he said. So, leaving the paths that had given confidence so far, he embarked on a new adventure. Spotting a thicket, he knew he was close. A bit further and there was the monument we had started from. He beamed again. We retired to a bench nearby, and drank more water; it was hot now.

"Do you know what 'confidence' is?", I asked, with my philosopher's concept analysis hat on. We went round the houses a bit but settled on 'the belief that you could be successful when faced with a challenge you had never before encountered', or something like that. I described how I saw this as saying something about how we approach the future.

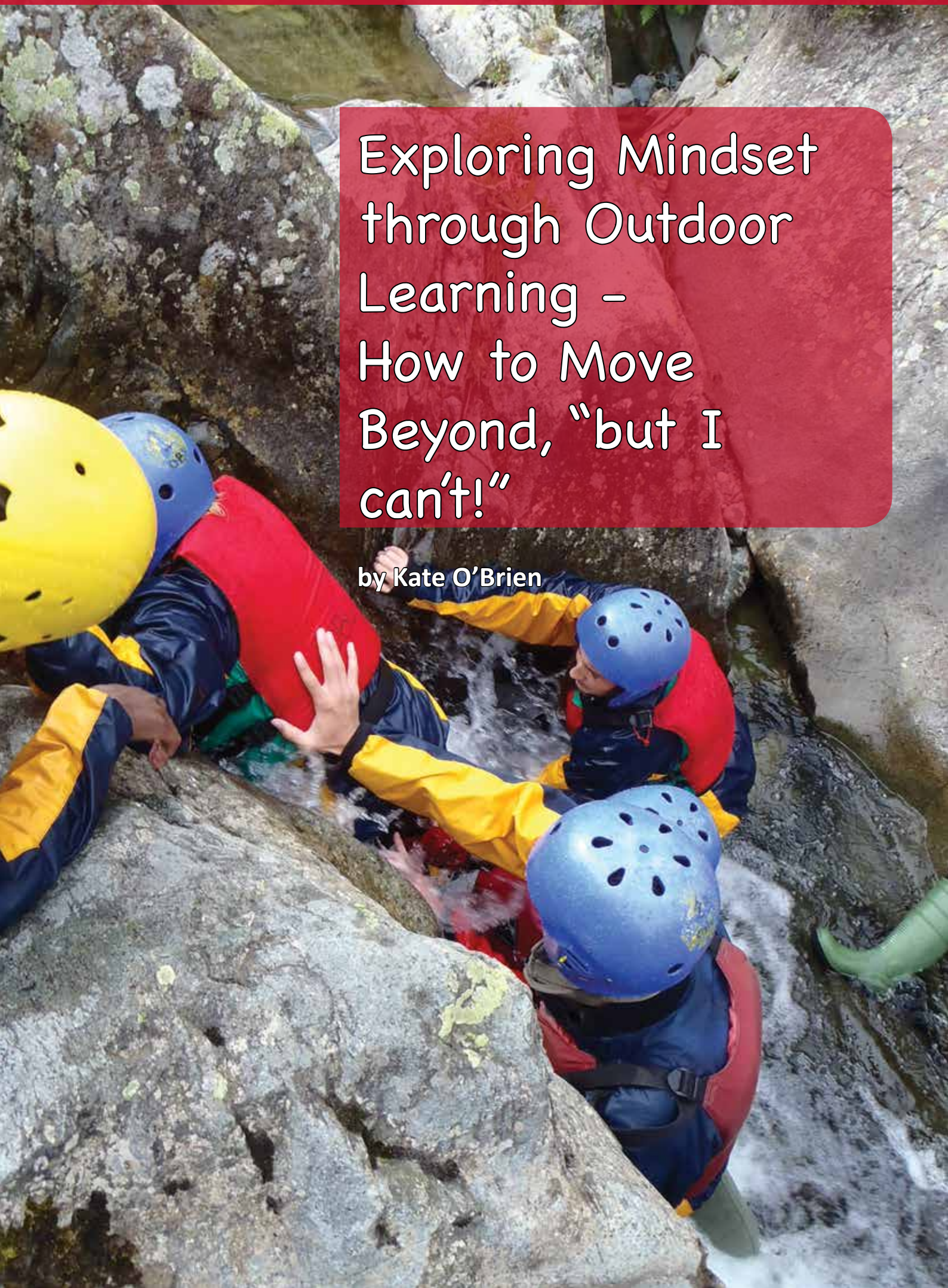
Disallowed (at least for now) from working because of his condition, we discussed his passions. Food was one, and cooking for his mum in particular. Volunteering, I argued, was work without pay, but no less valuable for that. Indeed, I was in this space, at this time, with this person, for this reason. Zaahir resolved to look for a community project where he could cook for others and volunteer at that. I said I'd help.

I said goodbye to Zaahir and jogged off to collect my controls. I decided to walk instead; it was a nice park, and the light at this time was nice too. And it gave me the rhythm and pace and stimulus to reflect on this short time spent with another, and this thing folk call orienteering.

It's a sport I love but when I explain why, so often I see eyes roll. For me, it's what it means for our autonomy that matters. The fact that you have to make your own decisions, take responsibility for your own mobilities. These are wonderful things. When considering the youth I have worked with throughout my life, and my years' spent studying the philosophy of education, can there be aims finer than these? Maybe orienteering is a philosophy of education in its own right; a way of linking theory with practice - a rare form of praxis. If not, it might at least be a way of seeing and being with the world that brings light and a feeling of empowerment into the lives of not just Zaahir but many more besides. ■

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Photo: with Creative Commons License by Oskar Karlin





Exploring Mindset through Outdoor Learning – How to Move Beyond, "but I can't!"

by Kate O'Brien

"But, I can't!"

This is a statement frequently uttered by participants we work with on outdoor programmes. I began to wonder what this actually meant and how to move beyond those three small, but powerful, words. My journey took me to the urban wilds of London to spend two years studying towards a Masters in Applied Positive Psychology. Subsequently I carried out a study considering the impact of a series of interventions underpinned by psychology, within an outdoor programme. This article considers what we can do as practitioners to support young people in understanding the psychological processes involved with challenge, so they are best able to make decisions to promote success in their lives. Positive Psychology (PP) is a branch of psychology which seeks to use psychological theory, research and interventions to recognize and develop human potential. Recent literature suggests that finding congruent themes from within psychology and outdoor personal development (OPD) may support our understanding of some of the processes underlying the success of outdoor courses, and may also strengthen the impact of programmes. It has also been suggested that the impact of OPD courses may be enhanced if instructors have an awareness of the factors which contribute to particular areas of psychological development, and explicitly focus upon these[1].



When studying PP, Mindset theory[2] stood out as being particularly useful to practitioners working in OPD. Mindset theory offers a model representing the way in which underlying beliefs regarding the self can transform into powerful motivational processes to construct significant patterns of cognition (thinking), affect (feeling) and behaviour (doing) in young people. The theory explains how different meaning systems, and subsequent self regulatory processes, are created in achievement situations, depending upon a person's beliefs regarding the fixed or malleable nature of intelligence, personality and character. Such patterns are particularly significant when people are faced with challenge or failure.

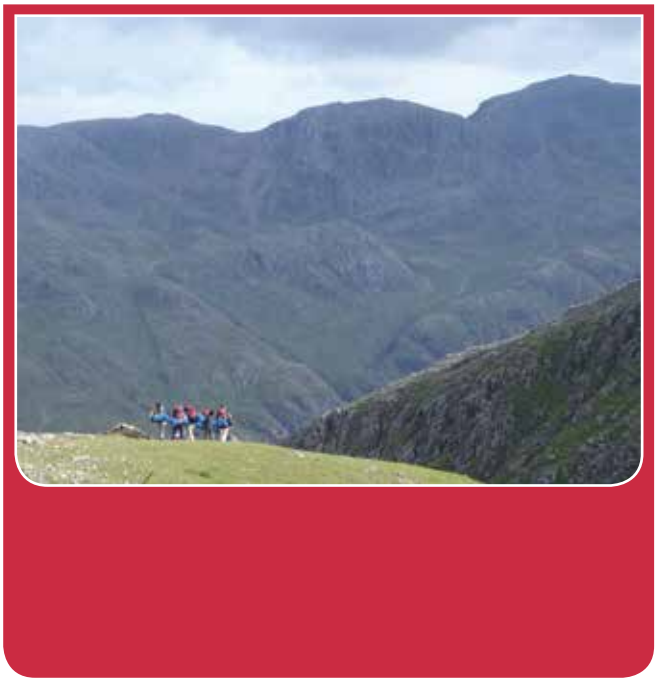
Dweck describes two different Mindsets. Someone who has a Fixed Mindset believes that intelligence, personality and character are fixed from birth, therefore these are uncontrollable entities which they can't change. This creates a meaning system focused on proving oneself, and the pursuit of tasks which will reaffirm this pre-set ability. Challenges are viewed as a threat to their abilities, if they cannot meet them, failure becomes a final measure of aptitude, and application of effort is seen as a measure of their incapability in that area. Subsequently those with a Fixed Mindset tend to avoid challenges for fear of revealing weaknesses, give up easily, become distracted and withdraw effort when things become difficult. Conversely a person with a Growth Mindset believes that intelligence, personality and character are malleable, therefore open to change and development under personal volition. People with a Growth Mindset seek out challenges seeing them as opportunities to learn. They also see effort as the switch which can turn on their abilities, believing it to be a necessary ingredient for success. This means when things become difficult a person with a Growth Mindset will tend to adopt new strategies, find solutions, apply more effort and use self monitoring to overcome the challenge. It is important to note that Mindsets can be context dependent, with people holding variable beliefs in different life domains, however people generally trend one way or the other.

There have been huge research efforts[3] in the past 20 years to create the existing body of evidence suggesting that Mindsets do matter, they have huge implications for creating successful outcomes in young peoples' lives, and crucially, they can be changed[4].

Mindset presents a useful tool for outdoor practitioners who already work in a context where a variety of challenges come with the territory, personal effort is usually required for success, coping strategies are tested and opportunities for reflection, feedback and processing of the experience are frequently encouraged. Outdoor courses offer just the challenging circumstances required to illuminate the Mindset responses thereby creating a perfect opportunity for development. An understanding of Mindset theory and ability to facilitate this explicitly could maximise the strengths of this educational method by providing some underpinning scientific evidence regarding personal growth, as well as offering empirically validated intervention techniques which compliment the outdoor experience and strengthen the learning. Facilitators may be able to intervene in real time situations if they have an understanding of how each Mindset can play out, as well as teaching and encouraging the Growth Mindset throughout the course.

My study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of exactly this. Could teaching instructors to use Mindset interventions within an OPD course increase the impact of the course, in terms of self efficacy, resilience and change in Mindset? Around two hundred students, aged 11-14 took part in the study during 5 day OPD courses at The Outward Bound Trust's Ullswater Centre. The half who made up the control group experienced a standard Outward Bound course, while the other half making up the experimental

group experienced the Outward Bound course with a series of Mindset interventions interweaved throughout the programme. Both groups experienced similar adventurous activities and instructors were similarly experienced. A quantitative methodology was employed, using validated psychological measures pre-course, post-course and one month post-course. As with any study there were limitations, however the results were fascinating and showed some significant trends. Both the control groups and experimental groups significantly increased their self efficacy as expected. However, the most important finding may surprise. Only the experimental group, who experienced the Mindset interventions throughout their course significantly increased their resilience and moved towards a growth mindset. The results confirmed positive behavioural results experienced by myself and reported by the instructors using the interventions.



For the first time the study provides important evidence that combining a Mindset intervention within an OPD course can increase the impact of the course in terms of resilience and change in Mindset, potentially leading to sustained positive behaviour change. This supports growing evidence to suggest that OPD courses may be enhanced by understanding key psychological theory and may also offer advances in knowledge into the intricacies of the process by which OPD courses are able to impact on certain areas of psychological development.

If participants are explicitly encouraged towards the belief that they have personal control over their development, gain an understanding of the utility of effort when facing challenges and have built up a bank of transferable strategies to use when facing setbacks, they are more likely to feel resilient and display resilient behaviours in future situations. In this respect Mindset may offer outdoor practitioners a well researched and logical framework to use when processing challenging experiences with young people, which can contribute to enhancing resilience.

Below are some ideas which we have developed to introduce a Growth Mindset to participants and to encourage personal reflection and development throughout the course. These were used successfully in the study and are based on Dweck's framework of increasing **awareness** of the two Mindsets and one's personal tendencies, realisation that once we are aware we have a choice which Mindset to adopt, and finally we can make efforts to **change** our Mindset.

Introductory Session – students were introduced to the two Mindsets using laminated cartoons (see http://www.centreforconfidence.co.uk/flourishing-lives.php). In small groups students were asked to consider how each Mindset could affect their experiences at Outward Bound. Instructors stressed that there are two ways of thinking in challenging situations, and introduce the course as an opportunity to adopt a growth mindset, sharing what that would mean.

Personal Shields – Once students had been introduced to their programme for the week they were asked to complete a personal shield (this could be either on paper, or represented on the ground outside). They considered the following questions: Something you will have to work hard at this week? This was discussed as a good opportunity for challenge, effort, pushing oneself and adopting a growth mindset. Secondly they were asked, something you will find easy this week? This was discussed as an opportunity to support others. The two questions can be used to provoke discussion about the course, individual differences and the importance of supporting others in their challenges. Later the final two boxes of the shield were used to reflect on progress e.g. what strategies did you use when finding something difficult? Was this effective? Which activity was more rewarding, the easy one, or something you had to work hard at?

Mindset Cycle – Students were introduced to the idea that how they view situations (beliefs) will affect their emotions and thinking, which will in turn affect behaviour and ultimately the outcomes they experience. This can be introduced as a visual model using a simplistic cycle format representing how each Mindset response can lead to vastly different outcomes and future experiences. This was most effectively facilitated using a high impact activity with quick results e.g. getting over the commando wall, or similarly challenging problem solving activity which may evoke a mixed Mindset response from the group. The cycle can be drawn out in chalk or on paper. Again this activity was used to set up and promote the idea of being open to challenges, application of effort and employing different coping strategies when challenged (these

may be mental, physical or involve getting the required level of support from the group).

Two Brain Model - Students looked at the effects of the two Mindsets in greater detail using the two brain model (Dweck, 2000). They were asked to consider the first three elements of the model ("embracing challenges", "persist in the face of setbacks" and "see effort as the path to mastery") in relation to the next adventure they will be experiencing. They brainstormed what the team would be saying and doing in a Fixed versus a Growth Mindset. They also highlighted what strategies the team could use when they find things difficult. This was returned to after the adventure to look at real examples of when people showed each Mindset, and what strategies were most successful. They also began to consider how these strategies could be generalised to future situations.

Example of how an instructor facilitated moving from fixed mindset thinking to growth mindset thinking:



Mindset detectives – A more individualised intervention involves pairing people up at the start of a day with the intention that they would become "Mindset detectives" for each other. Students can focus on their partners responses to situations throughout the day and provide feedback in a facilitated session at the end.



Transfer of Learning – students can build up a group and individual "strategies bank" containing any useful transferable strategies they have used when challenged on the course (this can be done on a flipchart, or on post it notes in a box, or any other method of recording as long as they have something written to refer to at the end). Students in the study then completed an action plan based on using these personal strategies in new challenging situations at home or school in the few months after the course.

The study carried out suggests that simply taking part in an outdoor programme alone is not enough to increase resilience and change Mindset. Something deeper is required, arguably a series of progressive challenges undertaken in a supportive environment, combined with structured facilitation which focuses on the psychology of this area of development. Mindset may offer one theoretical model based on extensive research within the psychology field which can provide outdoor practitioners with a framework to use in supporting young people to develop their understanding of the psychological processes involved with overcoming challenges in their lives. ■

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Kate studied Outdoor Education in the Community at Strathclyde University before working at a number of centres and programmes within the UK and abroad. She has worked in personal development for 14 years, with some time out here and there to travel and pursue personal adventures. Kate recently completed a Masters in Applied Positive Psychology and is passionate about enhancing practice by implementing learning from this widely researched area.
Please contact Kate if you would like further information or to read a full report of the study. Email: kateobrien29@hotmail.com
Photos: all from the author

What's it all about at the IOL Bushcraft Special Events?

Bushcraft workshops

- a description of these well supported special events

A report from Nick Winder

The IOL Bushcraft SIG offers 2 day workshop events, 2 or 3 times a year at various locations around the UK, though so far only in England (various locations) and Scotland (once!)

The aim of these workshops is to teach practitioners skills that will empower them to use bushcraft in their programmes and sessions. Bushcraft is a vast subject and everyone has something to learn so the workshops also provide an opportunity for the sharing of ideas and the promotion of best practise.

The skills covered complement those that appear in the Bushcraft Competency Certificate.(BCC) Specifically those covered by the BCC are; fire by friction, fire by other means, safe knife and saw use, shelter building, producing safe water, basic tree and plant ID and basic all around knowledge. If you need to learn these skills you should attend one of the courses that are regularly advertised in Horizons and on the website.

The SIG offers these workshops at a very discounted rate to SIG members (£55), discounted rate to IOL members(£80), and a reasonable price to non members(£120). We see this as a way to give something to the membership and to increase the use of bushcraft, which we are all passion-ate about. All the SIG executive, who organise these events, and often instruct at them, believe in the power of learning in the wilds through the use of these ancient but relevant skills.

Who attends this events? Anyone who has an interest in bushcraft on any level, who wants to learn and network with like minded people. We get teachers, instructors, youth workers, students, bushcraft professionals, in short, anyone with a desire to discover new skills for their own interest or to empower their own instructional work..

The workshops run from 1100 on day 1 through to early afternoon of day 2. This allows six separate two hour workshops to be offered and the topics covered have been wide ranging, as befits such a massive subject area. Most topics are covered twice.

Workshop have included:

TRACKING - basic skills in animal and human tracking

SPOON CARVING - take a green stick and create a spoon

WILD FOODS - wild edible plants, fungi and fruits, and how to make tasty meals with them

CAMP FURNITURE - chairs and tables, all made from natural materials

BOW MAKING - make a serviceable bow and arrow from raw materials

CAMP BAKING - both damper breads and risen breads

CORDAGE MAKING - making string from a variety of wild materials

DUTCHARROWSANDSPEARTHROWERS-makethemandlearntousethem

KNIFE SHARPENING - how to do it well and properly

USING POLE LATHES - a real traditional craft skill, lathe work without electricity

FLINT KNAPPING - making useable blades and tools from flint

TIN STOVES - wood cooking stoves can be made from cast off tins

PREPARING GAME - how to skin and prepare rabbits, birds, etc for cooking

PUMP DRILLS - how to build a drill that will bore through stone and wood accurately

THROWING STICKS AND BULL ROARERS - make them and use them

SPLITTING GREEN WOOD - how to do it well and use what you create

ALTERNATIVE FIRE MAKING - there are many ways of generating fire

MAKING WHISTLES FROM GREEN WOOD - can get noisy

WEAVING BASKETS - weaving willow or brambles etc to create baskets or trays

MAKING GRASS MATS - create a kneeling or sleeping mat

POT HANGERS - the kettle or pan needs to be suspended over the fire - how to

PREPARING FISH - descaling and gutting, and how to cook them

HAND DRILL - making fire with hands and sticks

..... and others!





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The instructors are very experienced in their subjects and are chosen by the SIG exec. from those known to be able to deliver quality sessions, from the bushcraft industry or further afield, but we will bring in specialists when it is appropriate e.g. for flint knapping. The instructors will happily instruct those who have no knowledge of the topic and hope that they engender a desire to master and use the skills taught. We derive our greatest pleasure when we hear that a topic has been used to involve youngsters in outdoor skills, which has happened on several occasions when attendees return to later workshops, for example, we have been told about youngsters making and shooting with bows they made themselves over an hour or so, and gaining greatly from the concentration required, safe knife use, and satisfaction of success.

There will generally be about eight different topics covered during one event, with most topics covered more than once to allow people to attend what they want in case of clashes. We are very keen for people to request topics and will attempt to fulfil such when we get them. People sign up for the topics they want and change after each two hour session.

Food and drink arrangements. There is always a kettle on a fire to provide brews during the day, and while we provide water, everyone must provide their own food, which means mealtime can become a 'show and tell' session in its' own right! e.g., try my home made sausage etc. If people want to cook on modern stoves they are very welcome.

Toilet facilities vary from site to site, but are always of a reasonable standard. They are often variations on composting systems. If in doubt feel free to ask.

People sleep in tents or hammocks, or debris shelters, or bivvy sheets as they prefer and once it gets dark everyone shares tales around the fire over a few drinks. As soon as drinks come out, sharp tools are put away to avoid potential accidents. As with the food, many home-brews appear for people to try. The following morning follows a similar pattern oftwo hour topics, until mid afternoon when there is a short debrief and everyone departs, often with an assortment of new creations and skills.

We often combine a workshop with SIG meetings as they provide a chance to discuss things with the membership face to face. The Bushcraft SIG strives to do what its membership wants, and they regularly say they want more workshops, most recently up in Scotland where over 20 people attended and made the trip up worthwhile for all concerned. The membership is largely made up of outdoor professionals and teachers who do some bushcraft to augment their practise, and these are the people you would meet at a workshop.

I believe they offer superb value and achieve their aims and the feedback from members and attendees seems to corroborate this.

Once again, I have been filled with inspiration and re-energised. The whole thing was well organised and the instructors very knowledgeable and skilful. Even better than June! Well Done.

Thank you for a well thought out and planned weekend. I enjoyed every aspect. Look forward to doing it again

I was quite apprehensive before coming – not sure if I had enough experience- but everyone has made me feel most welcome and I have achieved so much with the help of all the tutors!

Set up, surroundings, tuition, banter excellent.

This is the first event of this type I have been to. I am a Forest School Leader and I will take away loads of great new ideas that I can use with my young participants.

Fantastic two days. Did not know what to expect but will go away with so many ideas. Please keep up the great work that you do.

Inspiring and enjoyable. Great to try things I have long been meaning to in a supportive and well taught format. A brilliant non threatening environment.

You can find out more, or book for events that are set, via the Bushcraft pages of the IOL website. Keep an eye on the website, in the newsletters and through invitations by email. ■



Background photo with Creative Commons License by John Lemieux. Others from the Bushcraft SIG

TREES IN WINTER



Winter is here and many of the trees in Britain have shed their leaves leaving them looking naked and exposed in their dormant state. It is still possible though to identify them as there are many tell-tale signs that will help us distinguish trees and which will enhance our skills as budding naturalists too.

Broad-leaved trees are often easily recognised when their characteristic leaves are out during the warmer summer months. During the winter, however, many of these trees, being deciduous, shed their leaves making identification more difficult.

There are many ways of identifying trees during this dormant phase such as tree form and outline, bark, twig, leaf scar and bud. Of all these characteristics probably the most reliable feature to use is the bud. Buds will develop into leaves, stems or flowers and are either protected by bud scales, which are modified leaves, or are naked where no bud scales are visible.

This brief guide highlights ten trees found growing widely across the British Isles and includes identifying features in the form of bud and bark.

Beech - Fagus Sylvatica

A tree characteristic of chalk downlands but grows well on light soils elsewhere. It arrived into the country during the Bronze Age. Its young bark is smooth and silvery-grey but roughens with age, sometimes becoming scaly and rippled. The leaves turn bronze in the autumn and often remain on the branches all winter. The buds are shiny-brown, thin and pointed.





Elder - Sambucus nigra

Growing as far away as north Africa and western Asia this is a native tree found in woods, scrub and waste places. It is often considered a weed, however it has many uses from wine-making to flavouring food and to treating flu! Its grey-brown bark is soft and cork-like and has dark spots – lenticels - used for breathing. The buds look like tiny pineapples and have spiky scales which are purple and appear opposite on the stem.





Rowan - Sorbus aucuparia

Often called Mountain Ash, although no relation of the Ash, Rowan is a rather solitary tree, seldom forming woods and can be found higher in the mountains than any other native tree. It was often planted outside houses to ward off witches and its strong, flexible wood was used for making tool handles. The bark is shiny, grey-brown and with dark dots. These are actually pores (lenticels) through which the tree breathes. Its buds are long, slender, dark purple and hairy.





Ash - Fraxinus excelsior

A widespread native tree whose wood is a natural shock absorber! It has long been used for making tool handles and vehicle frames and is known in Norse mythology as the tree of life. The young bark is smooth and greenish-grey turning grey and fissured (ridged) with age. It produces distinctive black buds.





English Oak – Quercus pedunculate

Native to Europe and Britain and living to over 800 years old this is a highly valued tree. Its strong and durable timber was at the heart of Britain's buildings, ships and industry. The young bark is smooth and grey-green. As the tree ages its bark develops short, narrow cracks and vertical plates. The buds are light brown and spirally set on the stem. They form distinct clusters near the tip.





Alder - Alnus glutinosa

Alder is a common sight along riverbanks, marshes and wet woods. It is unusual as it is the only broad-leaved tree to produce cone-like woody fruits making it easy to identify in winter. Its timber is rot-resistant and has been used to make clogs and charcoal. The bark is grey-brown with square plates developing in mature trees. The buds are purple-mauve and club-shaped on a short grey, scaly stalk.





Goat Willow - Salix caprea

There are over 300 species of Willow growing almost everywhere in the world, except Australia. There are 18 species native to Britain, along with the numerous hybrids, and they are characteristic of lake and riversides. Goat, or Pussy Willow, is identified by its pale grey bark. It is banded with diamond-shaped cracks and can develop shallow, criss-crossed ridges. Buds are produced on red, silver-haired stems and are rounded and with a single, red scale.





Hazel - Corylus avellana

Native across Europe to western Asia and north Africa Hazel is often grown for its nuts or fencing and charcoal. It grows as a multi-stemmed shrub which is readily coppiced producing a cluster of straight, flexible stems. The bark begins light grey-brown and slightly shiny with fissures developing in mature shoots. The bark can appear to peel in fragile strips. The buds are short, blunt with green-red scales. The shoots are roughly hairy.





Silver Birch - Betula pendula

The first tree to colonise Europe and north America after the last Ice Age. Despite its delicate appearance, the Birch is a pioneer tree rooting where most other trees cannot establish. It is fast-growing and often planted as a nursery for other tree species. Its bark is white with thin horizontal lines and dark diamond shapes and may develop thick, corky fissures with dark knobbly ridges. Its buds are cylindrical and alternate on the stem. The twigs are hairless with whitish warts.





Sycamore - Acer pseudoplatanus

Commonly found in woodlands and field boundaries. It is thought to have been introduced to Britain from Europe by the Romans. The young bark is smooth and silvery-grey but as it ages it darkens and develops cracks and curling square scales. Its buds are arranged in opposite pairs. They are egg-shaped with a pointed green end. ■







About the Author

Jim Langley runs Nature's Work, an educational consultancy. He is an Approved Provider for IOL and runs workshops for Mountain Training and the outdoor industry www.natureswork.co.uk

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Outdoor Therapy:

Where do you stand?

by Steve Johnson

In 2006, a multidisciplinary forum, hosted by the University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN) and comprising representatives of influential organisations such as the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP), the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP) and the Institute of Outdoor Learning (IOL) met to discuss the evolution of Outdoor Therapy within the UK. While it was recognised that there were many areas of common ground amongst a group of practitioners working along a continuum of provision, ranging from clinical based psychotherapy to forest based outdoor recreation providers, there was a need to reach a clearer service definition that would recognise and aid the development of the field. It was also recognised that there were extensive areas of overlap as shown in figure 1 (right) (Johnson 2012).

These areas included the fact that regardless of the person leading the intervention the client always has a range of issues to deal with, from their identity, background and beliefs, to their fears and hopes. In delivering an intervention the therapist or outdoor practitioner, may move from one segment to another, sometimes using an activity purely for recreation (such as swimming in a remote lake, at other times for the lessons that may be learned from it, such as reflection on a ropes course activity. Always seeking to ensure the intervention is effective for the client. Another way of portraying this concept visually is as a simple sliding scale as shown in figure 2 right.

Figure 1 - Scope of outdor therapy (Johnson 2012)

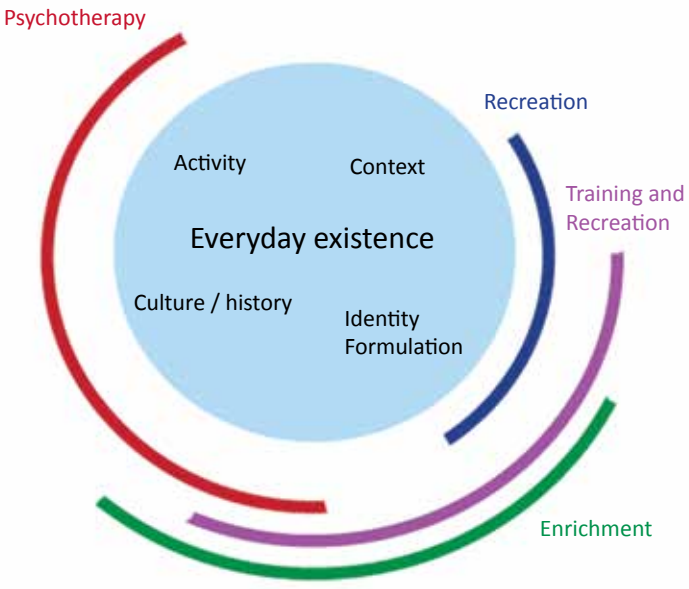
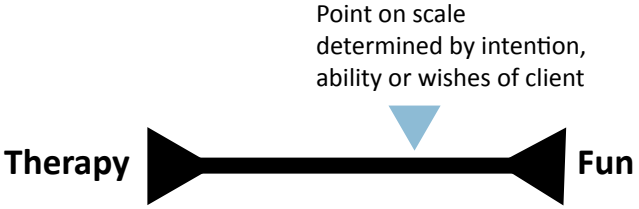


Figure 2 - Scale of intervention





In fact the client will themselves move between the segments as their own experience, sense of themselves, confidence in practice and achievement, even mood on the day change. The overlap between psychotherapeutic intervention and enrichment was deemed especially significant as both are therapeutic and it is the intention of the therapist (and/or client seeking help) that makes the difference. This is an area highlighted more than two decades ago in papers on Nature Guided Therapy (Burns 1998) and still being explored today.

The definition finally arrived at for Outdoor Therapy was that it:

- Uses a process of supported self-discovery to promote wellbeing and change
- Has some experience that takes place out-of-doors (recognition of interconnection to the environment and other themes)
- Recognises the outdoor place is an active component in the therapeutic process and that the process involves other components such as place, experience and reflection
- Understands that reflection (not reviewing) for the therapist and the client is an integral part of the process and that these reflective processes include what is happening for both the therapist/practitioner and the client and their relationship to the outdoor place.

Throughout this short article the term 'Outdoor Therapy' rather than 'Adventure Therapy' has been used. This is also a result of both the meeting referred to above and a meeting of the special interest group in Llanberis where members felt that while Outdoor Therapy included Adventure Therapy, 'Adventure' suggested a more specific series of activities that may therefore exclude members practicing from a perspective more linked to the role of the environment e.g. ecotherapy (Buzzell & Chalquist 2009, Clinebell 1996).

So whatever you current role, or choices for future development, involvement in the IOL Outdoor and Adventure Therapy Special Interest Group could provide you with new insights or directions, from the power of sense awareness (Burns 1998) to the role of Solution Focused Brief Therapy, from the practice of mindfulness to how improving your environmental knowledge can impact on group engagement.

Current membership of the group ranges from people running their own business to those working in centres, from Clinical Psychologists and academics to Bushcraft and climbing instructors, all seeking an awareness of how our work in the outdoors has therapeutic benefits at whatever degree we provide a service and in being able to demonstrate this we are able to show the importance of our sector in the ongoing debate on health and wellbeing. ■

The current officers of the SIG are
Kaye Richards - Chair
Steve Johnson - Vice-Chair
Stephan Natynczuk - Secretary

All can be contacted via email to the IOL office.

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Other Journeys

In October 1989 I was invited to Czechoslovakia to take part in an environmental education conference organised by an environmental youth movement called 'Brontosaurus' and supported by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). This 'Touch' conference was a different kind of meeting for a country still part of the Soviet bloc. There were no formal speeches from the podium but a series of hands-on indoor and outdoor workshops designed to encourage personal awareness and environmental action.

As I travelled back from the conference through dimly-lit Prague it was clear that the beginnings of political change were taking place in Europe. East German refugees were moving into the city en route for West Germany. Just a few weeks later the 'Velvet Revolution' took place when huge non-violent demonstrations in Czechoslovakia led to the overthrow of the Communist government.

In 1990 the 'Touch' conference, with the theme of 'Breaking through Barriers' was hosted by Low Bank Ground Outdoor Education Centre in the Lake District and supported by the Centre for Global Education and WWF (UK). This was a great opportunity to challenge East- West perceptions, share ideas and discuss how to encourage education for sustainability in the new Europe. These early 'Touch' conferences have led over the intervening years to many joint European projects, including international youth camps, the creation of outdoor and environmental centres, youth and outdoor leaders' workshops, the design and dissemination of educational materials and setting up of local Agenda 21 community initiatives. Many other networks are now well established and there is widespread co-operation in outdoor and environmental learning, both in research and practice, across Europe.

I returned to the Czech Republic this year to work with friends from these earlier conferences and took part in outdoor and environmental workshops in Zlin, in the east, and at Horni Marsov close to the Krkonoše National Park. There are examples of exciting new Czech projects such as outdoor kindergartens and schools involved in growing and producing healthy foods and drink for their communities. But it is clear that the exuberance following the 'Velvet Revolution' has gone. We discussed Europe's current issues and how we all face another dramatic turning point in our history. On 17th November, the anniversary of the 'Velvet Revolution', I travelled by train to Prague under heavy skies. The particular day, the weather and the landscape provoked these thoughts:.



The wind came at night,
Bending branches.
Apples bounced,
Bruised and bloodied
Like poppies
Onto a sorrowful earth.

And now, sombre clouds
Shroud the land
And distant poplars
Strike arrows
Into a cruel sky.

Sudden darkness,
We enter a cutting
Damp and rotting
Lit only by the ashen trunks
Of ghostly birch.

The Czech train trundles
From Trutnov to Prague
Stopping at forgotten stations
From a former Empire,
Where masters and mistresses,
Capped in cherry red,
Step out to salute
Our carefree passage.

The land is weeping on this
November morning.
The ecstasy of Velvet is no more
As fellow humans stagger
Across our cherished Europe
Driven by fear and a yearning to arrive
Their journey is no sanitised adventure
But a desperate need to survive.

Tomorrow I'll travel beyond this sadness
To a world of colour and warmth,
A home, a haven, secure in comfort.
What fate has chosen this for me?
Can our good fortune not
Embrace these poor souls
Who've fled in terror
On other journeys
From the soil
They knew as home?

GEOFF COOPER is a Fellow of the Institute for Outdoor Learning. He chairs the Adventure and Environmental Awareness Group and is an interviewer for LPIOL and author of "Outdoors with Young People".

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Active Ageing and the Outdoors:
A Response to Hickman, Beard and Inkster



by Elizabeth C.J. Pike and Johnny Weinstock

The article 'Ageing and the Outdoors'[5] (Horizons 71) considered that one likely legacy of older adults taking part in outdoor activities was that older adults actively refused to 'act their age'. The article called for the formation of a discussion group on active ageing and the outdoors to develop and share understanding of this expanding area. This article shares some findings from our research into experiences of the outdoors in later life, and also considers what might be meant by "acting your age".

Attitudes to age in the outdoors

The majority of outdoor adventurous activities initially developed in countries such as the UK and the USA during the late 19th and early 20th centruries . The dominant theory of development at that time emphasised the need for young people to engage in such activities because of their perceived benefits for physical growth and character development, while older people were discouraged from engaging in adventurous activities for fear of over-stressing their frail bodies[1], and because such activities were considered inappropriate "at your age"[7]. As a result, although outdoor adventurous activities were believed to have physical and mental benefits, older people were marginalised and unable to readily access these opportunities. Indeed, a quick glance through past issues of Horizons indicates a dominance of articles, comment, and images related to young people's experiences of outdoor adventure.

This article will consider three key issues for active ageing and the outdoors:
- the processes through which older people might become involved with outdoor adventure;
- how older people derive meaning from outdoor adventure; and
- challenges to older people's participation in outdoor adventurous activities. Our discussion is based on findings from several years of observation, interviews and analysing written documents related to those participating and offering education in the outdoors, all of whom are over the age of 65.

The processes through which older people become involved with outdoor adventure

For many, engagement in outdoor adventure has been a consistent feature of their lifestyles, while others may become involved with outdoor adventure in later life to experience something new and which may have the consequence of influencing other people's perceptions of them as an adventurous type of person. A 70-year-old outdoor educator explained that he had always been involved in outdoor adventure and described these activities as "ageless", since in the outdoors the age of the participant is secondary to the shared pleasure from the activities and environment[10].

Life expectancy is increasing in most countries and it is likely that there will be increased demand among older people for opportunities to engage in activities such as those delivered by the outdoor sector, with their perceived health and social benefits. Indeed, there is significant research evidence which suggests that older people seek social and inclusive activities that emphasise health, fitness, and cooperation, in preference to many traditional sports which feature competition and physical force. Take, for example, findings from a study of "wild swimmers" whose lifestyles contrast with the more usual perception that older people are frail, dependent, and socially isolated. One male, aged 64, interviewed in the study explained:

> My friends and family take it for granted that I go swimming and know it is a significant part of my life. They are interested and amused at the odd places I have found to swim in when on holiday…every ocean I've visited from the tropics to the arctic, remote rivers and lakes.[9]

Another recent phenomena has been the increasing numbers of "grown up gappers": older people who are taking the sort of "gap year" usually associated with teenagers, during which they have a break from their regular lifestyles to travel overseas and engage in adventurous activities. The *Travellers Worldwide* agency is one example of the industry that has developed to meet the needs of these older adventurers, and their website states: "*Grown-up* Gappers: If you've always thought that gap years and volunteering are for the 18 year olds out there, think again"[12].

Traditionally there has been an acceptance of what has been termed a "deficit model" of ageing: that growing old is a period of inevitable decline, dominated by the experience of diseases and other age-related problems that require interventions and treatment.
However, the lifestyle choices of those who take part in outdoor adventurous activities, such as these wild swimmers and grown-up gappers, has led to the development of a "heroic model" of ageing, that growing old can be associated with a pleasurable lifestyle, including engagement in a range of outdoor activities[11]. This resonates with the statement that older adults taking part in outdoor adventure are refusing to "act their age".

Neither the deficit nor the heroic model of ageing fully reflect in reality the views and experiences of older people. We should pay more attention to what has been described as "authentic ageing", or what might be described as "everyday ageing", ageing in ways that are meaningful to the individual[2]. Engagement in outdoor adventurous activities should not be understood solely as something "brave" or "heroic", not least because images of older people engaged in outdoor adventurous activities and refusing to "act their age" may mean that there is little support or recognition for older people who are not able or do not want to be "heroic"[11]. Consequently, the issue for us is not whether someone is "acting their age", but what meaning outdoor adventurous activities might have for people throughout their life course.

How older people give meaning to, and derive meaning from, their outdoor adventure experiences

Research helps us to understand that people might take part in outdoor adventure in later life to experience an alternative to, and



even challenge, traditional perceptions of older people. In contrast to other sporting activities which often take place in "safe" spaces, outdoor adventurous activities on mountains, in the air, and in open water, may be a sign of the "agelessness" described by the 70-year-old outdoor educator, who continued to explain that "in here [pointing at his head], I'm still 17. Why should age make a difference to what I do?".

The article Character Calmness and Carrying on [1](Horizons 68) looks at how outdoor activities might enable participants to demonstrate particular elements of "character" based on Goffman's[4] view that the development of character is predicated upon degrees of sacrifice and risk. When a person perceives danger in a situation, but proceeds regardless of the risk, this is an indication that they have what Goffman termed *courage*. If, in taking such perceived risks, an individual suffers a setback (whether physical, social or emotional), but continues with the activity with a full display of effort, this is regarded as *gameness*.

When older people display *courage* and *gameness*, they are able to redefine themselves as someone other than a vulnerable elderly person, and even become defined by others as an "outdoor adventurer". For example, a 75 year old Outdoor Educator said that his wife thinks "I'm stupid, I go rock climbing, 'it's stupid'", while one wild swimmer described how, as a 60 year old woman, her non-swimming friends thought she was "utterly mad, doing all this exercising", and another 65 year old male wild swimmer explained how his friends "think I'm a bit mad to go swimming in lakes and the sea particularly in this country". Despite the perceptions of risk of their families and friends, and subsequent social setbacks related to whether or not they were "acting their age", none of these participants could consider giving up their sport because it was such a meaningful part of their lives[9].

Challenges to older people's participation in outdoor adventurous activities

One consequence of the increased numbers of older people engaging in outdoor adventurous activities has been a recorded increase in the number of related accidents and injuries. A survey of sports injuries in Europe in 2012 found that, while there are less injuries in "traditional" sports among people aged over 60, this age group is disproportionally involved in fatal riding, bicycling, boating and mountaineering accidents, while injury claims made by Britons over the age of 70 from sports such as scuba diving, mountaineering, and skiing, increased from five percent of total claims in 2006 to nearly 20 percent in 2010[6].

The numbers of injuries incurred in later life can contribute to negative stereotypes of older persons and their (in)ability to safely engage in outdoor adventure. For example the Director of a large British insurance broker that offers insurance advice and cover for many sports organisations, stated: "While older people may think they are capable of taking risks with their bodies, the reality is that they are more vulnerable"[8]. The message being presented by this company is that older people should carefully consider whether or not they should engage in outdoor adventure. We know that older people may have to pay higher prices for insurance, or may not be able to gain insurance at all, for their participation in outdoor adventure, which is in itself a barrier to participation[10].

Implications for the Outdoor Sector

By listening to the voices of some older participants in outdoor adventure, it is possible to identify the meanings that are derived from engagement in such activities, and the possibilities they offer for redefining identity: rather than being defined as vulnerable old people, participants feel energised by their participation and some believe that others see them differently. However, despite these possibilities, many institutions and organisations continue to perpetuate the stereotype of the fragility of the ageing body in ways that may be limiting to participants, while some in the media appear to delight in producing stories about "heroic" older people.

Through further research, and engaging in discussion we may be better able to understand how we might support the development of outdoor adventurous activities which are relevant to the needs and interests of older participants, and move away from discussions of whether or not someone is "acting their age". This will help outdoor practitioners and providers to lead the way in challenging limiting stereotypes of older people and targeting provision beyond the younger generation who are so often the focus of attention in the Outdoor Sector. ■

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Johnny Weinstock is, and has been for a very long time, a youth worker in Hertfordshire specialising in outdoor education. He has a keen interest in giving both young and older people the opportunity to be involved in outdoor activities, and he designs and builds bikes which offer a variety of cycling experiences for people with a range of abilities. He has published papers suggesting methods for improving and measuring the effectiveness of outdoor adventure.

Photos: from the authors

IOL insights

What we have been doing on your behalf....



VOICE

- The UK Government's Department for Education called for evidence to inform **a review of teacher CPD**. IOL responded on behalf of the Outdoor Learning community pointing to the need for early intervention in a teacher's career, preferably a practical introduction to outdoor learning during initial teacher training.

- The Institute is engaging with Natural England's Strategic Research Group helping to ensure a true reflection of the breadth of the outdoor learning sector and a **link between research activity and practice development.**

- IOL Scotland is **working with SAAF** to ask for a Cross Party Group in Scotland to consider the role outdoor learning plays in the introduction to healthy lifestyles.

- IOL continue to be a key member of the **English Outdoor Council** ensuring production and distribution of resources such as High Quality Outdoor Learning and representing the other members of the council and the wider sector at consultations where appropriate.

- IOL has helped the **Paul Hamlyn Foundation** consider the best way to ensure long term impact of their 'Learning Away' research into the use of residential programmes in education.

GUIDANCE

- A report on the **evidence base for the effectiveness of outdoor learning** has been published. Funded by The Blagrave Trust and prepared by Caroline Fiennes of Giving Evidence and Professor Sandy Oliver of UCL, the report calls for changes in the sector. Initial findings have been presented at the recent AHOEC & CLOtC conferences and IOL will seek to work with those wishing to implement the recommendations. The full report can be found on the IOL website under Guidance/ Research Reports. IOL chaired the steering group for the work.

- IOL's review of **gender balance in leadership** in the outdoor learning sector is under way. Led by Cress Allwood the initial online survey based work will lead to development of guidance and workshops to support organisations looking to benefit from greater gender balance in their leadership teams.

- A recent **update to AAIAC & ERCA's ropes course guidance** can be found on the AAIAC pages of the IOL website.

COMMUNITY

- **Regional conferences**. The last quarter has seen a healthy attendance at IOL regional conferences in the South West, Midlands, North East & North West. These conference provide both an opportunity to listen experienced practitioners and a chance to network with a wide variety of people from the sector.

- **Integrated Field Studies at the Field Studies (NAFSO) PDE Event 2016.** If you're based in the South and East and were unable to get to the NW event earlier and so missed the chance to consider how well your practice integrates field studies into other activities, this is the Conference to get to. Bookings will be taken over the Christmas period.

- **AFA SIG & BMC symposium.** There was a strong turnout for the Adventure for All SIG meeting at The Lake District Calvert Trust in November. Members of the SIG also supported the BMC symposium that was held immediately afterwards.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- The IOL Employer's Group has sought to give guidance on sustainable models for outdoor adventurous activity element of the **National Citizen Service** provision in the sector.

- **Working with the Outdoor Industry Association and funded by Sport England** a recent workshop examined the implications for outdoor learning providers of the findings of the review of outdoor recreation provision and consumption. Representatives from Sport England provided guidance on SE policy for outdoor sport engagement and received feedback from workshop delegates.

- The continuing work on developing an **employer led suite of apprenticeships** for the outdoor learning sector has moved to a time of wider consultation and will shortly result in a proposed model to be taken to The Department for Business, Innovation & Skills.

- The Institute continues to review and develop individual and course accreditation. Any feedback should be sent to the Professional Standards Manager neal.a@outdoor–learning.org. ■

Keeping in touch

Please don't forget to let IOL know if you are meeting your local MP, lobbying in the interests of the outdoor learning community, or have developed new or innovative ways of promoting access to outdoor learning. If you would value the opportunity of representing and promoting outdoor learning or developing standards in outdoor learning please contact one of the IOL Trustees, Regional Chairs or any members of the professional development team.

Contact IOL institute@outdoor-learning.org / 01228 564580 / www.outdoor-learning.org

Around the IOL Regions

● **Regional Conferences and Gatherings.** The last quarter has seen a healthy attendance at IOL regional Conferences in the South West, Midlands, North East & North West. These Conferences provide both an opportunity to listen to experienced practitioners and a chance to network with a wide variety of people from the sector.

IOL South West Conference

Storm Abigail provided dramatic effects for the South West Regional Conference at the Mount Batten Centre in Plymouth. Dressed for the conditions it was great to see so many delegates ready for a variety of workshops. There were presentations by Nigel Olsham who engaged delegates in CBT and Mindfulness, while Orlando Rutter braved the weather to find numbers in the outdoors. RuSlack battled the wind to give delegates a taste of slacklinning, showing just what a Land Rover should be used for. A hot lunch warmed the delegates and the room was buzzing with chat after a successful morning.
Following national updates and contributions from the floor, the afternoon workshops got underway with the beach schools practitioner Lisa Downing recreating a beach experience inside. Final networking occurred at the end of the day in the bar.



IOL North East Conference

This was held at Carlton Outdoor Education Centre, Carlton in Cleveland. The Keynote Presentation: Re-claiming Adventure was by Dr. Simon Beames. Thanks to everyone who came and joined us for a good day!

IOL North West Practitioner Gathering (Entirely Outdoors!)

Held in the wonderful surroundings of Low Wray near Ambleside this pracittioners event was very well attended as usual.
A large choice of outdoor sessions were enjoyed by almost 200 outdoor practitioners and students. ■



An IOL survey to aid research

Research into Gender Parity in Outdoor Sector Leadership



by Cressida Allwood, MA

Today, the number of women and men in positions of power and influence within the outdoor sector is unknown, although a strong male majority seems evident. Yet it is widely recognized that organisations with a more gender-balanced leadership outperform those with less. Gender diversity raises the IQ of boards and impacts on the quality of decision making. Creative problem-solving and business performance is significantly improved by the addition of women's leadership perspectives.

Previous research into leadership and gender in the outdoors has sought to understand the female perspective in a 'man's world'. It has omitted to ascertain the views of men on the (sometimes sensitive) subject of gender parity.

Now the Institute for Outdoor Learning is sponsoring research to ascertain how men and women can work together to create greater equality of opportunity within the outdoor sector. Work is underway to gain further insight and produce Statements of Good Practice for the benefit of all members.

This research comprises two phases:

- The first is a survey to provide a snapshot of the current situation. How many men are there at the helm and how many women?
- The second phase involves the creation of a working party to consider the future: What do we want leadership in the outdoors to look like? What needs to change and how do we plan for this? How can men and women work together to co-create more highly functioning teams?

It's time to learn from leaders who have built gender-balanced teams and build on the pockets of good practice from within and outside of the sector. Greater awareness and understanding of how to collaborate more effectively will help us build innovation, better business performance and customer connections.

A more gender-balanced future requires skill, determination and courage. These qualities are inherent in our sector and offer the potential for stronger and more sustainable organisational performance. ■

IOL and AHOEC Joint National Conference

IOL and AHOEC are joining forces to host a joint Conference in October 2016

It's been a particularly busy conference season across the Outdoor Learning community. We hope you've found time to benefit from some new thinking and opportunities to develop new contacts at one of the many events of the last few months. The Institute continues to work hard at finding ways of ensuring the different meetings, workshops and conferences are as joined up as possible. Though we should celebrate the diversity in our sector it can be frustrating when too many different events take place covering similar but different issues. In an effort to manage this IOL and The Association of Heads of Outdoor Education Centres (AHOEC) are holding a joint conference in October 2016.

The event will take place over 3 days 13th-15th October at Yarnfield Park, Staffordshire, with AHOEC focused activity, joint strategic issues and IOL practitioner workshops.

This is an encouraging development in the way our sector works and we hope will be only one of many such future joint initiatives with different member organisations.

Plans are being made for the programme and the delegate options. We expect to be able to publish details open bookings early in 2016. ■

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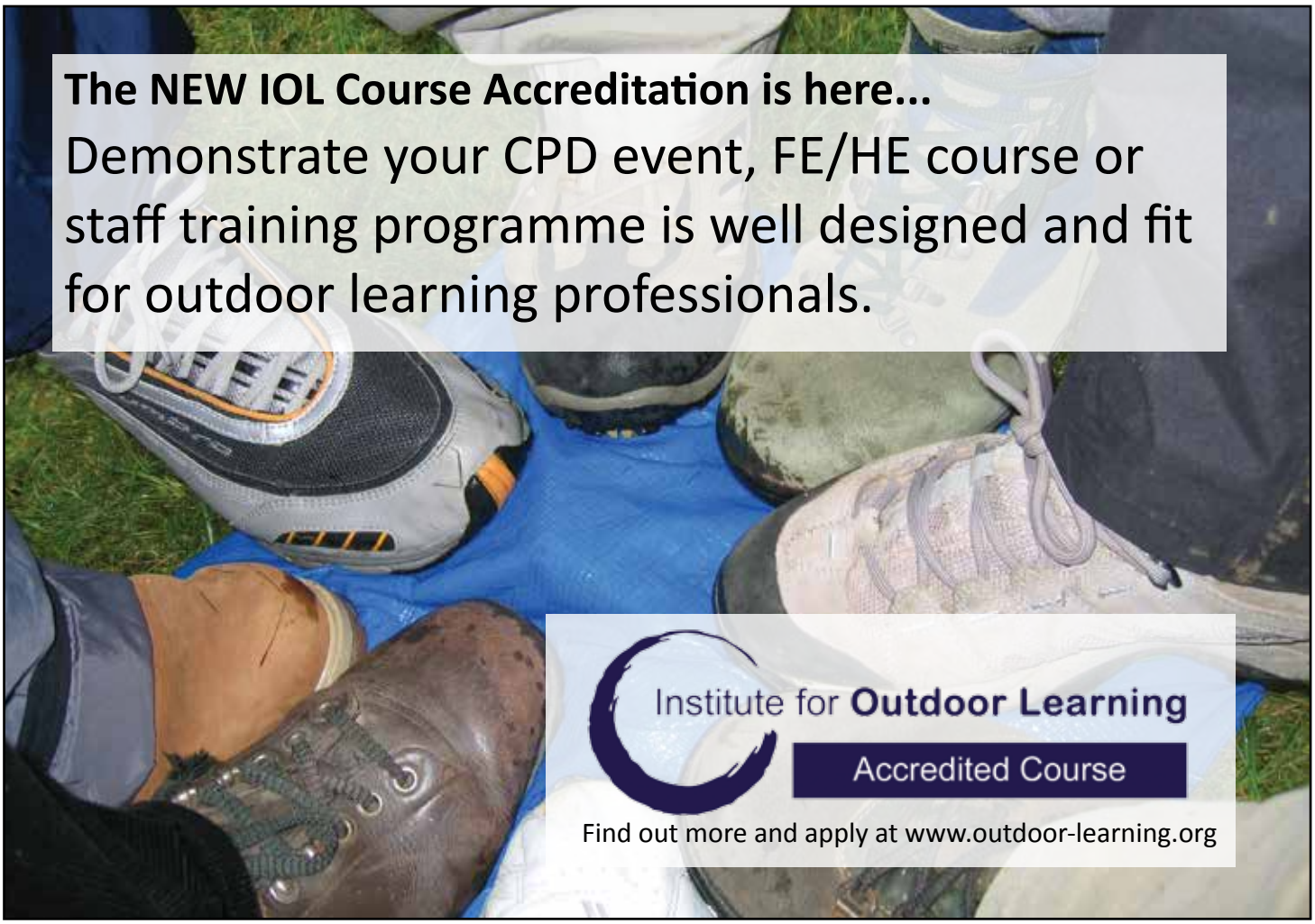
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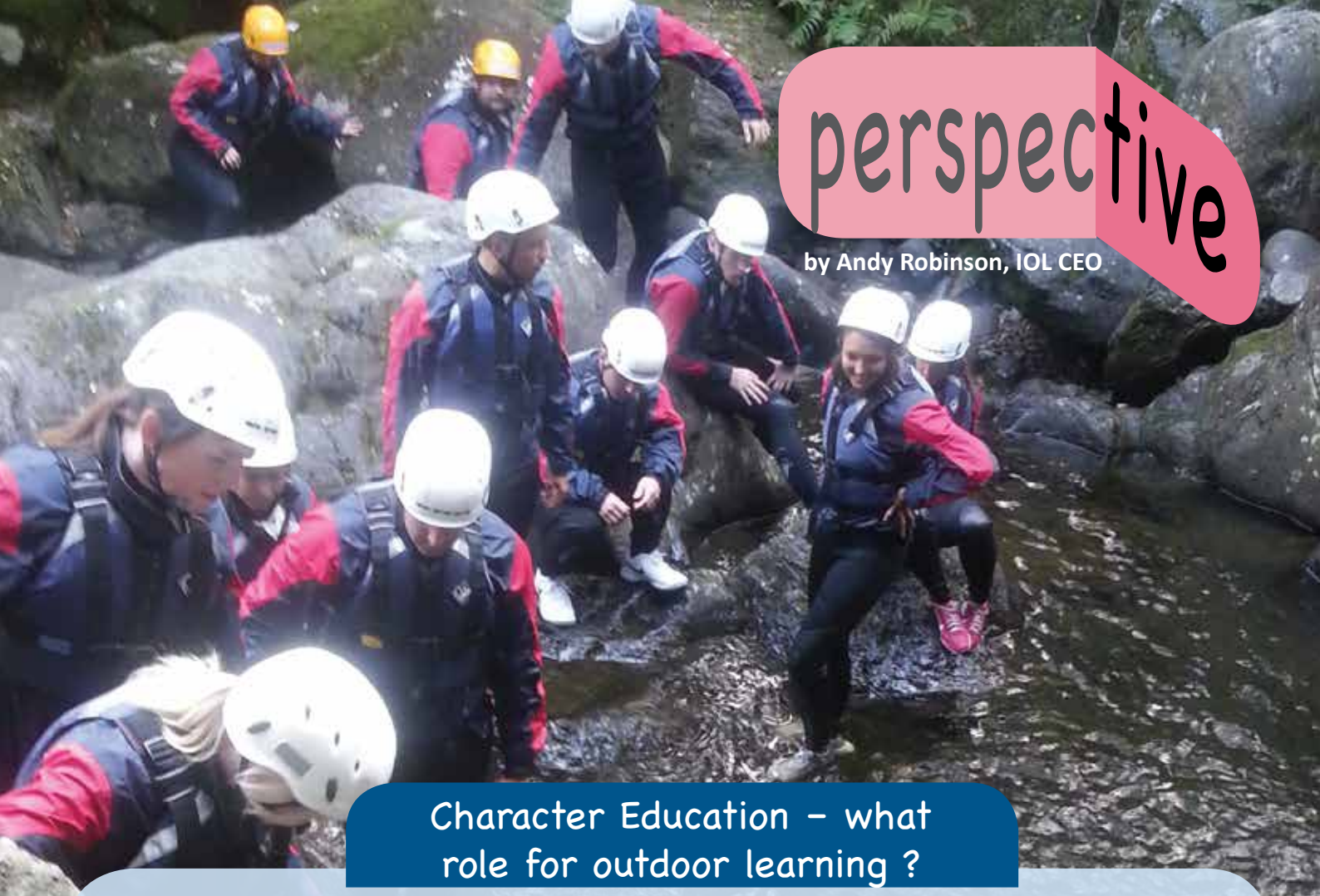


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perspective

by Andy Robinson, IOL CEO

Character Education – what role for outdoor learning ?

I suspect that many outdoor practitioners will have a fairly clear view of how their practice can play an important role in the development of character with children and young people. Though a discussion about the most impactful approaches to developing character is worth having, the question I am posing here is at a more structural level; where in a child or young person's life can outdoor learning help to build character?

Before we answer that question we need to briefly consider what is currently meant by Character Education and why has it gained such profile in the children and young people agenda. Back in the summer I had an interesting interview with a researcher from DEMOS (the leading cross-party think tank) as part of their preparation of a report Character Nation. The report picks up different approaches and emphasis placed on formal and informal approaches to developing skills for life or 'personal development'. It goes on to use The Jubliee Centre's definition of character : moral virtues such as courage, honesty, humility, empathy & gratitude; intellectual virtues such as curiosity and critical thinking; performance virtues such as resilience, application & self-regulation; and civic virtues such as acts of service and volunteering. Whatever the overarching name given to this area of learning and development it is clear that it is a priority for the UK Government as it considers the efficacy of the education system and the needs of employers and wider society.

More recently The Scout Association has teamed up with DEMOS to consider how their approach to character development might be made more accessible to school children. This piece of research has made it quite clear that access to uniformed organisations like Scouts, though attractive to many young people across the socio-economic range, is very unequal and bias towards schools from economically stronger areas. Given the amount of outdoor learning activity undertaken by such uniformed organisations, as part of their approach to character development, it is reasonable to say that opportunities for outdoor learning outside of school are also quite unequal.

So we have a position where there is a growing appreciation of the role the outdoors can play in character development, as well as education attainment and health. Should we as the outdoor learning community continue to largely focus our efforts on working through schools as part of their formal provision or should we put more time and energy into seeking more alternatives? Recent research such as Natural England's Natural Connections project has measured some success with increased volumes of outdoor learning but has also clearly picked up the competing pressures on teachers and schools. It is also clear that alternative structures such as outdoor sports clubs are often not set up or run to attract and develop children and young people outside of competition focused activity.

So what is the solution to developing the role for outdoor learning in character education? Inevitably I think it is a range of solutions.

- Shifting towards an approach to outdoor learning like Education Scotland's curriculum for excellence
- Developing approaches to outdoor learning such as: 'do try this at home' or 'outdoor homework'
- Encouraging all ages, children and parents/grandparents to explore their local outdoors
- Increasing outdoor learning input and placements in initial teacher training will make a difference to the amount of outdoor learning in schools.
- Building on the success of initiatives like the National Citizen's Service, to provide a range of accessible affordable models for young people that connect outdoor learning with community responsibility.
- Finding sustainable ways of connecting our increasingly urban based population with national parks and other rural or green locations.

The solution to establishing outdoor learning's place in Character Education will not be a simple one; but one thing is clear; simply continuing the existing outdoor learning provision and trends will not develop the sector's role in Character Education. So what do we want to do?

As ever if you'd like to influence policy, practice or research please contact any of the Institute team. ■

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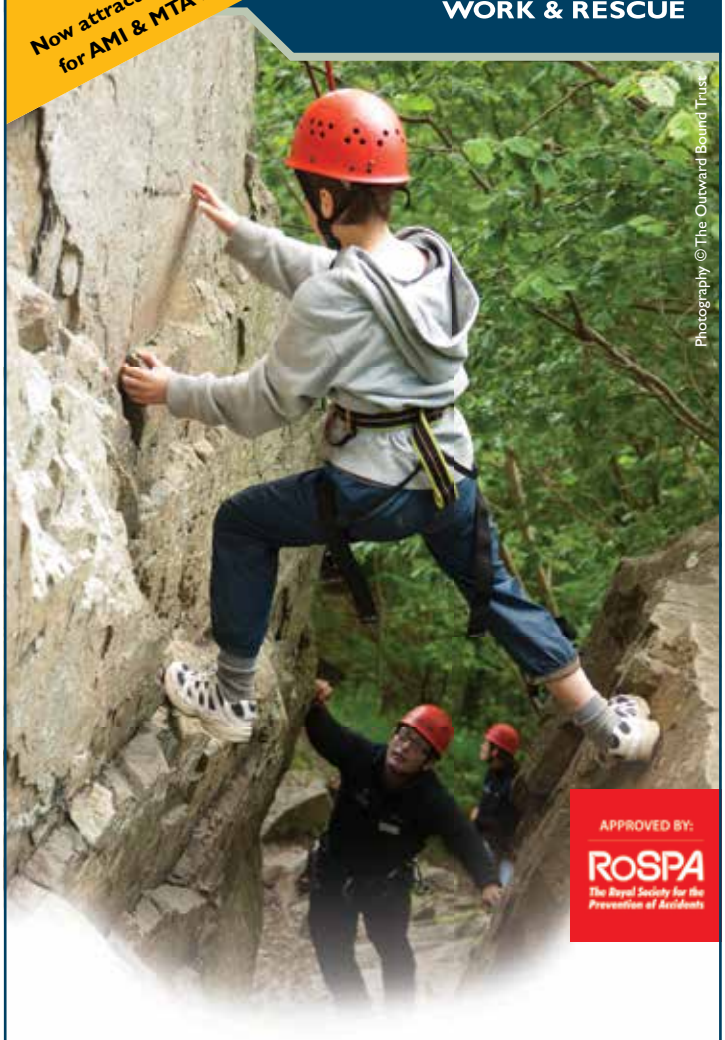
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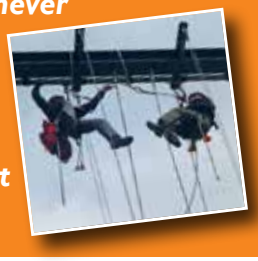
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