



EXPERIENTIAL  
CONSULTING  
*Risk Management  
for  
Outdoor Programs*

## These are NOT “Soft Skills!” Facilitating Emotional Safety

*A foundational risk management skill*

To support emotional safety, steps to take before, during, and after a program / trip.

	<p><b><u>BEFORE:</u></b> BE INTENTIONAL!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Learn</b> about your participants in order to best anticipate their needs</li> <li>• <b>Build</b> flexibility into itinerary to best adapt to participants’ needs</li> <li>• <b>Share</b> essential information transparently</li> <li>• <b>Invite</b> and be receptive to questions</li> <li>• <b>Share</b> assessment criteria (if applicable)</li> <li>• <b>Begin</b> tone-setting and building dynamics before trip begins!</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>DURING:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Clarify</b> goals and outcomes</li> <li>• <b>Talk</b> about risk tolerance as a group</li> <li>• <b>Talk</b> about emotional safety</li> <li>• <b>Establish</b> group norms</li> <li>• <b>See</b> each other as assets and resources</li> <li>• <b>Create</b> space for everyone’s voice</li> <li>• <b>Establish</b> expectations around choice and opting out</li> <li>• <b>Role</b> model vulnerability</li> <li>• <b>Facilitate</b> and offer tools to manage emotional safety issues</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>AFTER:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Debrief</b> with participants - <b>Ask</b> specifically about emotional safety, open-ended questions, be open to learning</li> <li>• <b>Debrief</b> with co-leaders</li> <li>• <b>Report</b> inclusion / emotional safety incidents</li> </ul>

## Factors that influence emotional safety on an outdoor program



- Items inside circles can positively contribute to emotional safety (for most participants)
- Items outside of circles can negatively impact emotional safety (for most participants)
- Items in the center of the diagram are indicators of a group that has fostered an environment conducive to emotional safety (for most participants)

### Additional Reading / Resources:

- Youtube: How to practice emotional first aid | Guy Winch
- Mental Health First Aid: [www.mhfa.org](http://www.mhfa.org)