



# Behavioral First Response Skills for the Field

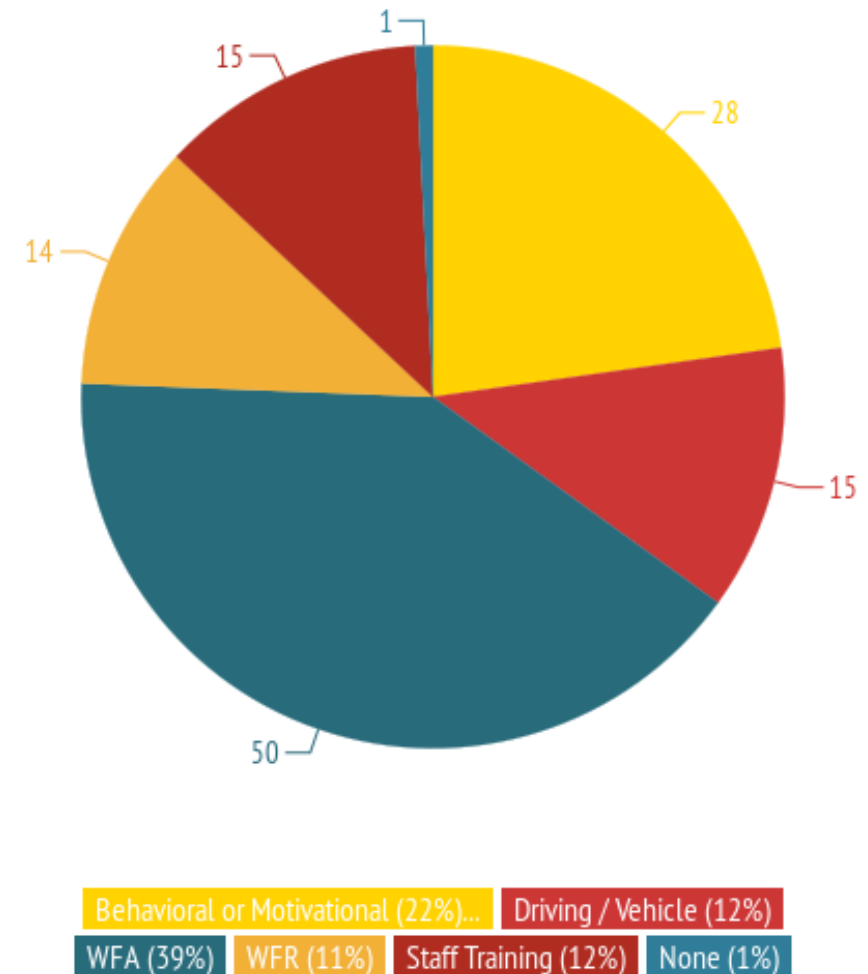
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Haub School of  
Environment and  
Natural Resources

# Field Experiences & Mental Health

- Lessons from Leaving
- A study with Outward Bound
- Outdoor Behavioral Health Council
  - Increases in restraints
  - Increases in runaways
  - Increases in physical confrontations



# Curt Davidson Ph.D.

(he/him)

- Indiana University
- Alpenglow Education
  - Founder and President
- University of Wyoming
  - Assistant Professor
- Field Experience
  - Outward Bound
  - Soar, Inc.
- Research Agenda
  - Outdoor Recreation
    - Mental Health
    - Conflict
    - Learning Processes





# Audience Input!

What are the most frequent issues you are seeing, relative to behavior and mental health, in your field experiences?





## Scope of the Issue

- 77% of college students experience "mental distress"
- 35% Diagnosed with anxiety
- 27% Diagnosed with depression



- American College Health Association. American College Health Association-National College Health Assessment III: Undergraduate Student Reference Group Executive Summary Spring 2022 (PDF). Silver Spring, MD: American College Health Association. Spring 2022.
- American College Health Association. American College Health Association-National College Health Assessment III: Undergraduate Student Reference Group Data Report Spring 2022 (PDF). Silver Spring, MD: American College Health Association. Spring 2022.

# Alpenglow's Mental and Behavioral Health Promotion Model

- Created for Outdoor Professionals
- Three Sets of Skills
  - Introspective
  - Hands-on
  - Systemic





A wide-angle landscape photograph of a Norwegian fjord. In the foreground, a large, dark, mossy rock formation juts out from the left. Two small figures of people are standing on the very edge of this rock, holding hands and looking out over the water. The fjord below is a deep blue, winding between steep, forested mountains. The sky is a pale, hazy blue. The overall mood is serene and majestic.

# Reducing Anxiety

A tale of 2 socks



#1 predictor of “on-course success”

# Creating Authentic Connections



empowerment  
grit  
lasting  
resilience  
hardiness  
fulfillment  
success  
connections  
happiness  
fun  
determination

# Building Authentic Connections

1. Pre-Trip Meetings
  1. Lighthearted
  2. Use Initiatives
  3. Build group cohesion right from the start
2. Build in Down Time
3. Build in Periodic Check-ins
4. Student Roles = Ownership
  1. e.g., Leader of the Day







# Break Down Communication Barriers!

1. Be Accessible
2. Cater to students
  1. GroupMe, Discord, Etc.
3. Flip (previously Flipgrid)
  1. Learning Names
  2. Providing Q & A
  3. Getting to know students

# Communicating Expectations

- UC Santa Cruz Outdoor Program
  - Frontloading:
    - What the student will do.
    - What the student will learn.
    - What the student **might feel**.
- Use photos & videos from previous trips.
- Have students give testimony.
- Use the “anonymous parking lot method.”







# In the Field

Because things happen....

# Why things happen...

Feeling Unsafe

Denial of  
Something  
Needed

Change in  
Routine

Repeated  
Failures

Low rates of  
positive  
reinforcement

Anger &  
Frustration

Perceived lack  
of control

# Audience Input

If you're seeing behavioral and mental health issues on your course, what is your best suspicion as to why that's happening?





# Grounding Techniques

- 5-4-3-2-1
  - 5 things you can **see**
  - 4 things you can **feel**
  - 3 things you can **hear**
  - 2 things you can **smell**
  - 1 thing you can **taste**



# Square Breathing

- Breath in for 4 Seconds
- Hold Breath for 4 Seconds
- Exhale for 4 Seconds
- Hold for 4 Seconds
- Repeat



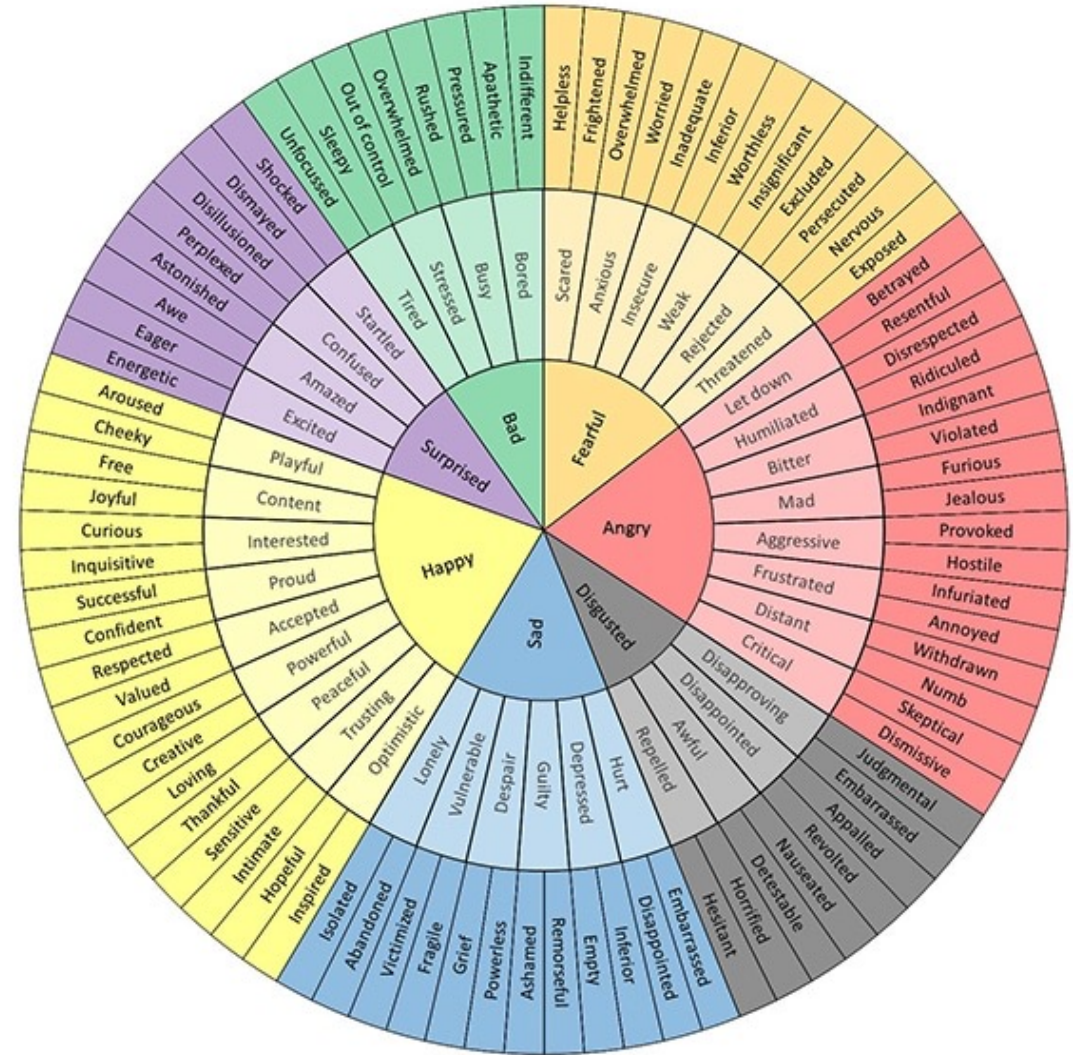


**Using your journal, answer 4 questions:**

## 2. What did I think about it?

### 3. How did I feel about it?

## 4. What did I do?





# R.E.S.P.O.N.D. Method

R – Read the Situation

E – Engage the Student

De-escalation if necessary

S – Support the Student

Use active listening to determine  
root cause

O – Options that Work

Choice Theory: Two options, both  
acceptable to you

N – Nurture the Plan

D – Determine Success





# Audience Engagement

Which of the tools discussed do you think will be most helpful for you to implement in the future?







## Next Steps

- Behavioral First Responder Certification
  - Online @ [www.alpengloweducation.com/bfr](http://www.alpengloweducation.com/bfr)
  - Discount Code: **ucalifornia2023**
  - In-person
    - [www.alpengloweducation.com/courses](http://www.alpengloweducation.com/courses)
    - UC Santa Cruz
    - September 23rd, 24th
- Thank you!
- Questions?