

Adventure Education and Disaffected Youth

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If you believe that outdoor and adventurous experiences can be so powerful that they have the potential to transform the way we feel about the world and everything in it....and..... if you have an interest in working with young people to aid their social development and improve their wellbeing then this chapter is for you.... read on!

Introduction

There is a long standing and commonly held belief amongst the adventure education community that adventurous experiences offer particular advantages for promoting personal development and pro-social behaviour. Much of the philosophy surrounding this belief originates from the teachings of the German educationalist Dr. Kurt Hahn. Much of Hahn's philosophy stemmed from his observations of what he termed as the 'decline of modern youth' in Germany during the 1920's. These observations, coupled with the view that young people's development should centre on education for active citizenship, formed the basis of *Hahnism*, which essentially promotes the use of adventure and challenge as a medium for learning and survival.

Dr. Hahn's legacy remains to this day, primarily with continued success of the Outward Bound movement and Gordonstoun School in Scotland. Furthermore, Hahn's philosophy has guided the enduring belief of adventure educators that outdoor and adventurous experiences, when facilitated appropriately and effectively, can provide a catalyst so powerful that it may elicit positive behavioural change amongst disaffected populations. Many of us working in adventure education will reflect on experiences in the outdoors that have been so significant that they literally change the way we think and behave. This philosophy is the bedrock of adventure education as an intervention for disaffected populations, with the central tenet being positive behavioural change.

The aim of this chapter is to draw on some of literature that has formed the contemporary approach to dealing with disaffection. We will draw upon related disciplines such as clinical psychology, mentorship and counselling and consider the idea that it is the responsibility of the educator to move toward a philosophy of accountability. We live in a culture where securing funding and encouraging investment in dealing with disaffection is ever more challenging. This presents us with the demand to provide evidence that our undertakings in working with disaffected populations is actually doing what we say it is doing. This need for validity of practices could be seen by many to be negative with the idea of accountability being seen as a threat to our operations that we might have been doing well for years. We might believe that we '*just know*' that adventure education can change people's perceptions, attitudes and behaviour and that our anecdotes and experiences are enough justify this. Many practitioners have great stories of the '*bad kid turned good*' as a result of

personal growth and social development; and we know that adventure education is particularly effective at promoting these personality characteristics. As history has shown however, it is often the politicians and the economic climate that dictate the availability of funding for programmes in social care and public services. With this in mind there is a growing sentiment that adventure educators should aim to provide evidence that beneficial behavioural change is brought about by effective use of adventure education.

So how could we go about providing this evidence? One approach that we will look at in some depth centres on becoming *mechanistic* rather than *descriptive* in the way we look at dealing with the problem of disaffection. By doing this we will consider the mechanisms behind how behaviour change actually occurs and how we can drive, facilitate and ultimately account for this. In an age driven by evidence-based practice, understanding these mechanisms and having specific tools to deal with disaffected populations will be vital to the practitioner. The intention of this chapter is to move towards an understanding of the complex picture of dealing with disaffection and promoting positive behaviour change. Furthermore, the chapter also intends to raise awareness of how we might use particular techniques and tools to foster development and pro-social behaviour.

What is disaffection?

This is a tough question because disaffection is often used as an umbrella term to describe all behaviours that are not socially desirable. Given that different people have different ways of defining the term, it is necessary to look at how the literature goes about classifying people as disaffected. Firstly, Williamson and Middlemiss (1999) illustrate the diversity in the way people define disaffection by stating that definitions of disaffected populations include anyone that is “temporarily sidetracked, essentially confused or deeply alienated” (p13). This is a pretty loose definition and could refer to a range of people from those who temporarily disengage from school all the way to those who repeatedly commit criminal acts and are removed from society.

Already we can see that we are talking about a group of people that are not easily identifiable. Disaffected populations like many populations are made of individuals and are therefore pretty intangible and hard to categorise. Newburn and Shiner (2005) refer to disaffected people as those who are in some way excluded from mainstream society and are at risk of being socially polarized. The idea of social exclusion is a common theme throughout the literature and paints a picture of a significant proportion of society that is, for whatever reason, on the ‘outside looking in’. Another common feature is that being labelled disaffected has negative connotations with the danger that we create something of an ‘underclass’. (Murray, 1990) This is however a somewhat destructive view and one that will alienate and further widen the gap between the majority and the minority.

Perhaps a better way of understanding disaffection is to divide populations into sub-groups. The first group Newburn and Shiner describe as those who are of compulsory school age and for particular reasons are absent from education either from truancy or exclusion or for those that remain in education are significantly underachieving or displaying anti-social behaviour. The second group refers to those who are of post compulsory education age and have not continued in education or training and are not a part of the workforce. For the purpose of terminology, individuals that fall into the post-compulsory education group are usually referred to in the UK as NEET’s (Not in Education, Employment or Training) although similar classifications exist worldwide.

Newburn and Shiner's classification is a really useful way for adventure educators to subdivide disaffected populations as it gives us a platform to classify a given group and to begin to understand their needs. As you have read in chapter 2, understanding the group you are working with and facilitating experiences to meet their needs is a fundamental skill of the adventure practitioner. We cannot assume that groups that look similar have exactly the same needs and should always plan for the most relevant individual outcomes. So what do disaffected populations look like to the adventure educator?

Voices from the field....

"In my experience of working with youth groups deemed to be 'disaffected' the key to a successful programme is to quickly and accurately understand who we are delivering to so we can approach them in the right way. Although we get information prior to a group arriving at the centre, it is still important for us to make our own judgement of the individuals we are working with. I've worked with young people from a real mix of backgrounds, from inner city kids all the way to some of the most extreme young offenders, and can honestly say that the key to successful delivery is to quickly establish realistic outcomes with group leaders and gain as much information about the individuals in the group. This helps me set clear goals and also to recognise when it's time to push them hard and, more importantly, when to back off!"

Simon Luck (Development Tutor, Skern Lodge, Devon)

Before we look at where disaffection has come from and why it is a growing problem, it would be useful to consider if adventure education can play a role in dealing with disaffection. In adventure education we will need to answer questions from the wider community such as:

- Who cares?
- Why should we do anything about it?
- Why not just lock them up and throw away the key?
- Why should naughty kids get fun activities and holidays anyway?

Although these questions might seem harsh they are ones that we often hear and that we need to be able to answer. Society demands that we are accountable for our practices and have a solid argument for justifying the role of adventure education seen by many as a fringe activity or 'treat'. Even private sector organisations, in the form of residential care homes, will bid for government funding so it is important for the sector as a whole to have a solid basis for the justification of practices. With respect to who cares and whether we should do anything about it, let us first examine some statistics.

According to the Princes Trust in 2007 there were an estimated 1.2 million young people not in work, education or training in the UK. You might see this from the view that there are a lot of young

people out there with no direction, perhaps with a low sense of self-esteem and confidence and that in itself is reason enough to tackle the problem of disaffection. Another perspective is that there are over a million young people that are able to work but who are not part of the workforce, paying taxes or contributing to society. As we will see in greater detail later, the Princes Trust report on the cost of exclusion published in 2007 estimates the daily cost to the economy of disaffected young people to be around £10 million a day. Consequently, we could argue therefore that is representative of 10 million reasons to meet the challenge of disaffection.

Let us look at the extreme end of the disaffected youth problem. There is an obvious link between disaffected young people and crime and it is not difficult to imagine that a very small minority of the population that we refer to as disaffected will at some point spend time in prison. The cost of keeping a prisoner in jail in 2010 for one year is estimated to be somewhere in the region of £30,000 to 40,000 which is actually similar to the cost of attending Eton College or Harrow School. So how many young people are we talking about? According to *HM prison service* and the *Prison Reform Trust* there are somewhere in the region of 14,000 to 15,000 young people aged 15-20 serving custodial sentences at any one time in the UK. Clearly the cost of locking up disaffected young who have turned to crime people is significant on a national scale.

What we can see here is that there are really two costs involved with disaffection. Firstly, the actual cost of keeping the most extreme cases in prison as well as supporting those who are not in education, employment or training. The second cost is to the economy of not having those young people in the work force and contributing financially to society. It regularly happens now that we switch on the news to hear headlines about overcrowding in prisons or the latest pressure on the economy and with this we hear repeated calls from judges and politicians to provide alternatives to custodial sentences and to try to alleviate the burden of disaffection on society. With respect to the question - who cares? We all should! With less pressure on the public purse and more people in the workforce we all benefit from economic stability and growth. Put simply, education is cheaper than incarceration.

The notion of offenders being provided with adventure interventions is regularly challenged, but let's consider what actually makes disaffected people reintegrate with the majority or put another way, what cures disaffection? In 2007 the Princes Trust published 'Breaking the Cycle of Offending'. The paper looked at the experiences of ex-young offenders and asked them directly what made them stop re-offending. Some key themes identified by the young people included:

- Advice and support from the same person in the form of mentorship
- Access to courses and qualifications
- Incentives and rewards
- Activities and programmes to engage with
- Something positive to do and places to go
- A consistent worker or mentor who makes sure appointments are kept
- Being around other young people you can trust
- Taking on responsibility
- Increasing confidence and motivation

(Princes Trust, 2007)

We can see that the key terms from this list relate well to adventure education; trust, support, reward, positive activities, consistency, responsibility, confidence, and motivation. Research demonstrates time and again that participation in adventure education initiatives results in significant improvements in these areas for many participants. So if you are ever confronted with the question: "Why should bad kids get fun activities and holidays?" Maybe you might be able to suggest that there's a bit more to it than meets the eye and state that activities themselves are secondary to the development of life skills that they foster and develop.

Where did disaffected populations come from?

We live in a changing world. Social science research shows how huge changes have affected young people in Britain over the last three decades. These changes have occurred through transformations in both the education and labour markets toward the end of the last century and into this one. For example, Newburn and Shiner (2005) propose that in the 1970's the over two thirds of young people left school at the compulsory age of 15 and entered the workforce. By the early 1990's this number had dropped to less than one fifth. Central to these changes was the contraction of the youth labour market in the 1980's and the subsequent rise of youth unemployment to a number in excess of one million. This changing dynamic contributed to the growing national crisis at the time and gave rise to riots in 1981 and 1985, predominantly occurring in areas of high youth unemployment.

In an attempt to resolve the growing crisis the government at the time introduced a series of strategies aimed at increasing skills and qualifications among young people. Most notably the Youth Training Scheme (YTS) and the Youth Opportunity Programme (YOP) were introduced to ultimately cut the number of unemployed young people. Successive governments have continued to build on the management of youth unemployment by introducing various initiatives, training schemes and expansions and diversifications of further education.

The outcome of this cultural shift is that the transition from school to the work force, which was once clear cut, has become considerably more complex. Where a school-work transition may once have been relatively straight forward, today there are a multitude of options and potential pathways that young people must differentiate and navigate between to find a suitable transition. Fundamentally, for many young people the length of time taken to make a successful transition is now significantly extended.

In addition to increasingly difficult school to work transitions, Coles (1995) outlines further problems compounding young people's development in terms of the transition from the parental home to independent living and the domestic challenges that this represents. Perhaps you can relate to this by reflecting on the trials and tribulations of moving out of home to 'fend for yourself' for the first time.

When we consider the increasingly complicated school-work transitions alongside Coles' notion of domestic challenges we begin to get an idea of the increasingly complicated choices facing young people that might not have existed a generation ago. At best the diversification of options facing

young people may be perceived by some as an increase in choices that provide challenge, self-determination and ultimately independence; at worst it may be considered as a risk and threatens consequences that are daunting and intimidating.

Not every young person is at risk of disaffection, evidence suggests however that both school and youth disaffection are rooted in particular circumstances that result from both the changing society in which we live as well as more specific and situational social contexts. In 2000 the UK government published the 'National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal: Young People'. With respect to disaffected young people the findings of this report stated that:

“The odds are heavily stacked against those who have experienced multiple disadvantages:

- Family life characterised by disrupted relationships, poverty and worklessness;
- Education that fails to meet their needs or motivate them;
- Peer pressures that encourage sexual activity, drug taking or crime;
- Low expectations and the absence of adult role models;
- Victimisation and bullying; and
- An inadequate response from public services.”

(Cabinet Office, 2000)

The cost of exclusion

To comprehend the extent to which young people are exposed to disadvantage as well as gaining an appreciation of the financial implications of disaffection, we can look at the findings of the 'The Cost of Exclusion'. Published in 2007 the study focuses almost exclusively on the financial implications of disaffection in the UK.

At the time of publication the report stated that based on figures obtained from the Office of National Statistics there were 1.24 million 16 to 24 year-old NEETs in the UK in 2006, representing a 15% rise from 1.08 million in 1997. This figure indicates that almost one-in-five young people (of post-school age) in the UK are not in education, employment or training. The Cost of Exclusion focuses largely on the financial implications of disaffection and details the cost of youth unemployment, youth crime and educational underachievement. The statistics are alarming:

- The productivity loss to the economy as a result of youth unemployment is estimated at £10 million every day.
- Youth unemployment and inactivity cost the economy £20 million a week in job seekers allowance.
- These two points combined represent a cost of £70 million a week
- The total cost of youth crime in Great Britain in 2004 was estimated to be in excess of £1 billion.
- In 2005 the percentage of young people with no formal qualifications stood at 12.6 per cent, 12 per cent, 8.3 per cent, 8.3 per cent, and 19.9 per cent in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland respectively.
- The UK has between 15 and 25 per cent lower output per hour than France, Germany and the US, much of which is attributed to poorer levels of employee skills.

Clearly the findings of the 'Cost of Exclusion' require action. From an adventure education point of view the study provides a good rationale for using adventure interventions. With the cost of prison costing between £30,000- 40,000 , coupled with the debate that imprisonment per se does little to modify behaviour, there are clearly grounds for investment in educational interventions that support behavioural change, such as those we would find in adventure education.

The role of adventure education: Research and practice

Youth disaffection is clearly a problem for society from various perspectives such as education, crime and cost to the tax payer. However, this fails to take into account the emotional aspect of the young people themselves who understandably may suffer from poor self esteem, confidence and absence of other basic human needs. A major problem with disaffection is that it is often a cycle that is difficult to break. Anti-social behaviour leads to alienation and polarisation from the majority and this pushes young people further away leading to even more anti-social behaviour. The concept of society not caring and being against young people results in a mentality of resentment that is destructive for everyone. In order to break this cycle it's vital that young people have positive alternatives and a means of re-engagement with society. In this section we're going to explore the role of adventure education in promoting behavioural change and developing a more pro-social behaviour.

The study of Adventure Education programmes with disaffected populations is by no means new. As far back as 1968 adventure education practitioners have sought to provide empirical evidence of the behavioural change resulting from adventurous experiences. In this example Francis Kelly and Baer (1968) studied 120 juvenile offenders aged between 15 and 17 years. The aim of Kelly and Baer's study was to assess participant levels of recidivism (relapse back into crime) following a USA based Outward Bound adventure education programme that consisted of a high degree of physical activity followed by periods of quiet reflection. The study showed that the Outward Bound programme produced less than half the number of recidivists (20%) compared to a control group (42%). Interestingly, Kelly and Baer's study also showed that after the first year of the programme recidivist rates in the Outward Bound programme started to increase, unfortunately this trend continued to a point where after 5 years the recidivism rates of the experimental group began to equalise that of the control group.

The findings of Kelly and Baer's illustrate a general trend in that evidence of short term effects of Adventure Education programmes is common, but are often eroded or lost completely over time, especially when the participant is integrated back into their habitual environment. In the case of Kelly and Baer's study the authors suggest that several key variables were related to recidivism including the type of offence, age and parenting issues. Although this study was conducted over 40 years ago, one concept resonates throughout much of the literature in the time since the Kelly and Baer study, which is that of individual differences.

It is something of a paradox that adventure educators and researchers have tended to rely heavily on the use of group based research design to assess the impacts of adventure based programmes on individuals. Although we are not going to debate research designs here, it is worth briefly considering the idea of over-reliance on the 'average' in group based research designs. In this approach the measurement of dependent variables such as school attendance or violent outbursts are grouped together and averaged out in order to establish the mean which then becomes an indication of the effectiveness of the independent variable (which is often an adventure education intervention). The problem here is that an individual's data (levels of attendance, violent outbursts etc.) are lost or at best masked by the tendency of the group and do not indicate the effectiveness of a programme on an individual. By doing this we potentially ignore the fact that the intervention could have been beneficial for a particular individual and highlights that to truly gain an appreciation of how a given programme or intervention impacts on an individual we must pay close attention to the needs and development of individual participants throughout the course of the programme as well as afterward.

Contemporary research has tended to focus on particular aspects of social functioning such as peer relations, group cohesion and self esteem, with promising results often arising from such studies. It is worth considering some of the potential mechanisms that underpin modern experimentation in our field. Although we cannot expect to find a one-size-fits-all approach to dealing with disaffection in the same way that we would prescribe antibiotics for an infection we can try to provide an academic underpinning from which to base our programming. To illustrate this it is useful to borrow a concept from clinical psychology.

The Biopsychosocial model of health

In 1977 the American psychiatrist George Engel introduced the Biopsychosocial model of health (figure 1), which was originally adopted by the medical profession to diagnose and treat illness and disease. The model focuses on the interconnection of the psychological and sociological aspects of a patient's life rather than just considering the biological component of their health. The model is holistic and proposes that overall health will emerge from the balance of all three components. An example of this could be a doctor prescribing pain killers for a migraine, in this example the doctor is treating the biological component by trying to reduce physical pain with a drug. Using the Biopsychosocial model the doctor might undertake an analysis of the social (work pressure, family life) and psychological (stress, fear) components of the patients life and look to address these to lead to curing the illness. The idea is that it is often social and psychological pressures that lead to ill health and so treatment could consider addressing the cause rather than the effect. It is common for example for students to get ill around the time of exams due to things such as stress, lack of sleep anxiety and peer pressure. The Biopsychosocial model would look at tackling these problems by treating them at their source. For example, in this instance we might look at developing a strong social base with friends and tutors (the sociological aspect) and deal with anxiety through relaxation or exercise (the psychological aspect).

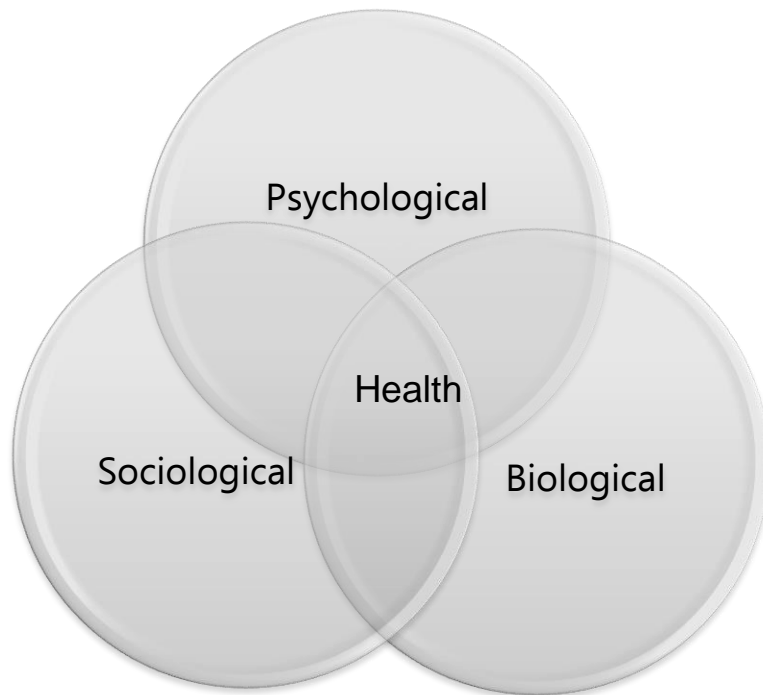


Figure 1: The Biopsychosocial model of health

The Biopsychosocial model has been applied to a variety of areas in health and wellbeing but not specifically to adventure education. Fox and Avramidis (2003) use the model as a basis for considering dealing with young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties but fall short of actually testing the propositions of the model. So how might we as adventure education practitioners use the Biopsychosocial model with disaffected young people? From an adventure education perspective we might consider 'health' from the perspective of emotional and social wellbeing as opposed to physical health. It is emotional and social wellbeing that is conducive of reintegration of disaffected young people back into mainstream society and it is the sociological and psychological components that are best developed through adventure education interventions.

Fairbridge is an organisation that specialises in such interventions and supports inner city youth in the most disadvantaged areas of the UK. Fairbridge works with young people over time to develop self-belief, confidence and other essential life skills by operating community centres and residential experiences with a strong emphasis on adventure activities. An integral part of Fairbridge operations is to facilitate a social environment that is positive and supportive. While we must accept that much of a young person's environment is determined by factors outside of our control, organisations such as Fairbridge offer a consistent support structure where young people are encouraged to express themselves in a variety of contexts such as art, media production and outdoor sports. When young people engage with an organisation such as Fairbridge they know that they are entering a safer and more supportive environment than what they may experience in the rest of their lives, where they also can interact with professional tutors. As we have already seen it is consistency in social structure and inter-personal relationships that promote pro-social attitudes and these can often

extinguish offending behaviour. Fairbridge is an excellent example of an organisation that contributes meaningfully to the sociological component of the Biopsychosocial model.

When we think of the psychological component we might focus on negative personality constructs. When you think of what this might involve with disaffected young people you might come up with things like low self-esteem, high anxiety or low confidence. What we are looking to do in this instance is diagnose the problem. Once we have established the most pressing issue we need to think about prescribing some kind of experience or activity that addresses this issue. No one is expecting a young person to change their behaviour after one day of an adventure intervention but we are looking to continually reinforce positive behaviours over time. The following case study is an example of such an approach.

Tom's story

Tom was a student in a pupil referral unit (PRU) and was reluctant to engage in any task, whether academic or physical, purely because he was afraid of failure. Tom had developed a defence mechanism of withdrawing from participating in any kind of activity simply to avoid failing at it. Our unit had a particular emphasis on adventure education with young people taking part in some sort of activity every day. In Tom's case it was essential for us to plan and facilitate activities that would ensure some kind of success on his part, usually through setting and working towards goals. These goals might be pre-planned or based on impulse. For example, with a problem solving task such as a river crossing, a pre-planned goal might be to plan a solution and present it to the group. Initially this might be done with a member of staff prompting and helping out, but with that help gradually fading out. Often the staff would have several different goals being worked on by members of the group, a bit like spinning plates! An impulse goal might be a reaction to the day's events. If, for example, tensions had been high between Tom and another young person we might look at completing the activity without using any negative language toward that person and rewarding positive behaviour if this is achieved. The idea with Tom was to use a fading approach, where lots of support is given initially but then reduced as confidence and skills improve. Tom was able, over time to develop the belief that with small increments in effort he was able to contribute and achieve. With this self belief came increased confidence and growth in self perception that transferred across physical and academic activity and even into his home life.

Tom's story is a happy one as he was successfully reintegrated into mainstream education after his time with us but this isn't always the case. More often than not it's one step forward and two steps back. We must be mindful of this and keep our commitment to the young people we work alongside. Being flexible and creative in our approach is paramount; if something isn't working don't be afraid to go back to the drawing board!

The previous example highlights how we can affect cognitions and behaviour through adventure education and manipulate a person's psychology in relation to the Biopsychosocial model. It also provides a further example of the kind of support that disaffected young people need in terms of their sociological environment. If we think about the psychological and sociological components of the model together we can start to think about the ways in which we might provide support, positive experiences and social interactions that promote pro-social attitudes and behaviours.

The Stages of Change Model

Although the Biopsychosocial model provides us with an intuitive and insightful approach to influencing young people's behaviour by providing support and promoting positive behaviour, it doesn't really provide a mechanistic approach to how people actually change their behaviour.

The Stages of Change (SOC) model was developed by Prochaska and DiClemente in the late 1970's and has historically been applied by cognitive behavioural therapists to extinguish undesirable addictions such as smoking and alcohol abuse. Before we look at the model (figure 2) and how we might apply it to dealing with disaffection through adventure education it is worth pointing out some of the underlying principles of behaviour change and how the model accommodates this.

Firstly, the model assumes that change is a highly individual process, where what works for one person might not work for another. The fact that the model allows us to look at individuals in detail is one of its major advantages for its consideration in adventure education. Another appealing facet of the model is that it assumes that change occurs in stages and often over the course of a considerable amount of time. This is an important point as we often (naively) expect change to occur overnight as the result of one particularly influential experience, say a weekend long hiking expedition. Rather than seeing such experiences as an instant fix the model assumes that such experiences are an integral part of a much bigger picture and forms a part of the progression through the stages to a point of behaviour extinction.

The next significant feature of the model is that it accepts that progression through the stages is not straight forward and more often than not individuals will experience a relapse and regress to a previous stage. Again, this is a particularly pertinent factor with disaffected young people as relapse into old behaviours is common when young people re-engage with their habitual surroundings. The points discussed so far, i.e. the nature of individual differences, the notion of gradual change over time and the concept of potential relapse highlight the importance of the role of the practitioner in mentoring young people through change. The emphasis of mentorship in these instances is the ability to treat young people as highly individual cases that can and might regress to previous behaviour patterns as a result of internal or external influences; clearly this requires practitioners to possess a resilient and flexible attitude to their mentoring.

Let's consider the processes of the Stages of Change model and speculate on how they could be applied to dealing with youth disaffection through adventure education.

There are various adaptations of the same model in the literature but the stages generally follow the following pattern:

- **Pre-contemplation** - This is where the individual does not yet acknowledge that there is a problem behaviour that needs to be changed. This could be a young person living in their habitual environment.
- **Contemplation** - At this stage the problem is acknowledged but the person is not yet ready to make a change or how to go about it.

- **Preparation** - The first positive step to change, the person looks for ways to start the change process.
- **Action** - This is where people believe they can change and are actively engaged in doing so.
- **Maintenance** - This stage involves the individual resisting temptation to regress into old behaviours and maintain positive new ones.
- **Relapse** – Relapses occur when the individual regresses back to the pre-contemplation or contemplation stage. It is not uncommon for several attempts to be made before maintenance is achieved



Figure 2: The Stages of change model

Let us now look at each stage in more depth and consider the role of adventure education for each one.

Pre-contemplation

In pre-contemplation the individual is not thinking about any kind of change as there is no awareness that their current behaviour requires attention or modification and they are not interested in any form of help. An example of this might be young people that are failing at school or are becoming known to the police for minor offences. People in this stage tend to defend their current behaviour patterns and don't see them as a problem. It is relatively easy to identify individuals in pre-contemplation as they are likely to treat confrontation with hostility and attempt to avoid the subject or project their behaviour by blaming others.

In order for adventure educators to mentor young people through this stage they would need to create awareness of the negative effects of existing behaviour. There are a range of facilitation techniques that are well documented in the adventure education literature such as reviewing, framing and metaphoric transfer that could be use by practitioners in this stage. It is essential that

when challenging young people's behaviour patterns the practitioner offers acceptable alternatives for new behaviours that the individual sees as desirable, this permits the development of goal setting and looking toward the future. Empathy and unconditional support are essential here, using phrases the "It's not you as a person that I am challenging, it's your behaviour" is a direct but non-confrontational way to challenge young people.



Figure 3: Adventure Education activities actively promote behavioural change through challenging negative behaviours.

Contemplation

In the contemplation stage individuals are more aware of the consequence of their current behaviour and spend a lot of time thinking about it. Introspection is pivotal in forming a commitment to change and needs to be well supported. At this stage of change the individual is able to contemplate the idea of change but tends to be ambivalent about it. The push and pull of emotions can often result in mood swings and instability.

Research evidence suggests that there is a huge variety in terms of the duration of this stage. Some people may progress through this stage in a matter of days whereas others never progress to translate contemplation into action. Again the adoption of the S.O.C model into adventure education would suggest the need for close mentorship and effective programming. These experiences should look to reinforce the positive advantages of adopting new behaviour patterns and encourage contemplation to be turned into positive action. This may be an appropriate time for extended experiences in terms of a residential activity or expedition as these have the potential to provide the kind of sustained exposure to positive behaviours that confirm the decision to commit to change. Adventure education experiences should offer participants the opportunity for reflection. If we deliberately set aside time for self-reflection and review it will serve to aid the contemplation process.

Preparation/ Determination

This stage represents the decision to change and signifies a commitment to adopt new behaviours. Entrance into this stage is to be celebrated as it is the first concrete step toward action. Preparation is characterised by individuals making comments such as “I have to do something about this – what can I do?”

Trust is essential here and is a key component of the relationship because the individual will be taking new steps toward behaviour cessation that are potentially uncomfortable. Part of the mentoring process at this stage might be well served by the facilitation of activities and experiences where the participant is able to confirm trust in the practitioner so that trust can in turn be transferred from the adventure environment to everyday life. This makes it really important for us to conduct activities where trust can be earned. High rope activities are commonly used in this context as there is little objective danger but trust is required.

Once an individual has recognised the need to change, they will search for alternative behaviours that are in line with their expectations. Some authors refer to this simply information gathering. This places a huge responsibility on mentors to provide alternatives and information that supports the young person’s thinking. Goal setting in the preparation phase has been shown to be an effective method of organising information and starting to translate it into action. Adventure educators might use a progressive goal setting process, using goals such as:

- Maintaining attendance in a 10 week adventure education programme.
- Learning how to read a map
- Achieving an award in sailing
- Making new friends
- Applying for a college course

Goal setting is a really good way to precede action. However, it is essential to remember some of the key components of good goal setting. These include making sure that the individual is part of the process and comes up with or at least agrees to all the goals being set.

Action/ Willpower

This is the stage where people believe they have the ability to change and are actively engaged in doing something about it. With disaffected young people this might involve a variety of actions. Participation in adventurous activities, days out or weekend residential should form the basis for positive action. Many organisations use residential programmes as an opportunity to practice new behaviours. This might involve taking part in new activities such as gorge walking, canoeing or climbing but we must not dismiss other, less obvious aspects of the residential experience. Working with others in putting up tents or cleaning the minibus at the end of the day are examples of times where good work achieved throughout the day can be lost by a little disagreement with a peer that escalates out of control. It is paramount that we remember this as facilitators and take steps to manage even the most trivial of daily tasks, as these are often unsupervised and are a tinderbox for

problems to flare up! When we are engaged with disaffected young people our working day is never really over. Good work and positive behaviours built up over days can get lost within seconds.

Action and willpower extend beyond the activities. We know all too well that positive changes can be lost when individuals return to their habitual environment, so action must extend to cater for this. Adventure education practitioners might look to forge links with other mentors to help support this. School teachers, youth workers and social services are all organisations that adventure education professionals work with to ensure continued positive action. Short-term rewards are a good way to top up motivation, we might use increased independence or give individuals responsibilities (such as “can you check all the boats are tied tightly onto the trailer”) to reward positive actions and reflect our growing trust in the young person.

Maintenance

With regard to disaffected young people, maintenance refers to being successfully able to resist the temptation to return to previous negative behaviours. The goal in this stage is to maintain the status quo. Evidence from clinical applications of the S.O.C model, (especially in cases of smoking cessation) shows that this is the stage that requires the most support. Oscar Wilde one famously said “I can resist everything except temptation”, which is a quote particularly relevant to disaffected young people as it highlights that good work can so easily be undone with the slightest temptation.

I remember working with a young person ‘Dan’ many years ago who was known to the police for regularly stealing cars and joyriding. Dan spent five months in a unit set up by the youth service and as a result undertook an adventure education programme. Dan made progress throughout the programme, especially in his ability to form relationships with adults who previously had been considered the ‘enemy’. One Monday morning towards the end of the programme, Dan had come into the centre followed by two policemen who promptly arrested him for stealing a car on the Friday night. This is an example of a young person taking positive action to improve his life, only to have that hard work ruined by one moment of giving in to temptation in the form of peer pressure. We are never going to stop examples like this occurring, but we can at least reduce the chances of relapse by offering close support and mentorship.

Maintenance is the stage most commonly associated with relapse. Individuals in this stage need constantly reminding of what they are doing and why. Ticking off goals as they are achieved and rewarding progress are vital. Acceptance is also a quality for the practitioner to be mindful of. It is highly likely that people you work with will relapse at some point.

Relapse

Relapse happens, but it is important to remember that in itself it does not represent failure. The path toward permanent cessation or stable reduction of negative behaviours is a rocky one. We should think of the S.O.C model as circular and it might be that a young person has to go around the cycle a few times in order to get to their end point and some might not ever succeed. We don’t want young people to relapse all the way back to contemplation or even pre-contemplation however but rather to determination, action or maintenance. This is where good facilitation skills, patience and empathy are needed. We need to remind young people what they are capable of and reflect on

previous successes. Empowering people is a good way to increase motivation, develop positive self-perception and limit the effects of relapse.

We have looked at the Stages of Change model and its potential application to adventure education. I have used this model as an example to show how we might try and foster behaviour change in disaffected young people but the fact of the matter is that you as practitioners will have to make it work for you in your way.



Figure 4: The end of a long Journey; Empowering young people is a good way to increase motivation, develop positive self-perception and avoid relapse.

Mentorship

One of the key themes that we have been referring to throughout the chapter is mentoring. But what exactly is mentoring and what role does it play in adventure education? As adventure facilitators, whether we work with individuals on a one off basis or part of a longer term programme, we are invariably seen to be in a position of responsibility. Young (2005) explains that mentorship is an act of guardianship and guidance that occurs in a wide range of settings and circumstances. As adventure practitioners our core role is to provide guidance and guardianship in the outdoors. If we didn't fulfil these roles we wouldn't be bringing many of our clients back at the end of the day! As adventure education has evolved it has become more professionalised and the roles of guidance and guardianship have extended beyond simply facilitating activities safely to mentoring young people in terms of developmental life skills.

The provision for accommodating disaffected young people has grown exponentially in recent history. Currently in the UK and indeed internationally there are a vast array of organisations in both the public and private sectors that deal exclusively with disaffected young people. This work relies heavily on frontline staff who often have experience in activity delivery but may not have professional qualifications in areas such as mentoring and counselling. These skills are central to the work of the adventure educator working with disaffected young people and enable them to deal

with managing behaviour change in disaffected young people. There needs to be greater emphasis on counselling skills and this is an area for future development in adventure education.

The next steps should not be too hard to make particularly if we follow the success of programmes such as Big Brothers, Big Sisters of America (BBBSA). In this programme disaffected young people from single parent homes are matched with a 'big brother or sister' who they meet with between two and four times a month for a year. BBBSA is aimed at developing the individual as a whole, in terms of social wellbeing and life skills and is one of the few mentoring programmes that has been the subject of rigorous evaluation.

According to Young (2005), well conceived and conducted research on BBBSA has shown significant reductions in drug and alcohol abuse, physical abuse, and truancy; showing the effectiveness of the programme in the US. Young goes on to add that at this stage there is very little evaluation of mentoring in the UK and she describes what little there is as: "small scale, qualitative and largely atheoretical" (p. 54). If we reflect back on some of the models described earlier (Biopsychosocial, Stages of Change) we could argue that we as adventure educators, in our various guises, are uniquely placed to offer disaffected young people mentorship that is aimed at behavioural change. For example, nearly all models of mentorship described in the literature involve some aspect of residential activity where adventure activities are used to establish relationships and cooperation with others. Generally this is followed by a goal setting process and an ongoing relationship with a mentor and young person that have been matched specifically together. The following piece illustrates how mentoring might work in practice.

Voices from the field

In the early stages of my career I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to work both in mainstream and adventure education settings, and with 'looked after children.' From early in my career it became apparent to me that outdoor adventurous activities could provide an effective vehicle for mental, physical and emotional growth in young people who were not attending mainstream education, as long as they had ownership of the process, rather than a process they had thrust upon them. The humanistic philosophy that I developed in my adventure education work contributed in part to my setting up a service in Scotland providing young people (usually caught up in the legal system and considered to be at risk of re-offending), with a programme of residential adventure activities. This programme aimed to disrupt the cycle of offending behaviour in the home environment and focus the individual's energies in a more constructive direction with the support of a mentor.

We provided breathing space both for young people and their families /carers. Offered in an intensive support setting (a staff to student ratio at least 1:1), it afforded the young person the opportunity to shape their own programme and choose a mentor to provide guidance and support. The key to the success of our service was the mentorship of the staff team, and the skills and experience that they brought with them. They were selected as a result of their experience and training in a variety of behaviour interventions including counselling and hypnotherapy. While these skills were never used explicitly in the contrived manner that many of the young people had experienced before; being sent to a counsellor or therapist 'to be fixed' will often prompt resistance. Our mentors were able to take a much more subtle approach. Reassuring each young person that they were 'good enough' helped resistance melt away, allowing staff to use gentle rapport building strategies the staff were able to build a rhythm with the young person that enabled the mentor both to draw upon the naturally occurring learning experiences within the programme and make suggestions on how situations could be managed differently.

I do not subscribe to the belief that adventure education should be seen as a 'cure-all pill', rather, with the right people, our service provided an opportunity for individuals to choose and engage in activities that they found interesting, challenging and provided sufficient excitement and satisfaction to maintain motivation levels.

The value of the service was highlighted to me when a young man was referred to our team, who until the point of entry to our service represented a one man crime wave to Glasgow Police. Not surprisingly 'Mark's' home and social environment was a traumatic one filled with violence, crime and abuse. The residential phase of our programme saw Mark experience, perhaps for the first time a period of calm, and unconditional positive regard, where boundaries were set in a firm yet non-threatening and blame free manner. This fostered trust and a sense of safety between Mark and his team and we quickly saw a significant change in the way he presented himself. He began to take an interest in all aspects of the program, including domestic responsibilities (unheard of until this point) and an appreciation of his environment as well as the more 'physical, exciting' stuff that he had planned with his mentor. My overriding memory of Mark remains as three of us sat on top of a crag next to the Solway Firth in August watching the Perseid Meteor Shower in a moonless night sky enjoying a mature conversation. Having had the luxury of an external perspective on the mentor's relationship with Mark there is no doubt in my mind that it was the time and energy that went into building a relationship, based on mutual respect and nurturing his development with activities he found engaging that contributed to his growth and development as a mature young man. Examples such as Mark's reinforce to me how worthwhile and beneficial adventure education can be when used appropriately

Chris Heaney. Founder/Director of experiential education and respite care service

Conclusion

The emergence and rise of disaffected young people is problematic for both the young people themselves and the society in which they live. It is clear that the cost of dealing with extreme cases of disaffection is far greater than either preventative or intervention based education. This chapter has focussed on the use of adventure based interventions that serve as a catalyst to achieve desired outcomes; this is an area that is ripe for development and would see adventure educators doing more to embrace skills from social work and counselling.

So what is the future of adventure education and disaffected populations? There are already numerous organisations worldwide that are engaged in working with young people in meaningful ways and doing fantastic work in turning lives around. But there are also an increasing number of adventure education professionals and graduates that could be working toward evidence based practice and the professionalisation of this area. As with all areas of behaviour based interventions there is a need for high quality, rigorous research that supports the use of adventure education interventions. With the increase of adventure education programmes in higher education, the time would seem ripe for this.

In terms of practice, we need to follow the central rules of adventure education which is to identify the needs of the individual and plan suitable experiences based around these. We have looked at supporting the individual as a whole as well as considering the change process that is fundamental to dealing with disaffection. It is also essential that we are mindful that change is difficult and behaviour can often get worse before it gets better. Adventure education interventions are not a cheap or 'quick fix' so as long as we are realistic about the time, effort and investment required to train professionals and provide effective interventions we may be able to make considerable contributions to reversing disaffection.

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