

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Experience is not what happens to a man, but what a man does with what happens to him.

~ Chuck Knox

An experiential learning activity is a planned challenge that requires chapter participation, problem-solving, and cooperation. SigEps create brotherhood through individual contributions to these group activities. Examples of experiential learning activities include high ropes courses, team-building exercises, and problem-solving activities.

You must remember that experiential learning involves both the activity and immediate follow-up in the form of debriefing and processing. **Debriefing** is a time during which the experiential activities can be explained. They are broken down to the basic levels of activity focus and intent. **Processing**, which is closely associated with debriefing, provides closure to the experiential activity. This final stage involves assisting the participants to comprehend and internalize their experiences, and the lessons learned from them. Wrapping up the experiential exercise, processing can point out how to utilize past experiences in making future decisions.

GUIDELINES

- ❑ The chapter is expected to hold an experiential learning activity each semester. Every member is expected to participate.
- ❑ All members who are currently in the Phi Challenge are responsible for helping plan an event that is fun for all members.
- ❑ Chapter Counselors and Community Mentors should be invited to participate.

The frequency of experiential learning activities contributes to the leadership development of a chapter's members. Experiential learning enhances your self-awareness and increases your self-confidence, and in turn, sharpens your leadership skills.



Another benefit of experiential learning activities is that they nurture brotherhood by improving chapter communication, motivation, and cooperation. Experiential learning builds and maintains a strong brotherhood.

While these activities should be fun for the participants, each person should learn something as well. When followed by debriefing and discussion sessions, the lessons learned may be reinforced and extended.



Debriefing and processing should occur after each experiential learning activity. It is a time when all of the participants can reflect upon and talk about their recent experiences. The purpose of these sessions is to generate discussion that in some way enlightens each participant.

KEYS TO SUCCESS

- ❑ **ASSESS:** Know what you want the group to learn and take away from each activity.
- ❑ **PLAN:** Make sure you have all of the supplies you need and understand how the activity works. Know how much time you will need and how you will end the activity.
- ❑ **PREPARE:** Assemble any materials you will need. Confer with your co-leader(s) to ensure the plan is understood.
- ❑ **LEAD:** Make sure everyone know the rules. Observe the group and remember things they do and say. Make use of these observations in your debrief.
- ❑ **EVALUATE:** Look back on your performance as the facilitator and the group's reaction to the activity. Learn from them both!

The list of debriefing questions on the following page can be used with practically any experiential learning activity. Use them or create your own according to what you observe from the participants and their conversations.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING RESOURCES

Rhonke, K., The Bottomless Bag Again!. (Second Edition). 1994. Kendall/Hunt.

Consalvo, C., Experiential Training Activities for Outside and In. 1993. HRD Press.

Kirby, A., The Encyclopedia of Games for Trainers. 1992. HRD Press.

Scannell, E. and Newstrom, J., The Complete Games Trainers Play. 1994. McGraw-Hill.

Sike, S., Feeding the Zircon Gorilla. 1995. Learning Unlimited.

Brotherhood Building Activities. National Interfraternity Conference.

Brotherhood Building Activities, Too. National Interfraternity Conference.

The Human Resource Development Annual Set: 1972-1996. 1972-1996. Pfeiffer and Company.



DEBRIEFING QUESTIONS

Category

Questions

General

- What happened?
- How did you feel?
- What would you do differently next time?

Reactions

- What did you experience?
- What did you observe?
- How did you feel?

Carry-over

- Do these fabricated problems have real life significance?
- What can they demonstrate about the relative strength of the chapter?
- Do they suggest possible improvements?
- Is there a relationship to what happened in this exercise and what happens in your chapter?

Leadership & Followership

- Chiefs and Indians...how many were there and how many should there have been?

Group Support

- Where does it come from?
- What form did it take?

Peer Pressure

- Did it have a positive or a negative effect?

Negativism/Hostility

- Why was it there?
- How was it handled?

Competition

- Was it against self, teams, a nebulous record?

Fear

- Physical or psychological? Fear or failure of looking bad?
- Did it enhance or hinder the performance?
- What is it like to win/lose as a team?

Joy/Pleasure

- Was it worth doing?

