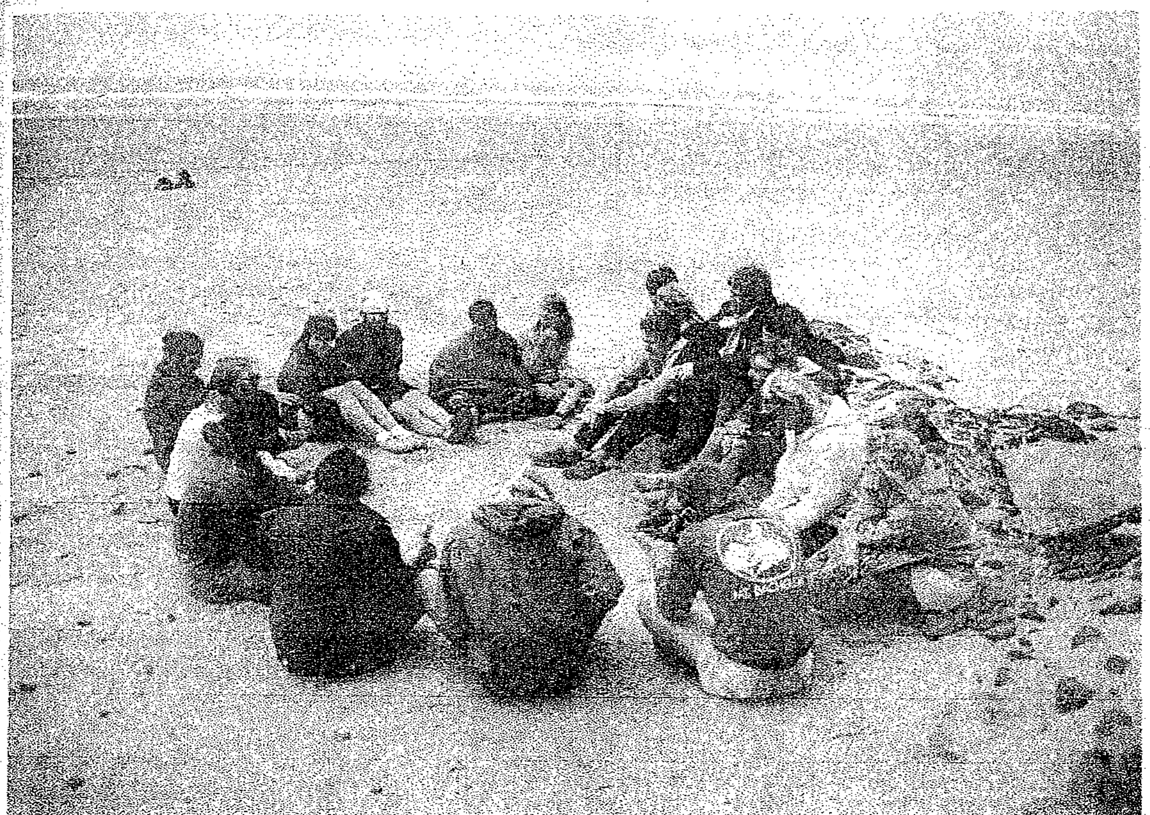
CHAPTER

15



Priest + Gass, (2005)

Basic Facilitation Techniques

According to Webster, it is also important to have "a teaching sequence developed for case spotting." He then quotes the sequence utilized by Stony Acres Outdoor Center, East Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania:

1. Explain concept/meaning of spotting.
2. Demonstrate and explain basic position(s)—stance, arms, hands, and eyes (focus).
3. Practice in controlled, contained context: e.g., Partner Trust Fall, Three Person Trust, Trust Circle, and Two Line Trust Fall (spotters are kneeling).
4. Emphasize relationship of good Spotting to trust.
5. Distinguish between spotting and assisting or helping.
6. Engender pride in becoming a good spotter: Actively promote the attitude and behavior that teasing and joking about not catching someone has no place in Adventure activities.
7. Supervise spotters closely, reminding of proper techniques as needed.
8. Rotate spotters so all have a chance and so all are used to spot appropriate others. (The big people should not end up doing all the spotting.)
9. Two spotters is the minimum number of spotters necessary for any element. Certain elements require more than two. Size, strength, weight, and fatigue also affect minimums. Do not hesitate to require more than the stated minimums in particular situations. Do bear in mind that an overabundance of spotters trying to spot for the same situation can lead to the problem of no one taking her/his job seriously enough because they do not feel their role is important. Make sure that each spotter used really is important to the task at hand. If there are more than enough, then rotate positions and responsibilities.
10. The basic premise in spotting is to offer protection to the individual participating on an activity but it is important to remember that because of unique aspects of ropes course design and the Initiative problems and the variety of terrain that the activities take place on, certain activities may have subtle differences in spotting techniques. These differences should always be carefully explained and looked for.
11. The spotter should be willing to put herself in a potentially risky situation in order to eliminate or minimize injury to another.
12. The spotter should be willing to share in cooperative spotting situations, not trying to do individually what is more easily and safely accomplished by two or more working together.

The psychomotor aspects of Spotting are:

Stance: Balanced, knees flexed to absorb impact, hands up and ready.
Position: Varies with specific elements.
Location relative to participant: Varies with specific elements.
Focus: Eyes constantly on the participant.
Absorbing Force: "Give" with the body, going in the direction of force, or rolling in the direction of force.

If a Low Ropes course is available, and the participants have had adequate training in these events, you should be able to move on to it. Don't hesitate to repeat any or all of the activities at any time. And keep plugging the fact that good spotting is a tangible expression of the Full Value Contract.

Please note that these minimal directions for conducting the Trust Fall/Spotting sequence are not meant as a replacement for more thorough discussions of the individual events that are available in other publications, and for the training received in Project Adventure workshops.

During a challenge course, two groups moved on to their next low element, the Spider's Web. With the groups facing the web, each outdoor leader overviewed the rules and safety procedures and asked if there were any questions. After clarifying these points, the leaders gave each group 25 min to complete the task.

After the first group completed the experience, the leader led a lengthy discussion concerning the details, analysis, and evaluation of the group's behavior during the activity. The leader asked, "What happened? What was the impact of this? How did that make you feel? What did you learn from this? What aspects of this activity were metaphors of your life? What will you do differently next time?"

For the second group, the outdoor leader asked questions to focus the learning *before* the activity: "What do you think this exercise might teach you? Why is learning this important? How might your learning help you in the future? Do you recall from past exercises what each of you wanted to work on in situations like this?" After the experience, the outdoor leader led a brief discussion summarizing the answers the group discovered during the activity.

The two scenarios may appear similar, but are quite different. The first is an example of debriefing the experience: asking the questions afterward. The second is an example of frontloading the experience: asking the questions beforehand. With debriefing, clients change after the debriefing and in the next activity. With frontloading, clients change in the present activity. You should, however, reserve frontloading for those few times when learning needs to be primed. In this chapter, we examine some of the basic approaches to facilitation, including discussion and nonverbal techniques, debriefing, and the more recently developed frontloading.

DISCUSSION TECHNIQUES

Discussion is an unstructured form of debriefing that permits clients to analyze past experience and to transfer learning from their adventures to their future lives. By verbalizing reactions to an adventure, clients reinforce their perceptions and see the situation from fresh perspectives. Furthermore, knowing that a discussion follows the activities, many clients will be more attentive to what goes on during an experience and will exhibit a heightened awareness of outcomes related to relationship dynamics, task products, group processes, and so on. To accomplish these outcomes, you must guide the discussion, using facilitation tips and tricks to make the content and format valuable to clients. These same tips and tricks equally apply to the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth generations of facilitation covered in the next two chapters, such as funneling, frontloading, and framing.

Remember, to begin a discussion, you should typically arrange clients in a circle. This allows them to more easily hear what everyone says and to see one another. Clients should be comfortable and ideally should all stand or all sit to allow eye contact. You should also be part of the circle so you can guide discussion, read body language for signs of discomfort, and make eye contact (but not enough to dominate or threaten). If the sun is shining, you should face the sun, keeping it out of the clients' eyes.

Client investment in the group and willingness to change stem from a safe and supportive atmosphere. Such an atmosphere is characterized by mutual trust, respect, equality, flexibility, freedom, empathy, acceptance, and anonymity. Physiological needs for food, water, shade, and shelter are met. Psychological safety is protected through fully valuing the self and others and through challenge by choice. With a supportive atmosphere, clients are able to take risks by experimenting with new thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. They take personal responsibility for their own learning, and change comes more easily than when the atmosphere is competitive, harmful, fixed, controlled, or critical.

To create a supportive atmosphere, you must establish and expect clients to follow certain ground rules. Furthermore, you must help the group evolve its own operating principles. These may include, but are not necessarily limited to, speaking for oneself; single speaking; listening and talking in the here and now instead of dwelling on the past; respecting self, others, and the environment; giving everyone the right to pass and not respond; welcoming all points of view; agreeing or disagreeing with the idea, not the person; avoiding put-downs; and maintaining confidentiality.

You should never facilitate beyond your ability. If a client discloses a psychiatric concern, don't open that can of worms unless qualified in psychiatry; instead, refer the individual to professional counseling. You should research the client group in advance and assess its needs and objectives for the adventure.

Before the discussion, you should explain the difference between a product and process, adding that discussions will center on group dynamics although clients may be tempted to talk about task outcomes. In addition, explain the concepts of transfer and metaphors. Remind clients to search for metaphors throughout the program.

The ensuing discussion should progress from positive topics to negative issues, then end on a positive note. Ask open-ended questions (see "Sample Questions for Funneling and Frontloading" on pages 208-211) of the entire group and speak loudly so everyone can hear. Speak clearly and concisely by avoiding complex wording. After asking one question, provide plenty of time for clients to think about the question, answers, and how they will respond within the group. Listen to clients answer and then correctly paraphrase their responses in order to confirm and clarify the intent for others. Acknowledge and validate all responses with a thank-you or a nonverbal signal, such as a nod of your head.

You must also act as a gatekeeper for discussion by giving everyone a chance to contribute. While recognizing that silence can be a form of contribution, you should be attentive to clients who are always quiet or speakers who are too dominant, run off on tangents, and talk forever.

Invite quiet clients to contribute by asking them by name, seemingly at random, without putting them on the spot. Make gentle eye contact, lean forward, and smile invitingly. Provide a legitimate way out if the person chooses not to share by shifting your eyes to other clients and backing off.

Listen to overbearing speakers for a useful statement. Once you hear one, ask, "What do others think of this point?" Ask the speaker to reemphasize the point if necessary, but clearly move on to others.

Arranging clients in a circle is often the first step of the discussion process.

Redirect tangential speakers back to the topic of discussion without sounding critical or angry. You can ask them to relate their comments to the theme or you can note a time limitation, indicating the need to return to the main issue. Support the speakers' ideas, but put them on hold and return to them later. Avoid confronting the individual, thereby inhibiting future valuable comments from others.

Interrupt lengthy speakers politely. Excuse yourself and explain your reasons for stopping them. If repeated interruptions become necessary and seem ineffective, you can introduce the burning-match constraint. Each client is given the same number of matches and may only speak as long as one match keeps burning.

Another technique is fishbowling, which splits the group in two with one half surrounding the other. The outer circle observes the inner circle's discussion and notes the frequency with which people speak and what they say or do. The outer circle reports their findings to the inner circle, and then clients change places. Tossing a ball of string, with the tail unraveling from speaker to speaker, also enables group members to identify a pattern of dominant and recessive talkers among them.

You may also have clients pass a talking stick or other inanimate object in one direction around the circle. Only the person with the stick may talk. This procedure can give quieter group members a chance to speak and may be less intrusive than picking on the silent ones by name.

Sometimes private conversations within the discussion can interfere with client learning, and so you may need to deal with them. Calling attention to this potential problem before beginning the dis-

Discussion Dos and Don'ts

Several dos and don'ts apply to the when and where of facilitating discussions.

Do:

- Take discussions seriously and schedule plenty of time for them. But if energy levels fall, end the discussion early.
- Discuss often and immediately after each experience. If this is not possible, have a brief discussion afterward and save a lengthy discussion for later.
- With most populations, spend as much time on the discussion as was spent doing the activity. If on a multiday experience, hold periodic discussions throughout each day.
- Discuss in the activity location unless noise from running water or blowing wind interferes with hearing. The location permits clients to more readily visualize what took place and where and how it happened.
- Pick a special place, such as a rock by a lake or the darkness of a forest, or a regular time, such as campfires or meals, for holding discussions during residential programs. This way, clients will know to concentrate on discussing at the chosen time or place.
- Encourage clients to ask their own questions that fit the theme. This permits self-discovery, freeing you from some of the responsibility for client learning.
- Remain alert for client metaphors and incorporate them into the discussion using client language. For example, if a client says, "I feel like a volcano," you might ask, "What kinds of eruptions have you experienced lately?"
- Welcome client contributions with a relaxed posture, open facial expression, and verbal appreciation. Observe body and verbal language and respectfully communicate in return with the same movements and words.

Don't:

- Lead clients by suggesting words or finishing their sentences. Ask questions instead of offering answers.
- Compare clients with other groups that have gone before or judge their actions as good or bad.
- Give false feedback. Instead, avoid giving insincere praise or unwarranted criticism.
- Assume you know what is best for clients, forcing them to change.
- Accept only one answer as correct, since this creates a situation reminiscent of the reward and punishment mentality of institutionalized schooling. If you accept only one answer, soon you will receive only one, because clients will fear being wrong.

cussion may provide a nonthreatening, proactive way to deal with this problem. When they occur, figure out why. One person may be clarifying a discussion point for another. Or the discussion may be so boring that two people are making small talk on the side. If the reason is appropriate, you can ask the two to share their thoughts with the whole group or you can break into small groups to encourage side discussions before returning to the big group. If the reason is inappropriate, you can comment on the distraction being counterproductive or you can even terminate the discussion and go to the next activity.

Occasionally, clients can get stuck in a rut during an activity. They may have promised change in the last discussion, but can't seem to get it together in this activity, or they may have just fallen apart as a team, straying dangerously off the task. At times like these, you can call a time-out or freeze the action and then follow with a single, well-chosen comment. This careful intervention and brief interjection can get the clients out of the rut, putting the group back on track to positive change.

When clients fail a task, they frequently concentrate on how they could fix the product of their actions, that is, what physical things they could have done better. Instead, you should focus the discussion on the process of their actions: the human relationships and group dynamics used to solve the problem. But if clients continually return to the task during the discussion, let them talk about this hang-up until they are satisfied enough with their product to be willing to talk about the process.

Balance the discussion. You shouldn't always examine mistakes, setbacks, failures, and other weaknesses, but should generally balance such negativity by also discussing strengths, such as success and achievement. Too many negatives can prolong agonies and lead to "paralysis by analysis," in which some clients become reluctant to discuss anything, freezing up in fear of constantly examining their shortcomings.

ALTERNATIVE REFLECTIONS AND NONVERBAL METHODS

Most of the tips and tricks we have discussed apply to verbal reflection. Certainly, verbal reflection is the most common form of debriefing conducted in North America. Not all clients are masterful at expressing their feelings through words, however, and a few may not even speak English or be cognitively mature enough to benefit. Therefore, alternative ways of reflecting may prove more beneficial and less intimidating than verbal reflection. You should consider nonverbal methods of reflection, such as art, drama, music, dance, poetry, writing, storytelling, photography, presentations, or even repeating the same activity (Greenaway, 1993; Priest, Gass, & Gillis, 2003). These methods should fit the age and culture of the clients. Be aware, however, that these methods can become routine, so use them in moderation, alternating methods often.

Art can take many forms: cartooning, making collages, drawing, graphing, painting, sculpting, or mapping. Cartoon balloons can convey true feelings. Clients can cut up old outdoor magazines to make collages that interpret their experiences. They can draw posters to represent their thoughts. They can graph their energy levels over time to infer shifting morale and motivations. They can paint murals to share their ideas. They can sculpt clay to illustrate emotions.

Realistic art is often the most difficult to create in a limited time and is usually the least useful for generating discussion since it is too close to what actually transpired. Abstract and symbolic art provide the greatest opportunities for making metaphoric connections. For example, a trip down a river can be a journey metaphor for completing projects in daily life. By drawing on plastic over the trip map, adding key points during the journey, clients can link key points of the project by using a second plastic sheet or by overlaying the first plastic sheet on the project time line. Once linked in either manner, metaphoric connections become conspicuous (Ringer, 1999).

Drama enables clients to act out what happened during the experience, what should have happened but didn't, and what they expect will happen next time. Drama can be accomplished through fantasy skits, modeling group members as if they are clay, or through reenacting the activity. Clients can perform in silence or by talking.

Clients can sing songs or play instruments. Music also proves useful in solo reflection. Expressive dance or creative movement can enhance the music. Poetry can take the form of cinquains, couplets, haiku, or limericks. Writing can be analytical, as in a newspaper article or quantitative and qualitative questionnaires, or be creative, as in a journal and short stories. Fantasy storytelling by leaders and clients can effectively impart metaphoric messages through quotes, morals, fantasies, legends, parables, or fables.

Photography, slides, video, or still snapshots from instant film can be useful when reviewing an experience. As you replay videotapes or audiotapes with an occasional pause for discussion, people can remark on what they were feeling or thinking at the time. You can display slides and pictures on the wall for clients to comment on.

Presentations are formal showings from the adventure. Clients can write a report on the trip, share photo albums with their families, give a slide show to the next group of incoming clients, or demonstrate new skills to the general public during an open house. In doing so, clients reexamine the experience from the viewpoint of an outsider. They must find a way to explain their personal and significant life-changing adventures to people who haven't yet experienced one for themselves.

Repeating the same activity a second time without debriefing the first time or frontloading can provide people with an opportunity to reflect alone and then improve what may not have worked well the first time. They may increase the product of their efforts, but they will more often enhance the process. In addition, you can have group members exchange roles. They may act differently in someone else's shoes.

To summarize, sometimes verbal debriefings may be limiting or inappropriate for producing functional change. Verbal debriefings may center on complicated and dynamic interactions, requiring you to deal with extremely complex issues. Less complex, speech-dependent, group-oriented, and rigid alternatives can be more effective than verbal debriefings (Smith, 1986). Moreover, alternatives may require less complex facilitation skills and therefore may be easier for leaders with less experience. Some clients may find expressing their thoughts with speech incredibly difficult, provoking anxiety, withdrawal, defensiveness, or frustration. Alternative methods are often less threatening. Traditional debriefing procedures rely heavily on group processes, and some clients are reluctant to interact and share in group settings. Many alternative techniques are oriented more toward the person; thus, individual clients may find them more meaningful and relevant. Alternatives may also provide a more beneficial structure than verbal debriefings for some clients, who then increase their involvement. Alternatives may be easier to schedule than debriefings that require the entire group's time, so you can implement them on an as-needed basis. Alternatives may make the logistics of facilitation more flexible.

DEBRIEFING THE EXPERIENCE

As stated in chapter 14, as the popularity of adventure programs grew in North America during the 1960s, more teachers, counselors, therapists, and other human service professionals became involved in conducting experiences. Many of these individuals imported techniques from their professions to heighten the experience. One import was using debriefing techniques to discuss the experience afterward. While debriefing sometimes met with resistance from proponents of the "let the experience speak for itself" model, it changed the very foundation of adventure programming.

The initial thought behind debriefing was that if clients discussed issues and stated personal commitments to change based on what they accomplished in their adventure experiences, they would own such issues and be more likely to follow through. The term "debriefing" was used because of the technique's similarity in structure (but not in content) to military debriefings that were familiar to early Outward Bound instructors with backgrounds in military service.

As a facilitator, your role in debriefing is usually to guide clients through reflective processes so they discover their own learning. You should not proclaim judgments about what you think; rather, you should guide clients in their learning by asking effective questions. In this way, you encourage clients to share their personal observations and own their behaviors or the consequences of their actions. Two successful examples of questioning are funneling (Priest & Naismith, 1993) and cognitive hierarchies (Quinsland & Van Ginkel, 1984; Hammel, 1986; Schoel & Maizell, 2002; Schoel, Prouty, & Radcliffe, 1988).

Funneling

One type of debriefing that is successfully used by a number of adventure programs is the **funneling approach.** In this process, you guide the group through a series of steps that funnel client attention from the experience toward making beneficial changes in their lives. These steps expand the classic three questions from Gestalt therapy: "What? So what? Now what?" (Borton, 1970).

Figure 15.1 illustrates the debriefing funnel. During the funnel process, you pour experiences through a series of six "filters," or types of questions, that "distill" learning changes through client reflection and answering. Each question filters out unwanted parts of the experience, narrowing

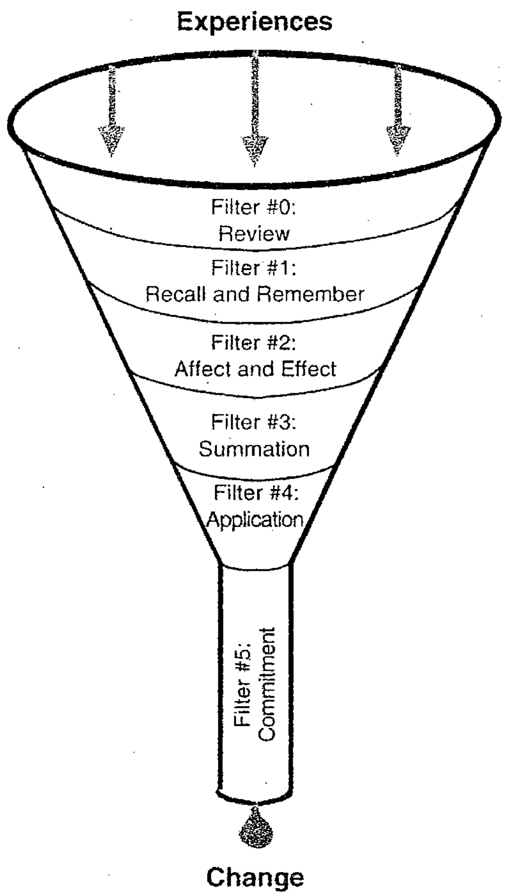


Figure 15.1 The debriefing funnel.

clients' concentration toward discussing wanted changes. The six filters are review, recall and remember, affect and effect, summation, application, and commitment.

Before the funneling can take place, you must thoroughly and correctly understand client needs. Without this knowledge, you can easily misdirect clients, no matter your good intentions. Obtain this information by observing the group members during the experience and keeping mental or written notes on what they say, how they behave, with whom they interact, and what incidents occur during the experience. Your toughest choice may be sorting out which issues and topics to debrief! Identifying specific learning objectives in advance that are based on your assessment of client needs can help you make this decision (see chapter 17). Examples of debriefing topics for most adventure experiences include trust, cooperation, communication, teamwork, planning, problem solving, decision making, judgment, innovative thinking, self-confidence, commitment, risk taking, coping with fear, dealing with change, resolving conflicts, leadership, gender inequity, group split, and emotional disclosure. Of course, you can't focus on every topic every time! But if you and your group miss an issue, it generally resurfaces in the next adventure activity or its debriefing.

The review question (filter 0) focuses the group on the topic or issue of interest based on client needs, your program objectives, and any incidents that took place in the activity. During this initial review, you can ask the group members to replay the experience in their minds or to describe it aloud in order to refresh everyone's memories. In this way, you get the group to concentrate on a single topic to the exclusion of everything else that happened during the experience. If the topic of concern is obvious from the experience outcome, then this filter may not be necessary (hence filter 0). Once the group agrees to center further discussion on this one topic, you can progress to the next level.

The recall-and-remember question (filter 1) gets clients to identify an incident relating to the topic that took place during the experience. If you bring up the incident, the group may deny it or perhaps feel confronted. Therefore, you should ask a question that gets the group to bring up the issue, giving it ownership and control over the situation. If a group is reluctant to speak about a topic or issue, you still have a few choices. Pushing a confrontation will likely be the least productive, so you should leave the denied topic and start a funnel of questions about another issue or design the next activity to more obviously highlight the point you'd like to make. We discuss dealing with denial further in chapter 16.

The affect-and-effect question (filter 2) addresses emotions and causes. Once clients bring up and buy into a specific incident related to an issue, you can ask other questions to ascertain the impact of that occurrence. These questions examine how each individual felt and how the group was influenced by the event. The answers permit a group to recognize positive or negative impacts of its behaviors and to separate personal impacts from group impacts. At this level, discussion is about sharing feelings and noting concerns. Once again, you must get partial acceptance from the group about the validity of these questions before moving on to the next type of question.

The summation question (filter 3) highlights new learning. Once you have ascertained the

The Reluctant Group

North Americans are generally more comfortable than others when it comes to speaking aloud, talking about themselves, or discussing in a group. Nevertheless, public speaking scares most people. You can always expect to encounter people who are uncomfortable discussing issues because they are afraid of failing, people who prefer to avoid negativity, or people who deny their problems, or to encounter a group reluctant to discuss issues in general. At these times, you can modify your approach to increase a client's willingness to enter into a discussion. Some of these modifications include nonverbal responses, closed questions, trigger questions, written responses, partnerships, trios, gift giving, reporting, and rounds.

You can encourage clients to nonverbally respond to simple statements you make to generate discussion. They can signal a thumbs-up or thumbs-down or raise a number of fingers to express agreement on a scale from 0 to 10. They can also form a line according to who contributed or listened from most to least. Or they can be targeted by positioning themselves near or far from an imaginary bull's-eye to represent whether they believe certain statements are right on or miss the mark.

You can ask the occasional closed question, but these should not make up the whole discussion. Clients, responding with either a yes or no, can get used to speaking with short, easy answers before you ask probing questions. After warming up with closed questions, you can ask trigger questions to evoke controversy, motivating people to dissent and speak their minds. For example, ask, "What is the role of competition in teamwork?" This question assumes competition has a role in teamwork, and some clients may disagree with this assumption.

Have clients write their responses before responding aloud. They can respond to your questions or statements, or they can finish sentences you start. By writing their ideas first, clients can collect their thoughts, reducing their chances of making mistakes while speaking. This approach ensures that quieter and more reluctant clients have as much time to respond as more eager clients.

Another way to allow clients to prepare for discussion is to give them a little solo time beforehand. Clients can go off on their own to contemplate the topics of the upcoming discussion. Music, natural sounds, or silence can enhance introspection. Encourage controlled breathing, meditation, or relaxation to "center" clients before asking them to contemplate your questions.

You can also divide clients into partners who discuss the topics in advance. Their mutual reinforcement of one another's ideas and comments can strengthen their resolve to speak out. Making partners into trios can introduce interviewing with an observer. While two discuss the topics, the third observes, reporting after the partners finish. In both these procedures, people may speak for themselves or can paraphrase and report their partner's responses. These approaches help because speaking on behalf of others is normally less stressful than talking for oneself.

You can build speaking practice into the discussion through gift giving and reporting. Clients can present physical gifts found outside or made from art supplies or inexpensive materials or nonphysical gifts of words or mimed actions to give one another feedback. Making gifts, whether physical or nonphysical, encourages clients who are more comfortable with or talented at nonverbal communication to participate more fully in verbal communication by bridging the gap between nonverbal and verbal. To use reporting, you can select people to perform the roles of interaction observer or quality inspector. They observe process or product issues and then report their findings to the group. Both gift giving and reporting encourage clients to speak out.

In rounds, clients take turns reviewing the activity. When one person forgets an occurrence or loses track of the order, the next person can chime in and so on around the circle. Clients identify points from the experience that were positive or negative, good or bad, easy or difficult, and funny or interesting. Clients need only identify these points and need not discuss them in any depth to begin with. In the ensuing discussions, you can probe only the positive topics until clients loosen up to the point that you feel you can move on to any negative topics that need attention. Last, you can go first and disclose something very personal, then ask clients to follow the precedent you set.

impact of the event, you ask clients to summarize what they have learned about the issue. So far, they have identified an occurrence and discussed its influence on their task performance and group dynamics. Now they talk about what they have distilled from all of this. When several clients' summaries of learning are in accord with their objectives, you can move to the next filter.

Once clients have identified new learning, you must help them apply it to real-life situations, thereby reinforcing learning and helping solidify its transference. The application question (filter 4) helps establish such linkages. Ask clients to make connections in the form of metaphors, or analogies, between the adventure and reality. When a number of clients concur that the metaphoric links are accurate and understand how the experience is like real life, you can ask the final type of question.

The commitment question (filter 5) looks toward change. Once clients have noted the usefulness of the new learning and how they might apply it in their daily lives, ask them to make a pledge and plan for action. You should press for answers in the form of an "I" statement and get the group to support members who commit to doing things differently as a result of their guided reflection on the experience.

Too much to remember? Before debriefing, you may want to write a list of questions that you will likely ask clients. This list should focus on the original objectives for the experience and on some predictable topics that may arise. But if unexpected issues surface, you should remain flexible, tailoring your questions to address them. To help you prepare debriefings, we have listed some sample questions in figure 15.2 based on the funnel model.

Remember, for funneling you identify a topic for discussion (review); ask for examples of its occurrence (recall and remember); ask about its impact on the clients, group, or task (affect and effect); ask what clients learned from this impact (summation); ask how the learning pertains to real life (application); and ask what people pledge to change (commitment). For example, groups often communicate poorly in the early stages of an adventure program. Clients may all speak at once, rarely listening to one another. Next is a sample "funnel" you might follow to get the group to improve its communication.

To begin, you might ask, "Can we talk about communication?" Unless someone objects, you can then ask the group to review their communication in the past activity and rate their performance by asking, "What rating would you give yourselves for communication on a scale from 0 (low) to 10 (high)?" If the average rating is low, you could add, "Are you interested in improving your communication?" If the average rating is high, you could ask, "Are you interested in making your communication a 10 or better?" Either question readies the group for identifying where communication broke down and a question such as "Can you give me an example of communication that could be enhanced?" Specify your questions if clients can't recall or remember the instance you wish to focus on: "Can you relate an instance in which listening

Review

Let's talk about (issue or topic). Can you review the last activity for me? On a five-point scale, hold up the number of fingers that indicates your level of performance, with five being excellent.

Recall and Remember

Do you remember an example of excellent (or poor) (issue or topic)? Can you recall a particular time when (issue or topic) was good (or bad)?

Affect and Effect

What affect (emotion) did you experience? How did this make you feel? How did this emotion affect the group? What influence did it have on the task?

Summation

How does the moral of this story go? What did you learn from all of this? Can you sum up what you have gained from our discussions (reflections)?

Application

Do you see a connection between this learning and your life back at school? Can you apply this on the job? Do you see any parallels to your family?

Commitment

What will you do differently next time? Begin with the words, "I will. . . ." How can you commit to change? Who will help support you in upholding this pledge?

Figure 15.2 Funnel guide questions.

was not done well?" Next, you can ask about affect or effect: "How did that affect the group morale? How did you personally feel about that? How did that resolve the task?" You can follow these questions with others about summation and application: "What have you learned from this? Does this ever happen back home?" Finally, you can seek commitment: "What will you do differently in the next activity? How are you going to change when you return home?"

Some groups may be reluctant to answer questions and to talk about things it did poorly. You can overcome reluctance by running funnels on positive topics, asking about things the group did well. Once members are comfortable talking about themselves and their actions, you can address negative issues or areas for improvement. Again, once you have completed the debriefing, composed of positive and negative funnels on several topics, you may often offer a new experience that gives the group a chance to put its pledges into practice.

In the debriefing after this new experience, revisit a funnel on communication to see if client strategies worked. This funnel might contain a few key questions such as "On a 10-point scale, how was communication this time? Give me an example of where it was improved. What caused this improvement? What were the results of the improvement? What did you learn from these results? How can you use this learning at home? How will things be different in the future?" Note that this abbreviated sequence of questions leaves room for you to probe for deeper answers with more complex questions or to confirm answers by paraphrasing client responses.

Debriefing experiences requires that you remain flexible in your questioning. You must use your best judgment in "customizing" questions. For this reason, "cookbook" approaches to debriefing rarely obtain 100% success; you will have to modify any approach. Once you are comfortable with this debriefing model, we encourage you to adapt it to suit your own style and your clients' needs. Furthermore, we encourage you to remember not to be bound by a single view of debriefing as the only way to guide reflection.

Cognitive Hierarchy

Another type of debriefing that has been successfully used by a number of adventure programs is based on Bloom's (1956) taxonomy of cognitive objectives. As with funneling, you lead the group through a series of questions that stem from the adventure experience and are designed to foster positive changes in clients' lives. The sequence of questions mirrors Bloom's six levels of cognitive thought: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Quinsland & Van Ginkel, 1984).

Following this model, you ask questions that progressively develop the cognitive knowledge about the adventure experience. Through this development, clients organize information at more concrete levels, that is, the knowledge, comprehension, and application levels, so they can answer debriefing questions at more abstract levels, that is, the analysis, synthesis, and evaluation levels. The questions you ask at the abstract level, particularly evaluation questions, focus on producing the positive and transferable changes clients will use in the future. Table 15.1 (Hammel, 1986) illustrates the levels of cognitive thought, debriefing functions, and corresponding sample questions that fit this hierarchy.

Knowledge operates at a memory level and involves remembering information by recognition or recall. Comprehension operates at an understanding level and involves interpreting or explaining information in a descriptive or literal manner. Application operates at a usage level and involves using information correctly. Analysis operates at a relationship level and involves breaking information down into component parts and detecting relationships among parts. Synthesis operates at a creative level and involves putting pieces of information together to form a whole in new and innovative ways. Evaluation operates at an opinion level and involves judging the value of ideas, solutions, and events (Gass & Gillis, 1995).

For example, a group of clients on the ropes course might be learning about cooperation. A knowledge question might be "Step by step, what happened between you and your belayer?" Clients typically respond with examples of how they worked in partnership. You follow with a comprehension question: "What exemplified cooperative behavior between you and your belayer?" Clients talk about the seriousness of trust or support. You ask an application question: "What were you doing to make cooperation so successful?" Clients answer with examples of listening better to their partner's needs. Then you ask an analysis question: "When do you think you cooperated best?" Clients identify a specific highlight for them in cooperating with their belay partner. You continue with a synthesis question: "How does this

Table 15.1 Cognitive Hierarchy

Cognitive thought	Debriefing function	Corresponding questions
CONCRETE LEVELS		
Knowledge (memory) Comprehension (understanding) Application (usage)	Review and describe events, feelings, thoughts, and problems.	What did you do when . . . ? What happened when . . . ? How did you feel when . . . ? What did your group do when . . . ?
ABSTRACT LEVELS		
Analysis (relationship) Synthesis (creation) Evaluation (opinion)	Make comparisons. Relate to daily life. Propose solutions. Examine values.	What was the highlight for you? What was the most challenging? Does this remind you of anything? What have you learned today that may help you in the future? What have you learned about yourself?

From Hammel, 1986.

highlight compare with your regular way of working with others in daily life?" Clients discuss the similarities and differences, to which you add an evaluation question: "How do you think you will work together in the future?" Clients talk about changes they will make and strategies for transferring their learning.

An obvious weakness of this model, as with most verbal debriefings, is that expressing emotional experiences in words and thinking about feelings in cognitive terms is difficult for most people, especially children. So you may wish to debrief with metaphoric stories or other alternatives.

FRONTLOADING THE EXPERIENCE

Recall that **frontloading** constitutes the fourth generation of facilitated learning in adventure education (Priest & Gass, 1993; Priest, Gass, & Gillis, 2003). "Front" indicates that the facilitation takes place up front, or before the experience. "Loading" refers to the fact that the learning is loaded together, or emphasized, in combination beforehand. In summary, frontloading means punctuating the key learning points in advance of the adventure experience rather than reviewing or debriefing any learning after.

Direct frontloading typically addresses one or more of the following five functions: revisiting, objectives, motivation, function, and dysfunction. The excitement of adventure activities can help a group focus intensely on completing a task, distracting it from the changes it's there to accomplish. The revisiting question reminds group members of the behaviors they pledged to perform after the last activity. Just before the new activity begins and after you have explained the task, you can pose a single question: "One more thing: What were the commitments that the group made last time?" This brief question brings the previous answers to the "do things differently next time" question to the front of clients' minds so that clients are more likely to act on their revisited affirmations during the activity.

Besides a revisiting question, you can ask four other types of frontloading questions in combination or alone. Objective questions ask about the aims of the activity and what can be learned or gained from the experience. Motivation questions ask why experiencing the activity may be important and how learning relates to daily life. Function questions ask what behaviors will help bring about success and how the group may optimize them. Dysfunction questions ask what behaviors will hinder success and how the group can avoid or overcome them. These five areas of frontloading are very similar to those of the filters of the funneling model; the difference is that you ask frontloading questions before instead of after the experience.

The five areas can be illustrated with The Wall initiative. This activity includes a 12 to 14 ft (3-4 m) structure with a ledge on the back side. The group is challenged to pass its members up the front side and over the top. One difficult aspect of getting over the wall is getting the first person up. Generally, the crux of the problem is getting the final person over the wall with no one remaining below to lift him. In a typical briefing before the activity, you introduce the problem by mentioning the group goal of getting everyone over the wall; task constraints, such as not holding onto the edges or not using props other than the available resources; safety rules, including no more than two people on the ledge at a time and no holding people upside down; safety procedures, such as removing jewelry and spotting at all times; and the time limit, such as 30 min including planning. Many programs then give clients the right to pass and be challenged by choice; some programs employ helmets and harnesses to prevent head injury or torn clothing; and a few programs include handicaps such as blindfolds or muting. During the briefing, you could also add the frontloading questions outlined in figure 15.3.

Frontloading can take place either before or after the logistical briefing. You may even occasionally include frontloading within the briefing. But we caution you about too much frontloading. The average person can juggle 5 to 9 thoughts in the mind at once. A typical adventure activity briefing has a half dozen or so important points

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Revisiting (commitments)

Our last event this morning concluded with some personal pledges about what we were going to do differently this afternoon and when we depart from this program. Would each of you care to share those commitments with the group one more time before we start?

Objectives (learning summation)

What do you think the group will get out of doing this activity? What do you think this exercise is designed to teach?

Motivation (application to reality)

Where might this learning be useful in your regular lives?

Function (positive actions)

What will the group need to do in order to succeed? What strategies does the group have for making sure it does these things?

Dysfunction (negative actions)

What things has this group done in the past that may get in the way? What can the group do to ensure these don't occur?

Figure 15.3 Frontloading functions and corresponding questions.

Sample Questions for Funneling and Frontloading

Knapp (1990) identified a series of questions associated with common adventure program topics that may prove useful for formulating funnels or frontloads. These topics include communication, feelings, prejudice, listening, leadership, followership, decision making, cooperation, diversity, trust, and closure. Use these questions as models for developing your own funnels and frontloads, making them your own so you can ask them in a natural manner tailored to specific client needs. Remember that you can't cover every topic in one discussion. Instead, pick one topic that may lead to another and stop discussion before clients become tired or restless.

Communication

1. Can anyone give an example of when you thought you communicated effectively?
2. How did you know that what you communicated was understood?
3. Who didn't understand someone's attempt to communicate?
4. What went wrong in the communication attempt?

10. Do you think you have other things in common with some of the group members?
11. How did this setting help you discover how you are similar to others?

Trust

1. Can you give examples of when you trusted someone in the group? Explain.
2. Is it easier to trust some people and not others? Explain.
3. Can you think of examples when trusting someone would not have been a good idea?
4. How do you increase your level of trust for someone?
5. On a scale of 1 to 10, rate how much trust you have in the group as a whole.
6. Can you explain your rating?
7. How does the amount of fear you feel affect your trust of others?
8. What did you do today that deserves the trust of others?

Closure

1. What did you learn about yourself?
2. What did you learn about others?
3. How do you feel about yourself and others?
4. What new questions do you have about yourself and others?
5. What did you do today of which you are particularly proud?
6. What skill are you working to improve?
7. Was your behavior today typical of the way you usually act in groups? Explain.
8. How can you use what you learned in other life situations?
9. What beliefs about yourself and others were reinforced today?
10. Would you do anything differently if you were starting the activity again with this group?
11. What would you like to say to the group members?

◄ EFFECTIVE OUTDOOR LEADERS ►

- Are competent at facilitating verbal debriefing.
- Know how to handle groups that are reluctant to enter into verbal debriefing.
- Are able to debrief experiences using reflective alternatives to verbal debriefing.
- Are able to debrief experiences according to both the funneling and cognitive hierarchy models.
- Are able to frontload experiences by all five direct methods, using the technique in moderation.

clients must retain for safety and accuracy. Adding more than 2 or 3 extra points by frontloading can overload clients, possibly causing them to forget the key points you're teaching. Even so, when used in moderation, frontloading can be an effective teaching tool.

SUMMARY

Basic facilitation involves discussion and alternative methods. Discussion is unstructured debriefing that allows analysis, sharing, and reinforcement of learning and change. Arranged in a circle and talking in a supportive atmosphere created by accepted ground rules and operating principles, the group discusses its experience as you guide it with open-ended questions. You listen to its answers and then ask probing questions. By managing overbearing, tangential, and lengthy speakers and by using discussion tips and tricks, you ensure input from all clients. Work with reluctant groups by encouraging nonverbal responses, asking closed and trigger questions, requiring written responses and reporting, and arranging for solo time, partnerships, trios, gift giving, and rounds. Since verbal debriefings disadvantage some clients, provide for reflection through alternative methods such as art, drama, music, dance, poetry, writing, storytelling, photography, presentation, and repeating the same activity.

To verbally debrief an activity, ask questions after the experience. To frontload, ask the questions beforehand. These reflection techniques were developed in North American adventure programs in the 1960s and 1970s, respectively. Debriefing can take any number of nonverbal forms, but is most commonly a verbal experience guided by you. You ask questions so that the clients discover their own learning. If you make statements for them, clients might feel confronted and deny learning. Funneling and cognitive hierarchy are two models for verbal debriefing.

Funneling includes six types of questions that successively filter the experience, narrowing the clients' focus onto change. The six filters are review, recall-and-remember, affect-and-effect, summation, application, and commitment questions. You follow this sequence of questions to focus on a predetermined learning objective, a topic that warrants discussion, or an issue that arises during the experience.

Debriefing by cognitive hierarchy is based on Bloom's taxonomy of learning, which includes six levels: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. You ask questions at the lower, concrete levels (knowledge, comprehension, and application) to help clients organize the learning, and then you progress to the higher, abstract levels (analysis, synthesis, and evaluation) to help clients transfer the learning.

Frontloading stacks the learning before the activity by using prebriefing instead of debriefing. You ask questions similar to debriefing questions, but you ask clients to anticipate the future rather than respond to the past. Direct frontloading has five forms: revisiting, objectives, motivation, function, and dysfunction. Too much frontloading can overload clients; you must use the technique only occasionally and only when emphasizing key points ahead of time is required or helpful.

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Prepare a funnel by writing six filter questions in sequence to use with an individual client (rather than a whole group) who has just experienced an adventure activity of your choice.
2. Ask a peer to role-play for that individual and ask her the questions. Modify your questions as needed based on her answers as you progress through the funnel.
3. Repeat the first two questions using the cognitive hierarchy model.
4. Compare and contrast the funnel and cognitive hierarchy models. Which one do you prefer? Why? Are there times with certain groups when one model might work better than the other?
5. Prepare five questions using the frontloading model and practice asking them of a peer.

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How to Design a Debriefing Session

by Heidi Hammel

Chances are you and I already agree that experiential education is a valuable form of education. I wouldn't be writing for an AEE journal and you probably wouldn't be reading one if we didn't both agree that there is tremendous potential for human development and growth in carefully designed, safely executed and thoughtfully processed experiences. Since you are reading this particular article, chances are also good that you have some ideas and some questions about how you, as a leader or teacher can maximize that growth through thoughtful processing or debriefing.

The primary purpose of debriefing is to allow participants to integrate their learning, thus gaining a sense of closure or completeness to their experience. In order for participants to take what they have learned in an outdoor experience and use it effectively in their every day lives, they must think about it and interpret its meaning for themselves.

As a leader, you can facilitate this process by:

1. Setting aside enough time to reflect on the experiences.
2. Asking the right questions.
3. Planning appropriate activities that will help participants reflect on their experiences.
4. Listening to the participants carefully.
5. Supporting each participant's unique learning.

This debriefing guide provides some ideas for doing these things, but a word of caution is necessary: this is only a guide, not a set of rules to be followed exactly. The joy of designing a quality debriefing is that each one will be different, because each group you lead will be different.

Heidi Hammel wrote this article as a guide for the Quest Outdoor Leadership Training Program at Bloomsburg State University in Pennsylvania.

Stages of Learning

In designing a debriefing you are guiding people through a potentially complex learning process. In order to do this effectively, it can be helpful to understand how people learn. How do we piece together information gained from experience, instruction or reflection? How do we get to the point where we can say, "I learned that..."?

One way to describe how people learn is Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, which delineates six levels of learning: (For more information about applying this concept to experiential education, read "How to Process Experience," Quinsland and Van Ginkel, JEE, Fall, 1984.)

"**KNOWLEDGE** (memory level) - remembering information by recognition or recall
COMPREHENSION (Understanding level) - interpreting or explaining knowledge or learnings in a descriptive or literal way
APPLICATION (simple usage level) - correct use of knowledge; e.g., to solve rote problems or answer questions
ANALYSIS (relationship level) - breaking knowledge down into component parts and detecting relationships between them; e.g., identifying causes and motives
SYNTHESIS (creative level) - putting together to form a whole; e.g., to formulate a solution
EVALUATION (opinion level) - making judgments about the value of ideas, solutions, events"

What does this mean? It is simpler than it looks. At first we are very concrete in our thinking about our experiences. We remember the events and their associated feelings. ("Today we sweated it out on that hike. I remember feeling like it would never