

THE ROLE OF FACILITATOR

The role of the facilitator is to facilitate, not act as a coach or teacher. The facilitator is a leader who facilitates the learning process. The facilitator should be able to exercise mature control over a group activity and influence groups and individuals to accomplish particular objectives. The facilitator needs to be sensitive to the personality and mood of individuals and groups and be able to function in an assisting, enabling role in the process of leading them to reach their full potential.

The facilitator should understand that each individual is distinct in physical and emotional abilities, and should not expect each individual to be able to do the same things in every way as other members of the group. Each individual should be expected and encouraged to make an effort and do their best, even if that is only a single step. But, if the facilitator becomes too carried away with expectations, hindrance rather than help will be the result.

It is important for the facilitator to realize that they cannot totally change, in a short period of time, the fears and lack of self-confidence that have taken years to develop. The greatest opportunity will be to plant seeds. This is accomplished by providing safe, supportive, nonjudgmental permission for the participants to make an effort to move beyond their personal expectations and limitations. It is their responsibility to provide the environment within which the participants may succeed while leaving the outcome of success or failure to the participant.

The facilitator should take neither complete credit for the participants' success nor blame for their failures, and should remember that individuals will not accept or pursue these high adventure activities with equal enthusiasm. Excessive time should not be spent trying to force an individual to do an activity simply to satisfy the facilitator's ego. Planting the right seeds in the participant will cause greater growth than trying to force what was not meant to happen at that particular time. The facilitator's job is to plant the seeds.

On the other hand, the facilitator should not give up too soon when an individual is experiencing difficulty, but should continue, with reasonable limits, to challenge the individual to press on beyond self-imposed limitations. It takes time for the facilitator to learn to recognize when a participant has reached his/her limit, but it is important to do so. To rescue too soon provides the easy way out that some participants seek; to continue too long can create ill feelings, resentment, and even panic. The facilitator should be satisfied with any honest attempt and accomplishment. Their role is to set an example, to motivate, to stimulate, to be flexible, to understand, to maintain a positive attitude, to minimize negative interaction, and to encourage group members to support each other.

There should be a reasonable amount of risk that a participant feels during an Adventure Challenge Course experience. Reasonable risk-taking is a part of living. Actual risk is the possibility of physical injury to the participant if something should go wrong. Perceived risk should be kept in the activity, but activities should be operated within the parameters of proven safety procedures so that the actual risks have been eliminated. It is in risk that growth happens. When we risk getting to know another or try new things, we grow in understanding and knowledge.