

PE102: Create Positive Program Experiences

PE102 - Create Positive Program Experiences was designed and prepared for Recreation North by Caroline Sparks with input from Jodi Alderson and Brenda Herchmer. Development was supported by the Arctic Inspiration Prize and the Recreation North partners.

Description:

This learning event explores how to establish a safe and supportive environment for participants. When recreation leaders use a strengths-based approach, they contribute to inclusive and positive recreation experiences.

Learning Objectives:

- Recognize some of the personal and social factors that influence individual behaviour.
- Identify strategies that contribute to safe, inclusive and positive recreation experiences.
- Explain how to apply a strengths-based approach in recreation leadership roles.

Required Learning Activities:

- RLA: Part A - Awareness and Empathy
- RLA: Part B - Using a Strengths-Based Approach

Week 1:

Positive program experiences are essential because they increase the benefits of recreation. At times, challenging behaviours make it difficult for participants to have positive experiences. When recreation leaders are aware of the brain's influence on, and personal and social factors impacting, behaviour; they are better able to establish safe and inclusive environments.

Key teaching points:

- Challenging behaviours may make it difficult for people to participate. Such behaviours affect learning and social development, pose risks to physical and emotional health, and contribute to the stress and burnout of leaders.
- The brain influences behaviour through fight or flight responses that may appear unregulated (i.e., out of control).

- Problem behaviours may result due to factors outside the individual's control. These may include trauma, abuse, unsafe living environments, food insecurity, violence, traumatic events at home, learning disabilities, fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASDs), cultural differences, mental health issues, physical/intellectual disability, sensory impairment, etc.
- Empathy can help reduce some of the helplessness that a leader may feel in the face of challenging behaviour. "Empathy is the ability to recognize, understand and directly experience the emotion of another. It involves listening with heart, accepting their message and staying focused on their experience rather than reacting. It means understanding that the behaviour may be connected to something outside of the immediate situation" (BC Public Service Agency, 2012).
- Cultural safety involves feeling respected and safe when participating in recreation. Recreation leaders build community by fostering cultural awareness and competence in their programs and events.

Reflective questions to encourage learning:

- Think about a time as a participant when you had a positive experience. Explain why it was positive. What took place? Overall, how did you feel? What made the experience important or meaningful for you?

Week 2:

Recreation leaders can apply a strengths-based approach in their programs and events. This approach builds the character, skills and values necessary to prevent problems and make participants feel included and safe. Leaders who develop attitudes and actions consistent with a strengths-based approach, learn to apply strategies that contribute to more positive recreation experiences for all.

Key teaching points

- A Problem-Centred Approach anticipates the worst, concentrates on individuals at risk or in trouble, reacts to problems after they happen, and stresses competition.
- A Strengths-Based Approach brings out the best in others, benefits all individuals, builds character, skills, and values that help prevent problems, stresses cooperation and collaboration, etc.
- Personal beliefs and actions form part of a strengths-based approach in recreation. For examples, leaders who believe that everyone has abilities and the potential to grow and change, do activities 'with' participants, not 'to' them.

- Strengths-based strategies should be holistic; attending to physical, emotional, spiritual and cultural wellbeing.
- One example of a strategy is the Zones of Regulation framework used in educational settings. This framework helps children and youth understand and regulate physical responses to stress.
 - The Red Zone describes extremely heightened states of alertness and intense emotions. A person may be elated or experiencing anger, rage, explosive behavior, devastation, or terror.
 - The Yellow Zone describes heightened alertness and elevated emotions, but with more self-control. A person may experience stress, frustration, anxiety, excitement, silliness, the wiggles, or nervousness.
 - The Green Zone describes a calm state of alertness. A person may be happy, focused, content, or ready to learn. In this zone, optimal learning occurs.
 - The Blue Zone describes low states of alertness and a person may feel sad, tired, sick, or bored.
- Although it is considered natural to experience all zones, the framework helps children and youth to recognize and manage their zone based on the environment, its demands, and the people in it. For example, when on a playground or in an active game, children are often in the Yellow Zone, experiencing a heightened internal state such as silliness or excitement. On the playground, this zone is acceptable and may not need to be managed. However, if the environment is changed to a quiet indoor space, behavior may need regulating or adjusting to meet the expectations of that setting.
- A strengths-based approach benefits individual participants, the group, and the recreation leader.

Other examples of strengths-based approaches can be introduced during Week 2. For example:

- <http://www.supercoloring.com/coloring-pages/arts-culture/mandala>
- http://www.coloring-book.info/coloring/coloring_page.php?id=209
- <https://blog.udemy.com/positive-body-language/>
- https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/Body_Language.htm
- https://copingskillsforkids.com/blog/2016/4/27/making-a-feelings-thermometer?utm_content=buffer849c3&utm_medium=social&utm_source=pinterest.com&utm_campaign=buffer

Reflective questions to encourage learning:

- What are some strengths-based actions or strategies that contribute to positive recreation experiences?
- What are the benefits of using a strengths-based approach for a) leaders, b) individuals, and c) groups?

Required Learning Activity: Awareness and Empathy

Choose a situation, in recreation, where you experienced or observed challenging behaviours. In a written or audio post describe the:

1. Situation (what happened)
2. Behaviour(s) you observed (the tip of the iceberg)
3. Factors that may have contributed to this situation (the part of the iceberg you don't see).

Post in the forum by the due date.

Note that this RLA is a pre-requisite and leads into the RLA completed in week 2.

Required Learning Activity: Using a Strengths-Based Approach

Respond to the situation you described in last week's RLA in a written or audio post.

1. Identify 2 strengths-based strategies or actions that were or could have been used to improve this situation.
2. Describe what these are AND how to apply or use each.
3. Explain what could change as a result of these.
4. Provide references (if applicable).
5. Post your response into the forum, in writing or audio.

Resources and References:

Resources

- PE102 Presentation
- Sample RLAs from May 2019 PE102 learners

Activities

- Required Learning Activities – 2 described above

References

Alberta Mentoring Partnership. Creating Strength-Based Classrooms and Schools: A Practice Guide for Classrooms and Schools. Alberta Government. Retrieved from https://albertamentors.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/SB_for_Schools_and_Classrooms.pdf

BC Public Service Agency. (2012). *Competencies Dictionary Implementation Guide; Aboriginal Relations Behavioural Competencies*. Province of British Columbia. <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/careers-myhr/job-seekers/about-competencies/indigenous-relations>

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