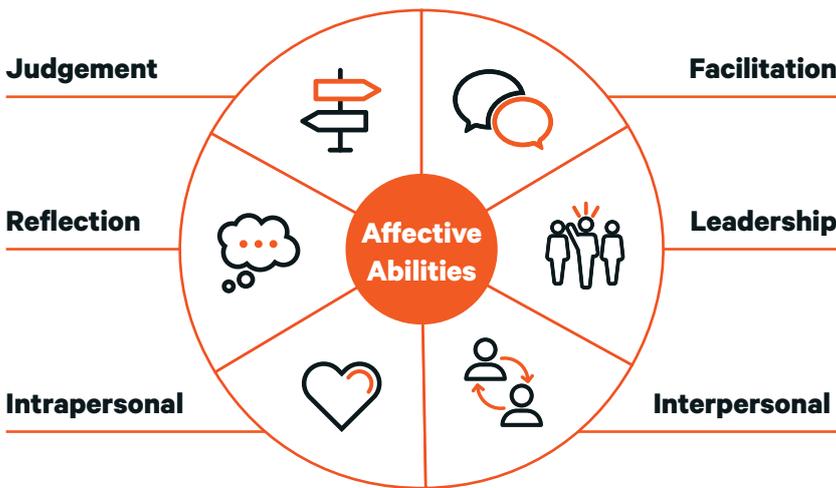


The Affective Abilities of Outdoor Leaders: A National Survey 2019

Research conducted by Dr Mandi Baker, Centre of Organisational Change and Agility, Torrens University Australia and Lamped Research



Affective Abilities are the interpersonal and intrapersonal abilities required to influence the development of positive relationships (Baker & O'Brien, 2019).

Mixed-method Integrated Survey with 351 Respondents



Research Questions

How do outdoor leaders perceive the importance of Affective Abilities?

How do outdoor leaders use their Affective Abilities?

What are the Affective Abilities training needs of Outdoor Leaders?

The Importance of Affective Abilities by Ranking

- Communicating effectively
- Learning from Experience
- Role modelling
- Decision making
- Managing one's own emotions and values
- Collaborating with others (peers, managers, stakeholders)
- Building/maintaining relationships with others
- Managing conflict
- Facilitation personal connections between participants



Respondents use AA for **79%** of an average day

Common Focus of Leaders' Affective Abilities

- A participant is anxious, fearful, or overwhelmed
- A participant is lonely, homesick, or left out
- A participant refuses to take part, try an activity or complete an activity
- A participant over-estimates their abilities
- Participants don't work well together
- Environmental factors significantly alter program
- Leaders have to ignore or manage their own wants/needs to deliver a program



Survey responses suggested that colleagues were a significant support factor in meeting the demands of outdoor leadership

“

It is important to create connections between yourself and the group, as well as within the group, to enable it to be a safe space for participants to communicate fears and issues.

”

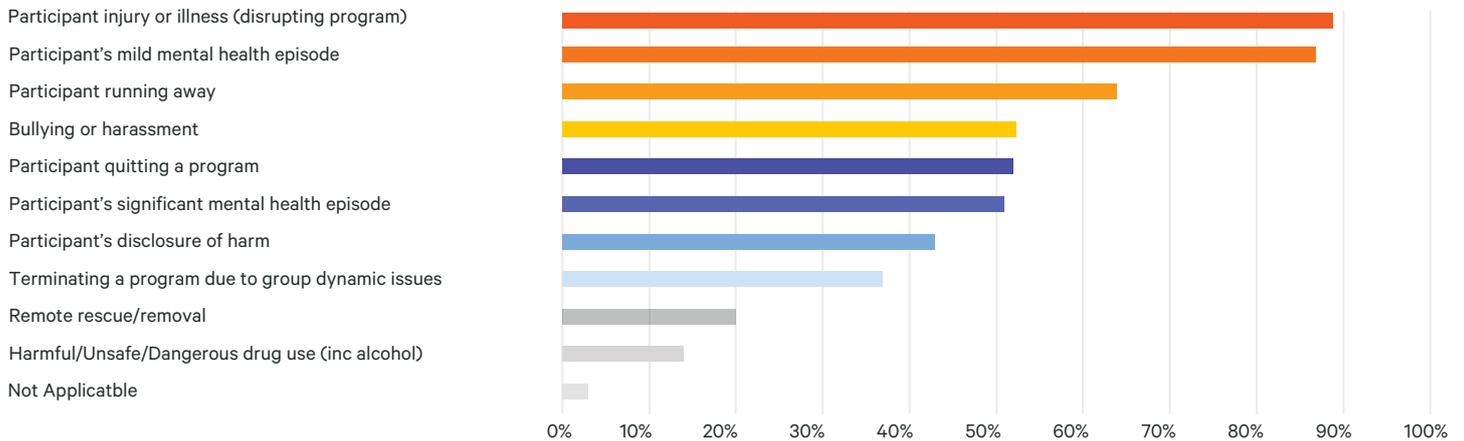
“

Doing a mix of physical and 'emotional' work can be draining. The challenge is to remain calm and connected under these conditions and, if I succeed in this, I'm usually able to respond effectively to most situations.

”

Affective Abilities for Responding to Critical Incidents

The role of outdoor leaders requires frequent management of highly demanding incidents. These situations require the use of well-developed Affective Abilities. The following demonstrates the rates of encounter over the course of a respondent's career.



Affective Abilities Training Needs



Effective communication



Managing one's own wellbeing



Decision making/judgement

“

We used to say that these abilities couldn't really be taught, that is a fallacy

”

Recommendations

For Outdoor Leaders

- ✓ Develop Affective Abilities to ease stress of emotional demand and develop buffer
- ✓ Take responsibility for self-care of physical, mental and emotional wellbeing
- ✓ Create and maintain healthy boundaries
- ✓ Seek/foster mentorships
- ✓ Maintain relationships and recreation outside of work environment/colleagues

For Managers

- ✓ Role model well developed Affective Abilities
- ✓ Recruit, train, reward and retain staff based on Affective Abilities criteria
- ✓ Match your leaders' Affective Abilities to participant/program needs
- ✓ Evaluate & modify policy to reflect the emotional and social demand of role
- ✓ Schedule rest for staff proportional to the demand of program/participants

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Baker, M., & O'Brien, W. (2020). Rethinking outdoor leadership: An Investigation of Affective Abilities in Australian Higher Education curriculum. *Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning*, 20(3), 202-216. TUA-1277

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