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THE AWARENESS ACTIVATION MODEL FOR TRANSFER OF LEARNING IN EXPERIENTIAL SETTINGS

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An individual applying her or his newfound knowledge and transferring the information, through action to a new setting is a valued outcome for experiential education practitioners. At the most basic level, the notion of transfer of knowledge appears so simple and commonsensical that it may only subconsciously serve as the focal point of initiative/rope course activities. Yet, transfer facilitated with intention may very well make any new knowledge acquired through experience more efficacious, applicable, and enduring for an individual.

Intentional facilitation, including isomorphic framing, may be the “trigger” that activates one’s sense of mindfulness toward long-term use or even a disposition for application of knowledge developed through contrived settings to reality. The purpose of this paper is to present a model designed to intentionally increase the transference from initiative/ropes course activities to reality.

The base of the Awareness Activation Model (AAM) represents the foundational, perhaps subconscious, understanding that each participant has of her or his individual “self”—including knowledge of one’s place in “real life” and one’s role in the present activity. This knowledge serves as the basis for the entire experiential event. The activation cycle, building upon this foundation, parallels the traditional experiential learning cycle (experience, reflection, generalization, and application), but is dependent upon specific modifications from the facilitator.

The “Experience” (E¹) in this cycle is actually composed of each individual’s own foundational life experience, as recalled through prompting from the facilitator (“How would you describe your ‘real-life’ self?” “Tell me about who you are at work/school/home.”) rather than the experience of an individual event. The “Reflection” (R¹) that occurs next involves a com-

parison of how the individual has behaved during the experiential occasion (e.g., a day of initiatives, a backpacking trip, etc.) with how she or he typically behaves in “real life.” This process is, again, prompted by the facilitator. (“How has your behavior here been different from/similar to that at work/school/home?”). Next, the “Generalization” (G¹) that occurs asks the individual to identify reasons *why* she or he has behaved differently/similarly in each setting (“What are some differences between your environment/atmosphere here and that at work/school/home?” “Why and in what ways do these differences matter?”). Finally, the setting in which “Application” (A¹) of this newly activated information occurs in the culminating experiential event itself, which is isomorphically framed appropriately for the population. As such, A¹ becomes the “Experience” (E) of the traditional experiential learning cycle, located at the top of the cylinder. The event is then facilitated and processed based upon its isomorphic frame.

The AAM represents a combination and modification of directly frontloading the experience and (isomorphically) framing the experience. This approach to processing is designed to increase participants’ mindfulness of their “real lives” and the relationships between reality and the contrived experiential setting so that the learning from the experiential event can be more readily transferred.

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