

Adventure Therapy Program Information

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

Welcome to the Adventure Therapy Program. Experiential learning and education are at the heart of how we create growth opportunities for our students. We believe that all lasting change must occur through lived experience in the context of safe, trusting relationships. Each sequence utilizes the "hard skills" taught in Adventure Activity such as biking, hiking, fishing, water skiing or rock climbing as a backdrop or platform for students to engage with the "soft skill" of Setting Goals, Empathy, Trust, Communication and Teamwork. The CALO Adventure Therapy Program is comprised of weekly Ropes Course and Adventure Activities. Each sequence culminates in a camping trip or Engineered Experience that allows them to demonstrate the hard and soft skills they've learned and celebrate their growth and success.

Setting and Achieving Goals

The Achieving and Setting Goals sequence is designed to provide students the opportunity to challenge negative core beliefs as well as gain mastery and self-confidence. Students are trained for a 100-mile bike ride on the Katy trail in Missouri through weekly fitness exercise routines and cycling excursions around campus. Ropes course activities during the Achieving and Setting Goals sequence teach students the importance of setting a goal that pushes them outside their comfort zone into their growth zone. In doing so students gain experiential knowledge of their limits and are safely guided to push beyond them. The sequence's capstone is a 3 day camping trip on the Katy trail, cycling 100 miles through the rural Missouri countryside.

Teamwork

The Teamwork sequence is designed to create experiential opportunities for students to explore how teamwork affects relationships. Students gain practical knowledge of the importance of working together as a team to effect mutual change. In order to help students increase their applicable understanding of the principles of teamwork they need to be involved in, and do activities that require teamwork. One of the major focuses of this sequence is the concept of living outside the comfort zone.

Students celebrate their hard work and demonstrate skills acquired in the Engineered Experience of rock climbing and bouldering in Northern Arkansas. For three days students camp and participate in low-ropes initiatives, bouldering and top-rope climbing in one of the Midwest's premier climbing destinations.

Communication

Safe communication is the foundation of any trusting relationship. In the communication

sequence, students gain experiential mastery of communication skills in interpersonal relationships. The concept of "work hard, play hard" is inherent in this sequence. Healthy communication poses great difficulty to our students and can require hard work to do well. As such, students learn that communication can become a vehicle that allows opportunities to reap the benefits of hard work through deepened relationships and play. Vulnerability, honesty and an awareness of our own fears is essential for us to communicate well with others.

The communication sequence is capped off by a 3-day Engineered Experience here at the Lake of the Ozarks. Students work together to canoe from different campsite locations on the lake and celebrate their accomplishment by playing, fishing, swimming, wakeboarding, skiing, wake-skating and wake surfing.

Trust

Trust is one of the more complicated concepts for our students as they struggle greatly with recognizing the value of this in relationships. Therapeutic metaphor is used throughout this sequence to tie the analogy of fly fishing or the "art of deception" to trusting relationships. We begin this sequence talking about the concept of deception. Students are asked to engage in contemplation and introspection with how they experience Trust in their lives through journaling and therapeutic groups as well as in adventure activities.

The Engineered Experience is designed to give students a chance to demonstrate the Trust they have gained throughout their participation in the sequence. For three days students paddle the Current River in Missouri and fish the pristine trout waters of Montauk Hatchery. Nightly fireside groups are held to provide students with an opportunity to talk vulnerably about Trust.

Empathy

Empathy for our students is often a difficult concept and skill to understand and master. We believe that empathy is an essential component of healthy, healing relationships and as such seek to foster this ability or emotional skill in our students. Many of our students resist empathizing with others, particularly those they've hurt for fear of the shame that may arise within. It is our goal to experientially teach CALO students that not only is empathy essential in healing broken relationships but that it is also an emotional skill that will serve them the rest of their lives. Themes of ecopsychology are also woven throughout this sequence to imbue our students with a sense of sustaining resources as well as an appreciation, or gratitude for what is often taken for granted.

In the Empathy sequence, the "hard skills" of wilderness survival are taught to coincide with the adventure activity of backpacking. Students study survival priorities (shelter, fire, water, food, backcountry first aid) and get a chance to practice this throughout the sequence. Students celebrate and challenge their abilities to work together and empathize with one another and their planet with a backpacking trip.

