ADVENTURE-BASED COUNSELING: THE BASICS & BEYOND

• History of ABC
  o Dr. Kurt Han, a highly regarded and very innovative German educator, began an educational program known as *Outward Bound* in the 1930’s at the Gordonstoun school in Scotland
    ▪ Dr. Han had only two students in the program
    ▪ He felt the school curriculum did not address the developmental needs of a child
    ▪ Used an expedition to develop skills such as running, jumping, and throwing
  o The program was eventually adopted by a young British shipping Baron Sir Lawrence Holt to develop vital survivor skills in British sailors during World War II
    ▪ Utilized challenging, adventurous outdoor situations
    ▪ Participants gained confidence, redefined their self perceptions, developed compassion, acquired a sense of camaraderie with peers
  o Project Adventure began in 1971
    ▪ Jerry Pieh, principal of Hamilton-Wenham (Massachusetts) High School, and his staff wanted to bring the benefits of wilderness emersion courses to the traditional classroom setting
    ▪ Recreated many of the experiences associated of Outward Bound
  o Adventure-Based Counseling existed in its primitive form in the 1970s
    ▪ It was used in school curriculum and in an outpatient hospital program
    ▪ By 1982, here were over 500 educational institutions that had adopted a portion of the model

• Theoretical Perspectives & Rationale
  o Counselors and clinicians from various perspectives (i.e., Adlerian, behaviorist, psychoanalytic, humanistic, religious, etc.) have been able to use and interpret the program through their theoretical lens.
  o Well researched from a multitude of perspectives
  o Generally, outcome findings for adventure-based recreation programs fall into six major categories:
Leadership, self-concept, academic, personality, interpersonal, and adventuresomeness

Antecedent variables that have found to have an impact:
- Age: Younger participants show the greatest development
- Sex: Mixed findings; some indicate no difference; others indicate that females experience a greater amount of development
- Prior experience: Not widely studied, but preliminary results indicate that it plays a role

Main components of an ABC session:

- Briefing
  - Leaders give instructions to the group
  - Emphasize the non-negotiable safety procedures
  - Share information in a give-and-take manner
  - What is said is directly related to the experience/adventure that is about to occur

- Leading
  - Trust exercises
  - Games that foster a sense of fun and cooperation
  - Problem-solving exercises that encourage individual and group initiative
  - Humor/fun
  - Rope course experiences
  - Expeditions
  - All exercises serve to encourage the improvement of self-concept

- Debriefing
  - The experience that just occurred is evaluated by the group
  - Everyone typically gets a chance to talk
  - Some debriefings are directive and involve the instructor talking and the students listening
  - Generally operate within a group process and ask questions such as:
    - What did we do?
    - What does it mean?
What are we going to do about it in our own lives?

- Repeating

- **Applications of ABC**
  - School
    - Classroom
    - In-school suspension
    - After school programs
  - Work
    - Leadership development
    - Increased colleague cohesion
    - Establish/maintain strong working relationships
  - Athletics
    - Increase group, as opposed to self, focus
    - Develop leadership/team captains
  - Intimate Partners
    - Increased cooperation
    - Cohesive problem solving strategies
References


