



## “The AAI Way of Debriefing”

### **Background:**

Adventure Associates conducts programs with a wide variety of clients, using a wide variety of facilitators with ranging backgrounds, skills, and expertise. We acknowledge and respect the many philosophies and approaches that our facilitators are versed with, and we understand that such guiding principles are typically very personal and based on a deep passion for facilitating client experiences in meaningful and productive ways.

We also believe that it is crucial for our facilitators to understand and respect the AAI “brand” of experiential learning. For the most part, our philosophy is based on widely shared and practiced ways of conducting experiential learning programs, though there are several important distinctions that our clients prefer and expect. Unless explicitly instructed otherwise, our facilitators should always strive to adhere to the following guidelines:

### **Be Intentional:**

AAI programs are sold and conducted on three different levels of design and facilitation: Team Building, Team Development, and Corporate Training. In addition, client goals can vary widely, even within these different levels. The first step to facilitating a successful program is to understand the client goals and expectations and not to deviate from those intentions. For example, if the goals are to “have a positive shared experience and build relationships,” it would typically not be appropriate to lead a discussion around decision-making models...”

### **Be Professional:**

While the many traditions in experiential learning incorporate a variety of games and imaginary scenarios, we strive to be professional and objective in how activities and challenges are framed. For example, rather than describing a spider web that, if touched, will alert a big ugly spider that will crawl down and eat you... we simply present a challenge where, “the objective is to get everyone from one side of the web to the other without touching the string or plastic frame...” As a general rule, we do not use fantasy or metaphors as a way to frontload team challenges.

### **Analyze Success:**

Most good facilitators understand the value of learning from mistakes/failure. However, while most models for experiential learning do require reflecting on a concrete experience and then modifying future behavior, such reflection/modification does not have to be in a negative frame. Rather than “analyzing what’s broken” in order to fix it, we believe that our clients benefit more from an *appreciative inquiry* approach of “analyzing what works” in order to promote it. We believe that participants are much more likely to transfer the lessons from their shared adventure-based experience back to their work environments when those lessons help to inform them of their potential to be successful. If something didn’t work, it is much easier to rationalize that “those activities are nothing like our real work environment...”

### **Respond to Client “Pull”:**

All Adventure Associates programs are conducted with a client focus. We do not provide—nor do clients expect—motivational speakers, lecturers, or teachers. Rather, we conduct intentional experiences from which clients can practice and improve upon their team skills and learn for themselves as a product of their experience—not what a facilitator tells them. The facilitator’s role is to present and process the experience in such a way that maximizes the chances of intended outcomes. Therefore, we do not “push” advice or additional insights, observations, or lessons towards the participants. This also means that we do not “push” a debrief conversation on a group beyond what they expect and prefer. This often means adjusting on the fly, and occasionally a group that did not initially request much debriefing turns out to become really involved in post-activity conversations. It is up to the facilitator to react to such a client “pull” and allow for additional discussion within reasonable limits.