

Experiential Education Workshops on May 3rd: AEENW Region Conference.

Highlights of workshops for TAPG, Classroom and other educators, Outdoors and General EE tool and Techniques for all.

Adventure Therapy Workshops Include:

Utilizing Near-nature Resources in Community-Based Adventure Therapy

Programming – Learn to adapt adventure therapy activities for parks, yards, and other urban nature spaces.

Grief Tool Kit: Experiential Support for Youth Experiencing Loss – Explore experiential activities to support children and teens processing grief through connection.

Wheel Therapy: A Collection of Wheel-based Experiences – Engage in hands-on, movement-based work using wheels as metaphor and method for resilience and transformation.

Grow Your Professional Relationship with Nature – Deepen your personal and clinical relationship with nature to promote restorative, sustainable work across all practice areas.

Workshops for Teachers, Afterschool Programs, Camps, 4-H Clubs, and Experiential Educators

Outdoor Learning Spaces – Discover how to design and use outdoor learning environments to foster creativity, teamwork, and ecological literacy. Explore trail building, spontaneous learning, and hands-on tech tools like iNaturalist.

From Arrival to Thrival: Unleashing the Power of Youth Community Builders! – Learn quick, relationship-building activities that engage youth the moment they arrive. These tools boost focus, reduce distractions, and set a positive tone from the start.

Play with Purpose: Building Social-Emotional Skills & Group Agreements – Use games and group agreements to teach SEL and build group culture. Practice experiential debriefing and strategies to guide groups toward inclusive, supportive behavior.

Beyond the Blank Page: Strategies for Engaging and Effective Journaling – Explore diverse journaling methods—written, visual, and expressive—to help participants process emotions and build self-awareness. Great for all learning styles, especially neurodiverse youth.

Engaging Youth Meetings or Supercharging Field Trips & Overnight Programs: Training Staff, Parents, Teachers, and Chaperones for Success – Learn how to lead structured, youth-driven meetings that reduce behavior issues and build connection. Perfect for prepping chaperones or running powerful program sessions—includes free card tools for immediate use.

General Experiential Education Tools & Techniques

Practical ideas for leaders, educators, coaches, and facilitators across youth, outdoor, and workplace settings.

Unleashing Excellence: Leadership and Team Building Lessons from Dog Mushing! – Discover how the teamwork, endurance, and strategy of the Iditarod can inspire stronger leadership, employee engagement, and high-performing teams.

Redefining the "Comfort Zone": Understanding Risk, Choice, and Self-Efficacy Within Adventure Contexts – Reframe how we think about comfort zones and growth. Learn how to expand a client's capacity for challenge through behavioral science and developmental theory.

Conversations Using the 22 Relational Nutrients: A Framework to Strengthen Connections with Colleagues and Employees – Explore Dr. John Townsend's 22 Relational Nutrients to build better conversations and emotional support at work. Practice giving, receiving, and asking for the kind of connection people really need.

Many of the Classroom workshops are also general EE tools.

Outdoor Educator Workshops

Perfect for camp staff, nature-based therapists, and outdoor program leaders looking to build safer, stronger, and more connected programs.

Connection Prevents Correction or How to Experientially Reduce Challenging Behaviors – Learn simple, effective techniques for building strong youth connections that prevent behavior issues—especially useful when staff training time is limited.

Safety Science for Outdoor & Experiential Education: Using Research to Improve Risk Management Strategies – Explore how real-world safety lessons—from the Space Shuttle to Swiss Cheese models—can help you improve risk management and foster a culture of psychological safety in outdoor programs.

Check out the General EE and Classroom workshops that work well in outdoor education!

Full workshop descriptions and presenter bios are below.

Adventure Therapy Workshops

Utilizing Near-nature Resources in Community-Based Adventure Therapy Programming

The purpose of this outdoor workshop is to teach practitioners how they can develop and apply therapeutic activities in parks, yards, and natural spaces in near-nature urban environments. This workshop is ideal for someone new to adventure therapy or who has recently moved their adventure therapy to urban environments. Participants will move from station to station practicing different adventure therapy activities. Participants will have an opportunity to experientially apply 2-4 adventure therapy activities with their group. Practitioners will be prepared to take the activities that they practiced in the park and utilize them with clients in their own practice. This workshop is based on Tony Alvarez's Adventure Day in the Park trainings. Daniel and Chris have both facilitated with Tony in a number of these training days.

Daniel L. Cavanaugh, PhD, LCSW, is a clinical social worker, educator, and researcher who utilizes community-based adventure therapy interventions to promote well-being in young people who are exposed to adversity.

Grief Tool Kit: Experiential Support for Youth experiencing loss

Many experiential activities focus on teamwork and problem solving. Death is not something we can fix in children, rather we focus on connection. In this workshop, participants will learn the developmental stages of grief as related to the tasks of grief by William Wordon. Next, participants will be introduced to several experiential activities used to foster connection and support youth in professing their own grief.

Erin Carpenter. I have worked as a Recreation Therapist for 18 years. My career is supported by a B.A in Therapeutic Recreation, a MA in Organizational Leadership from Seattle University and will be completing an MSW this June from the University of Washington. I have spent a majority of my career supporting youth in Residential Treatment through teaching of social, coping, and leisure skills. In addition to this work, I volunteer with Bridges Center for Grieving Children & Camp Erin, a bereavement camp for children providing support groups for children who have recent loss.

Wheel Therapy: A Collection of Wheel-based Experiences

Wheels have intertwined with narratives throughout time and space, connecting people to mechanic advancements and technical experiences that propel human development. Skateboarding, rollerskating, biking, and ceramics are a few innumerable ways of experiencing wheels. Wheels cultivate resiliency, self-efficacy, confidence, and community through shared experiences with self, others, and nature. The workshop focuses on the multifaceted roles of wheels as metaphorical and practical tools, inviting participants to explore how wheels are interwoven into human experience differently and applications to adventure therapy. Participants will have opportunities to explore different wheels experientially. Multiple wheel-based “tracks” offer participants a choice in their own adventure within the workshop.

Jackie Posner, EdS, MS, LMHCA, NCC, CCAT (eligible upon licensure), is an experiential therapist inspired by the integration of somatics, nature, and creative processing in healing across systems. As a long-time resident of the Pacific Northwest, Jackie enjoys exploring the connections between environment, culture, and wheels of all kinds. Her experiences as a roller skater and biker expose her to the wisdom of wheel-based activities. Jackie is co everything at True Wheel therapy and consulting, a project of Children are our Future.

Clara Liberov EdS, MS, NCC, ABC, CCAT Eligible upon licensure, is a multidisciplinary professional who weaves together arts, movement, and wheels in adventure therapy application. Clara hatched on the Northeast with access to wonder of woods and cities. Clara focuses on models of personal transformation and social change, sociolinguistics, and wheels. Clara currently works as a clinician at Northwest Discovery and Treehouse Therapies and is co everything at True Wheel, therapy and consulting, a project of Children are our Future.

Grow Your Professional Relationship with Nature

We all have a personal relationship with Nature, which includes wisdom learned specific to our unique connection and experiences. This workshop will focus on deepening our awareness and personal connection to Nature, as a way to further grow our professional relationship with Nature. We will explore our human brains and behavior through a mammalian lens, and deepen what Nature can teach us about the social-emotional framework. Build upon your professional curiosity from an acceptance framework and learn ways to collaborate with Nature professionally from a “yes, and”

mentality. Regardless of your professional background, this workshop will give tools and techniques to grow your professional relationship with Nature to promote a more sustainable and restorative approach to the work that you already do.

Alice Nelson is an LMFT (2016), and AAMFT Approved clinical supervisor (2020) in the state of Oregon. Alice identifies as a Nature Based Therapist, collaborating with Nature as a co-therapist when clinically supported. Currently, Alice works at a Portland, Oregon based non-profit where she developed a standardized Nature Based Therapy Clinical Program. Alice also offers Nature Based consultation and training through Grow With Nature.

Workshops for teachers, afterschool, camps, 4-H clubs and general Experiential Educators.

Outdoor Learning Spaces

This engaging workshop will introduce participants to building and utilizing outdoor learning spaces at the Science and Math Institute (SAMI), a Tacoma high school. The session will highlight the benefits of outdoor education, exploring how these spaces foster creativity, collaboration, and ecological literacy. Attendees will delve into the art of trail making and how to incorporate it into the learning process, alongside gaining hands-on experience with the iNaturalist app. Through immersive activities and guided exploration, participants will encounter "teachable moments" that demonstrate the spontaneous and impactful learning opportunities afforded by outdoor environments. By the end of the workshop, participants will have experienced innovative tools and techniques to integrate outdoor learning into educational practice.

Alexis A. Beard, NBCT. SAMI Technology Teacher. With over 20 years of dedicated experience in educational settings, my work makes use of both practical and project-based teaching methods. I am committed to project-based learning, emphasizing real-world applications and cultivating competencies in research, teamwork, and complex problem-solving.

From Arrival to Thrival: Unleashing the Power of Youth Community Builders!

Engaging youth from the moment they walk in the door is crucial for setting the tone of your program! This interactive workshop introduces quick, intentional activities designed to build relationships and activate learning before the program officially begins. Don't lose valuable time to cell phones and distracted arrivals—these activities ensure participants are engaged while they trickle in.

Professor Brian Brandt has over 30 years of experience making youth programs exciting through experiential education—but he still has the heart of a child! Play is powerful, and it's at the core of his work. He trains and consults globally, helping schools, camps, NGOs, and organizations create fun, research-based programs. His expertise spans STEM career development, social-emotional learning, civic engagement, and international exchange—always using experiential education as the driving force. Brian believes learning should always be fun!

Cindy Brandt, OT. Cindy has integrated EE into classrooms, youth clubs, occupational therapy and more. Has an excellent background on how to use techniques for youth with different learning styles and abilities.

Play with Purpose: Building Social-Emotional Skills & Group Agreements

Games and group agreements are powerful tools for fostering social-emotional learning (SEL) and creating positive group dynamics in classrooms, camps, afterschool programs, outdoor education, and therapy groups. This interactive workshop combines two essential strategies: using games to build life skills and crafting agreements that promote success and inclusion.

Participants will explore how to select and adapt games that reinforce SEL skills, engage youth in meaningful conversations, and lead simple, positive-focused debriefs. They will also learn the experiential debriefing model—What? So What? Now What?—to help youth reflect on their experiences, connect them to real-life skills, and determine how to apply their learning. Additionally, attendees will discover how to guide groups in creating and maintaining shared norms that support safety, growth, and positive behavior throughout a program.

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Beyond the Blank Page: Strategies for Engaging and Effective Journaling

Journaling is a powerful tool for self-reflection, emotional regulation, and creative expression. It helps participants process their thoughts, build self-awareness, and strengthen communication skills. Teaching educators how to guide participants in journaling fosters meaningful engagement, resilience, and social-emotional growth. This one-hour workshop equips educators with diverse techniques—such as free writing, lists, gratitude journaling, and unsent letters—to support different learning styles and emotional needs.

Exploring various forms of journaling, including traditional writing, doodling, and art journals, ensures accessibility for all participants, especially those who struggle with written expression. Visual journaling, for example, allows for emotional processing without words, making it an effective tool for neurodiverse learners. By introducing multiple journaling methods, educators empower participants to find their voices and embrace creativity. This workshop provides hands-on strategies to make journaling an engaging, personal, and transformative practice that supports self-expression and personal growth.

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Engaging Youth Meetings or Supercharging Field Trips & Overnight Programs: Training Staff, Parents, Teachers, and Chaperones for Success

Youth meetings are essential touchpoints for building community, setting expectations, and developing leadership—but without structure and intention, they can easily become chaotic or disengaging. This workshop introduces a flexible, easy-to-use card resource designed to help youth leaders, volunteers, and educators create meetings that are meaningful, well-managed, and youth-driven. For classrooms or chaperoned field trips.

Participants will experience hands-on activities that model successful meeting formats—including ways to start strong, build group agreements, engage during key discussion points, and wrap up with powerful reflections using the What? So What? Now What? model.

The same tools used to prepare for field trips and overnights can transform regular youth meetings into high-impact experiences that support social-emotional learning, reduce behavior issues, and build connection. Free card resources provided for immediate use!

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General Experiential Education Tools & Techniques

Unleashing Excellence: Leadership and Team Building Lessons from Dog Mushing!

The Iditarod, a legendary 1,000-mile race from Anchorage to Nome, Alaska, is more than a competition; it's a profound narrative of adventure, endurance, and teamwork. Picture the harsh conditions, where mushers and their sled dogs navigate treacherous terrains with precision. This journey offers valuable insights for leaders, highlighting that success comes from unity and strategic decision-making—essential in both the race and the business world.

Join us for a compelling presentation that reveals how the Iditarod can inspire exceptional employee engagement and boost productivity, build effective teams and inspire motivation. By exploring this metaphor, you'll learn how high-performing teams operate and how to apply these lessons to enhance your own strategies. Discover the secrets of the Iditarod and unlock your team's full potential for impressive results.

Robert Forto. From a childhood paper route to a six-figure dog training business, Dr. Robert Forto's entrepreneurial journey has been diverse and dynamic. He's teaches dog mushing and outdoor leadership at the university level and is the only instructor in the country that offers this course. Returning to college at 44, he earned a degree in

Physical Education, and Recreation, later completing a doctorate in Strategic Leadership. His expertise includes experiential learning and corporate expedition leadership. At Peak Experience, he leverages these skills to help you achieve your goals, offering tailored programs for individuals and organizations. Let's bring your vision to life.

Redefining the "Comfort Zone": Understanding risk, choice and self-efficacy within adventure contexts

It's time for the field to re-imagine how we use the "comfort zone" as adventure practitioners. The term yields inspo photos of sweeping mountain vistas with trendy affirmations like "life begins at the end of your comfort zone." As a result, we believe our job is to help people get out of this zone (where we presume they already are) in order for them to learn or grow. This workshop seeks to turn this belief on its head. Workshop participants will explore an alternative to this common logic that is grounded in developmental learning models and contextual behavioral science approaches. They will learn how to mobilize safety efforts that expand a client's window of tolerance and allows a person to recapture their self-efficacy through therapeutic adventure.

Deanna Vermulm is a licensed clinical social worker who has devoted her life to making everything in life a game and every game a valuable experience. Currently she applies her love for adventure and client wellness at Newport Behavioral Health where she develops and directs experiential programming within a residential treatment context. When not guiding adventures, Deanna enjoys setting off on her own, where she's allowed to embrace her own existential crises. These include, but are not limited to backpacking, triathlons, playing pool at the Alibi in Port Angeles (trust me, it's an adventure), climbing and surfing.

Conversations using the 22 Relational Nutrients: A framework to strengthen connections with colleagues and employees.

Steve Smith spent the last two decades running recreation and student leadership programs at Rocky Mountain College in Billings, MT and is a self-proclaimed campus fun captain. He loves connecting people to one another and to recreational pursuits in nature. He recently started a leadership coaching and consulting business emphasizing individual and group development. Tim holds a M.Ed in Adventure Learning from Plymouth State University and MA in Executive Coaching and Consulting from the Townsend Institute at Concordia University Irvine. He is a Townsend Leadership Program Director and CliftonStrengths and TPRAT coach.

Have you ever brought a challenging work conflict (stressor) to a supervisor and you were dissatisfied with the conversation. You might have thought, "That was not what I was looking for." Perhaps an employee or colleague brought up a stressful work circumstance to you and afterward you wondered, "I don't think I gave them what they wanted." Something was missing from the conversations-that something was likely a relational nutrient. In this workshop participants will learn more about Dr. John Townsend's 22 Relational Nutrients and practice conversations giving, requesting, and receiving them.

Outdoor Educator workshops include:

Connection Prevents Correction or How to Experientially Reduce Challenging Behaviors

Alice Nelson is an LMFT (2016), and AAMFT Approved clinical supervisor (2020) in the state of Oregon. Alice identifies as a Nature Based Therapist, collaborating with Nature as a co-therapist when clinically supported. Currently, Alice works at a Portland, Oregon based non-profit where she developed a standardized Nature Based Therapy Clinical Program. Alice also offers Nature Based consultation and training through Grow With Nature.

Summer is fast approaching and with that comes summer camps. One big challenge for camps is how to train staff to reduce camper behaviors when the window for staff training is so short. In this workshop, participants will learn how teaching staff to build connections is the key to preventing corrections throughout the summer. Participants will also learn quick and simple techniques to build connections or to help their staff build connections. Techniques will be appropriate for use with most youth and will focus on youth who may be more challenging to connect with. While targeted toward summer camp staff and leadership, this workshop is applicable to all people who are looking to better connect with the youth they work with.

Safety Science for Outdoor & Experiential Education: Using Research to Improve Risk Management Strategies

Why should experiential educators care about Swiss Cheese, the Space Shuttle Challenger, or Dominos? What have we learned about safety over the past 100+ years, and how can we adapt those lessons and concepts for outdoor & experiential education? This interactive workshop will provide a high-level overview of how safety

thinking has evolved, using key events and schools of thought from safety research, and provide participants with guiding questions and a head start on applying these concepts to their own programs. Examples of topics could include how we define and measure safety, how we talk about safety internally and externally, and what the research shows us are the best ways to create a psychologically safe workplace where people can speak up about their concerns, near-misses, and lessons learned from incidents.

Steve Smith is the founder of Experiential Consulting, a risk management consultancy that uniquely serves outdoor & experiential education programs. He has worked in the outdoor industry for over thirty years, in the field, in the office, in the board room, and in national conference leadership roles, specializing in program leadership, risk management, and staff training. His career has included leadership roles with national organizations including Outward Bound and The Student Conservation Association. Steve served as the Chair of the Wilderness Risk Management Conference (WRMC) for three years (2014 - 2016). Smith is the primary author and editor of Beneficial Risks.