A photograph of a person walking across a long wooden trestle bridge that spans a deep, forested valley. The bridge is made of weathered wooden planks and metal rails. The valley below is filled with dense evergreen trees, and in the distance, misty mountains are visible under a cloudy sky. The right side of the image is partially covered by a dark grey diagonal overlay containing white text.

PRESCRIBING NATURE FOR MENTAL HEALTH ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES

**A GUIDE FOR DEVELOPING A
NATURE BASED PROGRAM FOR
YOUR CAMPUS**

PRESENTER INFO



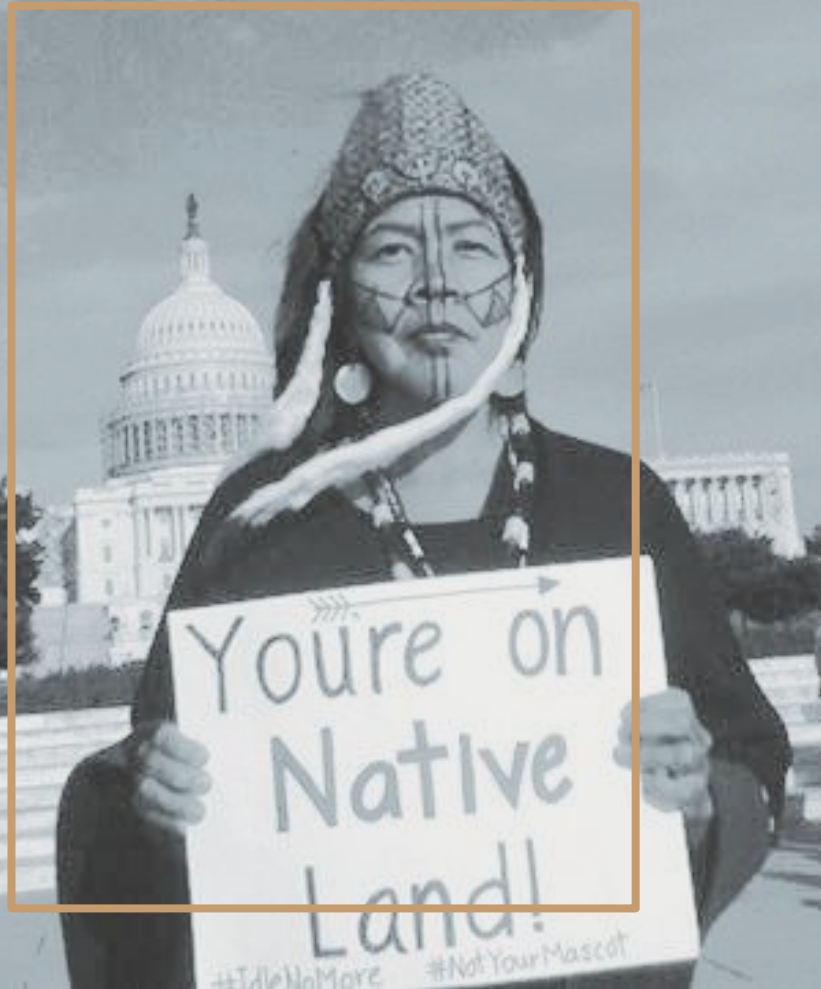
SUSAN DENNY, MS, LPC-S

Collegiate Adventure Therapy Collective
University of Texas, San Antonio



JACK WHEELER, MSW, LISW-S

Denison University, Counseling Services



LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Washington DC

Learning Outcomes

1

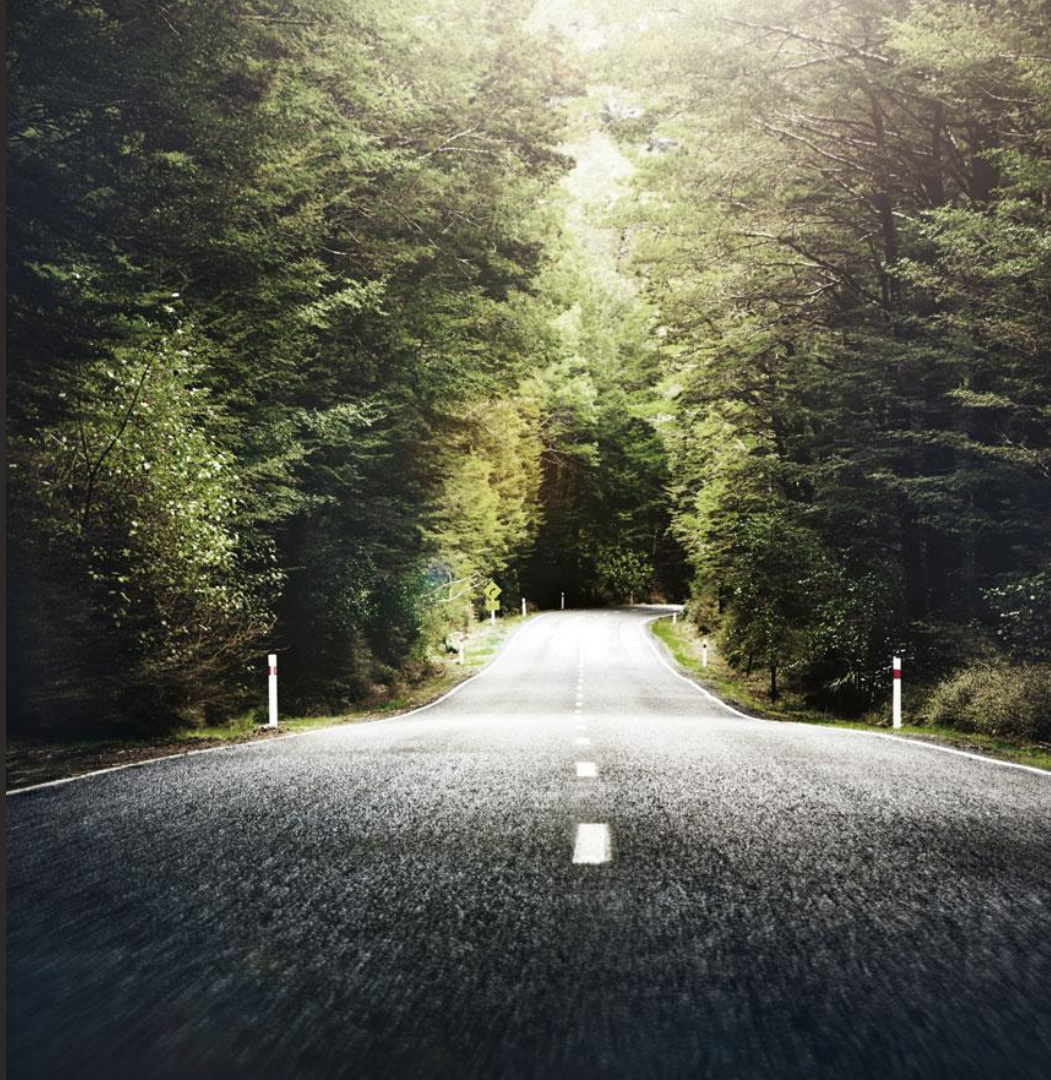
Describe eco therapy and adventure therapy

2

Identify three benefits to prescribing nature for college students.

3

Create a collaboration on your campus.





BEFORE WE START

Where are you on your journey?

What most peaked your interest in this topic?



CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE

What do you need to know most about to reach your rest spot?

- A. Theory about why it works.
 - B. Research findings..
 - C. Implementation on your campus.
-



MENTAL HEALTH TRENDS

What are the presenting concerns of your clients at your counseling center?



MENTAL HEALTH TRENDS

23.3% clients have anxiety.

Increasing trend in SAD and GAD.

18.8% clients have depression.

75% first onset by age 25

Triggered by ineffective coping skills ; exacerbated by college life stressors.

(CCMH, 2016 Annual Report; Kessler et al., 2005; Pedrelli, et al., 2015)



COUNSELING CENTER TRENDS

What are the biggest challenges in your counseling center right now?



COUNSELING CENTER TRENDS

76.6% of directors report reducing number of non-crisis clients to cope with demand

Growth in students seeking counseling is 5x rate of enrollment

University's want greater collaboration between departments to provide innovative programs that effectively increase overall wellness.

(CCMH, 2016 Annual Report)

GUIDED ACTIVITY



1

2

3

Identify three
benefits to
prescribing nature
for college
students.

What describes your calm place?

NATURE'S BENEFITS



Mental Wellness
Cognitive Functioning



Reduced Cortisol
Immune Function
Reduced Disease



Social Cohesion
Spirituality



Physical Activity
Energy

(Berman et al., 2012; Corazon et al., 2011; de Vries et al., 2003; Fan, Das, & Chen, 2011; Gidlow et al., 2016; Li et al., 2008; Maas et al., 2009; Norwood et al., 2019; Ohly et al., 2016; Roe et al., 2013; Ryan et al., 2014; Sugiyama et al., 2016; Villeneuve et al., 2012)

FOUNDATIONS: **DEEP ECOLOGICAL MODEL**

POLYVAGAL THEORY

Autonomic Nervous System
Environmental Cues
Regulation

ATTENTION RESTORATION THEORY

Being Away
Soft Fascination
Compatibility
Extent



1

Describe
eco therapy
and
adventure therapy

2

3

ECO THERAPY

ADVENTURE THERAPY

“Eco therapy helps people *connect with nature* to aid in dealing with physical and mental illnesses.”

—Buzzell and Chalquist, 2009



ECO THERAPY in a **College Setting**

Campuses are more green

Intuitively impactful

Cheap and Innovative

ECO THERAPY at Denison University

Provided at Intake →

Office Therapy



Benefits

Evidence Based Practices

Private Space

Climate controlled

Couch and chairs

Wi Fi Accessible

Risks

Environmental Hazards
(air quality and aesthetics of an old building)

Nature Therapy



Benefits

Evidence Based Practices

Private Space

Natural environment (may help mood and stress)

Lawn chairs and logs

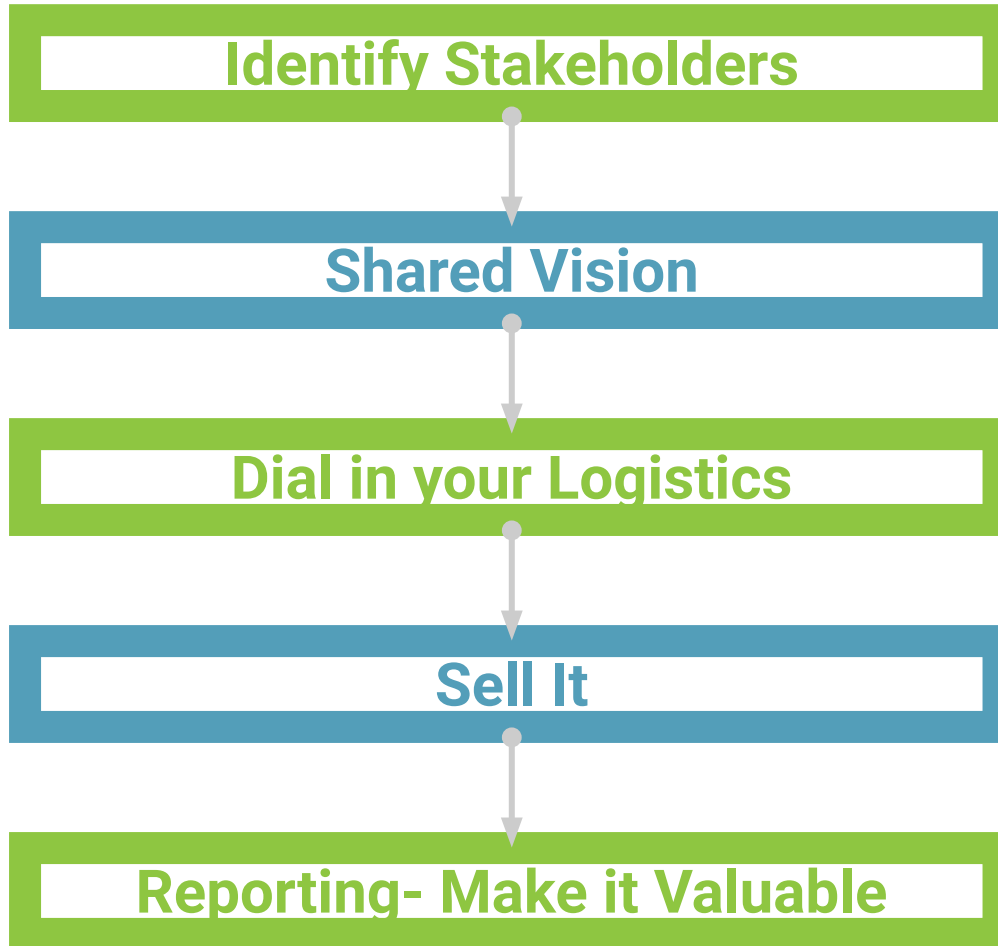
"Disconnected" from electronics

Risks

Environmental Hazards
(insects, heat, or cold)

Possibility of being seen walking to the space.

30 ft of uneven terrain (no sandals or heels).



ECO THERAPY DENISON UNIVERSITY

Identify Stakeholders



Shared Vision



Dial in your Logistics



Sell It



Reporting- Make it
Valuable



1

Describe
eco therapy
and
adventure therapy

2

3

ECO THERAPY

ADVENTURE THERAPY

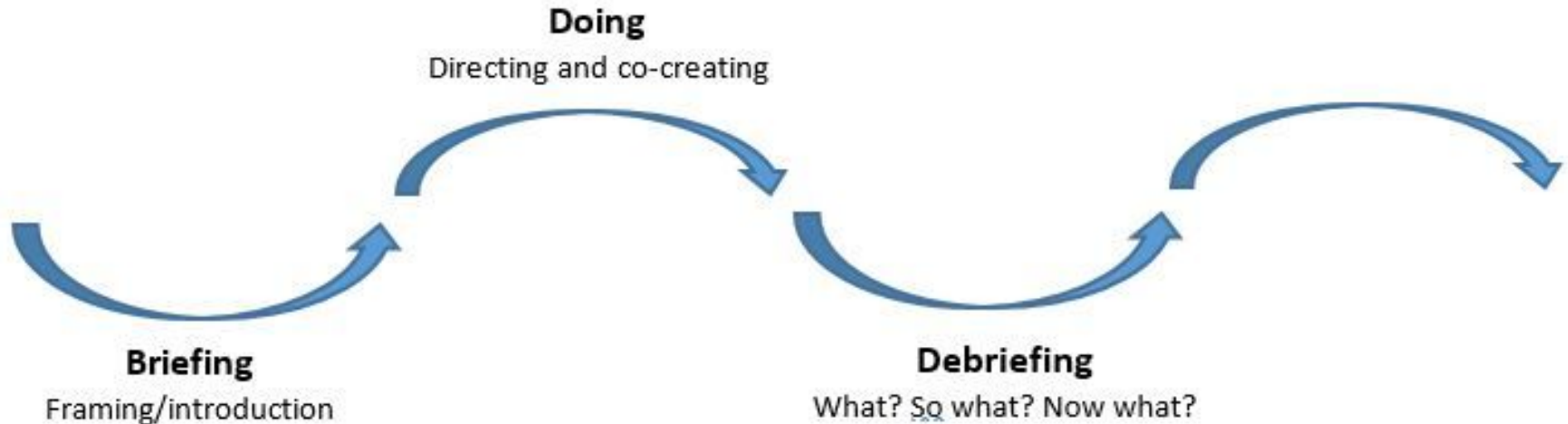
“

The prescriptive use of *adventure experiences* provided by mental health professionals, often conducted in *natural settings* that *kinesthetically engage* clients in cognitive, affective, and behavioral levels.”

—Gass, Gillis, and Russell (2012) in Adventure Therapy

THE ADVENTURE WAVE

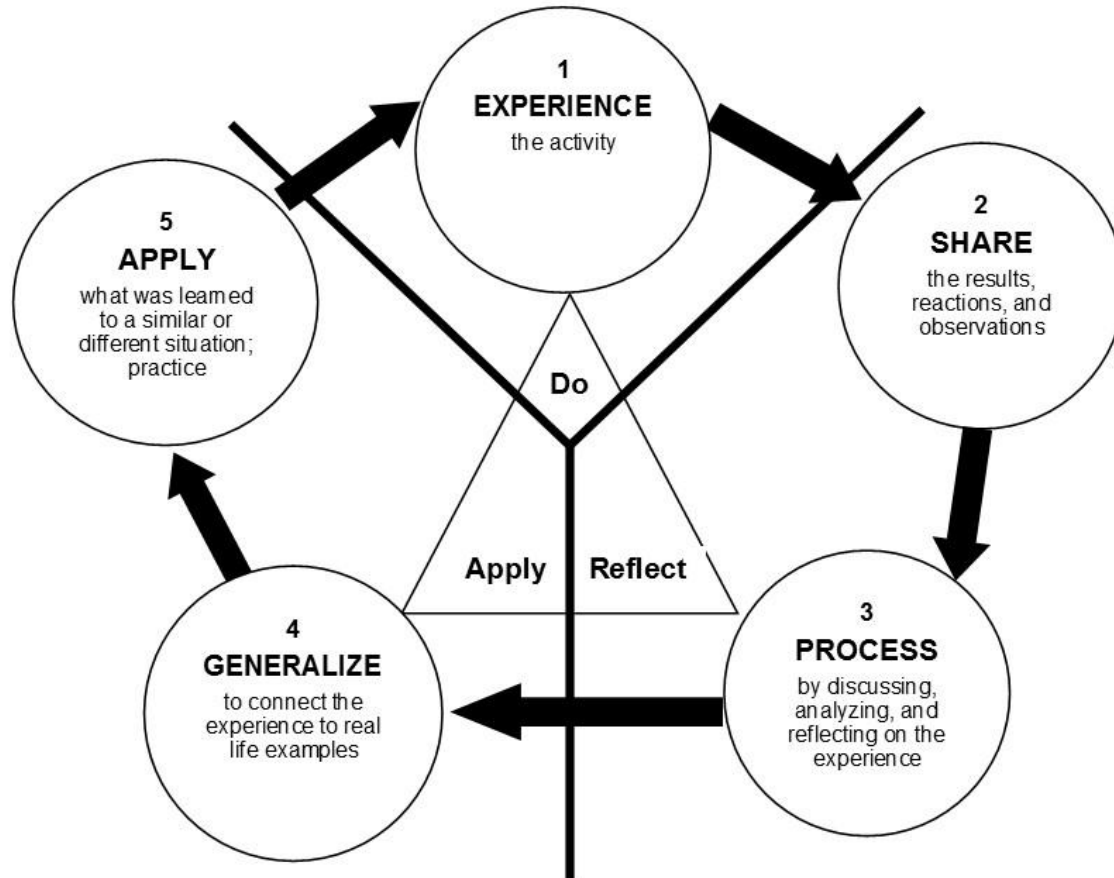
(Project Adventure)



The adventure wave

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING CYCLE

(Based on the work of David Kolb and others)



Benefits to Adventure Therapy

- Immediate and tangible learning opportunities and direct feedback.
- Clear understanding of cause and effect of actions and emotional energy on people and place.
- Decreasing stress
- Increasing interpersonal skills
- Increase utilization of coping strategies

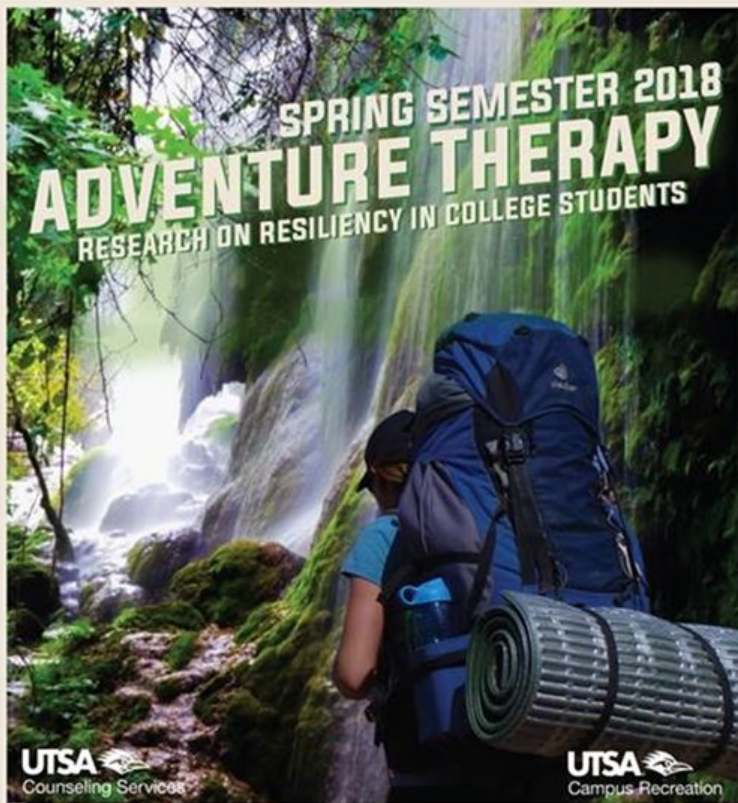
“

Strategies that support connection and community are needed on college campuses due to the greater risk for distress that students experience when they are isolated.”

- Rakow and Eells (2019). Nature Rx: Improving College Student Mental Health

Group-Based Adventure Therapy in a Collegiate Setting

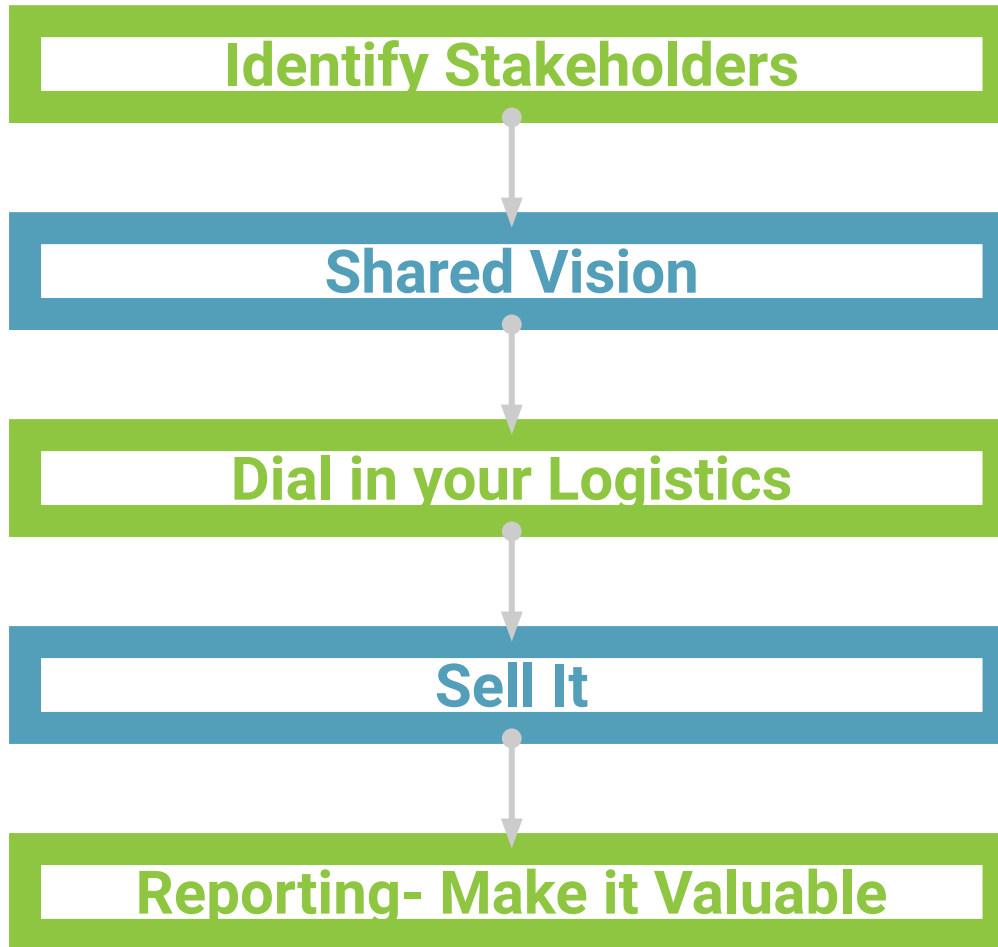
- Accessibility and Cost
- Resources
- Managed Risk
- Fits Current Need on Campus



Join us for this **10-Week counseling group** that will culminate in an amazing backpacking trip to **Colorado Bend State Park! FREE TO SIGN-UP!**

The group will meet weekly to learn skills to manage stress and build resiliency while gearing up for a grand adventure.

For more information on how to get signed up, please e-mail **Susan Denny** at susan.denny@utsa.edu or call (210) 458-4140, Counseling Services



Shared Vision and Logistics

Outdoor Center

- Where, When, How Many, Funding
- How much of a role does each program have in risk management vs. curriculum.
- Appropriate staffing
- Registrations, payment, records and university travel processes.
- Marketing/Screening

Counseling Center

- Confidentiality
- Staffing - clinicians
- Emotional Safety for clinical population
- Therapeutic Process - using metaphors to reach clinical goals
- Experiential
- Reflection



UTSA's ADVENTURE THERAPY GROUP

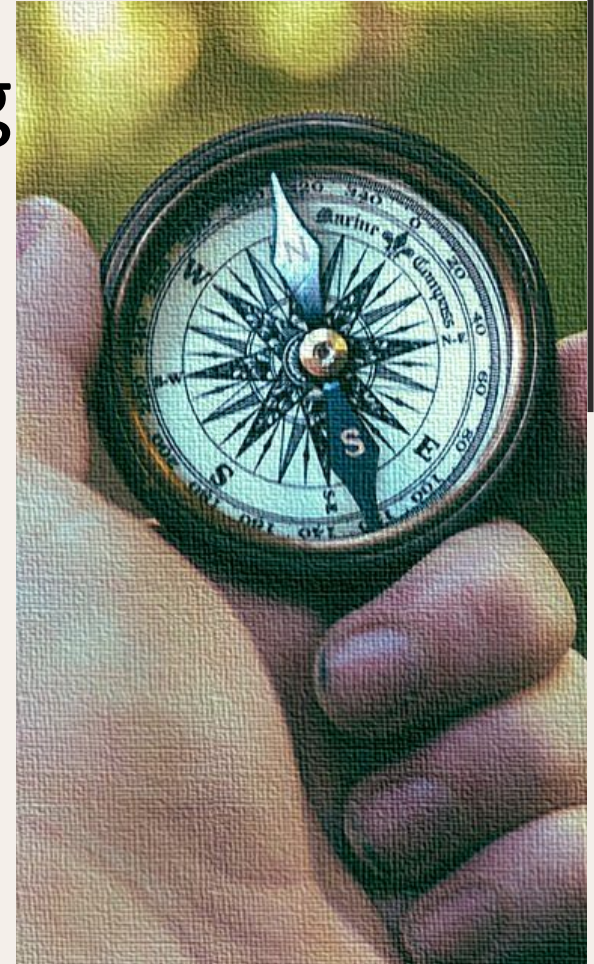
- 8 –week counseling group
- 3 day/ 2 night backpacking trip
- Participants from Counseling and Student Body
- Resiliency Focus
- Curriculum Based on Needs Assessment:

Reduce Stress
Build Relationships
Communication
Conflict Resolution
Decision Making

Spring 2018 Pilot AT Screening

Met each client individually

- **Psychological criterion**
 - no SI/HI; psychosis; addiction, eating disordered behavior
 - Presented with mental health and/or relational issues normally treated at Counseling (CS).
 - **Set Individual Treatment Goals**
 - **Signed Informed Consent – Confidentiality**
 - **Pre Assessments –**
 - Resiliency Scale for Young Adults (RSYA)
 - Counseling Center Assessment of Psychological Symptoms (CCAPS)
-



RESILIENCY SCALE FOR YOUNG ADULTS (RSYA)

Sense of Mastery

Optimism; Self-Efficacy; Adaptability

Sense of Relatedness

Trust; Perceived Access to Support; Tolerance and Comfort with Others

Emotional Reactivity

Sensitivity to Upset; Recovery Time and Impairment from Upset

Curriculum

7/8 Group
Sessions –
Prior to Trip

- Interpersonal Skills: Trust, Communication, Relationship Building, Problem Solving, Mindfulness, Leadership, Conflict Resolution, Feedback
- Technical Skills: Map and Compass; Set up a Tent; Choose Route and Menu; How to Pack a Pack

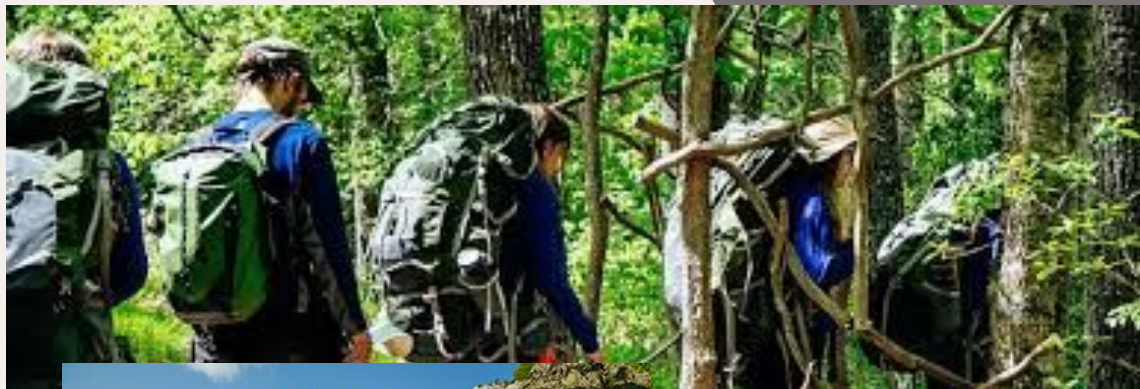
Backpacking
Trip – 3 Days

- Participants - Led navigation, camping skills and time management, support for each other
- OP student staff – Physical Risk (i.e. creek crossings, stove operation, first aid); Emotional Safety – Built trusting relationship
- Clinical staff – Facilitate evening group, solo, reflection opportunities, community rituals, immersion into group

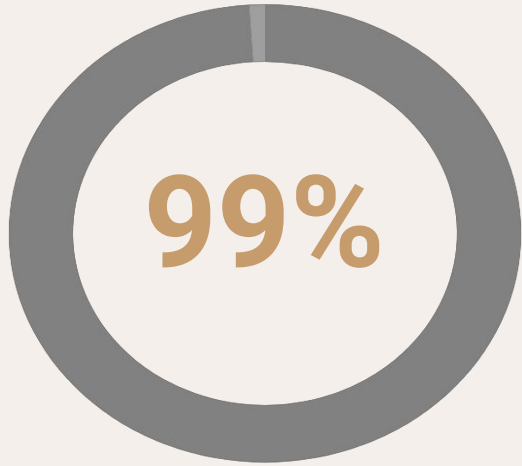
1/2 Group
Sessions – Post
Trip

- Reflection and Transference
- Climbing Wall – reaching your goals – moving from group to individual goals

Curriculum in Pictures

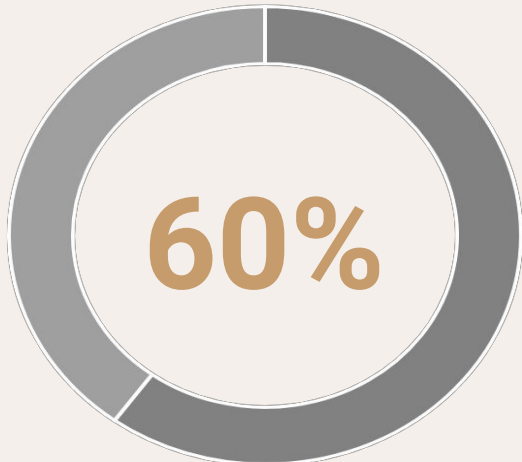


ADVENTURE THERAPY



n= 6

GROUP COUNSELING

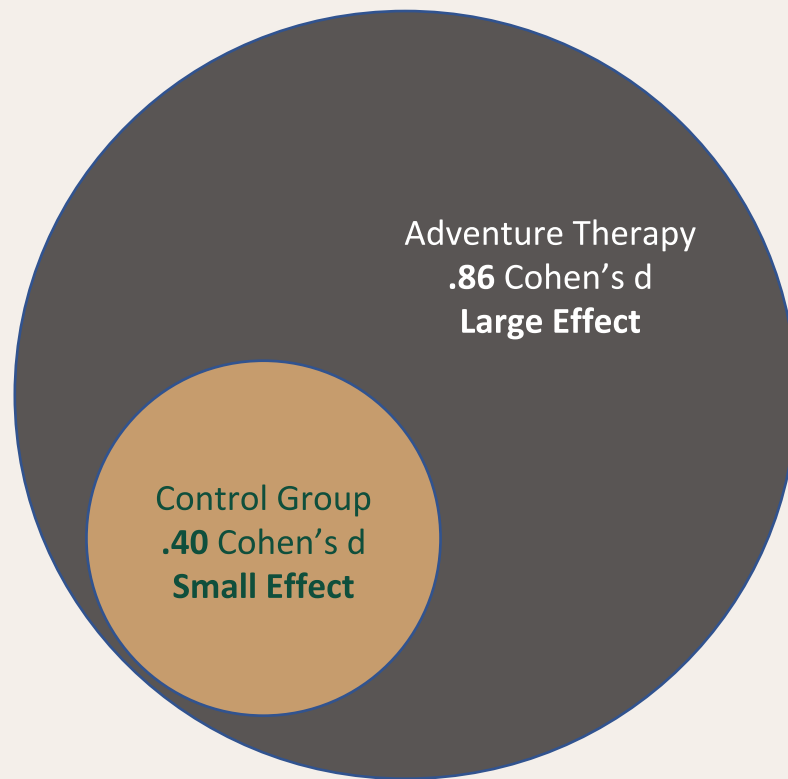


n= 4



RSYA: Sense of Mastery

	Pre	Post
Adventure Therapy	Mean=14.33 SD=2.2	Mean=16.55 SD=2.38
Control Group	Mean=15.14 SD=3.2	Mean=16.24 SD=2.12



RSYA: Sense of Relatedness

	Pre	Post
Adventure Therapy	Mean=13.13 SD=2.2	Mean=15.92 SD=2.56
Control Group	Mean=15.18 SD=2.48	Mean=15.11 SD=2.34



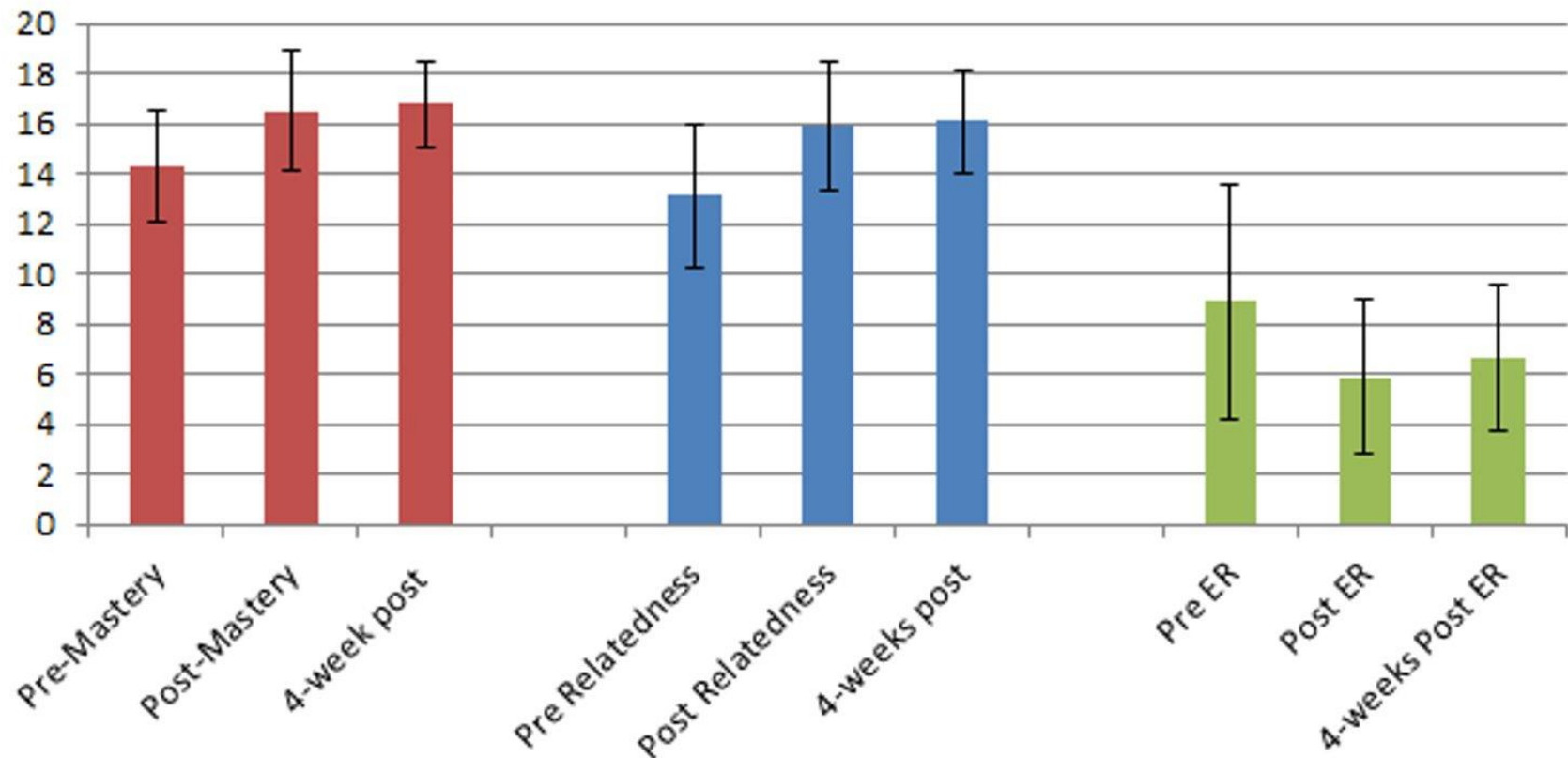
RSYA: Emotional Reactivity

	Pre	Post
Adventure Therapy	Mean=18.89 SD=4.65	Mean=5.89 SD=3.11
Control Group	Mean=7.48 SD=2.36	Mean=5.81 SD=1.93



Control Group
.77 Cohen's d
Moderate Effect

RSYA for AT Over Time

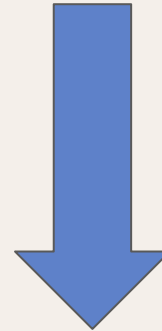
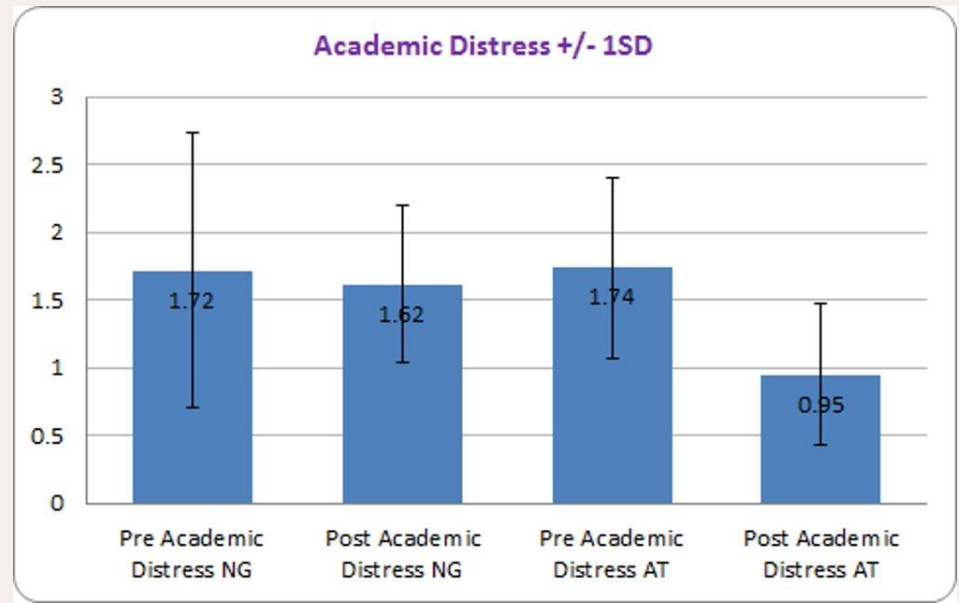


“I am more able to push myself to try new things after this group because I know the positive outcomes will outweigh the uncomfortableness at first.”

“Overcoming hard days by thinking that the hard will be over soon. I can endure this.”

“Now I know that I can do it. I used to think I wasn’t good enough. I put hard work into it [research paper] and it was good.”

Counseling Center Assessment of Psychological Symptoms (CCAPS)



Academic Distress (1.32)

Overall Distress (1.11)

Anxiety (1.06)

Depression (.93)

Social Anxiety (1.04)



**Register by
Jan 24th!**

Therapeutic Adventure Group:

Cultivating Resilience for Anxiety

DENISON'S STUDENT WELLNESS CENTER:
COUNSELING SERVICES



Implications for Prescribing Nature in College Counseling

Students show up

Students report more resilience

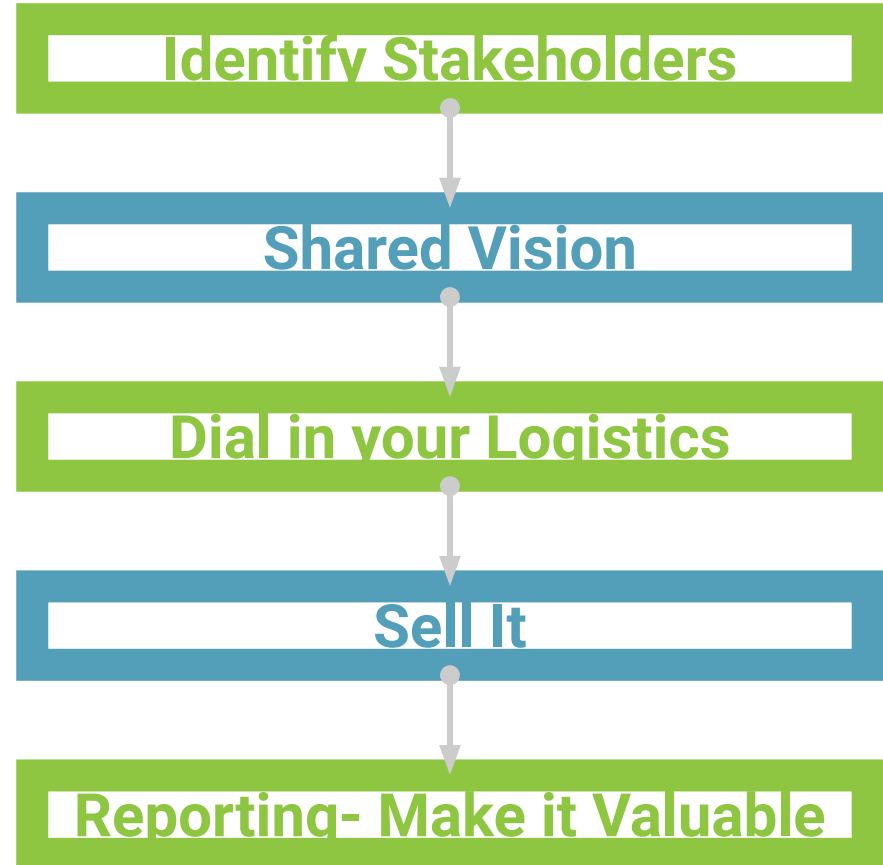
Students observe benefits

Promotes future wellness habits

Colleges already have the infrastructure

1. Who could make a good partner for you: determine what you bring to the table and what they bring?
2. What words or issues resonate with your university leadership? Wellness, Persistence, Resilience, etc. Where do you see a need the collaboration can address?
3. Brainstorm your program's approach, what would make a good model for you? While you cannot determine all the details of the logistics you can start to refine what you can think would work best.
4. To whom are you selling this program? What will benefit them and make them look good to their supervisors? Have you made sure your collective message fits their lens, language, needs?
5. Will you conduct assessment or research? Which approach is most valuable to those who supported your partnership? Is it qualitative, quantitative, and can you use allies to help you with an IRB or statistical analysis software?

Application



RESOURCES

Collegiate Adventure Therapy Collective - Facebook page and Listserv (sign up today!). Meet other college clinicians providing AT;

Therapeutic Adventure Professionals Group (TAPG) part of Association of Experiential Education (AEE). TAPG pre-conference in November 2020, Pittsburgh, PA

Outdoor Behavioral Health Council - obhcouncil.com; Regional National Wilderness Therapy Symposium and National Wilderness Therapy Symposium

Project Adventure - www.pa.org

Prescott College - Adventure Based Psychotherapy Certificate



WHERE ARE YOU NOW?



THANK YOU

Jack Wheeler, wheelerj@denision.edu

Susan Denny, sudenny@davidson.edu
