

STERLING COLLEGE

CHALLENGE COURSE INSTRUCTORS MANUAL

2021



INSTRUCTOR MANUAL

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Original edition was edited and compiled by Kim McIntyre

This is a working document. It will change and evolve as the staff of the Sterling College Challenge Course grows and the outdoor adventure field develops. We believe it is important to rethink how we approach our work to be able to stay up to date and accountable to the people we work with. We pass the responsibility on to the next group of leaders. Enjoy the process and strive for excellence.

This document is compiled from:

Inner Quest. 1998. Challenge Course Manual: The Inner Quest Guide to Challenge Course Programming.

Rohnke, K., C. Tait, J. Wall. 1994. The Complete Ropes Course Manual. 2nd Ed. Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company.

Warren Wilson. 2002. Instructor Manual.

Webster, s. 1989. Project Adventure Inc.'s Ropes Course Safety Manual: An Instructor's Guide to Initiatives, and Low and High Elements. Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company.

NOTE: Social Distance adaptations for pandemic times have been added to many of the activities under "variations"

Table of Contents

INSTRUCTOR MANUAL	2
Table of Contents	3
PURPOSE OF MANUAL	11
DISCLAIMER	11
PHILOSOPHY AND FOUNDATION	12
FULL VALUE CONTRACT/AGREEMENT	13
Other Sample Group Agreements	13
Agreement/Guidelines for Effective and Safe Group Process	14
Group Values and Agreement	14
Values	15
CHALLENGE BY CHOICE	16
COMMITMENT AGREEMENT	18
FACILITATOR CHARACTERISTICS	19
USEFUL BELIEFS ABOUT PEOPLE ON THE ROPES COURSE	20
REFLECTING ON THE EXPERIENCE	22
BASIC STRATEGIES FOR FACILITATING REFLECTION	23
WHAT, SO WHAT, NOW WHAT	25
COMMON ISSUES AND RELATED QUESTIONS	26
GENERAL GUIDELINES	29
THE CHALLENGE COURSE EXPERIENCE	29
POTENTIAL CONVERSATION TOPICS	30
CHALLENGE COURSE ELEMENT CATEGORIES	32
ELEMENT SEQUENCING	33
GENERAL SAFETY GUIDELINES	34

SAFETY CHECKS AND INSPECTIONS	35
SAFETY BRIEFING	35
INITIAL BRIEFING OF PARTICIPANTS	35
PARTICIPANT PREPAREDNESS	36
INITIAL ELEMENTS	36
NAME GAME	36
Element Description	36
Safety Considerations	37
Variations	37
Reflection Topics	37
WIND IN THE WILLOWS	37
Element Description	37
Safety Considerations	38
Instructor	38
Reflection Topics	39
FLYING CARPET	39
Element Description	39
Safety Considerations	39
Instructor	40
Variations	40
Reflection Topics	41
LAWN ELEMENTS	41
ALL ABOARD	42
Element Description	42
Safety Considerations	42
Instructor	42
Variations	42

Reflection Topics	43
AUSTRALIAN TROLLEY	43
Element Description	43
Safety Considerations	43
Instructor	43
Variations	43
Reflection Topics	44
TRAFFIC JAM	44
Element Description	44
Safety Considerations	45
Instructor	45
Variations	45
Reflection Topics	45
MONSTER	46
Element Description	46
Safety Considerations	46
Instructor	46
Variations	46
Reflection Topics	47
BLINDFOLD	47
Element Description	47
Safety Considerations	47
Instructor	47
Reflection Topics	47
A-FRAME	48
Element Description	48

Safety Considerations	48
Instructor	48
Variations	48
Reflection Topics	48
SIMPLE ELEMENTS	49
T.P. SHUFFLE	49
Element Description	49
Safety Considerations	49
Instructor	49
Variations	49
Reflection Topics	49
WHALE WATCH	50
Element Description	50
Safety Considerations	50
Instructor	50
Variations	50
Reflection Topics	50
COMPLEX INITIATIVES	51
NITRO CROSSING	51
Element Description	51
Safety Considerations	51
Instructor	51
Variations	52
Processing Topics	52
ISLAND IN THE RIVER	52
Element Description	52

Safety Considerations	52
Instructor	53
Processing Topics	53
BALANCE WALK	53
Element Description	53
Safety Considerations	53
Instructor	53
Variations	54
Processing Topics	54
STACKING ELEMENTS	54
Basic Safety Considerations for All Stacking Events	54
BEAR TREE	55
Element Description	55
Safety Considerations	55
Instructor	55
Variations	56
Processing Topics	56
UP AND OVER ELEMENTS	56
ELECTRIC FENCE	57
Element Description	57
Safety Considerations	57
Instructor	57
Variations	58
SPIDER'S WEB	58
Element Description	58
Safety Considerations	58

Instructor	58
Variations	59
Processing Topics	59
SPOTTED INDIVIDUAL ELEMENTS	59
Basic Safety Rules For Spotted Individual Elements	59
Instructor	59
Note	60
TENSION TRAVERSE*	60
Element Description	60
Safety Considerations	60
Instructor	61
Variations	61
Processing Topics	61
WILD WOOSEY*	62
Element Description	62
Safety Considerations	62
Instructor	62
Variations	62
Processing Topics	62
TRUST FALL	63
Element Description	63
Safety Considerations	63
Instructor	63
Variations	64
Processing Topics	64
BELAYED INDIVIDUAL ELEMENTS	64

BELAYED INDIVIDUAL ELEMENTS - - TRAVERSES	64
Safety Considerations	65
Belaying and Lowering Procedures for Traversing Elements	65
Belayed Individual Elements -- Ladders	66
Belaying and Lowering Procedures for The Dangle Duo	66
Safety Considerations	66
HIGH CHALLENGE COURSE RESCUE PROCEDURES	67
GLOSSARY	68
APPENDIX A: CLIMBING SIGNALS	72
APPENDIX B: SAFETY SYSTEMS	73
APPENDIX C: FORMS	77
DAILY ANCILLARY EQUIPMENT CHECKOUT	77
MAINTENANCE LOG	79
INTERIM, INTERNAL CHALLENGE COURSE INSPECTIONS	80
INTERNAL CHALLENGE COURSE INSPECTION FORM	82
Inspection Points	82
Semester Equipment Inventory	84
Challenge Course Evaluation	85
Sterling College Medical Short Form	86
Sterling College	87
Acknowledgment of Risk and Waiver of Claims	87
Sterling College Challenge Course	89
Acknowledgment of Risk and Waiver of Claims	89
Permission, Acknowledgment of Risks, and Waiver of Claims	90

PURPOSE OF MANUAL

The purpose of this manual is to serve as a technical and facilitation guide for instructors who will be working with participants on the Sterling College Challenge Course. The contents of the manual provide guidelines, standards, training, and rescue information. This information is intended for initial and refreshed training, and for ensuring continuity of policies and procedures over time. We have used The Complete Ropes Course Manual, Warren Wilson Instructor Manual, Project Adventure Ropes Course Safety Manual, and Inner Quest Guide to Challenge Course Programming Manual, as well as other current sources in the field, as guides in developing this manual.

DISCLAIMER

This manual is not a substitute for professional training, solid judgment, maturity and experience. While some of the guidelines and policies in this manual may also apply to other program activities and challenge course designs, this information is intended solely as a reference material for staff trained to supervise on the Sterling College Challenge Course at Sterling College.

PHILOSOPHY AND FOUNDATION

The Sterling College Challenge Course provides educational and developmental programming opportunities for groups and individuals.

- Programming and trainings use a variety of activities including games, teambuilding, initiatives, and low and high challenge course activities.
- Programming and training facilities provide opportunities to work on teamwork, trust, cooperation, communication, problem-solving and decision-making skills, conflict resolution, and understanding concepts like success, failure, responsibility, accountability, initiative, leadership, and innovation using group challenge activities.
- Programming activities incorporate elements of fun, excitement, adventure, and education.
- Programming and training are done on a Challenge By Choice basis. This means participants choose their own level of challenge to meet their goals.
- Programming activities are designed to be accessible for all abilities and aimed within the capabilities of anyone who is in good health.
- Well-trained, supervised, and supported instructional staff develops tailor-made programs to meet the needs and goals of the variety of groups that participate in our programming. Paying attention to staff development and supervision allows us to provide quality programming.

A challenge course is not THE ANSWER, but rather a good tool to be utilized to work towards accomplishing any number of goals. It needs to be understood by the instructors as well as the participants that this tool is only as effective as the people using it. Cooperation, compassion, trust, and a strong commitment to quality are key factors that all the people involved with challenge courses must commit to understand and work towards. We believe in the positively powerful impact a well developed and run challenge course experience can have. A good friend has passed along a wonderful saying that is very poignant: "IF it's powerful enough to help, it's powerful enough to hurt" (Mark Havens). Instructors and participants need to take the responsibility to keep the challenge course experience powerfully helpful.

FULL VALUE CONTRACT/AGREEMENT

The Full Value Contract is an agreement into which all participants, including group members and facilitators, must enter in order to ensure that “full value,” as its name implies, addresses valuing the fullest extent in every aspect of your group’s experience. Specifically, it involves committing to the following tenets.

1. Adhering to ALL safety guidelines. This includes complying with both physical and emotional safety as set forth by the facilitators. While other groups’ operational procedures may be negotiable and determined by the group itself, these are non-negotiable mandates. Physical safety issues are self-evident and need very little explanation. Emotional safety issues involve maintaining positive, non-threatening, non-abusive interactions among group members.
2. Valuing all group members and group processes. The group is composed of your peers, the facilitator(s) and yourself. Some examples of group processes are communication, decision-making and problem solving. Committing to valuing all group members implies:
 - a. Setting and working towards achieving realistic goals and helping others set and achieve their goals.
 - b. Giving and receiving constructive feedback of both confrontive and supportive nature.
 - c. Communicating respectfully and effectively.
 - d. Acknowledging and accepting individual differences (diversity) among group members.
3. Giving 100% of your effort. This means putting forth all the effort that you have available for the group. It also entails being open and honest with the group about anything that will limit your participation in any way. For example, if you have physical limitations or are not “up to par,” you owe it to your group and yourself to inform them. Giving 100%, not 90% or 110%. 90% is not enough (you are not actualizing your potential) and 110% is too much (you are overexerting yourself and allowing others to give less).

Other Sample Group Agreements

The time spent establishing group agreements at the onset of any adventure, challenge course or experiential workshop provides participants with a critical foundation for safe group process. These are 3 examples of agreements established by groups:

Agreement/Guidelines for Effective and Safe Group Process

- Honor confidentiality. You control your level of disclosure
- Give unconditional respect for self and others.
- Acknowledge and accept individual differences among group members.
- Communicating respectfully, directly, using 'I' statements.
- Each person's statement will stand on their own.
- Setting and working towards achieving realistic goals and helping others set and achieve their goals.
- Value risk taking.
- Be present in the here and now, expressing emotions as fully as possible, as YOU choose.
- Avoid the use of "zingers, hidden agendas, cross talk," and other "unsupportive" comments.
- Give 100% of your efforts in all of these processes and in-group efforts as a whole.

Group Values and Agreement

- To make physical and emotional safety the #1 priority in all situations, while striving to be aware of others.
- To communicate directly and respectfully, including active listening, straight talk and dialogue versus monologue.
- Act responsibly for self and others in a proactive manner.
- Support all individual, team, group and organizational efforts toward accomplishment of goals set forth.
- Seek to be an appropriate role model by honoring confidentiality and respecting individual differences.
- Giving 100% towards these agreements, values and group processes.
- To promote FUN for others and oneself in support of these concepts.

Values

- Value yourself.
- Value others and each individual perspective.
- Value risk taking.
- Value all group processes.
- Value effort, integrity and diversity within all challenges!

CHALLENGE BY CHOICE

This concept developed over time on women's courses and was made more widely known and used by Karl Rohnke and Project Adventure in 1974. The idea is to give people options, especially when they get to a point of challenge, where they may be stressed, or faced with self-doubt or pressure. When people can choose their own level of challenge and risk, they are more apt to get into "flow" (Csikszentmihalyi) and want to continue to risk and grow. If challenge is too high, they may be anxious and not want to continue; if challenge is too low, they may be bored, unmotivated, and not do well either.

Victor Frankl: "The greatest of human freedoms is the freedom to choose one's attitude in a given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way." (Henton, 1996, pg. 58)

"Challenge by Choice is not whether or not I choose to be challenged, but what kind of challenge I will take on!" (Henton, 1996, pg. 63)

Connection to goal setting is key!

"Choice occurs in the context of community. Community informs choice. Classmates provide a check for inappropriate goals. Consequently, students learn to make choices appropriate to the classroom." (Henton, 1996, pg 63)

"Challenge by Choice establishes a norm asking for and giving help." (Henton, 1996, pg. 64)

Rohnke: original intent of CBC was to offer participants:

- A chance to try potentially difficult challenges in an atmosphere of support and caring
- The opportunity to "back off" when performance pressures or self-doubt become too strong, knowing that an opportunity for a future attempt will always be available.
- A chance to try difficult tasks, recognizing that the attempt is more significant than performance results.
- Respect for individual ideas and choices.

Do we offer the Choice first and Challenge second?

How can we get people to risk? (Assumption = taking risks can lead to growth.)

Invite, Offer fun, Engage, Challenge

(Rohke and Grout, 1998, pg. 16-17)

"But respecting the right to choose doesn't mean you can't challenge. The nature of Adventure activities is one big challenging obstacle course...Your role as a leader must be to continually find

ways to offer understandable challenges that can be accepted by the group as it maintains it's right to make choices" (Henton, 1996, pg. 58).

Principles to keep in mind when you are challenging your group:

- Not everyone needs to do everything. There are many ways to participate in a given activity.
- Sequence your activities: proper activity selection goes a long way towards being able to support the challenge once the activity is in progress.
- Time spent with goal setting is time well spent...When a person is clear about what they wants to do it is much easier for everyone else.
- Group pressure is very real and can be used positively. Members are aided in this when they are aware of each other's goals, and familiar with each other...when choosing activities, reserve the more intense ones until the group members are more comfortable with each other.
- Trust is a great support to challenge (which brings us back to sequencing!!) Risk takes Trust, Trust takes Risk!!
- Individualize when necessary.

(Schoel, Prouty, and Radcliffe, 1998, pg. 132-134)

COMMITMENT AGREEMENT

- No idea is stupid, that is offered conscientiously.
- Direct confrontations away from others.
- Be a good peer example.
- Do not use offensive language.
- Talk to participants at their level.
- Challenge by choice -- choose to do "something."
- Be a leader not a boss.
- Listen and support each other.
- Laugh with--not at.
- Don't gripe, whine, or complain.
- Respect each other's opinion, don't interrupt them.
- Accept and offer constructive criticism.
- Remember the impact of your actions is more important than your intentions.
- Criticize behavior, not the person.
- Respect all staff, be attentive.
- Don't discount this commitment.

FACILITATOR CHARACTERISTICS

"Who you are speaks so loudly I can't hear what you're saying." -Ralph Waldo Emerson

Facilitators play a primary role in the successful outcome of a Ropes Course experience. The facilitator's function is to create a safe and supportive environment that encourages exploration, risk taking, and personal growth. The following characteristics of a facilitator will ensure more meaningful outcomes for Ropes Course participants.

- Good listening skills
- Non-judgmental stance
- Focused
- Technically proficient
- Organized and on time
- Patient
- Knowledgeable and safe
- Observant
- Casually competent
- Mentally and physically fit
- Willing to learn and grow
- Genuine
- Good sense of humor
- Team player
- Articulate and professional
- Positively assertive
- Open and friendly
- Huge sense of playful fun
- Being culturally competent and self reflective

USEFUL BELIEFS ABOUT PEOPLE ON THE ROPES COURSE

- As a facilitator, your communication influences the response you get from participants.

It is your responsibility to find a way for participants to learn and grow. If they don't respond at first, try a new approach. Often changing your language or using examples, metaphors, or analogies, can bring new meaning to the participants.

- The most useful information that we have is behaviorally specific.

You can tell more about what a person really means by observing how they communicate (nonverbally), then you can from just listening to what they say. "No way" seldom means no way.

- A continual nonverbal, behavioral dialogue is happening within your group. Your job is to pay close enough attention to the signals, and accurately express or modify your activities, in order to create the most meaningful experience for the participants.

- Mind and body affect each other.

If someone is stuck in a negative emotion, have them shift their body, or attention, and notice what happens. Move people around, and you help shift their perspective.

- We are not our behaviors.

A participant says: "I'm afraid of heights."

Facilitator: "Yes, you've had some past experiences that cause you to behave fearfully. What would happen if you were able to manage this situation so that you..."

- Our present behavior is the best choice available.

Even if a person is acting unproductively, at some level this is the best way that they know how to deal with the current situation.

- Acknowledge and respect the fact that participants are acting the best way they know how.

You could then ask, "If there was away for you to experience this safely, without those feelings getting in the way, would that be of value to you?" Break the experience down into smaller, more manageable steps. Success comes from taking steps, regardless of their size.

- Behavior is geared toward adaptation.

People adapt their behaviors to match their current beliefs about what is possible or not possible in their lives. When their beliefs expand, their behaviors automatically adjust to reflect their new beliefs.

- Your job is to open the door of possibility and to offer them an opportunity to walk through this door. Often, people don't realize that they have a choice. Remember, the choice is theirs.
- Every behavior has a place, or situation, in which it is appropriate.

Before you cast judgment on someone else, remember that even seemingly unproductive behavior (such as freaking out) has a place and a function in that person's life.

- Your role is to assist participants in finding eloquent ways to express their true needs. Your ultimate goal is for participants to discover more choices, which then lead to greater flexibility and confidence in dealing with any given situation.
- We have all the resources that we need.

Remember, people are not broken, or in need of being fixed. What they require is a way to access the internal resources that they already have, and to find a way to transfer these to a given task.

If a person says "I can't do that," your job is to find a time from their past when they felt competent at doing something, and have them pretend they feel the same way now. You can actually help transfer these feelings and beliefs, and this will assist them in behaving more resourcefully in this new situation.

- As a facilitator, by offering participants a combination of challenges and support, we help facilitate growth and contribute to a meaningful and long lasting experience.

People come from a variety of backgrounds and cultures, none of which is better than another, and all of which are worth learning about and developing sensitivity toward.

REFLECTING ON THE EXPERIENCE

Promoting reflection, whether at the end of a simple element or a “break-through” experience, is often the most difficult task for challenge course instructors. Resistance to reflecting can be traced to bad past experiences, lack of tools and/or skills, or a sense that there is not enough time.

Additionally, the instructor (from their observer position) might assume that everything went well and there’s no need to reflect, only to find out later (in private discussions) that some participants thought they were coerced during the element and others thought their ideas and concerns were not heard.

Without exception, no matter how many elements are accomplished in a day, the true value of the experience comes not from performing the action, but rather by understanding the group interaction from which the solution was derived. Therefore, it is imperative for challenge course instructors to facilitate reflection on the experience on a regular basis and do so in a manner that is suitable to the participants.

While this document is intended to be a technical safety manual, below are some basic guidelines and tools that should be of benefit during reflection. Additional information can be found in “Islands of Healing: A Guide to Adventure Based Counseling” by Jim Schoel, Dick Prouty and Paul Radcliffe and available through Kendall Hunt.

BASIC STRATEGIES FOR FACILITATING REFLECTION

Reflection should flow from the group as much as possible. If reflection takes place orally in a group setting, the sharing or discussion should include all group members and follow the topics and/or issues that are important to and raised by the participants. This is not an opportunity for the instructor to lecture or preach.

Establish a supportive learning environment that is safe for self-assessment and disclosure. Build on the strengths of the group and individuals. Reinforce participants in their attempts to stretch, grow and disclose. Maintain control of the discussion adhering to agreed upon guidelines for interaction and discussion. The environment should be supportive and individuals should be comfortable commenting on the behaviors of others in the group.

Keep discussions centered on OBSERVABLE behaviors. Since you are an observer of the group's interaction, NOT a member of the group, you can only discuss what you saw; not what you think happened. You cannot make any inferences or come to conclusions; you must be free of judgment.

Make certain you are discussing behaviors that are specific to this group and this element. An experienced challenge course instructor knows that each element tends to highlight certain issues. Don't process last week's issues with this week's group.

As an observer, you can only guess at what issues are important to the group. Be willing and able to switch issues or drop issues if the group takes the conversation in a different direction.

If someone in the group reveals something that is not necessarily observable (a thought or feeling), they have just made it observable and NOW you can discuss it during processing. Listen patiently for such comments.

Avoid using the word "feel." You cannot observe feelings and you should not request participants to verbalize their feelings. Until they verbalize their feelings, you can only observe an expression of their feelings and have to infer/guess what might be the actual feeling or emotion.

Crying is a good example. Most often, if you see someone crying you guess that they are either very sad or hurt. However, you may have seen people cry when they are extremely happy.

Keep in mind that one responsibility of facilitators is to maintain emotional safety. If you blatantly seek participants' feelings you may be delving into emotional issues you cannot facilitate or may need to leave unresolved. If a participant expresses a feeling through their remarks they have made it public, observable and available for discussion to the degree you are qualified to explore the emotion.

The best way to avoid using "feel" is to simply work your questions differently to take "feel" out of your repertoire.

Old way – How did you that make you feel?

Better way – What was that like for you?

You will most likely elicit very similar responses to the above questions, but the second allows for much greater flexibility in the response and tends to be much more accepted.

Become aware of the frequency with which you use “feel” and begin to minimize your use of “feel” during reflective conversations. If you have the training, time, appropriate environment and permission to explore emotional issues it is certainly appropriate for you to use any tools/words necessary to achieve the desired results.

Another word to avoid is “why.” It invites defensiveness and tends to be a very closed-ended question. Remember back to childhood when your parent(s) would ask you “Why did you do that!?” You responded with “BECAUSE!”

Why is a very easy question, but also a lazy habit for facilitators to develop. Simply reword your questions differently to achieve the same response, but in a more personable manner.

What was your rationale for X?

The reasoning behind this decision?

What lead you to do.....?

What were you hoping to gain by.....?

Because??? (said with a humorous, exploratory tone to your voice)

Be aware that your tone of voice will play a significant role in the impact of this line of questioning. If you sound accusatory the participant will become defensive.

Use good listening skills. In order to effectively facilitate a discussion you must hear AND listen to what is being said. Listening is generally one of the weakest skills of facilitators (and people in general). Good listening requires patience. You need to allow participants to finish their thoughts and digest what has been said before you respond.

Keep structured reflection time crisp – to the point and energized. Choose two or three broad observable issues to highlight. If the discussion gets bogged down, you may need to name the key process issues, reinforce good group effort and move on. Be willing not to address in order to keep things moving. The important issues will reappear during later elements and you can discuss them then. This should not be a universal loophole to minimize reflection. Use a shortened reflection opportunity to highlight key issues and maintain group energy.

WHAT, SO WHAT, NOW WHAT

Facilitators often want to get right to the meaty issues that are confronting a group. This often leads to short discussions and/or blank stares from the participants. The problem is that the group is unwilling or unprepared to discuss the underlying process-related issues. They may not yet agree on or understand the events that transpired during the element.

To help guide their thinking, the facilitator should use the What, So What, Now What approach to processing. This technique is further discussed in "The Art and Science of Processing Experience" by Knapp.

Begin with "What" question. "What did you do to get this job done well?" As needed, guide thinking to specific phases or issues (i.e. "during planning, before planning, during the rule changes?")

Elicit at least three behavioral examples of group process strategies that helped group performance. These will be the issues most important to them, not ones that you thought were important.

The responses to your first "What" question will usually be "bucket words" – teamwork, planning, communication, leadership, trust, listening, etc. Follow their responses with a second "What" question – "What specifically about _____ (fill-one of the bucket words) worked so well?"

Once you are discussing specifics, you can move onto the next step or the "So What." This is the easy part. Use "So What" as your question – "So What? What impact did _____ (the specific listed above) have on the people/performance?"

Finally, you get to the "Now What" stage or the "What-does-at-this-have-to-do-with-anything stage?" Your discussion should address what impact or relevance what the group just discussed has upon the next element or to other real life issues. "What is the lesson/implication for future elements/real life situations?"

After focusing on the issues/behaviors that contributed to the group's success you should also explore what could be improved. Begin with a "what" question – "What, if anything, caused the group trouble or that you did not like during this element?"

Use "What specifically" as necessary to get clarity and understanding of the issue. Followed by "So what? What was the impact of this?" And finally, "Now what? What would you like to see happen instead?" If the change is significant and requires continual attention from the group, make sure to get their commitment to trying the "new way" of doing things before closing the discussion. It could also be beneficial to make an agreement with the group to hold them to these new behavior(s).

By applying the above strategies, practice and by receiving feedback from other challenge course instructors you can become a better facilitator. Some of the suggested wording may

seem awkward at first, but with practice it will become part of your regular vocabulary. What, So What, Now What are a suggested outline. The actual words you use may be different, but the sequence should be similar.

COMMON ISSUES AND RELATED QUESTIONS

"If you treat an individual...as if he were what he ought to be and could be, he will become what he ought to be and could be." Goethe

The following questions are ones that the authors have had success with in facilitating reflection on Ropes Course experiences. You will develop your repertoire of questions as you continue to gain experience and insight. We encourage you to record your favorite questions in the blank areas in each section.

Opening

- What are you hoping for from today's experience?
- What kind of support do you need from the other group members?
- What do you perceive will be difficult for you today?
- What excites you about Ropes Course?
- What can you offer the group today?
- Knowing your typical roles in a group, what role would you consider assuming today?
- What are your personal and group goals for the day?
- What kind of support do you need from the facilitators?

General

- What happened that you liked or disliked?
- What contributed to the group's success?
- What would be helpful to change in order to be successful with future events?
- What did you discover about yourself? The group?
- How did you decide how you would do the element?
- Who knew the plan?
- How did you handle leadership?
- How do you handle fear?
- In what ways can you apply what you have learned?

Communication

- What did you ask for from the group?
- What prevented you from asking for what you wanted or needed?
- What was helpful or disappointing about your style of communication?
- What differences did you notice about other group members' styles of communication?
- What was confusing about a person's style of communication?
- Who was included in the flow of communication? Excluded?
- Who suggestions were acted on? Ignored?
- In what ways did the communication pattern change throughout the day?
- In what ways can you apply what you have learned?

Decision Making/Problem Solving

- What is the problem?
- What are the most important concerns you have about the problem?
- What are some of your lesser concerns?
- What are some other solutions? Brainstorm them.
- What is the best alternative for you? The group?
- What did you discover when you re-evaluated your choice?
- What changes do you need to make?
- What, or who, was helpful in solving the problem?
- What, or who, was a hindrance in solving the problem?
- How do you typically solve a problem? Make a decision?
- In what ways can you apply what you have learned?

Trust

- What makes it difficult to trust? Yourself? Others?
- What behaviors and attitudes help you build trust?
- What behaviors and attitudes get in the way of building trust?
- Which role is easier, the one trusting or being trusted?
- Which role is more difficult, the one trusting or being trusted?
- How can the group act, or look, if we were trusting?
- What can you do to help increase the trust level in the group?
- In what ways can you apply what you have learned?

Expression of Feelings

- How are you feeling right now? Consider mad, glad, sad, and scared.
- Describe one feeling that you have experienced today. What was going on? What were some of the feelings that came up for you today?
- What feelings are the easiest to express?
- What feelings are the most difficult to express?
- Were the ways you expressed your feelings today typical or atypical of how you usually express them? If atypical, how do you usually express your feelings?
- What feelings did you notice that the others were expressing?
- What feelings were hardest to be around?
- What feelings were expressed nonverbally today? Describe how they were expressed?
- What feelings did you keep inside today?
- What feelings do you want to keep most fresh in your memories?
- In what ways can you apply what you have learned?

Individual Differences

- In what ways are the group members similar? Different?
- How did the differences within the group prove to be a strength?
- How did the differences within the group prove to be a hindrance?

- How are you different from some of the group members?
- How did your differences affect the group?
- What was the basis for any of the stereotypes?
- What societal stereotypes were challenged today?
- How could the group learn and benefit from individual differences?
- In what ways can you apply what you have learned?

Individual Responsibility Taking

- What can you do, specifically, to make a difference?
- Name three things that you want others to know, or ways that you'd like them to act differently?
- How much control did you have today? Others?
- What makes it seem that others have more control than you?
- What personal attitudes and behaviors could you change, or influence change in others, for the day?
- What prevents the group from using "I" statements?
- What changes need to be made to avoid attacking or challenging certain behaviors within the group?
- In what ways can you apply what you have learned?

Team Work

- Specifically, how did your group work together?
- Specifically, how did your group make decisions?
- In what ways was your group cooperative? Give examples.
- In what ways was your group uncooperative? Give examples.
- What strengths were evident in your group? Weaknesses?
- What contributed to the success of your group?
- What prevented your group from being successful?
- What role did you play within your group?
- What did you appreciate about your group? Individuals?
- What strengths did you offer to your group?
- How does the group measure success? How do you?
- In what ways can you apply what you have learned?

Closing

- What were your goals at the beginning of the day?
- What goals were you able to meet? Not able to meet?
- What did you learn about yourself today? The group?
- What specific memories, or visual, will you take away from today's experience?
- Who did you really appreciate or enjoy today? Give specific examples.
- What are you most proud of from today's activities?
- What specifically was fun about today?

- In what ways was your behavior today typical, or atypical, of how you usually act in groups?
- In what specific ways will you apply what you learned from today's experience?

GENERAL GUIDELINES

THE CHALLENGE COURSE EXPERIENCE

The Challenge Course Experience is designed to be a safe, challenging, rewarding and fun experience for all participants regardless of their physical, mental or emotional abilities. The activities/elements are found in a maze of trees, poles, ropes and cables and require a group to work together to solve problems, help each other overcome perceived limits and produce a sense of exhilaration and accomplishment. While the elements are often thought of as being "physical" any person willing to participate can do so through the cooperative efforts of the group. Typically, elements last between 15 and 60 minutes in length and are followed by a short discussion or debrief.

Debriefs give participants and opportunity to stop the action and reflect on the group process skills required to accomplish the challenge.

POTENTIAL CONVERSATION TOPICS

Teamwork	A group working together in order to achieve a common goal which could not be accomplished by an individual.
Communication	Collecting and disseminating information. Includes both giving (talking) and receiving (listening) information. To be effective, communication must be understood by all involved.
Trust and Respect	Developing a sense of compassion and responsibility for and among group members.
Cooperation	Accepting of others/ideas and willingness to attempt something although you may not fully agree with it.
Leadership	Providing guidance to the group in order to achieve the task and maintain a positive and productive group environment.
Followership	Committing to success and carrying out the directions of others in a manner that maintains a positive and productive group environment.
Giving/Receiving Feedback	Providing reflective information to others in a fashion that allows them to accept and use it. Accepting and applying the reflective information that has been presented to you.
Giving/Receiving Support	Providing physical, emotional and psychological assistance to others within the group. Asking for the assistance that you need and accepting what is offered to you.
Self-awareness	Developing a sense of how one's abilities can be a vital resource for helping others and the group to succeed.
Self-confidence	Increasing one's willingness and ability to trust in self, others and safety systems.
Challenge	A test of one's abilities or resources in a demanding and stimulating undertaking.
Mental Challenge	Solving a difficult problem through resourcefulness, initiative, imagination and creativity.

A challenge course experience should provide participants with an opportunity to gain increased insight and knowledge about themselves and how to handle problems as part of a group or as an

individual. This is accomplished through careful provocation by the instructor and repeated exposure to the above topics throughout the experience.

A challenge course instructor must, therefore, be able to elicit thought from the participants and conduct small group discussions.

CHALLENGE COURSE ELEMENT CATEGORIES

Initial	Begin to “break the ice” among group members and develop a foundation of trust and physical awareness necessary for a safe challenge course experience.
Lawn	Requires a flat, open (grassy) area and introduces the concepts necessary for effective group process and problem solving used throughout the challenge course.
Simple Problem Solving	The challenges are greater than Lawn elements and each problem requires a new set of thought processes to arrive at a solution.
Complex Problem Solving	Requires effective group process and problem solving skills. The challenges are more complicated and require a longer period of time to complete than Simple Problem Solving Elements.
Stacking	By their nature, require the group to vertically stack participants in order to accomplish the task.
Up and Over	By their nature, require the group to move participants up and over an obstacle in order to accomplish the task.
Spotted Individual	In turn, participants attempt the presented element while other participants provide safety through spotting.
Belayed Individual	Similar to Spotted Individual elements, but with increased height. Spotters are replaced with a static or dynamic belay system.
High Impact	The most dramatic elements on the challenge course. The participant is most nearly on their own to accept the challenge and push beyond perceived limits. This is done by making the decision to try the element and to continue with the moral support of the rest of the group.

In the sections that follow, each category and the elements in each will be discussed according to program objectives for each element.

ELEMENT SEQUENCING

In order for a challenge course experience to be successful, the sequence of elements selected must be appropriate for the group. Following a special recipe or step-by-step process would be great. Unfortunately, that is not possible. For the most part, determining an appropriate sequence of elements for any particular group is up to the instructor's discretion. This decision needs to be based on the group's overall abilities (physical, mental and group process), safety issues observed and discussed, time available and desired outcomes.

Think of this sequence as steps, with each step building on the step(s) that came before it. For the most part you walk up steps one at a time, occasionally skipping one, but almost never skipping two without at least prior thought. The same for challenge course elements; present elements in a manner that establishes a constant, yet ever-increasing challenge.

Keep in mind that the challenges facing participants may not lie in the task itself, but in the group process issues associated with the group working together effectively. In other words, selecting several Simple Problem Solving elements to improve group interaction may be more appropriate than moving onto Complex Problem Solving elements and increasing the physical/mental challenge too soon.

Challenge course instructors must have a lot of imagination, creativity and flexibility when conducting an experience. It is imperative that they acquire thorough training which includes element safety considerations, course presentation and element sequencing. It is also important that instructors receive continual feedback from other instructors and/or supervisor and updated safety information.

GENERAL SAFETY GUIDELINES

These safety guidelines apply to all elements and should be enforced throughout the experience. Most of them should be covered during an initial briefing or participants.

- No running (except as noted). No dropping (equipment, people). No jumping. No throwing (equipment, people). All movements should be under control.
- No gum chewing or candy during the elements.
- Clothing, belts, or other personal belongings may not be used on any element except where specified.
- Shoes must remain on at all times. Sturdy shoes with closed toes and closed heels are required. High heeled shoes must be avoided.
- Anything that might get caught in the apparatus, including jewelry, watches, and bandannas, should be removed. Long hair should be tied back.
- Sharp objects should be removed from pockets.
- Participants should never be stacked more than three levels high.
- When spotting, a minimum of two spotters at each hazardous location is required. Spotting must be emphasized throughout the experience. One way to do this is to incorporate spotting into the “rules of the game” and have the group be penalized if there is a spotting infraction.
- As a challenge course instructor the underlying safety guideline is that you should always be “where the action is.”
- Additionally, the instructor should be aware of special needs of participants including physical or mental limitations, prescribed medication, history of injuries, allergies, and/or special communication or emotional needs.
- Pandemic/physical distance: create norms around boundaries, hand sanitizer use, physical distance, mask use.

Each element performed during a challenge course program will have specific safety considerations and guidelines. General Safety Guidelines and element specific safety considerations must both be enforced in order to assure the accident-free operation of that element.

It is the professional obligation of each challenge course instructor not only to commit these safety guidelines to memory, but also to establish an attitude of safety consciousness and ensure that these guidelines are closely adhered to throughout the entire experience.

An attitude of safety consciousness is far ranging in scope, and concerns not only the individual participant, but the entire participant group, instructor, course supervisor and the credibility of the organization as a whole.

SAFETY CHECKS AND INSPECTIONS

Challenge Course staff and students visually inspect the site and elements prior to each use. This inspection includes checking the elements themselves as well as the ground cover and tree canopy for hazards and/or potential deadfall. Trails and site areas are cleared of potentially harmful debris. All equipment is checked for proper functioning and potential hazards (splinters, cracks, etc.). Any equipment malfunctions or hazardous element areas are noted, not used, and reported to the Challenge Course Manager.

Challenge Course staff formally inspect the Challenge Course once in the fall semester and once in the spring semester. This is a more thorough, “wrench-on” inspection, in which each element is checked completely including tightness of all hardware, proper functioning of all equipment and condition of all element areas. This inspection is documented in the Outdoor Education and Leadership Binder in the Challenge Course Managers office.

Finally, all challenge course elements are inspected annually by an outside professional challenge course builder. This inspection includes all elements, element sites, equipment and procedures. An inspection report is filed in the Challenge Course Manager’s office.

SAFETY BRIEFING

Staff should participate in a Safety Briefing prior to each use of the challenge course. A Safety Briefing should include a discussion of the goals, objectives and expectations of the participating group; procedures and safety considerations for each element to be used; and specific needs of the participant group or individual participants within the group. Relevant information may include, but will not be limited to age, physical, mental and emotional abilities and/or communication limitations (i.e., hearing impaired, language barrier).

INITIAL BRIEFING OF PARTICIPANTS

Challenge course participants must receive information concerning the experience they are going to undertake. This initial briefing should include a description of a challenge course experience, safety guidelines, what to do if injured, and indication that 100% effort is expected, and that participation is challenge by choice.

PARTICIPANT PREPAREDNESS

Challenge course instructors must perform an array of tasks simultaneously to assure the challenge course experience is positive and safe for all participants. This should include checking and monitoring participants' physical and emotional well being. For example, are they dressed appropriately for the weather? Throughout the experience, instructors must be alert to changes in group members, noticing when participants may be hungry, thirsty, or tired; checking their understanding of directions and ensuring that participants remain attentive.

INITIAL ELEMENTS

These elements begin to "break the ice" and minimize some of the social barriers that exist among participants. Barriers that need to be overcome include reduced personal space and touching each other.

These elements also begin developing a foundation of trust and physical awareness necessary for a safe challenge course experience. Participants should be taught proper spotting and lifting techniques. Additionally, participants learn how to be spotted and lifted properly.

Finally, these elements provide the conceptual understanding of the need for adhering to established safety guidelines.

NAME GAME

Element Description

Provides a fun, energetic way to learn participant's names.

Each person thinks of an adjective which describes themselves AND begins with the same sound of their first name.

Starting with the instructor, each person introduces who preceded them (using both adjective and first name) followed by themselves.

Safety Considerations

No real safety guidelines

Variations

There are many variations to the Name game. Rather than adjectives, use fruits and/or vegetables, animals, ice cream flavors or rhyming words.

It is also possible to use tennis balls or other small, soft throwing objects. Rather than going around the circle, toss the ball to someone across the circle saying their name as you throw the ball. They say "Thank you," followed by your name. They throw the ball to someone else saying their name and that person says "Thank you," and the name of the person who threw them the ball. Continue this process of throwing the ball, thanking each other and using names until everyone has learned each other's name. Introduce more balls to the sequence when and if appropriate.

Individuals can introduce themselves and a movement or a position that illustrates one of their interests or hobbies. All other participants would then say the person's name and do their action or position. Names and action can be repeated as new individuals are introduced.

Having participants repeat individual's names simultaneously can lessen the pressure or stress on individuals and help begin to develop quality group process.

This is a good opportunity for challenge course instructors to be creative. Let your imagination run wild. Remember to keep it safe and controlled. It is imperative for you to know your participants/ names in order to assure safety.

Reflection Topics

Laughter

WIND IN THE WILLOWS

Element Description

Provides an opportunity to learn and practice safe spotting techniques.

After the group has been instructed in proper spotting techniques, each participant, in turn stands in the center of the group. Following a series of signals, the person falls into the group and is caught. The group then rights the person back through center and to the opposite side of the circle. This action continues until the person in the center or the instructor stops the action.

Safety Considerations

Spotters should form a close circle standing shoulder to shoulder.

Demonstrate proper spotting stance

- ✓ Feet shoulder width apart
- ✓ One foot in front of the other to help establish good stable base
- ✓ Knees bent slightly
- ✓ Hands up at chest height with elbows bent slightly

Demonstrate proper stance of person who will be in the center of the circle.

- ✓ Stand in center
- ✓ Feet together (heels and toes)
- ✓ Arms across chest with hands on opposite shoulders
- ✓ Body rigid (no bending at the waist)
- ✓ Eyes opened or closed

Review signals

- ✓ Spotters Ready? --said by person in the middle
- ✓ Ready --said by spotters on outside of circle
- ✓ Falling --said by person in the middle
- ✓ Fall-on --said by spotters

Stress the importance of good spotting at least three people (six hands) catching the person each time they fall.

Instructor

Instructor should demonstrate how to spot and how to fall.

Be constantly aware of any person not paying attention.

Be ready to slow a fall if someone in the circle does not do their job. This can be done either by being part of the circle or by maintaining a position immediately outside the circle.

Provide good coaching and feedback as necessary.

Reflection Topics

Teamwork

Communication

Trust and Respect

Giving/Receiving Support

FLYING CARPET

Element Description

Provides an opportunity to learn and practice proper lifting techniques.

Participants are organized so that half are on each side of the person being lifted. After being instructed in proper lifting techniques, the group places their hands on the back of the person being lifted, shifts them to a location and brings the person safely back to the ground.

Safety Considerations

All participants should be instructed in proper lifting techniques:

- ✓ Keep backs straight
- ✓ Bend knees
- ✓ Lift with legs

Participants to be lifted should stand with half of the participants on each side and the instructor standing behind them.

Participants doing the lifting should be instructed where and how to place their hands.

- ✓ Lifters closest to the instructor will place hands on the shoulders of the person being lifted.
- ✓ Lifts furthest from instructor will place hands on the lower legs and/or feet of the person being lifted.
- ✓ Other lifters should be distributed along the body of the person being lifted.
- ✓ Station more lifters in the mid-section of the person being lifted to support the weight.

Lift participant as a unit keeping head level with or above the feet. Feet should never be above the head.

Once a participant is in the air, group should move slowly and as a unit.

Lower participant to waist level before lowering feet to ground.

Extra participants or those who can't reach should spot.

Instructor

Instructor should demonstrate proper lifting techniques and assure their use.

Make sure that lifters are ready. Use signals if necessary.

Protect the head and neck area if group loses control. One way to do this is to put a hand in the armpit of the participant being lifted. Provide a place for the participant's head with your other hand.

Give directions of travel and movement.

Maintain control of the group.

Variations

The only variations are in the direction that the group moves when the person is in the air. Movement can be

in a circle

towards the feet or head

rocking back and forth from head to feet

up and down (upside down push ups)

Do NOT move laterally or with the lifted participant moving completely sideways with one line of the lifters walking backwards. This action could result in an entire line of lifters tripping and falling.

Reflection Topics

Teamwork

Trust and Respect

Giving/Receiving Support

Self-awareness

Self-confidence

LAWN ELEMENTS

Elements in this category vary greatly in their design, set-up and presentation. They are grouped in this category because they all require a flat, open or grassy area free of hazards and minimal equipment which is portable and can be stored indoors. If necessary, these elements could be run indoors.

In their purest forms, these elements introduce the teamwork concepts necessary for effective group process and problem solving that are used throughout a challenge course experience. The complexity of the tasks is low allowing for substantial growth as a group in a relatively short period of time.

There are many variations to these (and most elements) that can significantly increase the difficulty of the elements. Variables that can be introduced into these elements include muting participants (some or all), blindfolding participants (some or all), time restrictions, having the group attempt to improve their performance or combinations of variables. If participants are muted, they should speak up if they feel uncomfortable or unsafe. Also be aware that blindfolds can become uncomfortable and should remain on for a limited period of time -- 30 minutes maximum. It is best to ask for volunteers to be blindfolded and/or muted.

ALL ABOARD

Element Description

All participants must be supported by a platform (2'x2' or smaller) and hold this position for a specified period of time. Platforms are housed in the bouldering room in Simpson.

Safety Considerations

If participants sit on backs or shoulders of other participants they should be spotted up and down and lifters should be physically helped with lifting.

Encourage participants to step down if they lose their balance so as not to pull the rest of the group down.

Monitor people stepping and/or standing on each other's feet.

People should be warned of the possibility of twisted ankles.

Instructor

Constantly move around the group in order to help slow the group down if they lose balance and begin to fall. Be prepared to catch a lot of weight. You are the only spotter and may have to support most of the group.

Pay particular attention if any participant is up on their shoulders. Generally, spot behind this person and be prepared to catch them if they fall backwards. It may help to hold their waist band.

Variations

Have the group sing a song, making animal sounds or do other goofy things. Be creative, but be safe.

Increase the length of time the group must remain on the platform.

Once successful, use a smaller platform, if available.

Reflection Topics

Teamwork

Leadership

Communication

Self-awareness

Cooperation

AUSTRALIAN TROLLEY

Element Description

Participants must traverse a specified distance while standing on two 2"x4"x12' boards, with ropes attached at one foot intervals. There is a pair of trolleys in the chimney closet at the back of the climbing wall, and another pair in the bouldering room in Simpson.

Safety Considerations

Keep the group controlled and prevent wild use of the boards.

Keep fingers and feet out from under the boards.

Participants should not tie ropes to their feet or wrap around their hands because they will not be able to get free if they lose balance.

Instructor

Be ready to spot falls.

If participants are using the boards as a big pair of skis, consider spotting in the front to prevent a "domino effect" toward the front of the boards.

Be careful not to get in the way of the boards as the group is moving.

Variations

Have the group change the direction that they are moving.

Have the group maneuver through a pre-determined course.

Blindfold some individuals

Silence some individuals.

If a participant falls off, have them stand backwards when they get back on.

Give participants a time limit.

Distance Adaptation: two or three people on the trolleys at a time; other group members coach and advise.

Reflection Topics

Teamwork

Leadership

Giving/Receiving Feedback

Communication

Followership

TRAFFIC JAM

Element Description

You may have seen this as an old math problem or brain teaser.

Each participant is standing on their own square. Half of the group is to the left of an empty square. The other half is to the right of the center square.

The two groups are to exchange places while adhering to the following rules:

Participants may only move forward.

Participants may move forward one space into an empty space.

Participants may move forward around one person into an empty space.

Only one person moves at a time.

Only one person may be on a square at a time.

Participants may walk on the ground to get from one square to another. The problem is not staying off the ground while moving from square to square, but the sequence in which people move.

Anytime the group becomes stuck (creates a traffic jam) or violates any rule they must return to the starting position.

Safety Considerations

Maintain control of the group and have them concentrate on the task.

Participants may step on grass to move from square to square.

Instructor

Monitor the group and rules. Restart the group if they violate any rules.

Indicate when the group develops a "traffic jam" and have them start again.

Variations

The squares can be set-up either a straight line or a u-shaped, depending on the communication issues to be addressed. A straight line is more difficult.

Once the group has accomplished the task, have them reverse the process and return to their original squares.

Muting at some point in the process can be challenging.

Distance Adaptation: each person gets a unique marker with a clear front and back to place on their square, and must maintain physical distance while problem solving and stepping up individually to move their marker.

Reflection Topics

Communication
Cooperation
Followership
Giving/Receiving
Feedback
Leadership
Mental Challenge

MONSTER

Element Description

The group must form an inter-connected mass of humanity (a monster) that has a given number of simultaneous points of contact with the ground. Once formed the monster must cross a given area.

The number of contact points can vary, but one less than the number of participants in the group is a good number with which to begin.

Safety Considerations

If participants sit on backs or shoulders of other participants they should be spotted up and down and lifters should be physically helped with lifting.

Instructor

Spot around the group and be ready to slow a fall if balance is lost. Pay particular attention to participants who may be on other's shoulders.

The group is most likely to fall forward once they begin moving. Spotting in the front is crucial.

Make sure that the area being crossed is level and free from ground debris. Avoid having the group try to cross a huge distance.

Variations

Require a specified number of feet and/or hands to be in contact with the ground.

Require the monster to make monster noises.

Reflection Topics

Teamwork
Communication
Cooperation
Followership
Self-awareness

Leadership
Mental Challenge

BLINDFOLD

Element Description

A blindfold group is told to remain silent while the instructor gives each participant a number. Group must then arrange themselves in numerical order.

Safety Considerations

Use an area that is cleared of all obstructions and obstacles.

Instructor

Require the activity to be done silently.

Have the group arrange themselves by age, birthday, etc. Use your imagination, but keep it safe.

Assign each participant an animal and have them arrange themselves according to animals' type or size, or find a partner with the same animal allowing them to make their animal's sound.

Reflection Topics

Communication
Self-awareness
Mental Challenge

A-FRAME

Element Description

A person stands inside the A-Frame (a wooden frame in the shape of an “A” with ropes attached at the top). While maintaining at least one point of contact with the ground, but never more than two the group must move the A-Frame across a given area. The person inside must avoid contact with the ground. Participants must remain a rope’s length away from the A-Frame (12 feet).

Safety Considerations

Participants should not tie or wrap ropes around hands.

Person in A-Frame should take care not to hit head on A-Frame sides.

On wet days participants should take care not to slip when pulling their ropes.

Participants should only hold the ropes only at the end.

Instructor

Monitor the safety of the element. Assure that all participants remain at the end of their ropes.

Monitor where all participants are standing especially those behind the A-Frame. If participants walk too close to the A-Frame and it falls, the participants could be hit.

Variations

Begin with the A-Frame in a horizontal position. The group must determine how to raise the A-Frame to a vertical position before beginning to move it

Muting is effective.

Reflection Topics

Teamwork	Communication	Cooperation	Followership	Giving/Receiving Feedback
Leadership	Self-awareness	Mental Challenge		

SIMPLE ELEMENTS

The objectives of these elements are similar to those in previous sections, but the problems themselves bear no similarity to one another and require a new set of thought processes to arrive at each solution.

T.P. SHUFFLE

Element Description

The group stands on a horizontal telephone pole or beam supported so it is approximately 1 foot off the ground. Participants on the left side of the center must move to the right and those on the right side of center must move to the left. All movements must be accomplished without stepping off the pole/beam.

Safety Considerations

If a participant loses balance, they should step down, being careful not to pull down anyone.

Only one action at a time so that the instructor can spot the element adequately.

Participants should be warned not to step on other's hands or feet.

Participants should step down carefully when they are finished.

Instructor

Should spot where the action is and keep the group in control.

Variations

Participants must arrange themselves in order of birthday, height, or some other category

Reflection Topics

Teamwork Communication Trust and Respect Giving/Receiving Feedback

Cooperation Self-awareness Giving/Receiving Support

WHALE WATCH

Element Description

The group must balance a large platform for a given time period.

Safety Considerations

Jumping “playing” on the element is not allowed.

Keep hands and feet out from under the platform.

Have group step onto and off of the platform from either side at the pivot point so that their feet aren’t caught under the platform.

One end should be blocked underneath when not in use.

Instructor

Maintain control of the group and have them concentrate on the task.

Monitor safety. Assure participants keep their hands and feet out from under the platform.

Remove blocks from end before use and replace after use.

Variations

Have group attempt to sing a song while balancing the platform

Try and have the group balance the platform while some are blindfolded.

Group keeps the platform balanced while having people switch sides on the platform.

Distancing Adaptations: Only four people get on, one to each corner; place a ball in the center and keep it balanced or roll back and forth without letting it fall off. OR use tape on each end to mark a “goal line”; position half the group at each end to rock the platform back and forth to achieve “goals”, using only hands on top of platform edge.

Reflection Topics

Communication Giving/Receiving Feedback Mental Challenge

COMPLEX INITIATIVES

The behavior objectives of these elements are similar to those in the previous sections but the problems themselves bear no similarity to one another and may require a new set of thought processes to arrive at a solution. These elements are more complicated than the simple initiatives. For each of these elements, participants must present a plan to the instructor before an attempt at the element to ensure that a safe plan is used.

NITRO CROSSING

Element Description

The group stands on one side of an off limits area, sometimes referred to as a 'piranha infested river', delineated by ropes on the ground. There is a rope with a foot loop hanging from a cable, which participants can use to swing across the 'river'. The group needs to get everyone safely from one side to the other, using just the rope, without anyone touching the 'river'.

Safety Considerations

Participants can get a foot stuck in the foot loop while dismounting.

Not all participants are strong or confident enough to hang on to the rope for the duration of the swing.

Participants get really excited about swinging and the group needs to be carefully managed to avoid people pushing the swinger too hard, bumping into each other, or taking on more than they can manage.

Instructor

Provide a progression so participants can get a feel for the activity. Let each participant use the swing to cross a very short distance, so they can practice getting their foot in and out of the loop and holding onto the rope.

Widen the distance to be crossed, and brief participants on helping each other get on and off the rope. This is the main role for participant spotters in this activity.

To build the sense of this being a team as opposed to an individual challenge, have the rope dangling in the middle of the river when they start, so they have to figure out how to retrieve it.

Be prepared to step into the river and support a participant who is on the rope. If the participants on the landing side are holding the rope, and the participant on the rope can't get their foot out, there is potential for a hard fall.

Variations

Designate many places on the ground where people may land and allow only one person to land at each place. There are bicycle inner tubes for this purpose.

Mark the boundaries of the 'river' with a pole balanced on low objects. If participants knock the pole over they have to start over.

Place a platform on the far side of the 'river', and have participants land on the platform, creating a dynamic "All Aboard".

Challenge the group to carry a bucket of water ('nitro') across without spilling it.

Distancing Adaptation: attach guide ropes to the swing. Create destinations around the swing using platforms or inner tubes. One person gets on the swing, and the others pull on the guide ropes to move the 'swinger' from one destination to another.

Processing Topics

Communication Leadership Followership Giving/Receiving Support

Cooperation Self-awareness

ISLAND IN THE RIVER

Element Description

Participants traverse across a “river”, onto an island (which is a large rock), and then to the far shore of the “river”, using two planks.

Safety Considerations

Participants must be careful not to hit each other with the ends of the planks.

The element should not be used if the planks are wet and slippery.

Participants holding the plank should be careful not to pinch their fingers.

Adequate weight must be used to secure the plank while someone is walking on it.

Instructor

Be mobile. Slow the group down if they lose balance and begin to fall.

Spot participants as they cross the plank.

Processing Topics

Teamwork Communication Trust and Respect Self-awareness Cooperation

Leadership Followership Mental Challenge Giving/Receiving Support

BALANCE WALK

Element Description

Given a series of cables, the group must cross a designated area without touching the ground.

Safety Considerations

If a participant loses balance, they should step down, being careful not to pull down anyone else.

If the rope is used, participants may pivot and fall off the cable. If the participant feels this start to happen they should step down carefully.

Participants should step down carefully when they are finished.

Participants who are not yet standing/sitting on the cables may help spot.

If participants choose to support each other by holding hands, they should not interlock fingers.

Instructor

Spot where the action is and keep the group in control

Variations

Participants must remain connected. Trees/poles act as a connection, but rope does not.

Group must also transport a bucket of water – not recommended on cold days.

If one participant falls off, the whole group must go back to the beginning.

If one participant falls off, only that person must go back to the beginning.

Distance Adaptation: participants must stay 6' apart, but can hold onto additional ropes for balance. Have people start at different trees and attempt to complete a full circuit while helping each other. Preface this activity with a self spotting sequence. Spotters will hold opposite ends of a 6' rope, one rope in front of the climber and the other behind the climber. Spotters keep this rope taut so that climbers can use it as a handrail if necessary, and also can be supported by it in the event they fall.

Processing Topics

Teamwork Communication Trust and Respect Mental Challenge Cooperation
Leadership Followership Self-confidence Giving/Receiving Support

STACKING ELEMENTS

Stacking Elements by their nature, require the group to vertically stack participants in order to accomplish the task.

Basic Safety Considerations for All Stacking Events

Stack no more than three levels high.

One spotter on the ground is designated for every person in the air with a minimum of three spotters.

Participants must be helped up and down.

Only one action may take place at a time. This helps allow for adequate spotting and aids the instructor in controlling the group.

Participants should be warned of the possibility of dirt falling into their eyes.

If a participant steps onto a back, they must step on the shoulders or over the hips, but NOT on the middle of the back, which can cause injury.

If stepping onto a person's bent leg, step in the hip area NOT on the knee or the middle of the thigh.

Participants should use safe lifting techniques, such as lifting with their legs, not their backs.

Instructors should continually monitor participants in base of the stack to ensure that they can handle the load.

These elements require a great deal of concentration and may need to be avoided late in the day or when the group is tired.

Participants must present a plan to the instructor before an attempt at the element to ensure that all safety rules are adhered to and all group members understand the plan.

BEAR TREE

Element Description

The group attempts to safely stack people in order to reach as high as possible on the bear tree and place a piece of tape or make a mark at that point.

Safety Considerations

Keep fingers out of cracks or holes

Keep all stacked people in contact with the tree/pole and the person below them at all times (no tree climbing).

Spotters should be alert throughout the element and spot carefully until each person is safely on the ground.

Instructor

Secondary spotter behind participants.

Be ready to move in any direction to slow a fall. Be mobile.

Continually monitor participants at the base of the stack to ensure that they can handle the weight.

Check the ground to assure even footing for the base people.

Variations

Stacking can be done against a pole or a wall.

Processing Topics

Teamwork Trust and Respect Self-confidence Giving/Receiving Support

Leadership Mental Challenge Followership

UP AND OVER ELEMENTS

Up and Over Elements by their nature require the group to go up and over an obstacle to complete the task.

Basic Safety Considerations for All up and Over Elements

Generally, spotting is the most important safety aspect. This includes spotting “kicking” feet as people go over the element.

Jumping onto or off of or dropping off an element is not permitted

Participants should be warned of dirt falling into the eyes.

A minimum of three spotters is required on each side of the element. Spirit Spotters should be used to spot the first three people and the last three people over the element.

Participants should go up head first and come down feet first. Participants should keep their heads above their feet. This helps assure participants will land on their feet.

Only one action may take place at a time. This helps allow for adequate spotting and aids the instructor in controlling the group.

Keep fingers out of any cracks or holes that are present.

Watch out for splinters.

If a participant steps from the back, they must step on the shoulder or over the hips, but not on the middle of the back, which could cause injury.

Participants may step on another’s back as an aid to go over the element. They may NOT step on another’s back as an aid to come down from the element.

If stepping onto a person’s bent leg, step in the hip area NOT on the knee or the middle of the thigh.

Participants should use safe lifting techniques, such as lifting with their legs, not their backs.

Instructor is a secondary spotter. Be mobile to help prevent accidents if spotters fail. Supervise and encourage spotters. Position should be where the action is.

These elements require a great deal of concentration and may need to be avoided late in the day or when the group is tired.

Participants must present a plan to the instructor before an attempt at the element to ensure that all safety rules are adhered to and all group members understand the plan.

ELECTRIC FENCE

Element Description

The entire group must safely cross over an imaginary “electric fence” (bungee cord or kite string) without jumping, dropping or touching the string.

Safety Considerations

Spotters should be used on both sides to protect against falls. Some spotters should be in a low position to facilitate spotting beneath the person.

The fence should be crotch to waist high on the tallest group member.

Spotters should continue to spot even if someone touches the string.

This element should be used only with groups that spot well.

Only easily breakable kite string or bungee cord should be used to prevent injury.

Instructor

Act as a secondary spotter. Be mobile to help prevent accidents if spotters fail. Be where the action is.

Supervise and encourage spotters.

Variations

If anyone touches the string the whole group starts over.

If anyone touches the string that person goes back

Blindfold some of the participants.

Do the element silently.

Allow participants to use an 8' pole. If a pole is used, ensure care in its handling. A minimum of two people must handle the pole at any time to prevent it swinging out of control and hitting a participant. The pole may not touch the fence.

Processing Topics

Teamwork Communication Cooperation Followership Giving/Receiving Feedback
Leadership Mental Challenge

SPIDER'S WEB

Element Description

The group must pass participants through the "spider's web" without touching it. Holes vary in size and height. Each participant passes through a different hole in the web.

Safety Considerations

Some spotters should be in a low position to facilitate spotting beneath the person.

Participants should realize that the bottom rope will not break if they fall and may cause tripping.

A participant may be "wheel-barrowed" through a bottom hole.

Spotters should continue to spot even if someone has touched the web.

Instructor

Act as a secondary spotter. Be mobile to help prevent accidents if spotters fail. Be where the action is.

Supervise and encourage spotters.

Variations

If somebody touches the web the whole group starts over.

If somebody touches the web that person goes back to the start side.

To make the element easier, allow participants to use each hole two or more times.

Blindfold some of the participants.

Do the element silently.

Processing Topics

Teamwork Trust and Respect Communication Self-awareness Cooperation
Leadership Mental Challenge Followership Giving/Receiving Support

SPOTTED INDIVIDUAL ELEMENTS

In turn, participants attempt the presented element while all other participants provide safety through spotting.

These elements are participated in on an individual basis, but with the support of the group in terms of safety (spotting) and moral support.

Basic Safety Rules For Spotted Individual Elements

Participants should not sit on elements prior to, during or following its use.

Spotting is a key element and must be done as a group if the element is to be conducted safely. Self spotting should be taught as part of the sequence.

Only one action may take place at a time. This helps allow for adequate spotting and aids the instructor in controlling the group.

These elements require a great deal of concentration and should be avoided late in the day or when the group is tired.

Instructor

At each of these elements, prior to participants using the element it is important to communicate information regarding:

- ✓ how to do the element
- ✓ how to fall and how to self spot
- ✓ appropriate steps to recover from a fall
- ✓ how to properly exit the element

The most efficient way to present the necessary information is for the instructor to do a physical demonstration. However, if it is determined that a physical demonstration will place either the instructor or participants in a position of increased danger, other techniques should be used to convey this information.

Act as a mobile secondary spotter, backing up spotters and keeping them alert. Usually stand on the downhill side if there is one to assist in stopping the momentum of a falling participant.

Note

Elements marked with * in this category may be done either as a spotted individual element or as a belayed individual element, depending on how high above the ground the element is placed.

This element should be used only with groups that spot very well.

TENSION TRAVERSE*

Element Description

By pulling tension on a rope connected to a tree, the participant attempts to maintain balance while walking on a cable.

Safety Considerations

Group should form an envelope of spotters who move with the participant keeping their hands up at all times. Spotters should not lean on the cable or hang on the rope.

Spotters should be aware of the potential jerking action of participant's arms as they pull on the rope and should protect their faces from the rope or the participant's hands and elbows.

Participants should not outrun the spotters.

If participants start to fall, they should keep feet on the cable allowing the spotters to push them back to an upright position.

On triangular versions, participants should keep the feet spread wide apart when doing the middle section (opposite where the rope is attached) to prevent pivoting if balance is lost. They should be careful not to outrun their spotters.

Participants moving on the middle section (triangular versions) may flip over their spotters.

Spotters should not straddle cables.

If two cables converge at one tree, spotters should be careful not to trip over either cable.

When finished, the participant should step down carefully.

Instructor

Secondary spotter on the downhill side (if there is one) between the participant and the tree/pole where the rope is attached.

Stretch out rope and caution participants when they use it to be careful not to hit anyone.

Variations

On a triangular version

If two ropes are available, if there are at least 14 group members, and if the group spots very well, two participants may do the element at the same time. In this case the instructor would be located between the cables keeping an eye on both groups, ready to assist either group if necessary.

Distancing Adaptation: preface this activity with a self spotting sequence. Spotters will hold opposite ends of a 6' rope, one rope in front of the climber and the other behind the climber. Spotters keep this rope taut so that climbers can use it as a handrail if necessary, and also can be supported by it in the event they fall.

Processing Topics

Trust and Respect Giving/Receiving Support Self-confidence Challenge

* May be done either as a spotted individual element or as a belayed individual element, depending on how high above the ground the element is placed.

WILD WOOSEY*

Element Description

Two people attempt to make their way to the end of two diverging cables without either participant falling off.

Safety Considerations

Group should form an envelope of spotters moving with the participant and keeping their hands up at all times.

Participants should not outrun the spotters

Start with an instructor and one participant inside the cables. As the participants get farther apart, more spotters move to the inside.

Spotters inside the cable may want to hold their hands as if they were washing their face. They should not grasp the wrists/hands of the spotters opposite them.

If participants start to fall they should step down carefully.

Participants should be warned of the potential to bump heads with each other.

If participants chose to support each other by holding hands, they should not interlock fingers.

Instructor

Act as a secondary spotter between the cables.

Variations

Distancing Adaptation: participants are given a rope that is as long as the distance between the widest end of the cables. They start at a point on the cables where they can maintain a 6' distance from each other, or more, while they traverse. They can use the rope to balance each other while leaning back.

Processing Topics

Trust and Respect Giving/Receiving Support Self-confidence Challenge

*May be done either as a spotted individual element or as a belayed individual element, depending on how high above the ground the element is placed.

TRUST FALL

Element Description

Participants stand on the third or fourth rung of a ladder and fall backwards into the arms of spotters.

Safety Considerations

Participants must be good spotters.

Spotters stand in two lines facing each other with their arms “zippered” and palms facing up. It is important that spotters NOT grasp the hands/wrists of the person across from them. Watches should be removed.

Spotters should keep their eyes on the person who will be falling, their heads back, and their knees bent. Spotters should be warned that they might be hit if the faller flails their arms.

The participant who is falling should cross arms in a way that they will not hit spotters. Examples of ways to do this are hands folded and twisted back or hands grabbing the shirt collar.

Participants should be spotted up the ladder.

Signals should be used for clear communication. Example: “Spotters ready?” “Ready” “Falling” “Fall”

The fall should be from a height about chest high. The faller’s feet should be at or just below the height of the catchers’ arms. The third or fourth run of a ladder is appropriate.

Participants should be instructed to keep their body rigid while falling. An appropriate way to do this is for the participant to initiate the fall by leading with their head.

Participants with bad backs should avoid this activity.

Instructor

Stand at the head end and check to see that the spotters are lined up correctly

Spot or catch the head and neck to prevent a whiplash effect.

Variations

Have a second participant lay beneath the spotters. Spotters need to be careful not to step on the participant lying on the ground.

Processing Topics

Trust and Respect Giving/Receiving Support Self-confidence Challenge

BELAYED INDIVIDUAL ELEMENTS

The elements in this section are individual or paired, although moral support from the rest of the group and the instructor is helpful. All of these elements require direct instruction and supervision by the instructor to be conducted in a safe manner. The potential for accident dictates the absolute necessity for the instructor to be clear and concise in explanation and to be aware of any problems occurring during the operation of each element used.

Each of the following roles must be filled by a trained staff person when using high elements:

Belay Supervisor- directly supervises the belayer; stands facing the belayer; and is close enough to intervene. Generally there will be one belay supervisor per participant belayer.

Ground Support- directly supervises the climber, including tying in, harness check, putting on and adjusting chest harness, supervising communication and support. Generally there will be one ground support person per climber.

Element Manager- supervises the safe operation of a single high element. Can help with ground support but must keep an eye on the big picture.

Site Manager- Supervises the safe operation of the entire challenge course, in the event there is more than one high element in use at a given time.

BELAYED INDIVIDUAL ELEMENTS - - TRAVERSES

Our high traverse elements include the Burma Bridge, Pirates' Crossing, High Tension Traverse, and Multivine Crossing.

Safety Considerations

These elements are belayed dynamically by a trained participant or a staff person.

Prior to any participant leaving the ground, staff must check participants' harness, ensuring that both the sit harness and the chest harness are properly buckled, snug, and that the participant is tied in with a figure eight follow through, no backup knot, and the belay rope runs up through the carabiner on the chest harness. Participant, belayer, and spotters must all be wearing a helmet that is properly buckled and snug.

Participant may access the element either via ladder or etriers. Participant must be spotted while accessing the element. When participants are ascending the ladder, one person stabilizes the ladder while two others spot.

The Pirates' Crossing can be converted to a two-person High Tension Traverse by unclipping the Pirate's Crossing ropes from the poles and allowing them to hang down next to the poles. At any time when the Pirates' Crossing ropes are being detached or replaced, the area below the

element must be clear of any people because if dropped the rapid links could cause injury to anyone in the way.

Belaying and Lowering Procedures for Traversing Elements

Participants are the primary belayers in order to fully involve them in responsible positions during the session. Belaying is taught at the beginning of the session or at an earlier session. Instruction includes a demonstration of the technique, with explanation, and a full demonstration including climbing signals, a climber that ascends, falls, gets back on the element, completes the element and is lowered.

Belaying is done off the harness of the belayer. The belayer is anchored by a second participant (the "anchor") clipping into a length of webbing that is slung to the back of the belayer's harness, so that the webbing is attached to the front of the "anchor's" harness. All participant belayers have a back-up belayer and are closely supervised by a belay supervisor (staff person). The back-up belayer holds the rope in two hands, allowing some slack rope to form a "smile" between their hands and the belayer's brake hand. This allows enough slack for the belayer to take in rope and brake properly. The back-up belayer must always have two hands on the rope. The belay supervisor must always be facing the belayer and close enough to the belayer to intervene, and may also have a hand on the rope. The belayer, back-up belayer, and anchor move as the climber traverses the element, in order to stay below the shear reduction device above the climber. The belay system we use ensures that the brake hand is always in the optimal position to stop a fall.

Prior to lowering, the climber tells the belayer "Ready to be lowered", and moves away from the tree. The other climber on the element must be in a secure position. The belayer takes in slack, puts both hands on the brake rope, and says "lowering". The climber gently sits down in the harness, descending on the proper side of the cable. This procedure must be closely supervised by the belay supervisor. On reaching the ground, the climber and belayer communicate "off belay" and "belay off".

Belayed Individual Elements -- Ladders

The Sterling College Challenge Course includes one ladder event; the Dangle Duo. This element is temporarily out of service.

Belaying and Lowering Procedures for The Dangle Duo

Participants are the primary belayers in order to fully involve them in responsible positions during the session. Belaying is taught at the beginning of the session or at an earlier session. Instruction includes a demonstration of the technique, with explanation; description of climbing

signals, and may include a full demonstration of a climber that ascends, falls, gets back on the element, completes the element and is lowered.

Belaying is done off the belayers harness while the belayer is anchored to one of the trees opposite the element. The belay system we use ensures that the brake hand is always in the optimal position to stop a fall.

All participant belayers are backed up by a back-up belayer and closely supervised by a belay supervisor (staff person). The back-up belayer holds the rope in two hands, allowing some slack rope to form a "smile" between their hands and the belayer's brake hand. This allows enough slack for the belayer to take in rope and brake properly. The back-up belayer must always have two hands on the rope. The belay supervisor stands facing the belayer, must always be close enough to the belayer to intervene, and may also have a hand on the rope.

Prior to lowering, the climber tells the belayer "Ready to be lowered", and move away from the tree. The other climber on the element must be in a secure position. The belayer takes in slack, puts both hands on the brake rope, and says "lowering". The climber gently sits down in the harness, descending on the proper side of the cable. This procedure must be closely supervised by the belay supervisor. On reaching the ground, the climber and belayer communicate "off belay" and "belay off".

Safety Considerations

This element is belayed dynamically by a trained participant or a staff person.

Prior to any participant leaving the ground, staff must check participants' harness, ensuring that both the sit harness and the chest harness are properly buckled, snug, and that the participant is tied in with a figure eight follow through, no backup knot, and the belay rope runs up through the carabiner on the chest harness. Participant as well as belayer must also be wearing a helmet that is properly buckled and snug.

Spotters are required until the climber is out of reach on the way up and as soon as the climber is within reach on the way down due to stretch in the rope.

Climbers, spotters and instructors should wear helmets.

It's important to emphasize the importance of descending one at a time and on the correct side of the ladder. Teach participants the lowering procedure: one at a time; the other person gets stable, say "ready to lower", determine the correct side to lower on; when belayer has said "lowering", begin to lower weight onto rope while holding onto the rung so it doesn't bang you.

Staff can hold rungs away from participant during lowering to reduce likelihood of banging.

HIGH CHALLENGE COURSE RESCUE PROCEDURES

- ◇ If at any time a participant needs to come off the course for a physical, behavioral, or emotional reason, the belay supervisor will let participant know they are going to be lowered and supervise the safe lowering of participant.
- ◇ If a participant needs to come down but for any reason cannot be lowered in the usual manner (physical-unconscious or losing consciousness and in a more stable position on the element than they would be while being lowered, i.e. sitting on the cable by the tree or leaning against pirates crossing rope; behavioral-seems out of control, unable to listen to instructions, hanging onto element and not letting go; emotional-too distressed to go through standard lowering procedures), rescue will be initiated.
 1. Belay supervisor will alert Site Manager
 2. Belay supervisor will immediately supervise the lowering of the second participant on the element (if there is one).
 3. Site manager will decide who will conduct the rescue. Site manager will decide if emergency medical personnel are needed and send a staff person to call 911 if indicated. After calling 911, this staff person will also contact the main office/chain of command to notify them of the incident. (Note: the person contacted at the main office will delegate someone to do the following- the large First Aid kit from the Wellness Center, obtain the backboard from Simpson, and, if the patient is Sterling student or faculty, obtain their medical form from the Wellness Center or Megan Banner's office.)
 4. Site manager will bring ladder and rescue pack to element (trauma scissors, static line, rescue 8, steel carabiners, ATC, prussiks).
 5. Rescuer will remove ATC and one of the steel carabiners from the rescue pack and leave them on the ground.
 6. Rescuer will ascend to the climber using lobster claws and carrying a rescue pack. Rescuer will attach the steel carabiner with the rescue 8 to the nearest lifeline attachment point above the participant, call "rope!", and drop the remainder of the rope to the ground.
 7. Site manager or designee will set up a belay from the ground using the static rope.
 8. Rescuer will attach the steel carabiner that is clipped to the figure 8 on a bight to the participant's harness. If necessary, untie or cut the participant's belay rope from their harness.
 9. Site Manager or designee will lower the participant to the ground.

10. Provide first aid as necessary.

11. Site manager is responsible for filling out an incident report.

GLOSSARY

A.C.C.T.	Association of Challenge Course Technology. This is a trade organization for challenge course builders. They promote the use of challenge courses and set minimum standards for challenge course construction, ethics, and training.
Anchor	A secure point at which one can attach a belay line. This can be a natural object such as a tree or rock. Anchor points can also be on belay cables or thru-bolts.
Ancillary Equipment	Miscellaneous equipment needed to operate a challenge course such as carabiners, ropes, helmets, harnesses, and boards required on a challenge course. Ancillary equipment should be stored indoors when not in use.
Back-up Cable	A relatively short section of cable that is connect to, or is an integral part of, the belay cable system, and which protects the belay cable in case of bolt failure
Belay	In challenge course context, the rope or technique that is used to protect a climber from falling to the ground. A belay can be either dynamic or static.
Belay Pulley	Device that is used as a belay anchor point which travels on a steel belay cable. It consists of a steel sheave (wheel) encompassed by either aluminum or steel cheeks (rope housing plates).
Bight	A U-shaped bend in a rope with the running and standing ends remaining parallel to each other.
Cable Clip	(Also known as a cable clamp)-A drop forged galvanized cable connection device.
Carabiner	A mechanical device made of either steel or aluminum that has a spring-loaded gate. Used to attach a rope to an anchor point or attach a climber to a rope. For challenge course use, the carabiner should have a locking gate.
C.B.C.	Challenge by Choice. The freedom to temporarily back off from participating. C.B.C. is not an invitation to opt out.
Challenge Course Builder	Has built 30 or more complete courses, carries appropriate insurance, is knowledgeable of ACCT construction standards, offers a warranty, has a good reputation and can produce a list of references.
Chest Harness	Manufactured nylon harness used in conjunction with a seat harness to keep the body in an upright position in a fall situation.
Commitment Agreement	A series of positive actions, beliefs, and behaviors that participants agree to working towards while sharing an adventure.
Crab Claws	(Also Lobster or Bear Claws)-A static, single person belay system made of a piece of multilane. It is connected to a participant's harness with a carabiner or girth hitch.

Dynamic	A rope or system capable of stretching, giving or elongating when stopping a fall or force applied to the system.
Dynamic Belay	Belay with a rope running through a fixed anchor point. A belayer and friction device is required to keep slack out of the system to keep the climber protected. Having to do with energy or force in motion.
Environmental Hazards	Any hazard which would warrant the need to brief program participants. Environmental hazards could include, but are not limited to, terrain, weather conditions and critters.
Etrier	A ladder made of rope or webbing consisting of several off-setting stirrups. On a challenge course, it is used as an aid to climbing or traversing an element. Also, it is used in rescue situations as an aid to gain elevation.
Facilitator	A person who "makes things easier" by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly and definitely presenting a challenge or situation. • Setting definite perimeters for safety and operation. • Acting as a "video recorder" to assist later debriefing sessions. • Maintaining a supportive presence but not helping or interfering with the group's process. • Assisting with verbal and emotional sharing of an experience.
Flaking a Rope	Making a single turn in a coil, concurrently checking the rope for wear or damage.
Full Value Contract	An agreement within a group to work together towards individual and group goals, adhere to certain safety and behavioral guidelines, and to give appropriate and timely feedback to group members.
G.A.C. 7 x 19	Galvanized Aircraft Cable. A high quality, flexible cable made up of seven twisted main strands. Each one of those seven strands is made up of an additional 19 smaller strands.
Galvanized GriGri	A type of protective coating, hot dipped onto metal to prevent rusting. A device used to aid in belaying. This device, when used properly, can lock off a rope when loaded. It should be noted that it does not replace a belayer or the proper technique for belaying. A GriGri can also be used for rappelling.
Ground School	A low practice area that simulates a high static ropes setting. Can also be any place where an assembled group goes to practice belaying and other high course procedures.
Guys	Angled (usually 45 degree) cables that connect from a ground anchor to an erect pole or tree providing support.
Hazardous Location	This would include any site or area that could present a hazard to program participants. Hazards would include any place where participants are lifted off the ground or may be placed in precarious positions. Also, any potential obstructions inherent to the element design (i.e. beams, cables and connecting hardware) and ground features are considered hazards. Adequate spotting is essential at any of these locations.

Helmet	Hard shell head protection used to protect the head from falling objects and provide protection during falls. Helmets should fit properly by sitting on the top of the head with a snug fit. The helmet should be properly secured with a chin strap and be UIAA approved.
Industry Standards Initiatives	A set of standards for operation and construction agreed upon by experts in the field. Refer to A.C.C.T. Unique activities that are problem-solving in nature.
Kernmantle Construction	This nylon rope design consists of an outer woven sheath (mantle) enclosing an inner core (kern) of braided or twisted filaments.
Knot Strength	The actual force necessary to break a rope with a knot tied in it. Differs from tensile strength.
Lazy Line	Number 4 nylon cord used for hauling a belay rope up and through a shear reduction device.
Lobster Claw Loop	See Crab Claw. A circle made in a rope by having the running end cross over the standing end.
Nylon	A synthetic petroleum product from which high quality ropes are manufactured. Benefits: practically decay free, high tensile strength, considerable elasticity. Drawbacks: susceptible to ultra-violet deterioration.
Pole Class	A number system for grading the diameter of utility poles. Class 1 is larger than class 2, etc.
Polyester (Dacron)	A synthetic material from which rope can be made. Must less stretch than nylon with essentially the same tensile strength.
Polypropylene	A synthetic material from which rope is made. A strong rope but susceptible to UV deterioration. Used to make cargo nets, bridges, trolling lines and webs. Often referred to as "water ski rope;" it floats.
Pressure Treated (PT)	Wood that is pressure injected with a preservative.
Primary Spotters	Spotters who are positioned directly next to a person on a challenge course element. Instructors should assume this role when appropriate.
Processing, Debriefing, Reviewing	A short discussion following challenge course elements that focuses on the participants processing issues, comprehending and internalizing experiences and the lessons learned that arose during the experience.
Rapid Link	Carabiner-like device usually permanently fixed to a belay cable or another anchor attachment point. Characterized by great strength and comparatively low price. Used in place of a carabiner when the connector is going to be left on the course.
Rappel	To descent by sliding down a rope in a controlled manner.
Rescue Scissors	A good, quality cutting device usually with blunt ends capable of cutting the rope used on a challenge course.
Retired Rope	Climbing rope that is no longer serviceable as a belay rope. Can be used for games or initiative problems, but should be marked noticeable so that it is not mistaken for a belay rope in service.

Rope Log	Record that is kept on nylon rope usage. The log should record information regarding date purchased, number of participant cycles and number of falls caught.
Running End	When tying the knot the part of the rope that runs around the standing end.
Safe Working Load (SWL)	The SWL represents 1/5 or 20 percent of the tensile strength of a rope, bolt, clamp, etc.
Seat Harness	Designed to distribute the force of a fall over a large percent of the body. Harness should fit snugly over the hips with the leg loops fitted snugly.
Serving Sleeve	A simple piece of galvanized metal that crimps the working end of the cable to the standing end to prevent loose strands from puncturing skin.
Shear	The wheel (steel or aluminum) of a pulley. Pronounce shiv.
Shear Reduction Device	A device used to increase the diameter of a bend in a belay rope, thereby reducing the shearing forces generated at the bend.
Shock Loading	A sudden jerk (kinetic load) applied to a rope or cable by weight that produces greater stress on the rope/cable than the actual hanging weight of the initial load.
Spotting	Actively safeguarding the movements of another participant by movement and placement of the spotter's own body.
Standing End	When trying a knot the part of the rope that remains stationary as the running end passes around it.
Staple	A piece of ½ inch galvanized metal rod bent into a U-shaped object with points on each end. A staple can be hammered into trees or poles to serve as climbing handholds and footholds. Pre-drilling is sometimes necessary.
Static	No stretch. In a challenge course context it refers to either a type of belay or the rope itself.
Static Belay	Belay line (a short section of rope) is attached to a fixed point where little or no dynamic forces would occur or in a fixed or stable state.
Strand Vise	Device used for cable termination point. It is used for connecting cable to an eye bolt. Consists of three parts: stainless steel bale, aluminum collar and bullet. It incorporates a one-way mechanical camming action, which allows cable to be inserted but not pulled back out. It is quick and simple to install and affords easy adjustability of the cable.
Swage	A malleable extruded piece of metal used for crimping two lengths of cable together (lap swage), or crimping the cable working end back onto the standing end creating an eye swage.
TEB	Thimble Eye Bold. A drop forged bold used in challenge course construction (usually 5/8 inch with a thimble-shaped head). Varies in length from 4 to 18 inches.
Tensile Strength	The amount of evenly applied force necessary to break a rope in a destructive testing situation. Differs from Knot tensile strength. Also applies to a cable, carabiners, pulleys, and other mechanical devices.

Thru-bolt	Galvanized steel bolt that passes completely through a tree or pole and is used as a connection point.
Useful Life	The length of time a piece of equipment can be safely used.
Webbing	Nylon strapping available in tubular and flat design in varying widths.
Whipping	Used to attach a large diameter rope to a smaller diameter rope or to finish the end of a rope. On challenge courses it is used to raise ropes during course set-up and break-down.

APPENDIX A: CLIMBING SIGNALS

Sterling's climbing signals are a countdown of syllables.

- Ready to Climb 4 syllables. Said by climber to request protection from the belayer.
- On Belay 3 syllables. Said by the belayer to communicate that they are ready to provide protection for the climber.
- Climbing 2 syllables. Said by the climber to indicate that they are ready to climb.
- Climb 1 syllable. Said by belayer after a double check of the belay system and is a final authorization for the climber to climb.
Additionally, when a participant is ready to be lowered, they will call "ready to be lowered". The belayer will, under supervision (if a participant belayer), of an instructor, will tighten the belay, remove all slack, and say "lowering" prior to lowering the climber.
- Off Belay Said by climber after they are in a secure position and no longer needs protection from the belayer. (The climber need not be un-clipped from the belay before saying "off belay.")
- Belay Off Said by belayer to indicate that they are no longer providing protection for the climber. ("Belay Off" must only be said after an "Off Belay" from the climber.)

APPENDIX B: SAFETY SYSTEMS

Managing Safety Systems

1. Risk Management

- The Sterling College Risk Management Committee and the Challenge Course Manager work together to oversee risk management at the challenge course.
- The Risk Management Committee meets regularly, and reviews safety and risk management policies and documents pertaining to the Sterling College Challenge Course as needed.
- The Challenge Course Manager is responsible for developing, reviewing, and implementing safety and risk management policies and procedures pertaining to the Challenge Course.
- The Challenge Course Manager is responsible for informing students, staff and faculty regarding policies and procedures pertaining to use of the Challenge Course.
- There is a first aid kit stored in the locker on the back of the climbing wall.

2. Staff Training

- Students may take Foundations of Outdoor Education: Leadership and Facilitation in order to become familiar with the use of the Challenge Course. Students who wish to work as Challenge Course Instructors must pass a practical competency exam and assist in the instruction at three or more Challenge Course programs.
- Accidents and incidents at the Sterling College Challenge Course are reviewed by the Challenge Course Manager, the Risk Management Committee, and the President. Changes are implemented and communicated to students and staff accordingly.

3. Inspections

- Each use there is an inspection conducted.
- Each semester internal inspections are conducted and recorded in the Sterling College Challenge Course binder.
- An outside professional that follows A.C.C.T. standards conducts yearly inspections
Course elements as well as ancillary gear that are in storage should be inspected.
- A professional consulting arborist who can offer a tree management plan will inspect supporting trees periodically.

- A professional pole inspection company will inspect supporting poles, when they are about 15-20 years old. (Between 2019 and 2024)

4. Documentation

- Participants from Craftsbury Academy:

-All parents have signed a permission slip for field trips at the beginning of the school year.

-Parents are given a letter prior to the program which specifies the nature of the activity, indicates appropriate clothing for their child to wear, and directs them to a contact person if they have any questions.

-Craftsbury Academy staff accompany the group to the site, and participate in the briefing prior to the activity. This staff person then signs the Sterling College Acknowledgement of Risk and Waiver of Claims form.

- Other participants sign an acknowledgement of risk and waiver of claims form, (including parent/guardian permission if under eighteen), and fill out the Sterling College Medical Short Form and photo consent form.
- All Program Summary Sheets are recorded in the Challenge Course Binder.
- All accidents or near misses are recorded in the Challenge Course Binder. A Risk Management Emergency Plan is included in the Sterling College Challenge Course Instructor's Manual and reviewed annually as well as in Challenge Course Instruction classes.
- The Sterling College Challenge Course Instructor's Manual is reviewed annually and updated when appropriate. Staff training information and policies and procedures are included in the manual.

5. Site Maintenance

During the fall and spring semesters ongoing maintenance is conducted. This includes mulching below elements and in areas of high use, and around the base of trees with wood chips at a depth of 4-6 inches. It also includes mowing to keep grass and brush low, and trimming encroaching branches.

6. Equipment Maintenance

- Small portable elements are stored in the storage locker on the back of the climbing wall. An inventory of these elements is on the inside of the door. Larger portable elements: Whale Watch is leaned up against the back of the east wing of the Wall; All Aboard platform is behind the Whale Watch; TP shuffle is in the woods to the west side of the cleared area; boards for the Islands in the River are leaned up against the outside of the west wing of the Wall. A-Frame and one set of Trolleys are in the locked chimney on the back of the Wall;

the other set of trolleys is in the Simpson bouldering room. All Aboard islands are down at the challenge course.

- All belay gear is inspected (by look and feel) prior to each use by trained students and/or the Site Manager. Checks are made for proper function, wear or damage. (Example: A carabiner that does not close completely, by itself, 100% of the time must be repaired or retired immediately!) Any discolored or abraded nylon or any gear, which is suspected for any reason, should be retired or stored separately until professionally inspected. Any retired equipment must be completely removed from gear storage areas and destroyed or permanently and visibly marked.
- All nylon products are removed from the course and stored indoors immediately after use each day. All nylon products purchased are identified in the purchase log along with the date of purchase and the date it went into service. Any nylon that is exposed to excessive dirt should be washed with a nylon-safe detergent (no bleach!), using an abundant amount of liquid fabric softener to rinse and air dried out of direct sunlight. Equipment is retired based on manufacturer's recommendations.

7. Staffing Levels

- High elements: it takes one Sterling Challenge Course Instructor and three trained students to run each high element, assuming there are two climbers on the element and several participants playing different roles on the ground. The Instructor works as the Site Manager for the element, keeping hands off and supervising the whole situation. There is one student belay monitor for each participant belayer, and one student to assist climbers with tying in and with other aspects such as accessing the element, descending on the correct side of the cable, etc.
- There should be one more Challenge Course Instructor than there are high elements in use; this person serves as the overall Site Manager and is responsible for the safety of the entire program.

8. Security

- The Sterling Challenge Course is secured through use of warning signs and the lack of access from the ground to the elements. The ladder that is used to access elements is kept locked in the chimney behind the Wall, and the lowest rung of the Dangle Duo is also removed and locked in the chimney, while the second rung is partially raised and clipped to a staple on the tree with a rapid link. Cord used to raise belay ropes is secured to staples on the access trees/poles out of reach of the ground.

9. Participant Screening

- Participants are screened using the Medical Short Form.

10. Emergency Procedures

- Instructors are refamiliarized each year with the emergency procedures for the College overall as well as for the emergency and rescue procedures specific to use of the Challenge Course. Students are taught these procedures and practice them in class. A first-aid kit is located in the locker behind the Wall.

12. Accident/Incident/Near Miss

- All accidents, incidents or near misses are recorded on the Incident Report Form, reviewed by the Challenge Course Manager, and annually by the Risk Management Committee, and filed in the Challenge Course Program Binder. Changes in procedures are made in response to incidents.

14. Professional Support

- Faculty who work on the Challenge Course are encouraged to attend professional development sessions in challenge course use, maintenance, and/or construction.

APPENDIX C: FORMS

DAILY ANCILLARY EQUIPMENT CHECKOUT

Date of Checkout:

Person Checking Gear Out:

Item	Quantity Out	Quantity In	Note any problems or concerns
Harnesses, Sit			
Chest Harnesses, sewn			
Chest Harness, webbing			
Locking Carabiners			
Helmets			
Anchor Webbing			
Belay device with locking green carabiner			
Belay Ropes (include names)			
Rescue Kit (2 lg steel biners, rescue 8, trauma scissors, static line, prussiks, ATC)			
Etrier with non-locking carabiner			
Lobster claws with locking carabiners attached			

INTERIM, INTERNAL CHALLENGE COURSE INSPECTIONS

Internal Challenge Course Inspection should be conducted annually, unless the External Inspection has taken place within three weeks of the start of our Challenge Course Use Season. If the Challenge Course is to be used at a different time of year, and there hasn't been an External Inspection within three weeks, an Internal Inspection should be conducted. Additional Internal Inspections should also be conducted following any severe weather events.

Internal Inspections should be conducted using the Internal Challenge Course Inspection Form.

Informal Inspections should be done prior to each use. The following documentation should be in place:

- ✓ Rope use log
- ✓ Ancillary gear inventory
- ✓ Internal Challenge Course Inspection form
- ✓ Course maintenance log
- ✓ External inspection reports
- ✓ Documentation of instructor training/qualifications

INTERNAL CHALLENGE COURSE INSPECTION FORM

O.K. signifies no maintenance is required. Indicate any needs for maintenance.

Date of inspection:_____

Inspection Points	Wild Woosey	Balance Walk, Half Pirate/M ultivine	Dangle Duo	Burma Bridge	Pirates' Crossing / Tension Traverse/ Nitro	Multivine
Condition of Ground (deadfall, stumps, rocks, mulch)						
Condition of canopy (potential widow makers)						
Health of Support Trees				N/A	NA	N/A
Condition of Structural Wood						
Condition of Cable Systems						
Belay Cable Back-ups	N/A	N/A				

Belay Points Or belay zone (clear of debris)	N/A	N/A				
Guy Cable	N/A	N/A		N/A		

Internal Semester Challenge Course Inspection, Cont.

Inspection Items	Location of Item	Condition of Item	Maintenance Needs
Access Ladder			
Lock Box			
Webbing for Dangle Duo			
Etriers for Dangle Duo			
Ropes and Rapid Links for Low Cable Elements			
A-frame			
River Crossing			

Whale Watch			
Spiderweb			
Peanut Butter River			
TP Shuffle			

Inspector Name and Date

SEMESTER EQUIPMENT INVENTORY

Item	Quantity	Comments on Condition of Equipment/Action to be Taken
Harnesses, Sit		
Chest Harnesses, sewn		
Chest Harnesses, webbing		
Locking Carabiners for chest harnesses		
Helmets		
Anchor Webbing		

Belay Device with locking green carabiner		
Belay Ropes		
Rescue Kit (2 lg steel biners, 1 trauma scissors, static line, rescue 8, ATC, 3 prussiks)		
Etrier with non-locking carabiner		
Squid Pole		
Lobster Claws with locking carabiner attached		
Additional Carabiners		
Additional Webbing		
Staples		
Bolt Hangers		

Completed By:

Date:

CHALLENGE COURSE EVALUATION

1. What was your favorite part of the Challenge Course? Why?

2. What was your least favorite part of the Challenge Course? Why?

3. What did you learn about yourself today?

4. Please rate your overall experience and explain.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Disappointment

Awesome

5. Would you recommend this experience to a friend? Why or why not?



STERLING COLLEGE MEDICAL SHORT FORM

Name (Print) _____ Birth Date ___ / ___ / ___ F ___ M ___

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Emergency Contact _____ Relationship _____

Phone Number(s) _____

Health Information

For reasons of safety and your well-being, we need to be aware of any special health considerations you may have. This information is considered to be confidential. Please attach a separate note if you need more room.

Do you have any sensory or physical limitations? _____ If yes, please list and state how you are affected:

Are you taking any medications? _____ If yes, please give reason, the kind of medication, and dosage:

Medication: _____ Reason _____ Dosage: _____

Medication: _____ Reason _____ Dosage: _____

Your height: _____ Your weight: _____

Allergies (food, insects, etc.): _____ If yes, please describe:

Signature below includes permission to take me to a medical facility should it be determined by Sterling personnel that it is necessary to do so.

Signature: _____

Signature of parent or guardian if participant is a minor:_____

Date:_____



ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF RISK AND WAIVER OF CLAIMS

Acknowledgment and Assumption of Risks: As a faculty/staff of Craftsbury Academy, I certify that my students:

- A. have filed medical and emergency contact forms with Craftsbury Academy;
- B. Have been informed as to the risks associated with use of the Sterling College Challenge Course;
- C. Have been instructed on safety protocols pertinent to use of the Challenge Course;
- D. Have been informed of the importance of following instructions;
- E. Will not use illicit drugs while participating in this activity.

I certify that my students have been informed of the inherent risks associated with use of the Challenge Course, which include but may not be limited to: slippery surfaces; being exposed to a height of up to thirty feet off the ground; using climbing ropes, harnesses, carabiners, anchors, and other materials that could fail if used improperly; the presence of other people; the possibility of falling.

I understand that any instructors may request that any of my students refrain from participating in any of the organized activities if, in their judgment, it would be in their best interest.

Release and Waiver of Claims: Craftsbury Academy agrees to release and not to sue Sterling College trustees, faculty, staff, vendors, students, or any others affiliated with Craftsbury Academy participation in this activity; and indemnifies Sterling College against any claims of any other persons for losses incurred by Craftsbury Academy or them arising out of Craftsbury Academy participation in this activity.

Craftsbury Academy faculty or staff signature

Date

Sterling College

WORKING HANDS ♦ WORKING MINDS

Date:

Dear Parents of Craftsbury Academy Xth graders:

On _____ your child will be participating in a teambuilding session at the Sterling College Challenge Course from _____. The session will be facilitated by trained Sterling College faculty and students. Craftsbury Academy faculty will also be present. The Challenge Course consists of low elements and high elements. The emphasis of the session will be on supporting each other in meeting personal challenges on the high elements, which are belayed with a safety rope and are up to 25 feet off the ground. The session will be conducted using Challenge by Choice principles, meaning students will choose the level of challenge they wish to take on. Students will receive a thorough orientation to equipment and safety procedures, and will be closely supervised throughout the activity.

Please ensure that your child wears comfortable, loose-fitting clothing, comfortable shoes (no sandals or flip-flops, please), and a warm jacket, hat and gloves if the day is chilly.

If you have any questions please contact _____ at the Craftsbury Academy.

Sincerely,

Anne Morse

Sterling College Faculty

Sterling College

WORKING HANDS ♦ WORKING MINDS

STERLING COLLEGE CHALLENGE COURSE

Acknowledgment of Risk and Waiver of Claims

Acknowledgment and Assumption of Risks: As a participant on the Sterling College Climbing Wall and/or Challenge Elements:

I will follow the instructions and directions of the Sterling College staff.

I understand that the Climbing Wall and/or Challenge Elements have certain inherent risks, which include but may not be limited to: slippery surfaces, being exposed to a height of up to thirty feet off the ground; using climbing ropes, harnesses, carabiners, anchors, and other materials that could fail if used improperly; the presence of other people; the possibility of falling.

I understand that any instructors/faculty may request that I refrain from participating in any of the organized activities if, in their judgment, it would be in my best interest.

Release and Waiver of Claims: I agree to release and not to sue Sterling, trustees, faculty, staff, vendors, fellow students, or any others affiliated with my participation in the Climbing Wall; and I indemnify Sterling against any claims of any other persons for losses incurred by me or them arising out of my enrollment and participation in the Sterling College Climbing Wall and/or Challenge Course.

Participant's Signature _____ Date _____

Guardian's Signature (if participant is under age)



PERMISSION, ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF RISKS, AND WAIVER OF CLAIMS

Sterling College Challenge Course

I. Permission. I, _____, as Parent/Guardian, give permission for my child, _____, to participate in a Challenge Course Session on (date), under the instruction and supervision of trained Sterling College faculty and students. I understand that transportation will be provided by the (Name of School)

If an occasion arises that requires medical treatment, I give permission to Sterling College to seek medical attention for my child. I also understand that I will be notified as soon as possible if such an occasion should arise. Please provide a number where we can reach you and an emergency contact name and number:

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Emergency Name: _____

Emergency Phone: _____

Participants in the challenge course session understand they must: Follow advice and instructions given by Sterling College instructors; not participate beyond their capability or comfort level.

II. **Acknowledgment of Risks.** I understand that the Challenge Course has certain inherent risks, which include but may not be limited to: slippery surfaces; being exposed to a height of up to thirty feet off the ground; using climbing ropes, harnesses, carabiners, anchors, and other materials that could fail if used improperly; the presence of other people; the possibility of falling.

