



# OAE TOOLKIT

OUTDOOR ADVENTURE EDUCATION (OAE) IN YOUTH WORK



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## Introduction

*Due to the increase of information technologies in our lives, people spend more and more time in different social media channels and modern technologies, resulting in a lack of physical activities and actual connection with people and nature around them (Gass & Priest 2005).*

*One of the methods that have been developed that increases individual's physical activity and connection with nature is **Outdoor Adventure Education** (later in text referred to as OAE) - an experiential method of learning incorporating the use of all senses, that generally takes place through interaction with the natural environment. The main focus of OAE is on the educational nature of the experiences, close interaction with the outdoor environment, elements of real or perceived risk and uncertain outcomes (Ewert et al. 2014).*

*In order to popularize OAE methods among all of EU countries and build a stronger cooperation within organizations who practice it, **Outward Bound Croatia** organized an **Erasmus+ training "Love Every Challenge"** from 8<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> of October 2016 in Veliki Žitnik, Croatia, gathering youth workers from 8 countries – Latvia, Poland, Croatia, Netherlands, Spain, Portugal, Finland and Romania.*

***The goal of "OAE Tool Kit"** is to introduce the readers to the concept of Outdoor Adventure Education, the main principles and models it's based upon, and couple of activities used during the training. The handbook can be used as a **helping tool for youth workers** and other interested parties in planning and implementation of future projects and activities related to use of Outdoor Adventure Education.*

*We're thankful to all the instructors, participants and partner organizations – Piedzīvojuma Gars (Latvia), Stichting Buitendoor (Netherlands), Outward Bound Finland (Finland), Centrum Edukacji Nieformalnej I Outdooru (Poland), EuropeMov CRL (Portugal), Outward Bound Romania (Romania) and Asociacion Experientia (Spain) - for the support and inspiration during the planning and implementation of the project.*

*Please use this tool kit responsibly and be aware of your knowledge and skills considering the context of outdoor adventure education. The authors of this handbook are not responsible of incorrect use. We do not hold any credit for the activities and methods which are gathered here.*

*Enjoy it responsibly!*

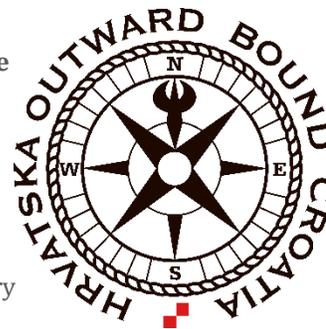


# ORGANIZERS OF THE TRAINING

## Organizers of the training

**Outward Bound Croatia** is a member of Outward Bound International whose experiential educational programs are recognized in over 30 countries around the world as a valuable enrichment of the classic school system.

The main field of activity is organization and implementation of **innovative outdoor programs for school children and youth**, with special concern to youth with fewer opportunities, like children from broken families, youth with behavioral problems, youth facing post-war reconciliation difficulties and so on. Programs include courses in nature, teaching various technical skills and sports, learning how to overcome physical and mental challenges. The result of these programs can be seen in increased levels of self-esteem and the discovery on one's own full capacities, which can later be transferred to everyday life.



Special attention is also given to social and environmental responsibility and the impact of one's actions on the group and society as a whole. We teach and work by the following values: compassion, integrity, excellence, inclusion and diversity. **Learning through experience, challenge and adventure in a supportive environment** are the principles we use to design and deliver programs with targeted outcomes like character development, leadership and service.

### Trainers of "Love Every Challenge":



**Anna Kanepone**

*A youth worker & instructor in  
Outward Bound Croatia  
/Latvia/*



**Atis Keņģis**

*A trainer and a youth worker  
in "Piedzīvojuma Gars"  
/Latvia/*



**Marko Kovačević**

*An instructor in Outward Bound  
Croatia & youth leader in Scouts  
/Croatia/*

# HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF OAE

## Historical development of OAE

Although the use of outdoor adventure education in the world is quite recent, deeper studies of OAE already show increase in self-development, environmental awareness and need for active and healthy lifestyle. There are more and more examples when OAE methods are used in traditional education system and other contexts like therapy for youth at risk, survivors of sexual assault, families in distress etc.

The historical development of OAE and **importance of adventure in our daily lives** goes way back to the time of world explorers, traders and pilgrims. Even our ancestors during the Stone Age spent part of their free time playing games in which they improved their coordination and reflexes, that later played an important role in hunting and self-protection. **Development of different skills** is still one of the most important motivations to choose the use of outdoor adventure education methods (Ewert et al. 2014).



**Image: Québec's first summer camp, Camp YMCA Kanawana**

©The YMCAs of Québec 2016

Coming closer to nowadays, footprints of OAE can be found also in the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> century in America, when summer camps and outdoor programs organized by YMCA organization led to **increased popularity of recreational activities with adventure elements**. Meanwhile the government put more effort into developing several recreational areas and nature parks, inviting people to spend more time outdoors, closer to nature (Cavert 2013, ER).

During the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century a lot of people started to use **outdoor elements as a part of education**, involving learning about nature and different outdoor survival skills – setting up a camp, going on expeditions, etc. (Cavert 2013, ER). In the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century a new term was developed – **outdoor education** - that was explained as an experience based learning process that takes place mostly outdoors (Priest 1986). Additionally, to the activities mentioned before, outdoor education involved also rock climbing, skiing, kayaking etc. (Cavert 2013, ER).

The pioneer of Outdoor Adventure Education was **Kurt Hahn** during the mid-twenties – a progressive educator from Germany, who's aim was to create an environment that would allow young people to learn habits that would protect them from degrading values of modern society. He believed that by removing people from the community environment that they are used to and challenging themselves, it's possible to create a better society.

# HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF OAE

In order to develop these progressive ideas, Kurt Hahn opened the Salem School in Germany but, after facing resistance from the authorities, he moved to Scotland where he opened **Gordonstoun** (1933) – a school where traditional education was combined with progressive ideas taken from Salem. Main methods of the education were called “**The seven laws of Salem**” and involved better self-awareness combined with the experience of failure and success. Learning methods developed imagination and an ability to plan and face challenges with increased courage. Special focus was also on cooperation and justice instead of competition (Cavert 2013, ER).



**Image: Kurt Hahn with Lawrence Holt**  
©The Outward Bound Trust 2016

In 1941 Kurt Hahn together with James Hogan and Lawrence Holt opened “**Outward Bound**” – a training course for young sailors to learn how to survive in the sea. The main method used in the training was **experiential therapy** that was based on principle that put the students in situations and environments that they could face later in life and learn from. This method was later used also in the school program of Gordonstoun (Cavert 2013, ER).



**Image: Gordonstoun obstacle course**  
©BBC 2016

In 1962 by the influence of an Outward Bound course in England, Joshua Miner, ex-colleague of Kurt Hahn, opened an **Outward Bound school in Colorado** – alternative program that offers education through adventures, outside of the traditional school environment. The main aim of the program was to develop a better understanding of self, others and the environment as well as improving mutual communication and cooperation. During next couple of years, positive experience and success of the Colorado program encouraged the opening of Outward Bound schools all over the world, and outdoor adventure education proved itself as a strong method of education (Cavert 2013, ER).

Thereby the movement that started in America as outdoor camps, continued in Europe as a form of experiential therapy and developed to being a strong tool to educate society. Nowadays the methods of OAE are being used in personal, group and family consultations, personal trainings in companies and different other areas, still keeping the main aim – giving a possibility to **develop individually** and together with a group **learn about yourself and others in a challenging and exciting environment** (Cavert 2013, ER).



# MAIN ELEMENTS AND SUCCESS FACTORS OF OAE

## Main elements and success factors of OAE

Main characteristics of OAE are:

- **Education has the primary importance** - making the experience as educational as possible, taking advantages of every situation and teaching the participants “how’s, why’s and when’s”;
- **Natural setting and close interaction with outdoor environment** – natural environment serves as a key component in the education process;
- **Elements of real or perceived risk** – risk can be real and inherent to an activity or (mis)perceived by participants in a safe activity;
- **Uncertain outcomes** – different factors like terrain, participant’s skills and abilities, weather etc. can make the outcomes of a programme unpredictable. Uncertainty during the experience forces participants to confront anxieties, analyze decision-making abilities and assess physical, emotional and leadership skills.



Resource of the images: Outward Bound Croatia 2016

# MAIN ELEMENTS AND SUCCESS FACTORS OF OAE

With the development of OAE, more research has been conducted to understand what elements influence the effectiveness and results of outdoor education. One theory that was made after combining several studies in the field of OAE, showed that OAE is based on six main **elements that are relevant to reach the goals of the programme** and encourage **self development**, these are: the physical environment, activities, information processing, group, instructors and, the participant himself (McKenzie 2000).

- **Physical environment** – being in a new environment gives participants a new perspective and a chance to experiment. Unknown environments can produce a certain level of anxiousness and a risk perception, that – when overcome – can result in higher levels of self-confidence and an increased ability to adapt to different situations (McKenzie 2000).
- **Activities** – quality activities that combine challenges, skill development and success are an important part of self-development. In addition to this they must also challenge participants in physical, emotional and mental ways. Activities should be chosen according to the needs, aims and physical ability of the participants, making the challenges achievable. It is also important to keep to the principle of “challenge by choice”, giving participants a chance to choose whether they want to take a part in activity or not (Golins & Walsh 1976).
- **Information processing** – to increase the value of experience and to encourage self-development, it is important to reflect on and analyze participant experiences and observations (Bacon 1987).
- **Group** – the optimal size of the group is 7-15 people, thereby creating a stronger connections, cooperation and skill combination. Group dynamics and relationships significantly impact the success of programs (McKenzie 2000).
- **Instructors** – previous experience, mutual relationships and personality have a significant impact on motivating the participants within the program. Comparing to other types of education, OAE instructors have three main functions – facilitation, safeguarding the experience and minimizing the impacts on the natural environment. Combining all of these roles and the ability to react and use different situations for learning enables instructors to successfully engage and maximize the learning outcomes (Ewert et al. 2004).
- **Participants** – age, gender, previous experience and expectations have a relevant connection with reaching the goals of a program (McKenzie 2000).



Resource of the images: Outward Bound Croatia 2016

## Impact of Outdoor Adventure Education

One of the main questions in the area of Outdoor Adventure Education has always been – how effective actually are the OAE methods and which aspects of an individual do they impact? Although it's not an easy task to measure the impact of OAE, there have been several research studies trying to answer this question.



One study showed results in relation with self-development and self-awareness of an individual. Research conducted at an Outward Bound School in England in 1966 showed that after participation in outdoor program, most of the participants displayed higher levels of **self-confidence, independence, and a more realistic view to the life and inner-stability**. The main factors shown to stimulate the development of an individual's personality were mentioned to be the level of stress, adventure and intensity during the program (Hopkins&Putnam 2012).

Further research in 2008 studied the long-term impact on *National Outdoor Leadership School* participants after finishing the program. Main impact areas were divided in 4 big groups – personal-development and self-awareness, group dynamics, system of personal values and technical skills (Furman et al. 2008).

**Personal development and self-awareness** - results showed higher confidence of participant's skills, risk-management and leadership skill development as well as ability to react fast in stressful situations.

*"I've learned to trust myself and my decision-making abilities more. To seek international environment and connection with people. More laughter and joy!" – participant of the training course.*

**Group dynamics** – higher levels of mutual trust and cooperation within a group, problem solving and task management, way of communication and team work in general.

*"Every problem or challenge is solvable! Maybe you're seeing it from the wrong angle." – participant of the training course.*

**System of personal values** – raised awareness of nature conservation and protection, ecological lifestyle, cultural awareness and appreciation of nature.

*"Life happens when you go outside!" – participant of the training course.*

**Technical skills** – development of outdoor survival skills (outdoor cooking, setting up camp etc.), as well as experience in different outdoor activities like rock-climbing, kayaking etc.

*"Be brave! Don't get stuck at one place! Explore!" – participant of the training course.*

From all of the skills mentioned above, research results showed that participants valued most the ability to function in high-risk situations, taking a leadership role, gaining higher levels of self-confidence, the ability to work better in a team and an increased appreciation of natural resources.

# OUTDOOR ADVENTURE EDUCATION IN EUROPE

## Outdoor Adventure Education in Europe

One of the discussions during “Love Every Challenge” training course was about the reality of OAE in Europe, taking a closer look at the challenges and good examples of OAE in each participating country – Netherlands, Poland, Latvia, Romania, Finland, Spain, Portugal and Croatia.

Although the level of OAE development as well as people’s understanding of it in each country was different, there were still common themes and challenges. Although recreational activities in nature and outdoor education are becoming more popular, issues still remain, such as - **a lack of government support** and **financial resources**, the retention of **traditional views and methods in education**, as well as a lack of recognition for the **development of soft skills** and **personal-development** in the school system.

Regarding to the OAE implementation in schools, increased support and **training for teachers** is needed as well as **more research** showing the impact of OAE on participants. Strong research can be a crucial aspect to get fundings for different OAE projects.

Positive examples and practices discussed were the Outward Bound and Scouts movements in Europe as well as combining science and **technologies with outdoor education**, thereby maintaining a high level of interest in new generations of youth and diversifying offers in outdoor programmes.

In conclusion, although the OAE field in Europe is still quite new, the overall direction is positive and shows signs that it is slowly gaining a value in a society.



# FACILITATION IN OUTDOOR ADVENTURE EDUCATION

## Facilitation in Outdoor Adventure Education

An important role in Outdoor Adventure Education is given to the instructor of activities – instructors have the ability to inspire participants to develop themselves in ways they never thought possible.

After a couple of studies and questionnaires with program participants and people working in OAE field, a list was created with main skills and characteristics that determines if someone is suited for an instructor role in Outdoor Adventure Education. Main skills and abilities mentioned were:

**Technical skills** – there are a range of different outdoor skills relevant to outdoor adventure education such as – kayaking, rock-climbing, making knots etc. Having these skills in a higher level than participants, allows instructors to keep the control over group during the activities and create a safe environment for learning.

**Safety skills** – skills that are needed to maintain safe and adequate environment for the activities – navigation, first aid, weather predicting, water safety etc.

**Environmental skills** – skills that are needed to prevent and minimize the damage to the natural environment posed by activities, and the introduction of environmentally friendly practices such as setting up campsites, garbage collecting etc.

**Organizational skills** – skills that are needed to plan, organize and analyse the activities – risk management, choosing hiking routes, provide equipment etc.

**Instruction skills** – ability to introduce the group with an activity or concrete situation, explaining rules and teaching basic skills.

**Facilitation skills** – ability to resolve conflicts and foster good group dynamics, trust and cooperation between participants and instructors.

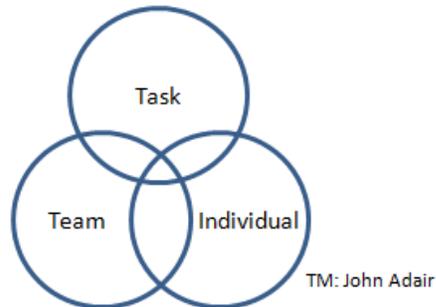
**Flexible leadership style** – ability to quickly react and change plans in case of unexpected situations, adapting to the needs of the participants.

**Experience based judgement** – sound judgement, reaction in situations with missing information (Gass un Priest 2005).



# FACILITATION IN OUTDOOR ADVENTURE EDUCATION

One model that can be used for understanding if an instructor's leadership style matches with a concrete situation, is **John Adair** model that involves three aspects that are asked from the leader – **task management, group creation and development, and individual development** of participants. The model explains that a leader should be able to cover all three areas, even in situations when a bigger focus is on one of them (Adair 1983).



Another model used in OAE is the **COLT model** which focuses on **connecting planned learning outcomes with leadership style**. For example, if one of the planned outcomes would be encouraging creativity, activities should be led with an approach that encourages mutual cooperation and creative thinking instead of a leader with autocratic leadership style. It's also important that leadership style can be significantly impacted based on **concrete situation and surrounding environment** – in case of an emergency, the priority is to react fast and get the group in safety, while in a more relaxed environment an instructor is advised to step back and involve more participants in decision making (Priest and Chase 1989).



# FACILITATION IN OUTDOOR ADVENTURE EDUCATION

Thereby when preparing for a program, it's relevant to recognise the needs and background experiences of the group, as well as characteristics of activities planned. It's important to find your own unique leadership style and be able to adapt to each situation.

**Comparison of management styles** can be useful to understand and be more aware of your own style:

Directive	EFFECTIVE WHEN:	NOT EFFECTIVE WHEN:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ The „do it the way I tell you“</li> <li>❖ Manager</li> <li>❖ Closely controls</li> <li>❖ Employees</li> <li>❖ Motivates by threats and discipline</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ There is a crisis situation</li> <li>❖ When deviations are risky</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Team members are underdeveloped – little learning happens with this style</li> <li>❖ Team members are highly skilled- they become frustrated and resentful at the micromanaging</li> </ul>
Authoritative	Effective when:	Not effective when:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ The „firm but fair“ manager</li> <li>❖ Gives team clear direction</li> <li>❖ Motivates by persuasion and feedback on task performance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Clear directions and standards needed</li> <li>❖ The leader is credible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Team is underdeveloped- they need guidance on what to do</li> <li>❖ The leader is not credible- team will not follow vision if they do not believe in it</li> </ul>
Affiliative	Effective when:	Not effective when:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ The „people first, task second“ manager</li> <li>❖ Avoids conflict and emphasizes good personal relationships between team members</li> <li>❖ Motivates by trying to make people feel happy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Used with other styles</li> <li>❖ Tasks routine, performance adequate</li> <li>❖ Managing conflict</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ There is crisis when directions are needed</li> <li>❖ Performance is inadequate</li> </ul>
Participative	Effective when:	Not effective when:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ The „everyone has input“ manager</li> <li>❖ Encourages team to make input in decision making</li> <li>❖ Motivates by rewarding team effort</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Team works together</li> <li>❖ Staff has experience and credibility</li> <li>❖ Steady working environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Team members must be coordinated</li> <li>❖ There is a crisis- no time for meetings</li> <li>❖ There is a lack of competency</li> </ul>
Pace setting	Effective when:	Not effective when:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ The “do it myself” manager</li> <li>❖ Performs many tasks personally and expects team to follow his example</li> <li>❖ Motivates by setting high standards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ People are highly motivated, competent</li> <li>❖ Little coordination required when managing experts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ When workload requires assistance of others</li> <li>❖ When development, coaching and coordination needed</li> </ul>
Coaching	Effective when:	Not effective when:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ The “developmental” manager</li> <li>❖ Helps and encourages team to develop their strengths and improve their performance</li> <li>❖ Motivates by providing professional development opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Skills needs to be developed</li> <li>❖ Team members are motivated and wanting development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ The leader lacks expertise</li> <li>❖ In a crisis when performance contradiction is too great</li> </ul>

## Communication styles

Another important aspect of a successful outdoor program is **communication** – not only with participants but also the organizing team itself. Recognizing different communication styles can bring diversity and skill variety to a team and adapt facilitation approaches according to the needs of the participants.

One theory divides people in to 4 categories of communication types:

**1. The Conductor** - The Conductor quite literally drives the locomotive of the business. They're forward looking, aggressive, go getters who have a high sense of urgency. They'll set the pace and take initiative for working on a task. If a deadline passes, they'll be the first to notice.

*Tips for communication: be efficient, get to the point, set and clarify goals and objectives, talk in terms of results not methods, provide details only if asked, give conclusions.*

**2. The Promoter** - The Promoter is full of optimism, positive and has a sense of humor. They put people first and value relationships. Making friends comes easy and they'll go with a consensus over their own wishes. They are the glue that brings a team together.

*Tips for communication: use lots of examples, talk in terms of people and stories, practice before theory, leave plenty of time for talking and socializing.*

**3. The Supporter** - The Supporter is calm, understanding and patient. They are good listeners and learners. They'll contribute by serving the team and sticking to the task at hand. Taking things step-by-step is the way they work best. People are their priority.

*Tips for communication: earn their trust in small steps, provide plenty of reassurance, don't ask for big decisions right away, don't come on too strong.*

**4. The Analyzer** - The Analyzer is precise, analytical and detail oriented. They'll do tough assignments to perfection the first try. They are professional, organized, and use their time effectively. Avoiding risk is built into their behavior. Tasks, not people, are where they tend to focus.

*Tips for communication: have plenty of details and facts, be prepared for skepticism, answer all of their questions, make sure you are well prepared, go relatively slow with them by giving enough time to think and analyze (Maximum advantage 2013, ER).*



## Activities as tools

The **main tools in OAE are different activities** that are used to create better group dynamics and encourage personal development of participants – team work, leadership skills, initiative, problem and risk management etc. Chosen wisely, these activities can make a positive impact and a change in perspective of program participants.

For more in-depth information, you can read the descriptions and useful tips of some of the activities that were used during the training course, including some of the get-to-know-each-other (GTKEO) games, team building games and energizers.

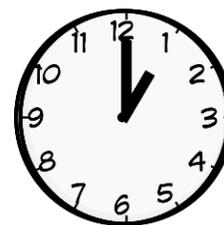
### Speed Dating

**Description:** Give everyone a piece of paper on which they have to draw a simple clock with numbers on it from 1 to 12 (look at the image). Afterwards they have to find one person for each of the given hours that they will meet afterwards. For example – for 1 AM I agree to meet John, thereby I write on my clock “John” next to 1 AM, and he writes my name, and so on until you have a person’s name by every clock hour. Take in mind that you can only meet one person once (if there’s at least 13 people in the game, if not – you can meet everyone twice) and both of you have to agree on the same clock hours that you still have free. After everyone’s meeting schedule is full, the game facilitator shows a topic for each clock hour, one by one, giving 2-3 min for the conversation. After the time is over, the game facilitator shows the next topic and so on until the last hour. The topics of the hours can be – “Best summer adventure”, “Your hobbies”, “Biggest fear” and so on. You can also connect the topics with the topic of the program.

**Materials:** Sheets of paper and pens for each participant, a timer

**Purpose:** Getting to know each other, ice-breaking

**Reflection:** Usually not needed, but you can mention in the end of the game that participants are encouraged to use their free time in the breaks to continue these conversations and walk up to people they still haven't had a chance to speak to.

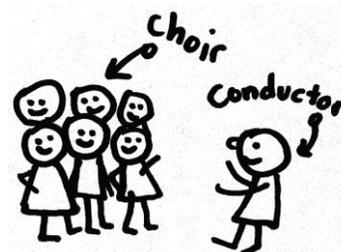


### Human Choir

**Description:** Divide people into three groups and create a setting of a choir where each group represents a different choir voice – sopranos (very high voice), altos (middle voice) and basses (very low voice). Afterwards each person goes in front of others and says their name clearly and loudly, while everyone repeats a couple of times together. After that, the person in front has a chance to be the conductor of the choir, leading and showing by hands the voices she/he wants to hear and how loud/silent, fast/slow. The only name singers can use while singing is the name of the person standing in front. Afterwards the person in front chooses the next conductor and switch roles with him, until everyone has been in front.

**Materials:** Nothing, just a place

**Purpose:** Learning each other’s names, creativity, presentation skills



# ACTIVITIES AS TOOLS

**Reflection:** Usually not needed, but you can ask how people felt when they were in front? Was it easy to conduct others? Etc.

## Blanket Game

**Description:** Divide or ask the participants to divide themselves into two teams. Place them far enough from each other so that you can make a “wall” between them from a blanket and it’s clear whose turn it is. The aim is to guess the name of the one person behind the blanket as fast as possible. Once the blanket is lowered the one who tells the correct name of the opponent gets a new team member. The game ends when everyone is on the same side of the blanket although it’s also possible to end it as a tie (recommended for very competitive or problematic groups). The trainer should encourage everyone to go behind the blanket at least once.

**Materials:** Blanket/sheet/tarp/curtain etc. big enough to hide the groups, 2 people holding the blanket

**Purpose:** Growing team spirit, getting to know the names of others

**Debrief and reflection:** Usually not needed, but if the group is very competitive or has low self-esteem it’s important to emphasize in the end of the game that in the end everyone is in the winning team or end it when it’s a tie.



# ACTIVITIES AS TOOLS

## Human Chair Game

**Description:** Invite everyone to sit in a circle with faces oriented towards the person next to you (the chairs as well as the people should be as close to each other as possible). When everyone is ready ask them to lean back, thereby putting their heads in the lap of the person behind them and their legs in front of them so that the person in front of them can lean back. When everyone feels comfortable, the facilitator of the game starts to take out the chairs of the circle, thereby leaving the balancing only to the people, until the last chair, if possible.

After all the chairs are gone, participants can hold up their hands, showing the strength of the team's balance.

**TIP:** Every time before taking out a chair, ask the people balancing on it if you have their permission and if they feel stable enough.

**Materials:** As many chairs as people participating in a game

**Purpose:** Trust in a group, energizer between sessions

**Reflection:** Usually not needed, but you can ask the participants how was the task? Was it easy? Did you feel comfortable? What helped?



# ACTIVITIES AS TOOLS

## Pizza Massage

**Description:** Invite participants to stand in a circle facing the person next to them with their backs. Afterwards start describing the process of making pizza doing the movements on the back of the person standing next to you, doing it a nice, massage-like way. Start with processes like making the dough, putting on the tomato sauce, cheese, ham, olives etc. until cutting the pizza and eating it when it's ready. You can include some fun ingredients and processes to make the activity funnier for participants, but don't forget to mention that participants should be gentle and nice to each other while doing the massage.

**Materials:** -

**Purpose:** Energizer, works especially well after an expedition as a massage to sore muscles

**Reflection:** Not needed

## Trust Fall

**Description:** One person at a time stands on a higher platform with their back turned to the group, who are standing below, thereby representing full trust on others and willingness to take full part in the program. The others are creating a corridor facing each other and locking arms in a couple standing very close side by side to create a safety net for the person on the platform. When the person standing on the platform is ready he or she asks the group the following question (Are you ready?) When the group replies (Yes) it means that they are ready to catch that person in their arms. At this point the one on the platform throws him or herself backwards in the arms of the others maintaining a straight posture.

**Note:** It's important that the person who falls, as well as the people catching him, take off glasses, rings etc. that can hurt others when falling. It's also important that the person falling should stay as straight as possible when falling and cross his/her arms over their shoulders. A safety check is very important for this activity!

**Materials:** Some kind of platform (not too high, around 1,5-2 m), Enough people to catch whoever falls (min 8 people)

**Purpose:** To stimulate and test trusting abilities towards the group, encourage the proximity between the members of the group.

**Reflection:** How did you feel falling in the arms of people you don't really know? How can you apply it to your life? What was difficult? What did you learn?



# ACTIVITIES AS TOOLS

## Magical Carpet

**Description:** Group members stand on a sheet or tarpaulin, the size of which needs to be appropriate for the groups size and ability. The aim is then to get everyone onto the other side of the sheet without anyone stepping off the sheet. If they complete this successfully a variation is to get your group to reduce the surface area available of the sheet/tarpaulin by folding it back under itself, as well as encouraging them to set higher goals within the task – shorter amount of time etc. The smaller the surface area the more creative the group has to become to make sure that everyone remains on the tarpaulin or not touching the floor. The facilitator needs to remain vigilant and make sure that they are in a good position to spot people throughout!

**Materials:** A sheet or tarpaulin (for 10 people at least the size 1,5m X 1,5m)

**Purpose:** Team building, problem solving, trust within a group

**Reflection:** How would you rate your team's work? Was it easy to communicate with each other? Was there anyone leading others? Was it easy to trust others and be close to each other?



## Snake: Low Ropes

**Description:** Put rope between trees in a zig-zag formation. Use pulleys to tighten the rope. The team has to complete the course without falling – if one person falls the whole team has to start again. You can use a time limit to create a more stressful situation. If so give some time to prepare.

**Materials:** Static rope, Carabiners, Pulleys, Stopper, Slings. Use slings, carabiners and pulleys to connect the rope between trees and make a pulley system to the end of the course to tighten the rope. Use stopper to keep the rope tight.

**Purpose:** Building teamwork, trust building, creative thinking, getting out of the comfort zone.

**Reflection:** How was it? What happened? 2. How did you work as a team? 3. What would you do differently?



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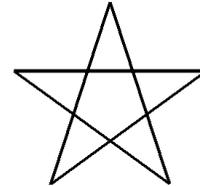
## 5-point Star Figure: Rope Game

**Description:** All the participants grab the rope with both hands. The assignment of the game is to make a figure of a 5-point star pentagram (image next to the description) without letting go of the rope. Participants are allowed to slide the rope between their hands, but not to switch places with each other. The assignment is done in silence, giving some time before to create a strategy and decide on the amount of time it will take to successfully finish the task.

**Materials:** Rope (Make sure it is long enough for your group size)

**Purpose:** Team building, Communication

**Reflection/Debriefing:** How was it? Hard/easy? What was hard/easy about it? What made it hard/easy? Did you fit in the time frame? How would you rate the team work and communication? What would you change next time?



## Expedition

**Description:** It is a tool, a method and a learning environment. It contributes in experiential learning in practice, in a real life context. It includes responsibilities, physical, mental and social dimensions of challenges and possibilities for a group and individual to discover their capacities. Also, the possibility for improvement. On the other hand, an expedition provides the possibility to enjoy nature and to discover our own individual place in it. It provides a dialogue between a human and the greatness of nature.

**Purpose:** Getting experience in outdoors, team work, leadership, self-initiative

**Materials:** Sleeping equipment, personal gear for outdoors, camping equipment (tarps, ropes, toilet stuff, kitchen equipment), navigation and transportation equipment, food and water

**Safety:** The expedition occurs outdoors so the instructor has to be sure of different kinds of safety regulations i.e. making fire, carrying first aid kit, informing 911/112 if necessary. Safety issues can be included in group

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preparations for the expedition itself. You can provide some first aid exercises so all members of the group are aware of necessary procedures, as well as introduce members on how to make a bivouac, make fire, navigate by compass etc. If you are using open fire, make sure that the group knows how to use it and if it is allowed.

**In general:** From here we rely on our case. We had 26 participants and 2 instructors. Participants were divided into smaller groups by their responsibility areas: food (cooking, making fireplace, washing dishes), equipment (setting up camp, taking care of the garbage etc.), navigation group (main navigator, his assistant and a “tail person” – always walking as the last person in a group) and 2 team leaders. Every day team’s responsibilities changed, giving participants the possibility to try different roles each day.

## Preparation for the expedition:

*Food group:* The group had a limited amount of money per person to buy food ingredients for 2 days’ worth of meals. They planned the meals, went to the local supermarket and bought the ingredients. After that they organized the food and divided the weight between all group members.

*Navigation group:* They learned how to use a compass and how to read a map. Afterwards they planned the route of the first day of our expedition and informed others of the details. One member of the navigation team also had the task to be the tail person, that meant always being the last in the group and checking if everyone is here.

*Team leaders:* Two team leaders had the task to communicate with all groups, make sure that everyone does their tasks and that the group dynamics stay good. Also responsible for communication with instructors, if needed.

*Equipment group:* They learned how to make shelters from tarps and ropes, as well as taking care of trash management.

*On an individual level:* People needed to bring with them their personal gear, learn how to satisfy their personal needs (hygiene) in the nature and work together with others fulfilling their team roles. They also learned some basic outdoor survival skills - how to build a shelter in nature, basic knots, how to make a fireplace etc.

TIP: Starting from the moment when participants are divided in the groups and know each other responsibilities, try to interrupt as less as possible, giving the participants an opportunity to learn from their own experiences and failures. You can also give extra tasks, like choosing 2 people who will go blindfolded and 2 who won’t be able to speak etc. They can change every 30 min.



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**Day one:** After a couple of hours hike and rock-climbing activities, where participants faced their fear of heights as well as developed their trust within a team by securing each other, participants reached the camp site in late evening. After dividing responsibilities and setting up a camp, they had an evening circle during which everyone was encouraged to share their feelings about the day, as well as decide about the new responsibilities of groups for the second day.



**Day Two:** The second day started with breakfast prepared by the food group, followed by taking down shelters, packing up personal gear and cleaning up the camp site. After checking if any garbage was left around, the group hiked to the cave nearby where they divided in to two groups – while one group with an instructor was going inside of the cave with their helmets and headlamps on, the other was waiting outside. Afterwards – they switched. After caving the participants hiked up to a mountain peak and from there – back to the educational center, which took them a couple of hours. After returning back to the center we had a debrief about the expedition and unpacked the gear we used.



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## Solo

**Description:** A Solo is usually performed at the end of a program, to give participants more time to reflect on their learning outcomes. Participants are divided each in their own spot not hearing or seeing anyone else and with a rule not to go further than 2 m around them (depends from the size of the place). The spot is usually a calm, beautiful, relaxing and/or comfortable. The instructors should be nearby for safety reasons but not seen. Participants will be given a whistle (in case of an emergency), a pen, a paper and an envelope to write a letter to themselves that will be sent to them (if possible) 6 months later. The minimum time of a Solo is 1,5 h lasting until 20 h and even more, depending on the time available and the participants.

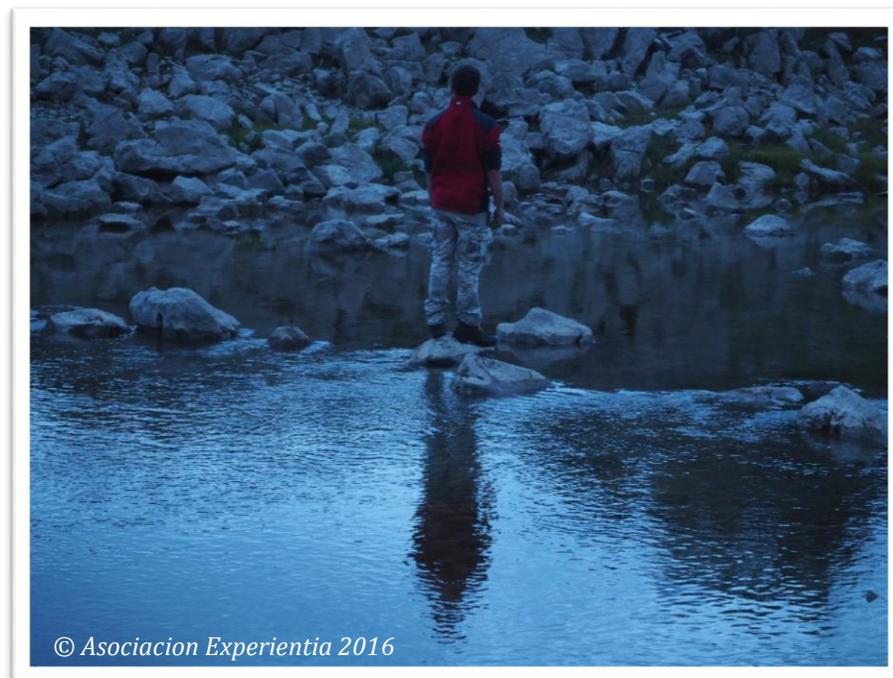
**Note:** Before organizing a Solo, evaluate the psychological readiness of participants. Usually it's suggested for programs lasting for more than 4 days and participants 18+.

**Materials:** Sleeping bag and a sleeping mattress, a whistle, water and food/snacks to survive, if possible a nature-friendly color that glows in the dark (for marking the places where participants are located)

**Purpose:** Self-awareness, connection with nature

### Reflection:

1. How was the experience?
2. What observations during the Solo time did you make about yourself? What new things did you notice?

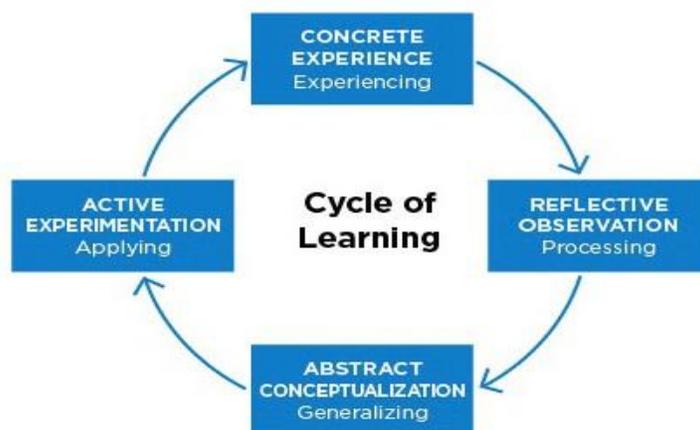


## Reflection in OAE

One of the most important parts in OAE to make the experiences as educational as possible is **reflection**, which is strongly connected with **experiential education** – process during which participants are encouraged to actively participate in their learning process and learn from the experience. Main focus is on the process itself, instead of the result, thereby encouraging participants to create the value of activities by themselves, based on their choices and cooperation abilities (Kolb 1984).

One of the main models that experiential education is based upon is **David Kolb's cycle of experiential learning** (Kolb 1984). David Kolb explains learning as a neverending, cyclic process, during which concrete individuals integrate different ways of thinking, feeling, doing and perceiving that are later used in the creation of new experiences and choices (Mackēviča 2015, ER). It is important for the learning process that it is not enough only with the experience – it's important to analyze it and make conclusions. Similar as in the process of changes – it's not possible without a previous experience that it is based upon.

**Kolb's Cycle of experiential learning** looks like this:



The model is based on a theory, that the main factor during the process of personal development and the results of learning effectiveness is the way of learning, which consists of **4 learning phases** that are connected with each other. The model helps to access and analyze experience, understanding it better and creating a possible way of using it in future (Mackēviča 2015, ER).

**“Concrete experience”** and **“Reflective observation”**- main focus on present, encouraging participants to go through the experience itself and reflect it on thoughts and feelings.

**“Abstract conceptualization”**- focus on past, looking at the concrete experience on a larger scale, finding common things and connecting with personal experience.

**“Active experimentation”** – focus on future, raising a discussion about how to use the experience and feelings during it in the future, especially daily life situations (Mackēviča 2015, ER).

# REFLECTION IN OAE

The main **aims during the reflection** are to give energy to the learning process, enriching the experience, encouraging understanding of experiences and connections to daily life, as well as developing ability to learn (Greenaway 1993).

In order to make the debriefing more effective and goal oriented, it can be divided in three phases:

- **What?** – What happened during the activity? What were the best/worst moments? What stages did you go through during the activity?
- **So what?** – What are your thoughts and feelings about what happened? How would you rate your team’s performance? What was good and what wasn’t? What did you learn? What learning connections can you see here? What meaning can you see here?
- **Now what?** – What are the connections with your daily life? What could be done differently next time?

When planning a reflection of an activity, take in mind different **factors**:

- **Energy level of participants:** Do they still have an energy for a reflection or is it better to move it for later? Is it better to give them time to reflect by themselves or analyze it right away while the experiences are still fresh?
- **Place and environment:** Is it easy to focus on what others are saying? Is the place comfortable and encourages opening up to others and sharing?
- **Aims and objectives:** What are the main learning outcomes you want focus the group’s attention on? Where there any specific group dynamics you noticed during the activity/day?



## Reflection activity examples

In order to make reflection sessions more diverse and interesting for participants, different methods can be used. One of the simplest ways of organizing a reflection is by sitting or standing in a circle and passing around some object that works like a “**microphone**”. This object can also be used to encourage participants to share, creating the story from a perspective of an object, for example a pine cone or a figure of an animal.

Another simple but effective method is to use **cards with different images or words** that describe emotions on them, encouraging participants to use a card that represents the most their day or feelings of the moment and then share it with others. Both of these methods help participants to express their feelings in a more creative, playful way and separate their feelings from themselves.

# REFLECTION IN OAE

In case of a bigger group and limited amount of time, facilitators can also use methods like expressing feelings in **one word** or speaking only while the **fire match** is burning. These methods also give the ability for each of the participants to express their feelings, even the ones who are usually more silent and in a role of an observer.

Here's also an example for a reflection activity in the end of the program that we used in the training:

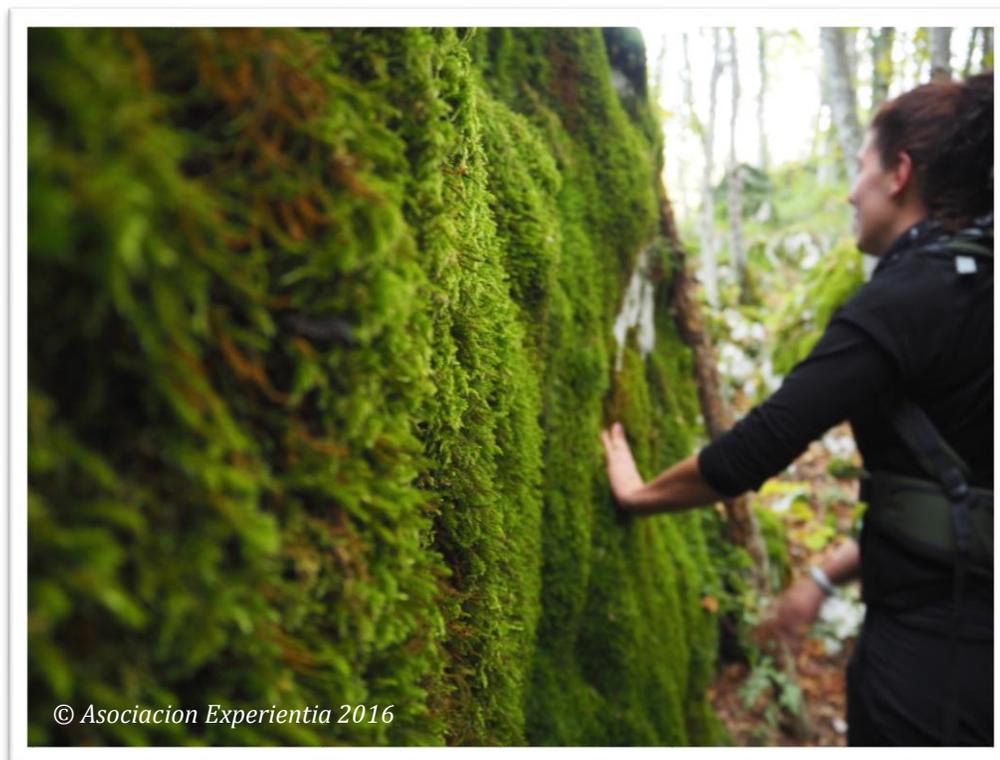
## Memory Water

**Description:** A reflection activity to share the feelings in the end of the program. In the middle of the circle put 4 bowls of water – one of them filled with clear water, one of them with water that is mixed up with instant coffee (or something dark), thereby changing the color to dark brown/black, and leave two of the bowls empty. Invite the participants to share their memories from the program by putting a spoon of clear water in one of the empty bowls with all the positive memories they want to share about their experience and a spoon with the dark water (to the other empty bowl) for the negative memories they've had. Thereby in the end of the activity, when everyone has shared, you can see the ratio between positive and negative memories.

**Materials:** 4 bowls, water, instant coffee

**Purpose:** Reflection, sharing emotions, togetherness

**Reflection:** What are the positive/negative memories you would like to share with others from the time spent together?



*Special thanks to the participants of the training course  
“Love Every Challenge”!*



*Handbook created by: Anna Kanepone, Zagreb 2016  
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