



GREAT WORK, INC.



Wilderness, Natural Consequences and the Struggling Adolescent

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Definitions

“Wilderness”

Any nature based setting

“Natural Consequences”

Results that occur without the urging or influence of adults

“Struggling Adolescent”

ALL adolescents

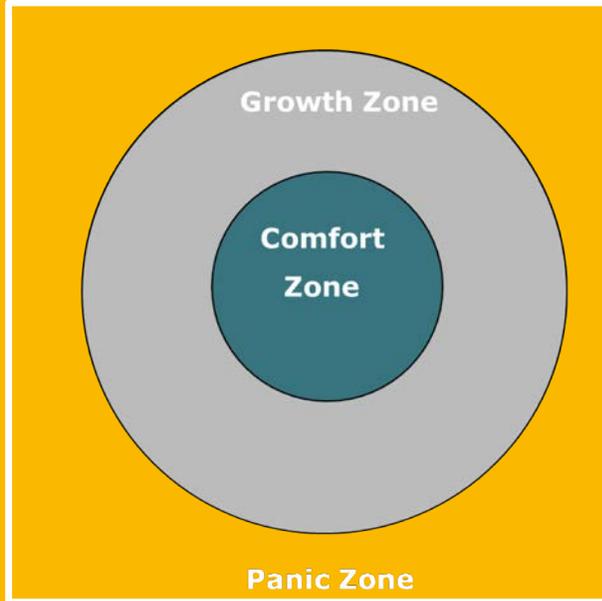
“Youth Detention”

Any environment with a focus of behavior intervention

“Risk”

Its not a four letter word!

In 15 minutes!



Overview of an experiential learning theory

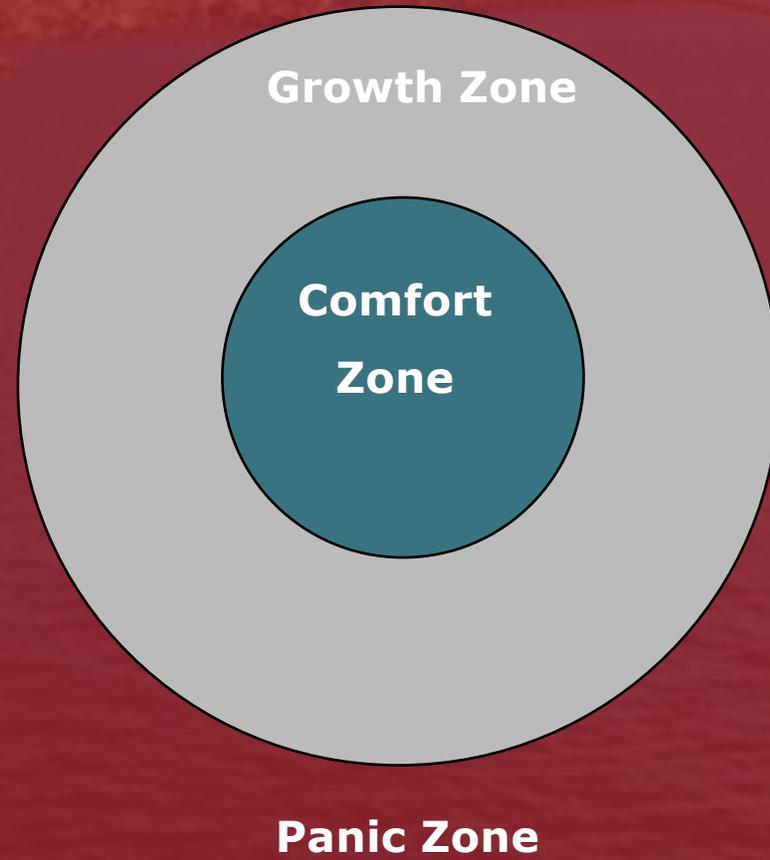


Examine the anthropological influences that drive challenging behavior in adolescents



Explore how the natural aspects of wilderness address key developmental needs

Experiential Learning



Experiential Learning

Comfort Zone

Safe

Familiar

Comfortable

Cozy

Relaxing

Experiential Learning

Growth Zone

Exploration

Scary

Risk

Excitement

Rebellious

Adventure



Experiential Learning

Panic Zone

Frozen

Petrified

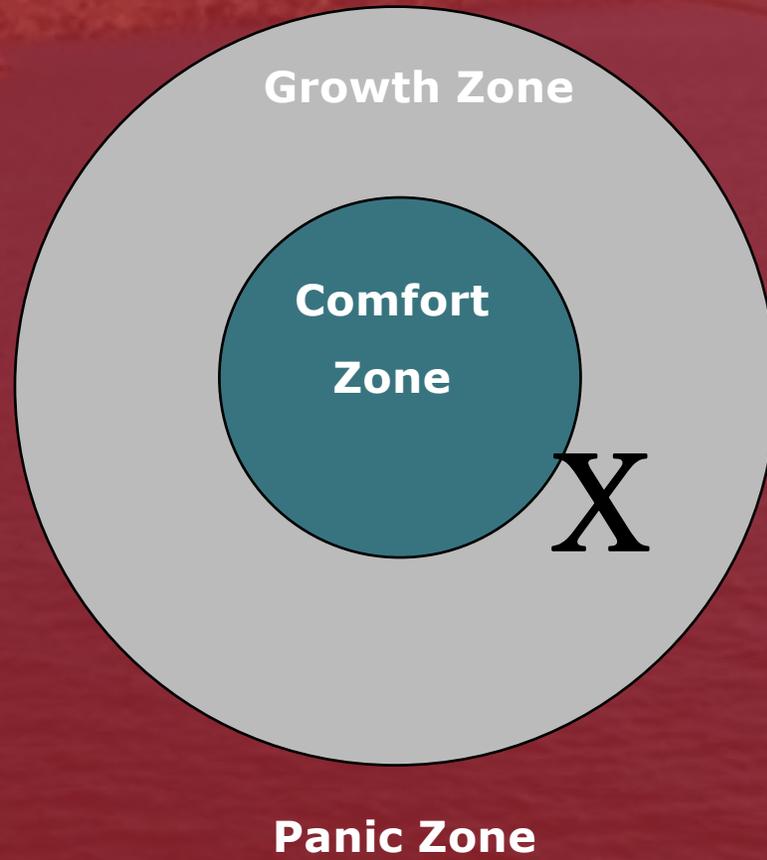
Traumatic

Angry Unhealthy

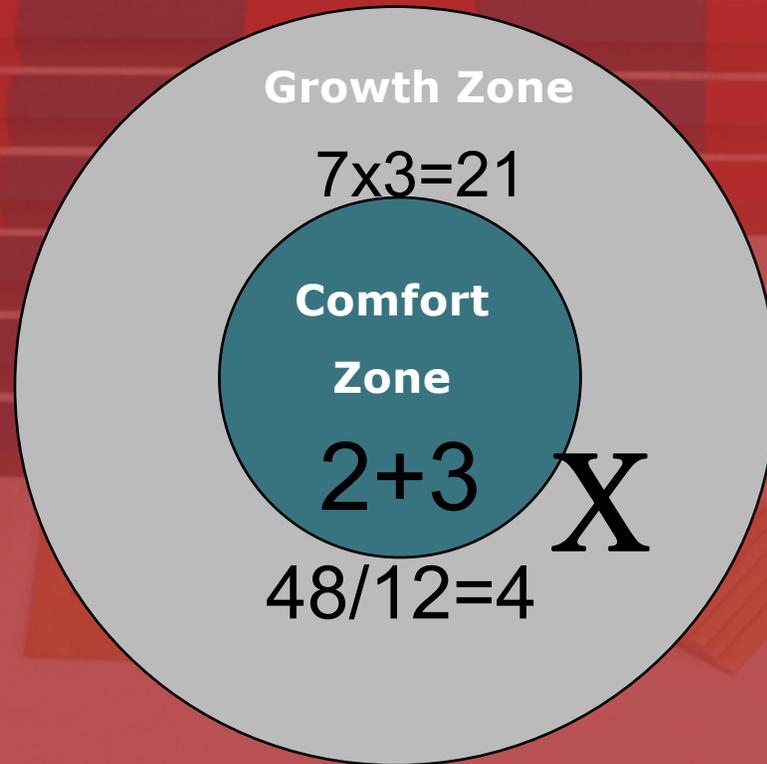
Rebellious



Experiential Learning



All Learning



Panic Zone

$$S(\omega) = \frac{\alpha g^2}{\omega^5} e^{[-0.74 \left\{ \frac{\omega U_\omega 19.5}{g} \right\}^{-4}]}$$
$$= \frac{\alpha g^2}{\omega^5} \exp \left[-0.74 \left\{ \frac{\omega U_\omega 19.5}{g} \right\}^{-4} \right]$$

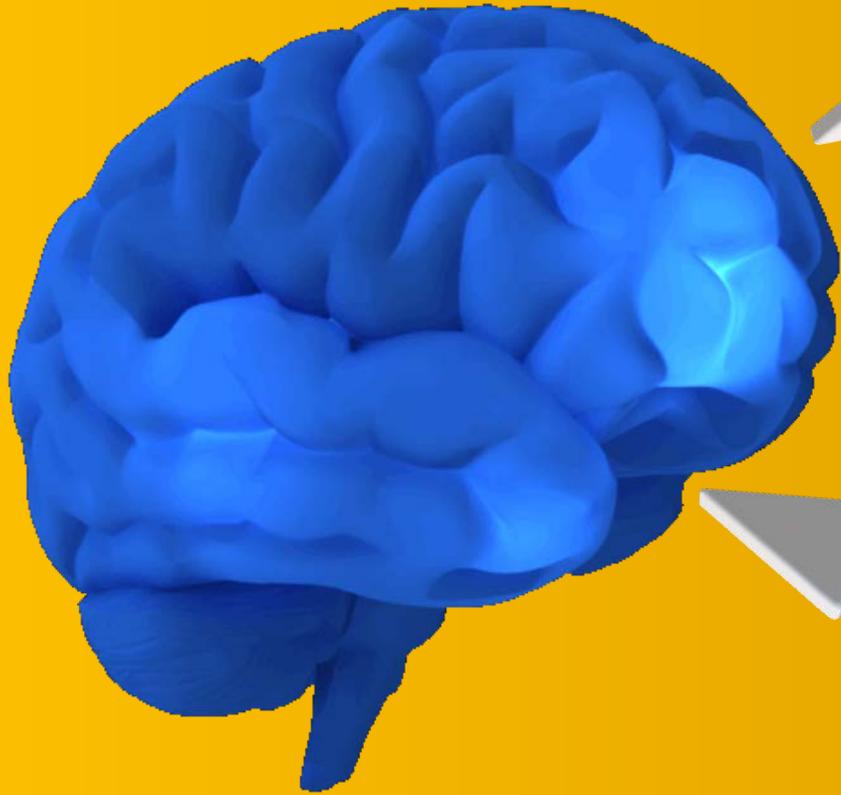
Food for thought:

All learning &
growth
involves risk-
taking



All of education
must involve
trust-building

Adolescent Brain



Frontal Lobes

- Responsible for reasoning and judgment
- Regulates emotions
- Credited for inhibition of impulsive behavior

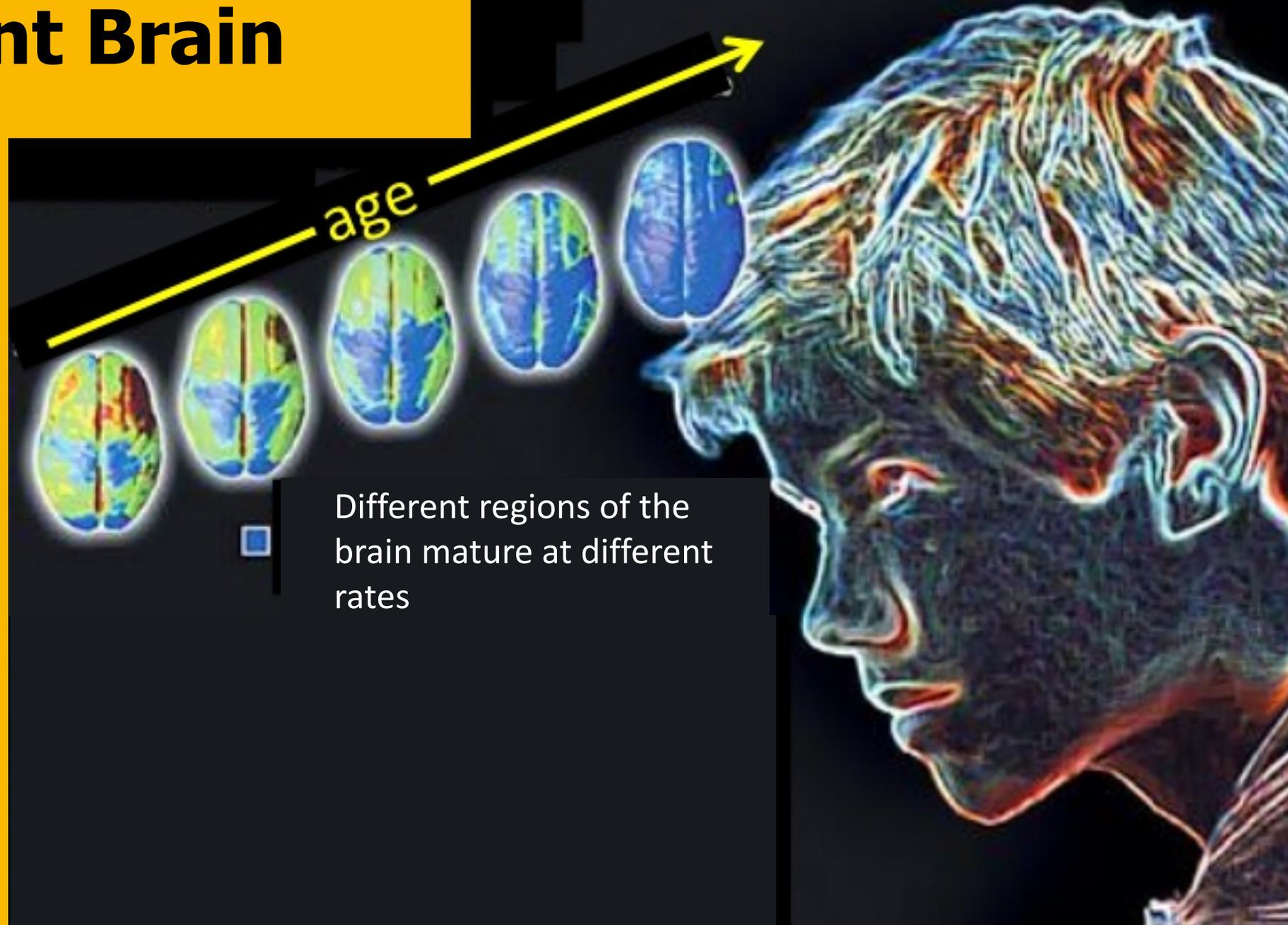
Ventral Striatum

- Activity in this areas spikes during adolescent years
- Releases dopamine
- Blamed for “risky” behavior in adolescents

Adolescent Brain

“Youth are heated by nature as drunken men by wine”
Aristotle 350 BC

- Wired to take risks
- Weigh rewards greater than consequences
- Seek stimulating experiences
- Inflated sense of both confidence AND insecurity





• The original Nido or nest

Familiar was important key to survival.

Comfortable

Cozy sensation seeking increases when being

watched by other adolescents.

Safe

Relaxing

is why humankind exists and didn't stay in a cave.

There is an evolutionary advantage to being a "reckless" teenager!

WILDERNESS as a prepared environment

Typically, a wilderness based program will be an environment that is unfamiliar and uncomfortable and intentional and thoughtful attention to programming and the role of the adult(s) is essential to achieving positive impact

TRAINING PHASE

- Adult-led with frequent lessons and focus on technical skills and establishing social norms
- Focus on relationship building, trust
- Clear boundaries and structure

FRAMING PHASE

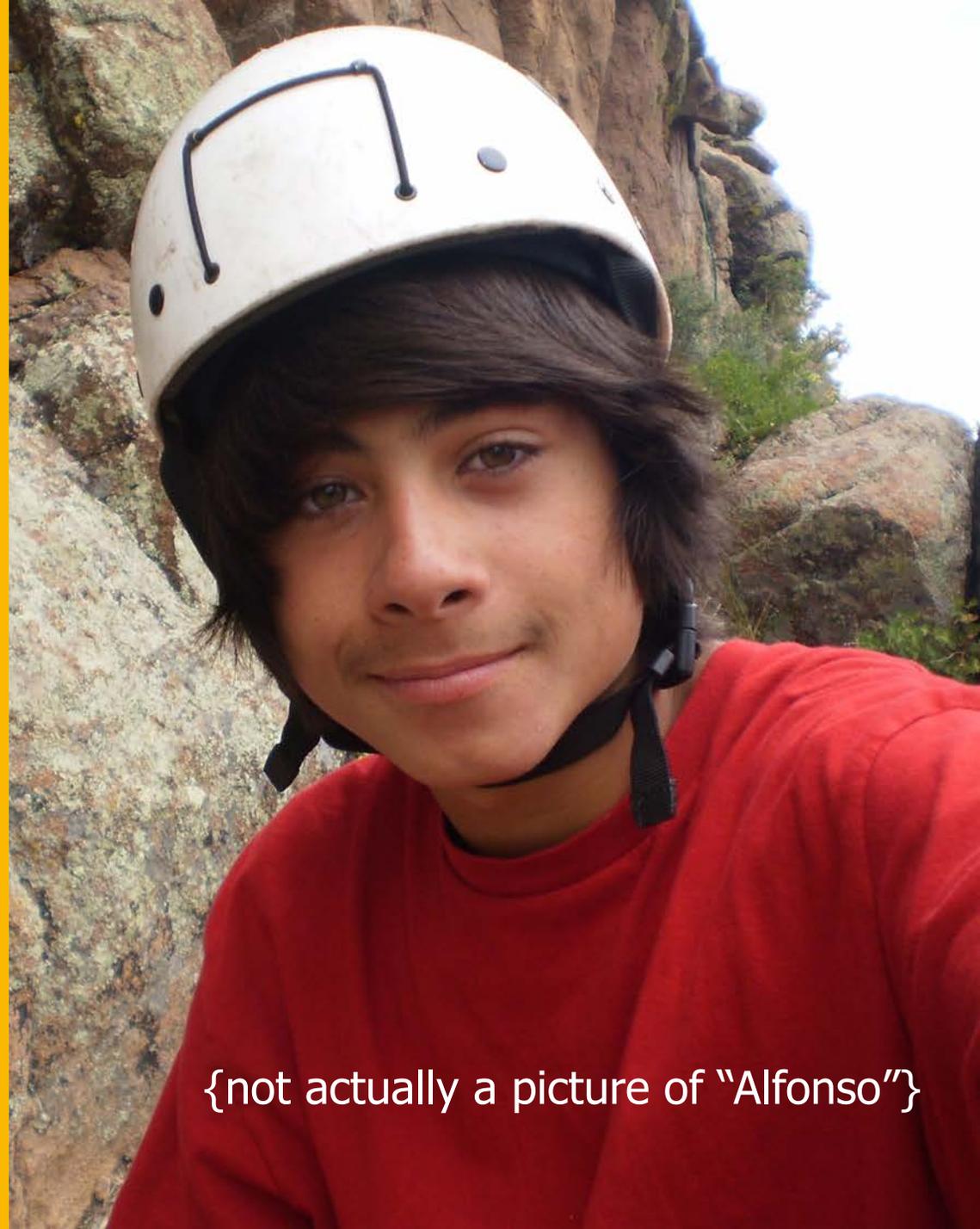
- Role of the adult is to coach, advise and suggest, but allow youth to explore ownership and leadership roles within the group
- Strengthen relationships as a non-dominant member of the group

LEADERSHIP PHASE

- The adult(s) step back further from leadership roles and become the safety net for emergencies
- Observe and ask questions
- Support

"Alfonso"

- 14 years old convicted of being a passenger in a car involved in a drive-by shooting resulting in death
- Bounced between group homes, treatment centers and detention centers since he was 10
- Nothing was ever his fault and only ever got in trouble because is "y'all just jealous of how suave I am"
- Graduated 31-day backcountry trip, developed a love of rock climbing and has stayed out of trouble since



{not actually a picture of "Alfonso"}



{not actually a picture of "Lauren"}

Lauren

- 17 years old expelled from school and kicked out of home due to a pattern of fighting with one that landed the other girl in the hospital for 2 weeks
- Has been court ordered to therapy since 13 and never said a single word and refused any medication
- Had attempted suicide 6 times and was an active cutter
- Graduated a 45 day wilderness experience, started seeing a therapist, taking meds for depression and graduated High School without incident

Tyler

- Found his father who died by suicide when he was 10
- Diagnosed with Oppositional Defiance Disorder at 13
- Arrested for assault on teacher, SRO and principal at age 14
- Found meditation and slack-lining on a 46 day wilderness trip
- Continues both and is currently a senior in film school



{This IS actually a picture of Tyler}

Not just anecdotal:

Research is being done more and more that show even a half hour a day can act as a preventative measure against depression, anxiety and other mental health disorders

- Depression rates have gone up by 63% since 2013 and time spent outside is down by more than half with unstructured outdoor time down to 5-7 minutes a day
- Obesity rates have gone from 5% in 1980 to 35% today in the US
- PSYCHOLOGY TODAY – “Wilderness therapy does three things very well: assess the issues, help the young person develop coping strategies, and emerge with a more positive sense of self and hope for the future





A group of ten people, including men, women, and children, are captured in a moment of pure joy as they jump and cheer on a grassy mountain peak. They are dressed in outdoor hiking attire, and the background features rugged, rocky mountains under a bright blue sky filled with fluffy white clouds. The overall atmosphere is one of accomplishment and happiness.

Thank You

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References

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- Why Wilderness Works - <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/brainstorm/201712/why-wilderness-therapy-works>