



Chapter 8- Commuter Crew: Managing Human Dynamics

FACILITATING HUMAN DYNAMICS

Participants come to SCA programs excited to meet new people, to see a different part of your community, and to rise to new challenges. Their natural exuberance and spontaneity is the foundation for building a close group atmosphere based on trust, respect and open communication. A cooperative community based on these principles is a life changing, profound experience for everyone.

The following chapter is a mix of theory and practical ideas. You will find useful insight and guidance to leadership, leading young people including how to be an ally, building relationships with them, tips for listening and how to handle some of the more commonly discussed issues. Also addressed are specific problems that can be disruptive to congenial group dynamics or which may require you to terminate a participant's Crew experience.

Any leader will lead smarter if they understand themselves, the group they are leading, and the factors that make groups go well. Take time to read this chapter before you go in the field and again sometime during the middle of your program.

LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLES

For the next weeks, you are essentially in charge of making things go well for everyone, including yourself. Taking charge of a group and ensuring its success is the one of the most challenging and satisfying human endeavors. **Of all the leadership principles and concepts there are to learn, two are particularly pivotal – *modeling and listening*.**

Modeling is the most basic, fundamental way of leading: "What you do speaks so loudly to me that I cannot hear what you say." Teenagers are sensitive to what you say and how you say it, but even more so to what you do. They may not always seem to be paying attention or they may blatantly act as if they are ignoring you but they do not miss a thing. You are a model for each and every one of them. If you want your crewmembers to be cooperative, honest, respectful, and candid then you must model the same.

Listening is the basic form of demonstrating equality and respect. Nothing speaks more respectfully than simply listening - attentively, without interruption and with relaxed delight. Tuning your listening skills and helping your participants to tune theirs will greatly increase the level of safety and satisfaction for everyone.

Leadership is a natural human quality, not the special talent of a chosen few. Remember that every person is capable of becoming a leader. The skills of rational, successful leading can be taught, learned, mastered and practiced. One aspect of leadership is being present in people's lives as a reminder of who they are and of what is possible. Finally, it is not your job to think for the group. A leader should elicit the thoughts and ideas from all members of the group, fill in any gaps, organize the thinking into a consistent form and communicate it will enough back to the group to secure their agreement and commitment to it.

Whatever your style of leadership, you must first and foremost ensure the well being of your participants. This means thinking and acting with integrity in every situation and not abdicating your ultimate responsibility. All effective leadership styles will necessitate that you:

- Clearly communicate your expectations regarding each situation and event that is going to occur.
- Establish ground rules ahead of time and insist on their being followed.
- Retain the right of absolute veto for yourself and your co-leader at all times.
- Read the Group Dynamics section at the end of this chapter to learn how to make these keystones of leadership inclusive for your whole group. The above guidance does not mean that you have to lead as a dictator, however experience shows that mishaps and near misses on SCA programs sometimes occur because the Crew Leader was unwilling to assert them-self as the leader of the Crew. Do not let your desire to function as a Member of the Crew, instead of its director, allow you to lose control of the group or be persuaded into making unwise decisions. If you have to play the tough guy now and then, do it. Don't let your own self-esteem depend on whether your Crew always likes you.

Be Good to Yourself

Your Crew is not more precious than you, nor are you more precious than them. Be a model of how to take care of your self. Getting burned out mid-program is a distinct possibility, especially if you are a solo Crew Leader. Be pro-active about getting the downtime, rest and silliness that you need to keep leading with presence and clarity. Here are some strategies you can employ to maintain your own well being:

- Give yourself time to be alone on a regular basis. Spend some time reading, writing, or staring at the view.
- Don't get too worked up over little things. If directing the work project is all consuming, it is okay to let non-safety things slide a little.
- Work at feeling comfortable expressing your feelings, too. The Crew needs to know where you are coming from, and you need to let things out just as they do. Your job is extremely demanding physically and emotionally. You wear many hats at once: leader, entertainer, friend and comrade. Talk honestly to the group about how tricky this balancing act can sometimes be. Ask for their cooperation and support - you may just get it!
- Just as you praise them for doing things well, let them know when they've done something that impacts the group. Gather the group to talk about what needs improvement and what they see that needs changing. Figure out ways to keep the same situation from recurring.
- Don't carry the weight of the whole world on your shoulders. Take advantage of other adults who visit to talk with them about what your experience is like. Let yourself vent a little if you need to.
- Recognize and accept that you make mistakes. Delight in them and apologize when necessary.
- Laugh. At yourself, with your Crew; often and hard.
- Know that you are making an impact, even if you can't see it and they are not telling you.
- Trust yourself and your thinking.

LEADING YOUNG PEOPLE

You have been chosen as an SCA Commuter Crew Leader in part because of your excitement, experience and commitment to leading people between the ages of 15 and 19. The kind of leader you are is affected by many things: the way that you were treated as a young person, the role models you had growing up, your life experiences, and the quality of information you received about leading and young people. Remember back to when you were 16 years old? How did you feel about yourself? What adults were particularly important to you or did you especially admire at that time? Why? What was it about how they treated you that you liked then? Do your own thinking about each situation you encounter and decide to act as their most beloved ally – this is the kind of leadership that young people want.

Understanding teenagers' current situation is vital in leading them effectively. Young people are up against their own personal hurdles as well as the pitfalls that come from society at large. These social pitfalls are the ones that are a continual struggle for all of us - racism, sexism and income-based bias. In addition to these challenges, young people are up against a whole set of harmful attitudes, ideas and behavior that systematically misrepresent and dismiss young people. This systematic mistreatment is called the oppression of young people. It is important to understand this oppression so you can be a better ally.

Patty Wipfler summarizes these challenges in her pamphlet *Supporting Adolescents*:

- **Teenagers are Not Respected**

Our society has not decided what teenagers are "good for". They are not seen as significant people in their own right. Adults do not solicit their ideas and opinions. They are required to sit in schools for hours and listen to the thinking of adults in subjects that may or may not interest them. Adolescents are treated as though they are betwixt and between, blessed with no judgment or valuable contribution to make in communities, politics, work or the arts. This way of treating young people looks almost "normal" to adults who fought for a period of time and then gave in.

- **Teenagers Don't Get to Play Freely Anymore**

Play in its freest form is the way children express their genius. Play is a building block of self-esteem. As school and home life become more demanding, adolescents have to give up this unstructured play-time. This lack of goofing around, laughing with friends, creating games and making fun out of nothing robs teenagers of some of the key ways that human beings express their good will and creativity. Less play means they lose a primary place where they get to see how good they are and how fully they belong.

- **Teenagers are Separated from Simple Affection**

As children grow up and become too big to crawl into adults' laps both lose touch with their need for human closeness. This circumstance, coupled with the cultural habits and fears that creep into our adult psyches about touch, creates a huge void for teenagers. The withdrawal of affection creates a lonely and almost unbearable situation. The concrete evidence that someone cares is gone. The only avenue open is to explore sexual contact, which comes out of desperation and confusion, rather than love and tenderness.

- **Teenagers Face a Confusing World**

The world and all of its institutions don't make much sense to young people. With all the hope, enthusiasm and energy they have it is a hard knock to find out that the world is full of injustice, violence and simple apathy.

- **Teenagers Lack Models of Genuine Leadership**

Without models of savvy, energetic adults who care about the human condition, young people are left with the impression that they too are powerless to address vital issues and initiate change. Without adults to interrupt their growing frustration and disappointments, they will act malevolently towards each other and give up on their own hopes and dreams

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

By the time a person reaches the age of 16 or 17, they have grappled with this oppression for years. It is not new to them. Every teenager has had years to internalize the messages that they are not good enough, or valuable, or important. This may come out in how they treat each other or how they feel about themselves. You cannot undo all harm, but you can think outside of the social box and act with integrity toward every young person and remind them to treat each other with respect. You are becoming their ally - someone who will stand up against the oppression and think well about them.

As the leader, you will constantly be paying attention to the big picture and simultaneously building one-on-one relationships. These are the foundation of your program. People will make changes, think bigger and participate more fully when they can tell that someone cares about them. Strong, respectful relationships with adults and with each other give young people the sense of safety and confidence needed to transform their lives.

Day by day, as you are able to connect with each person you will transform your group of individuals into a cohesive, functioning team. Work projects will go faster, chores will go more smoothly, play will be spontaneous, and your program will be the success you want it to be. In addition, these very same relationships will enrich your life tremendously.

The next page on *Being an Effective Ally* is a list to read over and over again – choose one or two things to think about and practice at any given time. Give yourself space to learn how to use this particular set of tools.

BEING AN EFFECTIVE ALLY

- ✓ Be yourself and show yourself.
 - ✓ Play and laugh a lot.
- ✓ Be aware of unintentional stereotyping of any people.
 - ✓ Avoid making generalizations about teenagers.
- ✓ Young people often know what is best in many situations.
 - ✓ Don't be afraid to ask them for advice.
- ✓ Care openly - let people know you appreciate them and their efforts.
 - ✓ Allow young people to feel discouraged.
- ✓ Hold back your cynicism, sarcasm, and hopelessness about the world.
- ✓ Work for an environment that is free of negativity, put downs, excessive teasing and vulgarity.
 - ✓ Pay attention to daily comforts: food, rest, play, etc.
 - ✓ Be encouraging.
- ✓ Validate their ideas and thinking as much as possible.
 - ✓ Always speak with respect in your voice.
 - ✓ Insist that they take care of themselves.
- ✓ Let them have their own lives, recognize and encourage those lives to be different than yours.
 - ✓ Separate your issues from their issues.
 - ✓ Make mistakes, it shows you are really trying.
- ✓ Set aside time to get to know each person individually.

LISTENING

Within all the parameters discussed above, you will be giving your participants lots of room to grow and open up. You can delight in watching them learn new skills, expanding their own self-confidence and getting close to one another. You will also find you have a difficult balancing act to perform: to guide and protect them while giving them room to explore and make independent decisions. Some strategies to manage this are covered in the section *Group Dynamics*. Other ways to keep the doors open and how to be available are discussed below.

Once you have fostered an emotionally safe environment where your crew feels comfortable talking to you, they will bring complex issues to you directly or to group conversations. These could range from sex and sexuality to child abuse and drugs. How these conversations unfold will be determined largely by the tone you have set and the attitudes you have displayed. If you feel centered about where you are coming from, you can help participants explore their own ideas or feelings. If you feel uncomfortable with particular topics, keep the conversation light and short. Correct information is important but imposing your beliefs is not useful to them and not allowed by SCA. Much of the time, you will simply need to listen.

You may want to set aside a time to talk about things in several ways: informal chats after or during lunch, with individuals while you are working, sitting away from the group and making yourself available. Group discussions could be a "town-meeting", morning check-in, or informal talks that are facilitated to give everyone a chance to vent negative feelings, to give positive feedback or to solve problems. You may also use these times as a chance to do your "wellness check," asking how everybody is feeling, physically and mentally.

Effective Listening (Counseling) Skills

Everyone can benefit from being listened to well. There is no greater satisfaction than watching someone's life turn around or go forward because of your support. This is counseling in its simplest and finest form. Listed below are some basic listening dos and don'ts. Teach and practice these skills with your participants so they can listen to each other and to you as well.

Do:

- Listen with respect.
- Set up a space that is relatively private where you can both be comfortable.
- Sound, act and be pleased with the person talking.
- Encourage them to keep talking.
- Ask just enough questions to keep the person engaged in the issue.
- Honor confidentiality unless there is some disclosure about abuse.
- If they begin to cry or tremble, stay relaxed and tell them it is fine to show their feelings. This is actually part of the process of healing past hurts.

Don't :

- Interrupt or give your opinion.
- Give advice unless the person asks.
- Say "that reminds me of..." and tell your story.

HANDLING SPECIFIC ISSUES and POLICIES

Sex and Sexuality

An awakening sense of sexuality is one of the hallmarks of adolescence. Students will talk about sex, either around the campfire if they are comfortable with you, or in their tents at night. Some conversations will remain abstract while others can be personal. Related issues such as sexual orientation, abortion, pre-marital sex and AIDS may arise. In discussing any of these issues with your participants, present factual information on all sides of the issue. Make the students aware of the broad range of opinions that exist without promoting any one point of view.

Despite their schools' sex-education classes, teenagers as a whole remain remarkably shut off from accurate and tangible information concerning sex, how to handle contraception and sexuality. Regarding sexually transmitted disease, teenagers represent the fastest growing group of new AIDS patients in America today. While most of them are likely tired of hearing about it, they might have a new appreciation for the severity of the problem if you, an adult whom they like and trust, discuss it with them frankly.

Policy to Refrain from Sexual Relations

You must make it clear from the outset that students must not engage in sexual relations during the entire course of this program. You can phrase this however you feel most comfortable, but this is a non-negotiable. You may find yourself challenged to define what you mean by "sexual relations", and for these purposes, anything beyond a friendly hug --including kissing -- is not acceptable. Equally important, participants should not engage in relationships that become exclusive of the rest of the group, regardless of assurances that no sexual activity is taking place.

Ensuring the health and safety of our volunteers is the main motivation behind this policy. Creating a physically safe haven for these young people means protecting them from any possibility of pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases.

Even more importantly, you must maintain an emotionally safe haven for students, free from any implicit or explicit pressure to engage in sexual conduct. Having sex with someone they don't know very well or for the first time is an emotionally intense experience. They will be sufficiently challenged by the other aspects of your month-long program; they do not need to be distracted with managing charged interpersonal relations.

Also, SCA recognizes that students may be more modest and sexually conservative than their Crew Leaders. We need to respect that in each one of them.

Make it clear to your Crew that whether you agree or disagree with SCA's policy, you will uphold it. It may not be necessary to go into the reasons discussed above. Many Crew Leaders have found it sufficient to talk about:

1. The negative effect that exclusive behavior has on group dynamics and the need for everyone to be 100% engaged in the group experience.
2. The importance of developing close relationships with members of the opposite sex, free from pressure to be sexually involved.
3. The importance of acknowledging sexual feelings and the DECISION to act or not act on them.
4. Your concern for the welfare of the group and them as individuals.

5. Your need as a professional outdoor educator to protect your own reputation. Should you be dismissed from working for SCA for not upholding this policy, it might be difficult for you to get work with other outdoor groups. Ask them to refrain out of respect for your situation.

If you will be supervising this Crew with a spouse or partner, you may be asked, "Well, what about you guys?" SCA does not have a policy on this issue, and since this is in your purview, think about your response ahead of time. Keep in mind that your willingness to discuss this frankly with them will send a message about what they can discuss openly with you.

Disclosure of Abuse

It may happen that a student, feeling safe enough to entrust you with a darkest secret, tells you about some physical or sexual abuse he or she has suffered. While this is not a common occurrence on an SCA program, it does happen. It is not likely within the scope of your experience or professional training, and certainly not within the goals of the SCA program, to provide extensive counseling to any student. But we can offer some suggestions regarding steps you can take include:

1. Reaffirm that this program is a safe place, physically and emotionally. Assure him or her that nothing of that sort will happen on this program.
2. You must tell them that any information they disclose to you, you are required to report to the National Director who in turn is required to report it to the appropriate state Child Protective Services (CPS). This policy is required by law and is not negotiable.
3. LISTEN and show that you believe what he or she is saying. Tell him or her that you are glad to be trusted enough to share these painful stories. Assure them that you will always be there to listen if they need you.
4. Suggest that when he or she gets home they should seek out other adults whom they trust to talk with or that they might want to get counseling to help them deal with his or her feelings.
5. Try not to dwell extensively on the problem.
6. Respect their confidentiality. Do not bring the subject up again unless they initiate a conversation. Do not discuss in a group setting. By involving the whole group in discussing his or her abuse (even if he or she would feel comfortable with it) you run the danger of that student becoming, in the eyes of the group and perhaps his or her own eyes, a "victim" of abuse. Having a participant acquire a single labeled identity can be unhealthy for him or her and your Crew.

Electronics

Crew Members are not permitted to use cell phones or other electronic devices during the program. While participants may wish to use them during the commute to the meeting site each morning, these devices need to be turned off and kept out of site for the entire duration of the program day. Crew Leaders may ask for these devices to be stored in a secure location (lock box, locked storage shed, etc.) while the crew is in session.

There are multiple reasons for this policy. First and foremost, the distractions caused by music players, hand-held games, and cell phones have the potential to endanger crew safety or that of the individual. Second, SCA crews are designed to teach appropriate workplace behavior; these devices are not appropriate in a work environment. Finally, the Crew experience is one built around teamwork and attention to the immediate

location; the isolation of an individual via electronic "experience" has a detrimental effect on group dynamics and reduces his or her attention to the natural or built environment Crew Members are intended to be immersed in.

Eating Disorders

Anorexia and bulimia are severe eating disorders that most often strike adolescent women. As with abused students, this is neither the time nor the place to attempt to "cure" these disorders. Because aspects of the disease include a skewed self-image and an inability to face reality, a student suffering from either anorexia or bulimia is unlikely to tell you so directly. You may be able to guess what the problem is from their physical appearance or eating habits.

Unless you have specific training in counseling teenagers with these problems, refrain from asking directly if they are anorexic or bulimic. You create less safety and more damage by labeling someone's behavior.

Strange eating disorders present a problem if a student's low energy levels or muscular weakness keep them from fully participating in the work or recreational aspects of your program. If this is the case, consider asking them what they think is going on, and how they want to handle it. You will most likely have to send them home. Again, don't let yourself become so involved in "helping" one student that you neglect the rest of the Crew.

Other Disruptive Behavior

You may be confronted with any number of other individual behaviors that disrupt the group and force you to spend a great deal of time coping with one participant. Commuter Crew Members may sometimes bring difficult home situations to work during the day and therefore may appear to have bad days. Whatever these are, (aggressiveness, uncooperative, dangerous behavior, disregard for safety rules, etc.) try to resolve the problem either in one-on-one discussions or in a group forum. If reasonable measures fail, however, don't waste any more time trying to salvage the situation.

If You Dismiss a Participant

Once in a while you may get a participant who needs more attention and resource than you and your co-leader can reasonably provide. Their behavior may be simply unsafe to themselves or the group or too disruptive.

Any of the above situations represent sufficient cause to dismiss a student as well as these below:

- Failure to abide by SCA policies
- Consistently unsafe behavior at work
- Unsociable behavior that severely disrupts congenial group living or endangers any Crew Member.
- Infectious or debilitating illness.
- Physical threat or harm to another Crew Member

Generally, Crew Leaders tend to try too hard and long before dismissing a student. Their resistance to "giving up on somebody" is well intentioned but sometimes misguided. You just cannot win all the hard cases all the time. Always remember to weigh the benefit of focusing time and energy on one student against the harm done by neglecting the remaining Crew Members. Writing down the daily little things help to keep perspective

Participant Contract

Each participant should fill out the Participant Contract before the first day of the program. Please be sure you go over the Participant Contract on the 1st day and make sure you have gone over the Rules and Policies with them and you clarify any misunderstandings and/or confusion for yourself and your co-leader.

Disciplinary Procedures

In order to assure consistency and fairness in our disciplinary approach, we have created the following three-step procedure for you to follow in dealing with participants who do not abide by the established Rules and Policies of the program.

STEP #1: Verbal Warning

This is an initial warning given to a participant to inform them that they have broken one of the rules. You must inform them that they are being given a verbal warning, so that they know they have reached this first stage. Do not assume they know they are being given this official warning; tell them so. Remember to document all verbal warnings.

A verbal warning is a powerful tool and must be used accordingly, with good judgment and reason. Be firm but fair in doling out discipline at this level.

STEP #2: Discipline Contract

This is a written contract between you and your Crew Member to rectify a problem that has occurred again after their verbal warning. This contract will be written in the presence of the participant and will be signed by the both of you. Completing this contract is a way of documenting your attempt to correct a problem by supporting the implementation of a possible solution. It also identifies to the individual, in writing, the consequences of a further breach of the rules, which is step #3.

STEP #3: Breaching the Disciplinary Contract

If the situation escalates to this level, you have a problem that must involve SCA staff. Possible consequences may include expulsion for the day or for the entire program. Every situation will be different, and will call for its own set of consequences. We must be cautious yet consistent in our approach to ultimate termination.

If you are having severe behavior problems, be sure to check in with SCA staff. Make sure to record it in your report(s) as well. It is important to remember that SCA will back you 100% in these disciplinary proceedings as long as you document events and keep your Regional Coordinator aware of challenging situations if/when they arise.

Other Helpful Tips Regarding the Dismissal of a Crew Member

If you decide to dismiss a student from your program, or a student voluntarily decides to leave, consider the following:

1. Notify SCA and the parents. Inform each party of the circumstances and what the plan of action is.
2. If you suspect that the student might run away if they knew your intention, make all necessary arrangements before telling them.

4. Tell the group that you have dismissed the student and why. Give them a chance to say goodbye, unless the student leaving will not create a safe situation.
5. Once you and your Crew Members all back together (minus one) gather the group to talk about how they feel about their departure, or ask any questions. You will likely have a few days of feeling off balance, before the group finds its new equilibrium.

Unplanned Crew Leader Departure

Once in a very great while, there have been situations under which a Crew Leader needs to leave a program while she/he is in the field. Some of the reasons that have necessitated such a departure in the past have included accidental injury or debilitating sickness, unanticipated family or personal needs and Crew Leader "burn out". The professionalism of our Crew Leaders, their commitment to the safety and well being of their Crews, and SCA program staff's determination to provide whatever support we can to Crew Leaders, have always worked well to provide a successful conclusion to challenging circumstances. Each incident is treated on a case by case basis. Careful, complete communication with SCA Regional Coordinators is absolutely critical in solving each situation.

Conflict

While conflict can be a catalyst for individual or group growth, it can be challenging to a leader and on some level to everyone else. Before your program, think about how you deal with conflict. Do you avoid, smooth over, compromise, force, or collaborate? Do these strategies work on all, or only during some, circumstances? How you handle conflict is part of your leadership style. Like all of leadership theory, practice improves your ability to handle situations that are emotionally packed. Here are a few basic reminders:

- Take a step back.
- Really listen.
- Try to identify the problems under the surface.
- Be impartial.
- Reframe.

Teach these above steps to your participants. Explain the process to them. Get the parties to see how solving the conflict is inevitably beneficial to them and the group, and get them to commit to solving it. Chapter 12 of John Graham's book Outdoor Leadership offers good strategies for dealing with conflict. Some of the issues that cause conflict within Crews that SCA insists Commuter Crew Leaders step in to immediately resolve include sexual harassment, gender inequality, safety (of self and others) and any form of racism.

MANAGING GROUP DYNAMICS

Cohesion, teamwork, empowerment, personal growth and leadership are all attributes of successful SCA Crews. But how do leaders foster these ideals in their crews? Successful leaders understand group dynamics, and build their community by empowering participants to take ownership and become leaders with in the team. They understand team structure and the stages team's progress through. They have learned to ensure positive group building. They have thought about what can both hinder and enable

group success. They have strategies for avoiding conflict. Successful leaders have identified their role as the leader far before their first meeting with the group.

Every team has three elements -- structure, task and process. It is up to you, the Crew Leader, to allow for the definition of these three elements in your crew.

- Structure: Your crew has an outlining structure -- you as the Crew Leader and your crew as the participating members. Visitors, agency coordinators, and guest speakers become a part of the structure as they come and go.
- Task: A large part of the task is set by your sponsoring agency -- that is, of course, your work project. The non-work portion of base camp life, recreation and environmental education are up to you and your crew to define.
- Process: This is almost completely up to you and your co-leader to determine within the bounds of SCA's protocols and policies.

The next sections will give a description of the growth process of teams, along with inclusive and empowering strategies to facilitate ownership in your group.

Stages of Team Building

Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing and Adjourning are the five stages of group development. Most groups fall into these stages during their progression through the experience. They do not necessarily always follow in this order. Your team can form, norm, storm, norm, storm, perform, etc.

- Forming: This is the group's honeymoon stage. Members tend to be more shy and reserved. They sit back and try to figure out the tone of the group and where they fit in. With SCA, this stage of development begins as you send your first letter to your crew and make phone calls to each person. This forming continues as your group meets at the airport, the local work site and as you begin your first week.
- Storming: Storming is when the members challenge each other and you as a leader, and this begins when they feel comfortable in the group. Feelings that have surfaced are now looking for a place to be expressed. Most of these feelings will likely stem from cultural/racial tensions, insecurities/fears, homesickness, personality, poor communication, and remembrances of past experiences. While it can be a trying stage for leaders, it is one of the most valuable for the team. Storming expands the growth potential of your crew exponentially.
- Norming: This stage comes when your crew has settled in to an understanding about how you all function as a team. They acknowledge the group's process of decision-making and conflict resolution. This is a time of relative peace and harmony.
- Performing: This is the stage all leaders strive for and hope will last! This is when your team goes beyond getting along. They've accepted leadership roles, have excelled, and are growing as a group. They've started to click, and now they're working like a well-oiled machine.
- Adjourning: This is when the program is coming to an end. Bringing closure and allowing for debriefing in terms of wrapping up the experience up for both the participants and you is important.

These stages describe the normal growth process for teams. Remembering these stages will help you understand the daily trials and tribulations as your group grows. You'll hopefully remember that the aches and pains, as well as the exhilarating high points, are common to all growing groups.

STRATEGIES FOR FACILITATING THE FIVE STAGES

Here are some basic guidelines for navigation through the stages of group cohesion.

Forming

- Set the tone and give the group structure.
- Set clear boundaries.
- State your expectations of them as individuals and as part of the group.
- Include SCA policies.
- Include everyone in the goal setting process.
- Set personal and group goals.
- Model ideals of team (open communication, concern for safety, celebration of diversity).
- Play ice-breaker games to break walls.
- Give group initiatives to encourage teamwork.
- Introduce consensus building decision making when appropriate.
- Encourage them to take leadership and responsibility in the group.
- Discuss fears openly. No fears of the unknown are unreasonable.

Storming

- Crisis is an opportunity for you to teach, make connections and model leadership.
- Framed right, conflict becomes something to embrace and work through.
- Allow for venting of negative feelings as well as solicit positive feedback.
- Anticipate potential problems and conflicts in your group. Strategize how you might handle blow-ups before they happen.
- Don't let your fear of being controlling or being a "bad guy" to allow a hurtful situation to continue. There are certain situations in which you must take a firm stance, including (but not limited to) interrupting oppressive jokes, racism, foul language and sexual harassment.
- Involve your team in using conflict resolution techniques that are solution oriented, as opposed to blaming someone.

Norming

- Although this is a time of peace, your group is still not functioning at their potential.
- Celebrate their accomplishments, but challenge your crew, as a group and individually.
- Find the spark that will ignite them.
- Push leadership in each participants and expand comfort zones.
- Engage them in group initiatives; identify places in their teamwork that needs refinement.
- Work through problems to make group stronger.
- Explore new topics and areas of interest.

Performing

- Step back and let them take the lead.
- Support and encourage them.

- Enjoy the growth that you have fostered in your team.
- Continue to find ways to challenge their thinking and grow their sense of camaraderie.
(Notice the decline in suggestions in this section. There is less for you to actively do as the leader now. Do anticipate however, that the dynamics could change at any moment.)

Adjourning

Celebrating your program and saying farewells to each other are important steps of closure for teams. Use your creativity to figure out best how your team needs to say good-bye and appreciate each other. Allow participants to recognize their feelings of sorrow and loss at the end of the program, and don't forget that you will feel these things too. Help them to notice all that has happened and finalize your accomplishments with some sort of ritual or closure. Here are a few ideas:

- Make a ceremony of your last meeting, last night under the stars or last work day.
- Have everyone write a memory they want to remember, gather their stories, and at a later time, copy and send these to them.
- Have everyone write a letter to themselves (or others) to be sent later. Remember to send these!
- Do some final journal entries in the group log – remind everyone that they each will get a copy.
- Bring fabric markers to decorate shirts.
- Bring other arts and crafts supplies (macramé, beading, etc.) that you can bring along to encourage creativity and make small gifts for each other. Choose names out of a hat to have each person to make a gift for another.

INCLUSIVE GROUP FACILITATING STRATEGIES

Consensus Building

Using the consensus building technique of making decisions is a basic step in empowering participants within the group. This inclusive model shows participants that their individual voice is important. You can start consensus-based decision making during your first meeting together, modeling how you expect the group to function for the duration of the program. Be sure that the participants understand the structure and confines of your group decision making process.

- At the beginning of the program, discuss which program decisions participants will have a say in, and which decisions are already set.
- Set operating procedures for group decision making.
- Take turns speaking, and listen with respect.
- Ensure active listening by all members if people are being forgotten. As the group grows into the model, your participation will be needed less and less.
- Intervene only to facilitate the process and ensure safety as the group makes decisions.

Encouraging Leadership

Empowering participants to take active leadership roles is an effective way of making each member feel integral to the team. Begin encouraging participants to accept more responsibility early on. Make them central to your decision making process and in charge. Let them see how they are essential to the group. (At the same time, retain your leadership position by making it clear that you have the final call. You draw the bottom line.)

- Begin with structure. This limits the unknowns and enhances the feeling of safety.
- Encourage consensus building decision making as your program develops.
- Have high expectations for work and behavior.
- Take young people seriously; insist that they take themselves and each other seriously too.
- Have young people talk first at meetings. Save your opinions for last.
- Have participants identify tasks and assume them.
- Ask for suggestions on improving project and camp situations.
- Be aware of gender dynamics and encourage active participation from everyone.

Community Building

The community that you and your crew build will greatly influence the quality of your crew's summer. Part of the growth experience for these teens is learning to live in a community as a contributing member. It is up to you to mold the foundation for this, and up to them to build upon that. This should be a community in which all members are safe, both physically and emotionally. Work for an environment that is free of negativity, put downs, excessive teasing and vulgarity.

- Set your expectations in the beginning.
- Conduct regular wellness checks.
- Respect the need for quiet time; foster this understanding in your group.
- Allow for and celebrate individuality and diversity.
- Explore the pulls of individual needs and interests vs. group needs and interests with your group. Develop a plan to provide for both.
- Discuss what compromise means to members - individually and as a group.
- Have a library, games, activities, etc. to engage your crew in fun activities together.

JOURNAL AND LETTER WRITING

SCA Crew Journal

For over forty years, every SCA crew has kept a group diary, someone writing each day to record the daily events, conversations and jokes that make up the whole of the program. The log can serve as an important means of expression for participants as they grow in their awareness of the natural world and larger world issues. Crew Leaders can also encourage students to draw in the log, or record any poems or songs they make up.

After the program, SCA will copy and send the journal to each participant, including you. Since we will be copying it for you, be sure to have the students write in a dark colored pen.

Successful logs contain as much memory-inspiring information as possible. Give some guidance about what makes for a good log. You might make it an integral component of your environmental education program. Consider including:

- Daily weather observations, work completed or meals prepared.
- Animals seen or plant identified (nature log).
- Guest speakers who visited and what they talked about.
- Special activities.
- Personal thoughts and reflections.
- Maps of camp, work area, day hikes.
- Jokes or funny incidents that happen.

Sometimes participants have a hard time thinking of anything to write. Consider bringing some cartoons, short written passages or poems that the writer of the day can respond to get started.

Letters to SCA Sponsors

One of your responsibilities in the field is to ensure that each participant mails at least one letter to his or her sponsor(s) before the end of the program. You can determine the best time to write the letters. Set aside a definite block of time when everyone does letters. You may need to set a firm deadline for when they need to be completed - before dinner tonight, by lunch tomorrow, etc.

Near the beginning of your program you will receive a packet of information from the SCA membership department. It includes:

- A letter to each student with the name and address of his or her sponsor(s).
- Paper, envelope and stamps.
- A letter to you with directions for the process.
- Two or three sample letters for inspiration, not to copy.
- A short questionnaire for you to fill out and send to the SCA membership department with suggestions or comments about the materials you received and the sponsor letter process.

Distribute the information to your crew and talk to them about the importance of writing these letters. SCA depends on donors to keep this program running, and the donors keep giving because they like the personal touch of getting a letter from a volunteer in the field. One donor was so thrilled by the letter he received that he sent \$10,000 to help future volunteers! Each letter does make a difference.

Tell your students to be themselves. This is not a graded assignment. Encourage them to think about what they really like about their experience and to talk about it. You may want to read the sample participant letters or the thank-you letters SCA has received from the sponsors to inspire them.

In their letters, students should give their name and address. They can go on to describe some or all of the following:

- The area they are volunteering in.
- The group and their leader.
- A typical day: food, work, play, etc.
- The work they are performing.
- What are they most proud to have accomplished.
- What they feel they are learning as a result of this experience.

Sponsors LOVE the letters they receive from participants, and again and again rate the experience of actually hearing from the volunteer in the field as the number one reason for continuing or increasing their support of SCA. We also encourage participants to send a holiday greeting card to their sponsor in December. This is the time that most sponsors are thinking of renewing their sponsorship for the next summer.

Each year, SCA must raise over two million dollars from individuals, corporations and foundations. For each participant we place in the field, SCA's membership and development staff raises more than \$700 in private funding. The majority of the donors

that students write to are individuals, but some are corporations or charitable foundations.

The SCA fund-raising staff makes several promises to donors. For each \$250 that donors give, they will be matched with an SCA participant and receive:

- A biography of their student and a description of the project he/ she will be working on.
- At least one personal letter from their volunteer during the program.
- A report on the program and a certificate of sponsorship, in the fall.

The holiday greeting SCA asks students to send to their sponsor is not a promised item. When they get home, each participant and his or her family will be invited to join as SCA members. Members receive publications such as our annual report. But most of all, they get the satisfaction that comes from helping make the SCA program available to another volunteer.

CONCLUSION

One of the things that SCA alumni tell us again and again is that their experience with SCA taught them to look at themselves with an entirely new perspective. Self-confidence and self esteem skyrocket. A new sense of the possible permeates the way they look at the world. So you can bet that your success in supporting the emotional needs of your crew will probably be more responsible for the positive impact of their SCA experience than any other single aspect of your leadership. Use your wisdom and compassion to its highest extent in this endeavor and you will undoubtedly find your own lives ever changed by your SCA experience as well.