

WHICH BENEFITS?

Experiential Education (EE) engages all senses and neuro-pathways so as to lead into a deeper cognitive awareness or consciousness, a greater applied understanding, and a readier autonomic responsiveness to all situations from physical through environmental to social and emotional.

TEN CATEGORIES

EE benefits can be arranged into ten categories. Here are a few examples from a vessel of many.

1. **Enjoyment:** Experiential (EE) programs tend to be fun. EE activities range from exercise in the great outdoors (hiking, biking, skiing, paddling, etc.), through solving problems (ropes or challenge courses, group or team initiatives, outdoor living, etc.) to nature immersion (restoration, rejuvenation, etc.).
2. **Intrapersonal:** EE activities can benefit the psychological self by developing character or identity, increasing confidence or skill, and enhancing self-efficacy or resilience.
3. **Interpersonal:** EE activities can benefit the social self by developing teamwork or trust, boosting prosocial or mediation skills, and improving communication or cooperation.
4. **Ecological:** EE activities can develop a sense of eco-awareness or understanding of how natural elements are connected in a fragile network of dependence. Environmental stewardship involves the sensible care of natural resources, especially because some activities could not function without these.
5. **Protection:** EE activities can also develop a sense of eco-consciousness or willingness to value and take action to conserve nature and protect the local environment. Going beyond this, sustainability involves taking action to mitigate and resolve global issues.
6. **Spiritual:** EE activities can grow an affinity for previously unknown places and expand a kinship for previously unfamiliar people.
7. **Academic:** EE can be a direct part of formal education (pre-school, K-12, and college) or can be applied as alternative or informal learning. EE has been shown to improve academic performance (reading, writing, arithmetic, and other subjects), as well as aid in student retention and graduation. EE tends to be transdisciplinary, project-based, and learner-centered while using all senses, domains, intelligences, and learning styles.
8. **Health & Wellness:** The physically active or kinesthetic element of EE obliges exercise and this leads to better fitness and overall physical, mental, social, and spiritual health.
9. **Economic:** Many EE activities make financial contributions to the local economy through employment and the purchase of goods and services. They also aid societal prosperity by reducing healthcare costs and increasing productivity of their clients and customers.
10. **Skills Learning:** along the way to realizing some of the above benefits, other skills are gained, such as how to do the EE activities safely and without damaging the natural environment. Learning new activity skills is not the primary reason for joining in EE, but these activities are the media by which other lasting benefits may be achieved.

Programs ought to know which benefits they impact and which they have no influence over. While this knowledge is useful in marketing, it is also critically important to motivating staff and creating the program mission, vision and values.

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FURTHER RESOURCES

ARTICLES

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