

ADVENTURE-BASED COUNSELING: THE BASICS & BEYOND

- **History of ABC**
 - Dr. Kurt Han, a highly regarded and very innovative German educator, began an educational program known as *Outward Bound* in the 1930's at the Gordonstoun school in Scotland
 - Dr. Han had only two students in the program
 - He felt the school curriculum did not address the developmental needs of a child
 - Used an expedition to develop skills such as running, jumping, and throwing
 - The program was eventually adopted by a young British shipping Baron Sir Lawrence Holt to develop vital survivor skills in British sailors during World War II
 - Utilized challenging, adventurous outdoor situations
 - Participants gained confidence, redefined their self perceptions, developed compassion, acquired a sense of camaraderie with peers
 - Project Adventure began in 1971
 - Jerry Pieh, principal of Hamilton-Wenham (Massachusetts) High School, and his staff wanted to bring the benefits of wilderness emersion courses to the traditional classroom setting
 - Recreated many of the experiences associated of Outward Bound
 - Adventure-Based Counseling existed in its primitive form in the 1970s
 - It was used in school curriculum and in an outpatient hospital program
 - By 1982, there were over 500 educational institutions that had adopted a portion of the model
- **Theoretical Perspectives & Rationale**
 - Counselors and clinicians from various perspectives (i.e., Adlerian, behaviorist, psychoanalytic, humanistic, religious, etc.) have been able to use and interpret the program through their theoretical lens.
 - Well researched from a multitude of perspectives
 - Generally, outcome findings for adventure-based recreation programs fall into six major categories:

- Leadership, self-concept, academic, personality, interpersonal, and adventuresomeness
- Antecedent variables that have found to have an impact:
 - Age: Younger participants show the greatest development
 - Sex: Mixed findings; some indicate no difference; others indicate that females experience a greater amount of development
 - Prior experience: Not widely studied, but preliminary results indicate that it plays a role
- **Main components of an ABC session:**
 - Briefing
 - Leaders give instructions to the group
 - Emphasize the non-negotiable safety procedures
 - Share information in a give-and-take manner
 - What is said is directly related to the experience/adventure that is about to occur
 - Leading
 - Trust exercises
 - Games that foster a sense of fun and cooperation
 - Problem-solving exercises that encourage individual and group initiative
 - Humor/fun
 - Rope course experiences
 - Expeditions
 - All exercises serve to encourage the improvement of self-concept
 - Debriefing
 - The experience that just occurred is evaluated by the group
 - Everyone typically gets a chance to talk
 - Some debriefings are directive and involve the instructor talking and the students listening
 - Generally operate within a group process and ask questions such as:
 - What did we do?
 - What does it mean?

- What are we going to do about it in our own lives?
- Repeating
- **Applications of ABC**
 - School
 - Classroom
 - In-school suspension
 - After school programs
 - Work
 - Leadership development
 - Increased colleague cohesion
 - Establish/maintain strong working relationships
 - Athletics
 - Increase group, as opposed to self, focus
 - Develop leadership/team captains
 - Intimate Partners
 - Increased cooperation
 - Cohesive problem solving strategies

References

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