Positive Group Culture and Student Management

Erika Kercher Halm, Northwest Outward Bound School

NORTHWEST OUTWARD BOUND SCHOOL

Outcomes

- Examine basic idea of group formation

- Explore different methods & tools to:

  - Proactively develop positive group culture

  - Address undesirable participant behavior
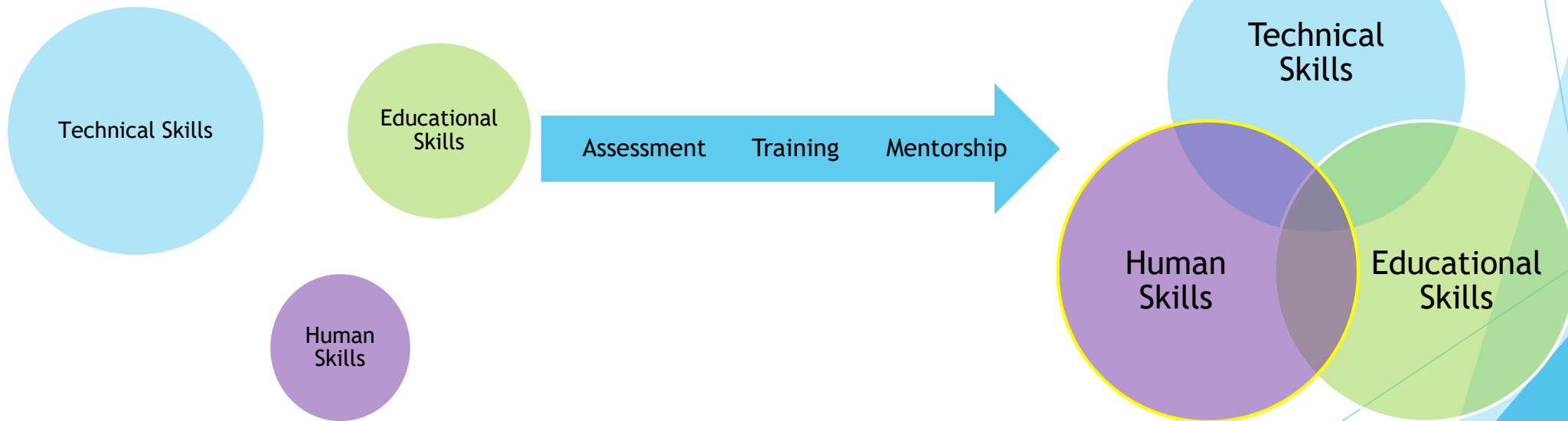
- Apply student management concepts to scenarios

Joel Reid

The Outdoor Educator

New Instructor

Technical Skills

Educational Skills

Human Skills

Assessment   Training   Mentorship

Experienced Instructor

Technical Skills

Human Skills

Educational Skills

Phases of Group Development

Forming

↓

Storming

↓

Norming

↓

Performing

Jo Corbett

Establishing Positive Group Culture: The Tone Set

Ice Breakers

Supportive Environment

Establish Trust

Group Living Agreement

Luke O'Neill

Establishing Positive Group Culture: The Tone Set

Group Living Agreement

Establish Trust

Supportive Environment

Ice Breakers

- ▶ Break the ice!
  - ▶ Learn names
  - ▶ Loosen up
- ▶ Fun
- ▶ Sharing
- ▶ Challenge
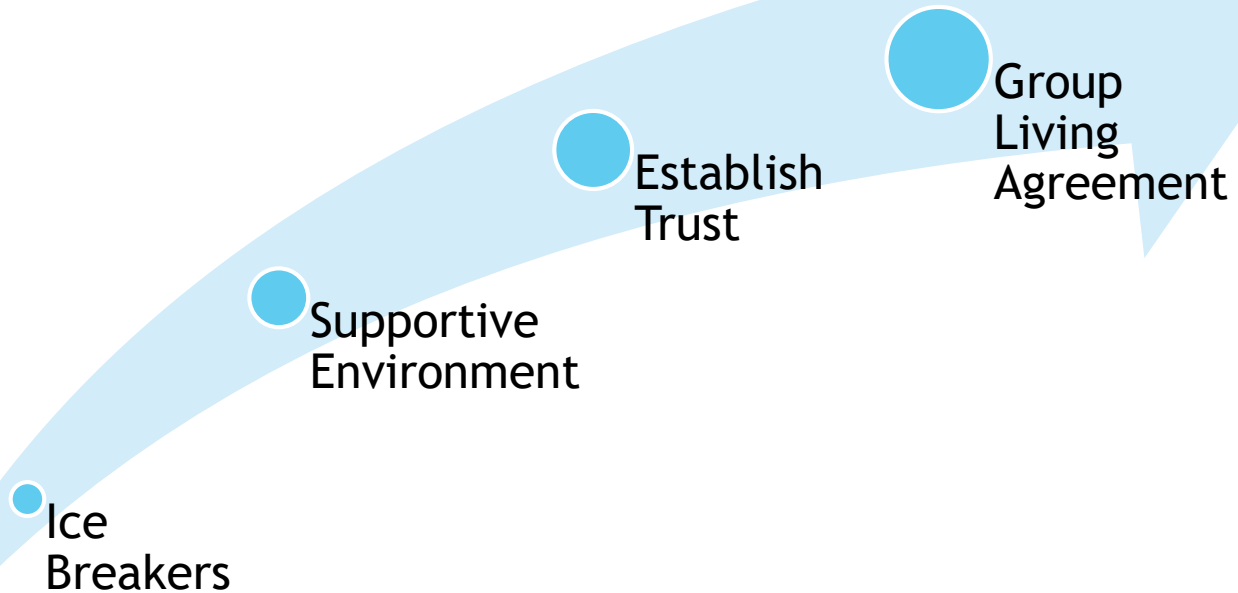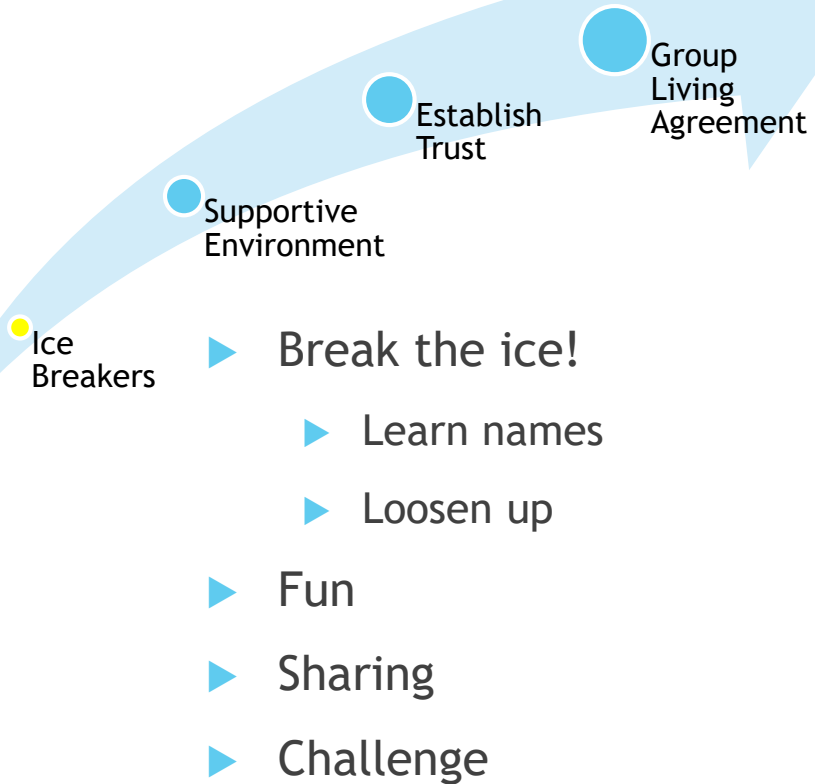
Joel Reid

You can learn more about someone in an hour of play than in a year of conversation. - Plato

Establishing Positive Group Culture: The Tone Set

Ice Breakers

Supportive Environment

Establish Trust

Group Living Agreement
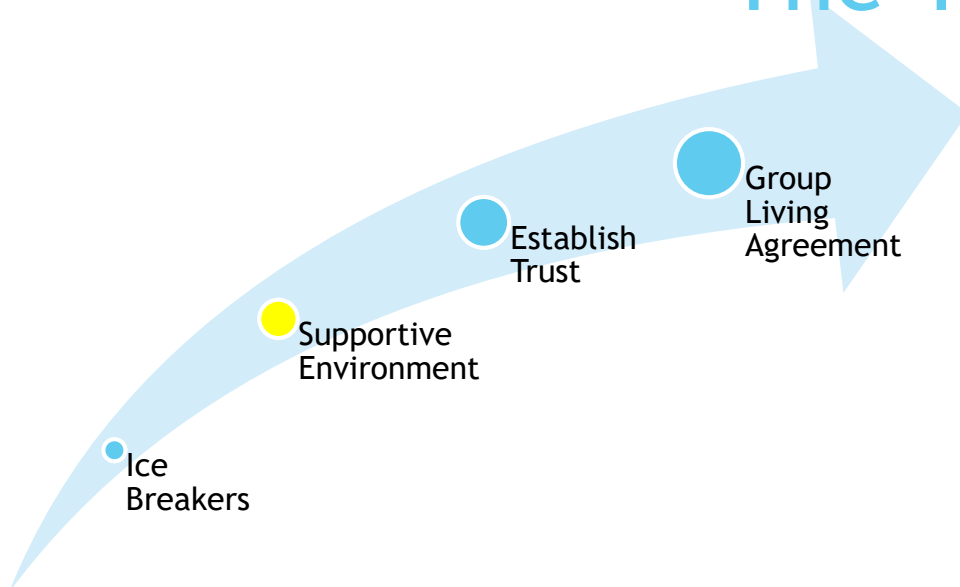
▶ Start building rapport
  ▶ Use names
  ▶ Use trivia from ice-breakers
  ▶ Ask questions

▶ Share vulnerabilities
  ▶ Evening Meeting
  ▶ Meals
  ▶ Travel time

▶ Set clear expectations
  ▶ What are non-negotiable expectations?
  ▶ What you will do for them
  ▶ What do you expect of the group?
  ▶ What will their trip look like? Big picture
  ▶ Daily structure and flow

▶ Allow time and space for needs to be met

Creating Positive Group Culture: Set the Tone

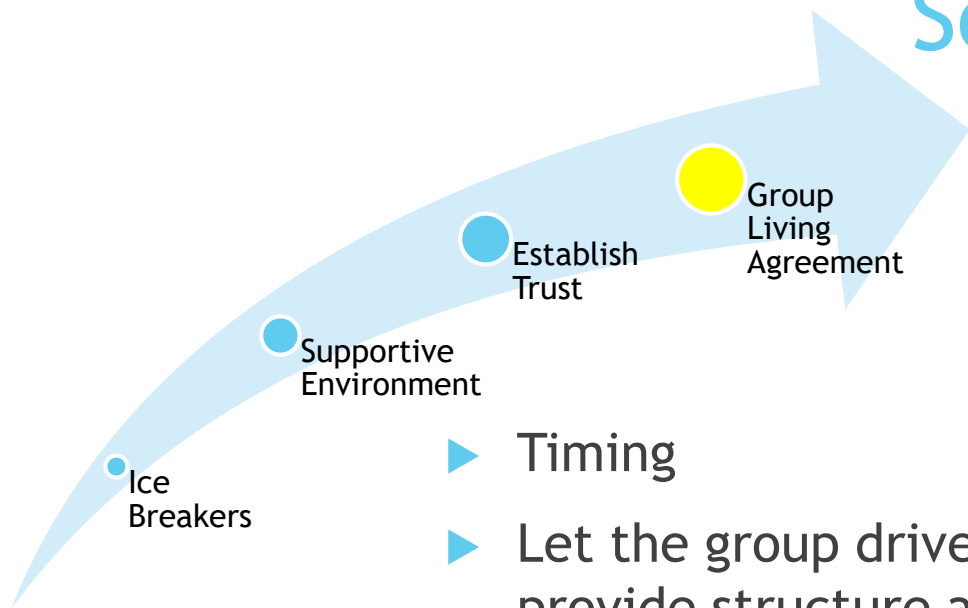- Ice Breakers
- Supportive Environment
- Establish Trust
- Group Living Agreement

▶ Keep building rapport

▶ Dunk 'em and dry 'em

▶ Demonstrate competency

▶ Be realistic

▶ United front with you co-leader

▶ Take notes and use them to give specific feedback

Creating Positive Group Culture: Tone Set

Group
Living
Agreement

Establish
Trust

Supportive
Environment

Ice
Breakers

- ► Timing
- ► Let the group drive it, but provide structure and involvement
- ► Tailor it to meet your group's needs and the length of trip

- Set yourself up for a positive group culture by:
  - Accurate self and co-leader assessment
  - Knowing your population
  - Trip start plan
  - Early and genuine rapport building
  - Well-executed tone set: group cohesion, supportive environment, trust, and an explicit set of group norms
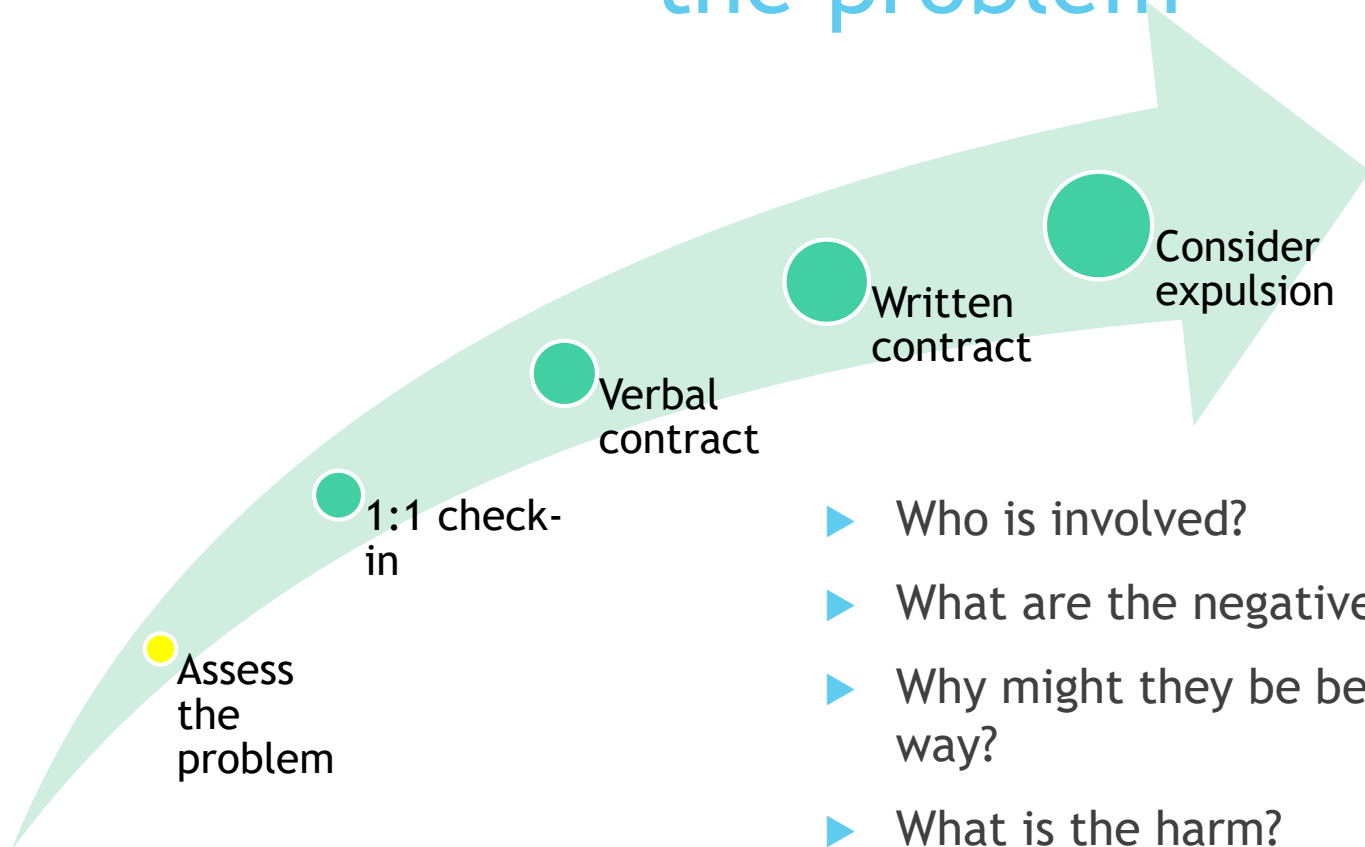 - Modeling and teaching interpersonal skills

Undesirable or inappropriate behaviors

- Do they have needs that are not being met?

- What are they trying to accomplish with their behavior?

- Common causes are:

  - Quality of the relationships

  - Expectations

  - Control/Power

Fun

Freedom

Power

Love & Belonging

Survival
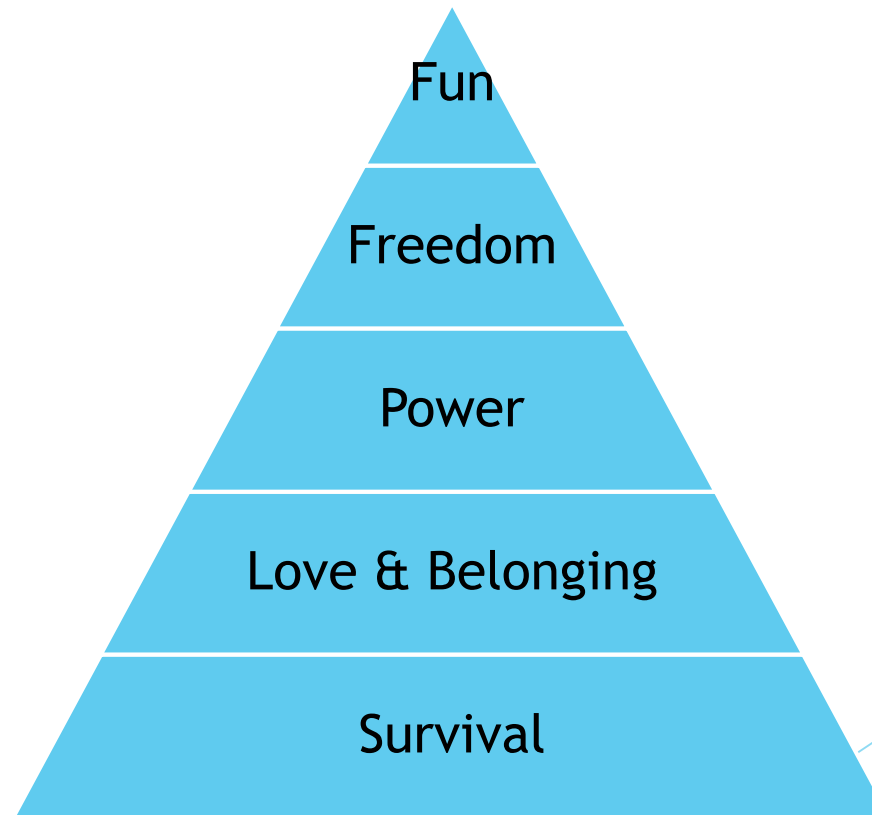
Dr. William Glasser, Choice Theory

Addressing Problematic Behavior: Assess the problem

Assess the problem

1:1 check-in

Verbal contract

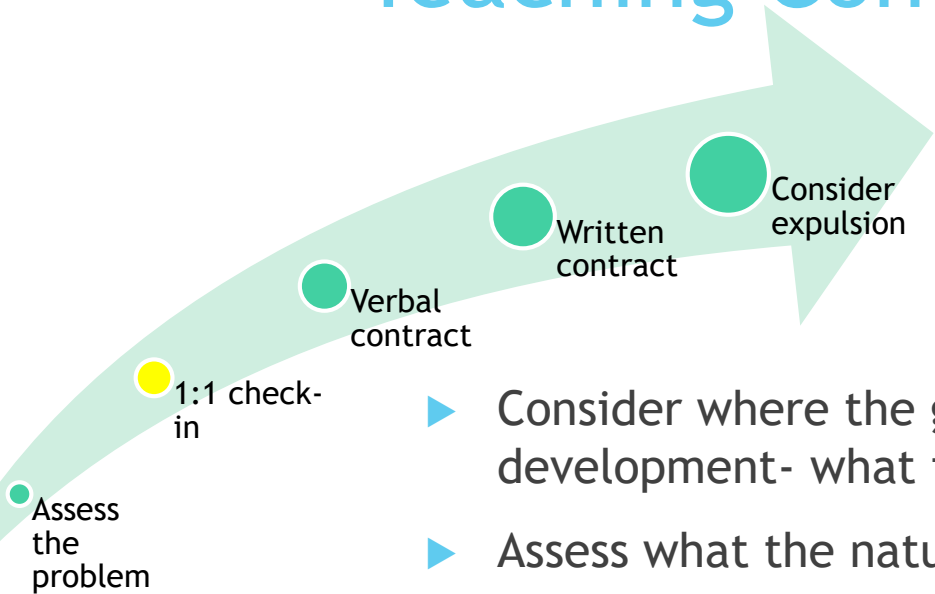Written contract

Consider expulsion

- ▶ Who is involved?
- ▶ What are the negative behaviors?
- ▶ Why might they be behaving in this way?
- ▶ What is the harm?
- ▶ Who should address it?

Addressing Problematic Behavior: Check in Early

Assess the problem

1:1 check-in

Verbal contract

Written contract

Consider expulsion

- One on one check-in; identify the behavior and explain how it is impacting the group
- Separate behavior from the person
- Conflict resolution tool?
- Review expedition behavior and expectations if necessary
- Document

Addressing Problematic Behavior: Teaching Conflict Resolution

Assess the problem

1:1 check-in

Verbal contract

Written contract
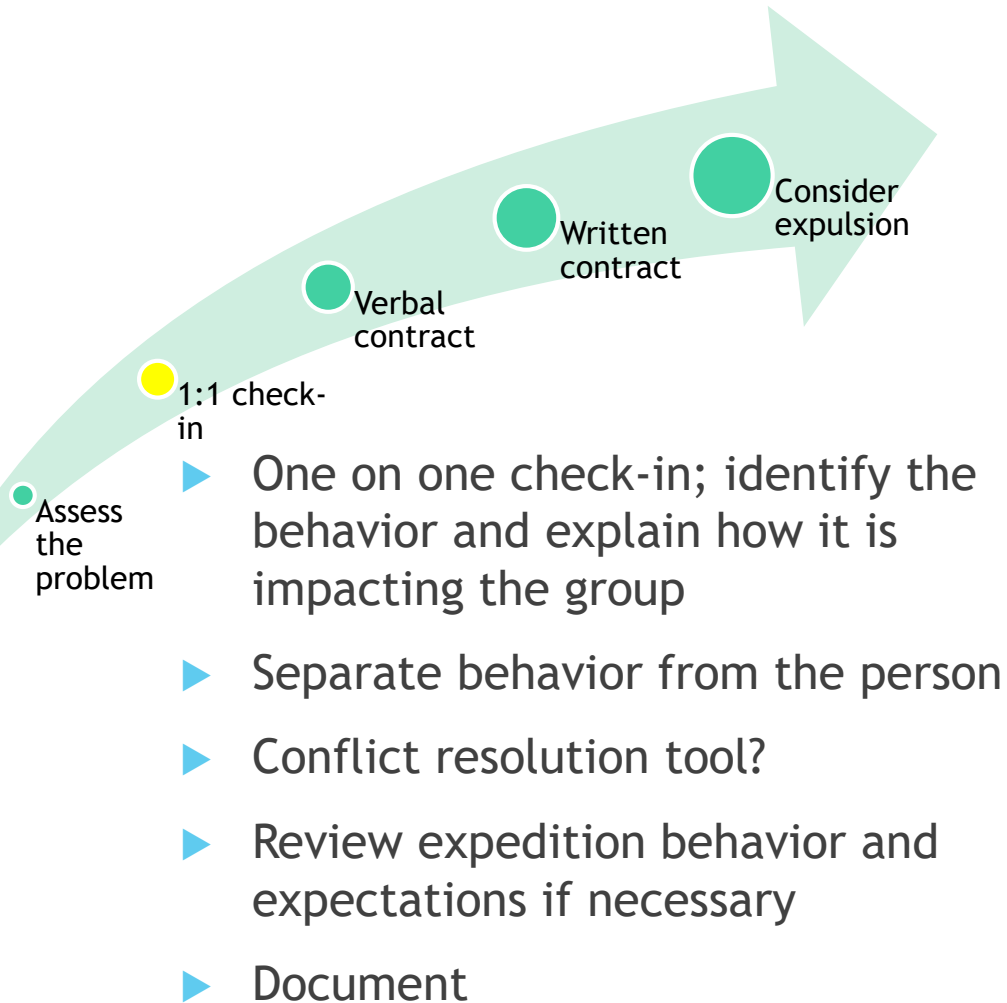
Consider expulsion

- ▶ Consider where the group is in their development- what is your role?

- ▶ Assess what the nature of the conflict is

- ▶ Allow time for emotions to calm down
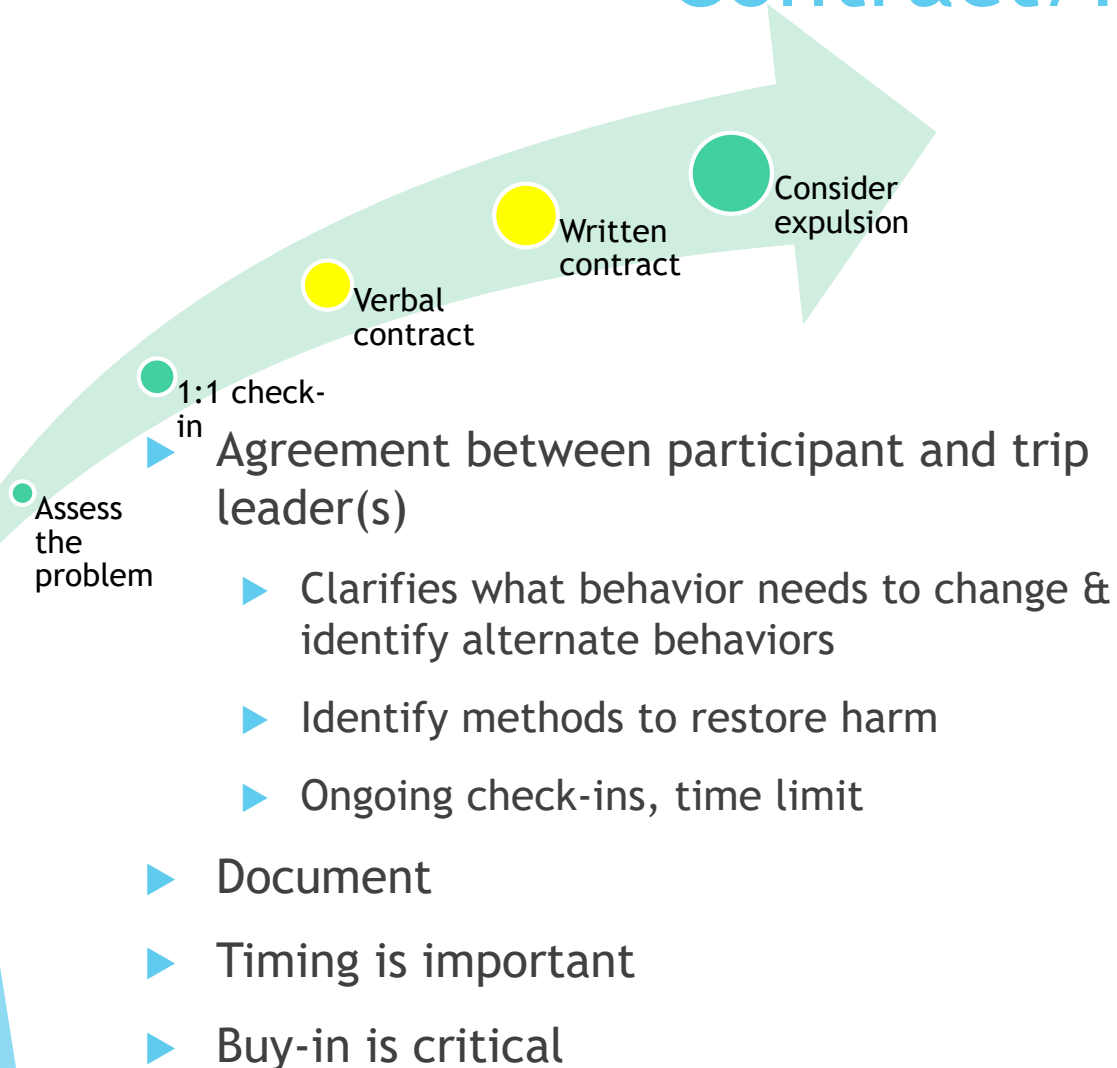
- ▶ Simple tool:
  - ▶ VOMP

Addressing Problematic Behavior: Teaching Conflict Resolution
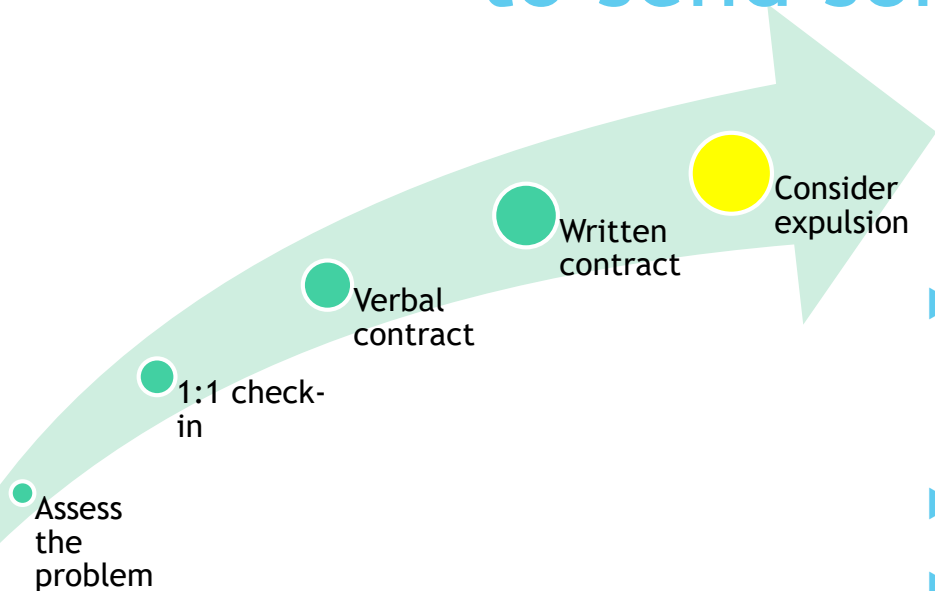
VOMP: a simple method to facilitate conflict resolution

▶ **V**oice: each person describes their version of what happened, using "I statements"

▶ **O**wnership: each person takes ownership for their actions

▶ **M**ile in their shoes: each person tries to express empathy for the other person

▶ **P**lan: make a place for how to avoid reoccurrence.

Addressing Problematic Behavior: Verbal Contract/Plan

Assess the problem

1:1 check-in

Verbal contract

Written contract

Consider expulsion

▶ Agreement between participant and trip leader(s)

　▶ Clarifies what behavior needs to change & identify alternate behaviors

　▶ Identify methods to restore harm

　▶ Ongoing check-ins, time limit

▶ Document

▶ Timing is important

▶ Buy-in is critical

Addressing Problematic Behavior: When to send someone home

Assess the problem → 1:1 check-in → Verbal contract → Written contract → Consider expulsion

- Is the behavior impacting your ability to manage risk appropriately? Outside your skill set?

- Are other participants feeling safe?

- Does the participant understand why their behavior is not acceptable on course?

- Consider the overall impact to course quality for expelling vs. waiting it out

- Bring in outside support

Creating Positive Group Culture

- Accurate assessments
- Planning
- Genuine, early rapport
- Co-leader relationship
- Intentional tone set: ice breakers, supportive environment, developing trust, established group norms
- Observe, re-assess, adjust

Addressing Negative Behaviors

- Consider the "why"– what are they hoping to accomplish?
- Observe, assess, and address:
  - Identify the behavior, its cause, and its impact/harm
  - Check in one-on-one
  - Conflict Resolution tools
  - Formal plans/contracts
  - Remove from the group if necessary

Small Group Discussions

- Use a scenario from your experience
- What were root causes are of the behavior/conflict?
- What could have been done proactively to prevent?
- How did you address it? Would you do anything differently?

References and Resources

References:

▶ Raynolds, Lodato, Gorden, et. al., *Leadership the Outward Bound Way*

▶ Glasser, *Choice Theory*

Resources:

▶ Sample course-start (tone set) plan

▶ Conflict Resolution tools: VOMP

▶ Games & Initiatives:
http://wilderdom.com/games/

Thank you!
ehalm@nwoutwardbound.org

Stuart Montgomery