



An Introduction to Team Challenge Courses—What to Expect

The Team Challenge Courses at Lake Williamson are tools to enable experiential learning, which can be defined as “*learning by participating*.” Our courses are designed so that a group of individuals can learn and grow as they are led through activities that challenge them in various ways. These activities involve games to play, obstacles to overcome, and problems to solve. Each is designed to engage participants physically, mentally, socially and emotionally. Facilitators select activities which fit group goals, age, physical ability, and social skills.

- **Facilitators are respectful of individuals’ right to choose their level of participation without undue pressure or the need to explain or justify their choices.**

Many activities involve an element of *perceived risk*. The risk may be physical, social, and/or emotional. This perceived risk helps to engage the team members, making the experience both challenging and fun. In all cases, however, the *actual risk* is minimized by the facilitator’s careful instruction, active supervision, and thoughtful selection of activities.

- **A facilitator cannot guarantee safety**, but will strive to minimize actual risk. To that end, facilitators reserve the right to stop any program or remove any individual where safety instructions are ignored or violated.

After each activity, the facilitator helps the team learn from their experiences through the process of “*Debriefing*.” This involves guiding a discussion through questions and observations which will help the team to learn about themselves as individuals and a group.

- **Ideally, the team should be able to apply the principles learned on the course to their personal lives.**

Other than briefing and debriefing activities with the group, the facilitator strives to be an “invisible” observer. Although every group and situation is different, ideally the facilitator will speak as little as possible, allowing the participants to find the solution within themselves. It is not uncommon for a group’s request for clarification or an idea to be met with a shrug or a response that does not directly answer the inquiry. This is not meant to express a disinterest in the group (Quite the opposite is true!). Though there are times when a facilitator may insert a new thought into the group’s efforts, ultimately the solution to the problem rests within the group.

- **Eagle Crest facilitators will deflect problem solving questions back on the group.**
- **On the high ropes course, facilitators will allow participants to cry, panic, and “struggle” without interference.** This is not indifference, but we have learned that “rescuing” too soon can rob a participant of his victory. Facilitators will generally only help on high ropes when a participant directly asks for it or when emotional paralysis (the inability to take action) occurs. Participants are encouraged to help each other.

For your safety, there is a 250 pound weight limit on the zip lines. Severe injury may occur if a participant misleads staff regarding his/her weight. This weight limit does not apply to other course elements. However, all high ropes participants must *comfortably* fit a harness, with three inches of “tail” on the belt strap.

TO PARENTS & ADULT LEADERS OF YOUTH: Eagle Crest Adventures encourages adult leaders to participate. We do, however, wish to prepare you for some of the “limitations” you may encounter. We assume adult leaders have selected our program with the desire to see their students grow and develop as a team. Therefore, our facilitators make every effort to leave the problem solving experience with the *youth*, and not the leaders. To that end, facilitators may kindly remind adults not to give directions, ask leading questions, or offer anything more than encouragement. If, as an adult, you find yourself struggling with these limitations, you are not alone! It is difficult for any adult to remain silent when they see the quick solution their students do not see. We simply ask adults to allow students the freedom to learn experientially and to not be offended if one of our facilitators request that the solution to the challenge be reserved for the youth.