

Six *Guiding* Principles and A Simple Rule...

Simple Rule

Always, without exception, put the physical and emotional safety of your group first.

***Guiding* Principles**

Principle One

EVERYTHING COUNTS

Everything counts, every little moment. This goes for you as well as your trippers. The idea is to remember that no one moment is merely a transition to what comes next -- each moment has its own value and potential. Your "trip" includes everything from prep-work and packing to driving and journaling, to making camp, washing dishes, spending time out of doors, and finally sending your group back home with good memories. With this in mind, your job is to keep your standards up and infuse each activity and interaction with all the enthusiasm, sensitivity, wonder, awe, and count-your-blessings appreciation you can muster. It's a 24-hour-per-day job and the more you love it, the more you encourage your trippers to join in and soak up all the positive experiences they can. Any comment or act, along the way, might have a lasting impact. Who knows when some little something might prove extra meaningful to someone else? You set the tone, so make sure to take the time to do the little things well.

You can...

Principle Two

GET THE BEST...Out of yourself, your group, and your co-staff.

Trips are a great time to catch yourself at your very best. It's also a terrific time for your co-leader(s) and trippers to do the same.

One of your main jobs as a guide is to help find and create situations that bring out the best in everyone on your trip. This isn't always easy. Some people may need physical challenges, like long hikes or rides. Others may need leadership challenges, like making route decisions or being a leader for the day. And still others may just need to feel included, to be a vibrant part of the community. For them, just navigating the dynamics of their tent-mates or paddling partners may be all the challenge they need.

To do this well, you'll need to get to know each person on your trip. You'll need to find out what's important to them and what their goals are. And you'll need to be a careful observer. Because when you see someone at their

best, it's almost always a good idea to let them know about it. And then help them repeat that success. It takes a lot of work, and thoughtful planning. But to be part of a group of people all operating at their very best, is an incredibly rewarding and satisfying feeling. And it may turn out to be one of the most meaningful group experiences you'll ever be lucky enough to have.

You can...

Principle Three **WALK THE LINE**

You are sherpas on the rocky terrain of group dynamics. You are the moon that pulls the tide of trip harmony higher or lower. You are your group's slackline walker and you keep your trip from leaning too far in any one direction. Choose your metaphor. Guiding is all about finding and maintaining a happy center. A balance. Where's comfortable middle between journey and destination? Process and outcome? Control and out of control? Individual needs and group togetherness? Hard skills (like teaching knots and building fires) and soft skills (like keeping up a healthy sense of fun)? Leading and following? Paddling and...not paddling? Your job is to help keep things in balance, for your trippers, your co-leaders and for you.

You can...

Principle Four **NATURE IS NOW APPROACHING...PLEASE LOOK AROUND**

This might seem obvious, but at the center of every Echo trip, there's the experience of being out-of-doors, living in nature, and finding harmony in the sort of pristine environments your trippers may have never seen before. In a lot of ways, Nature (capital N) is the big draw and everything else follows. Besides following a "Leave No Trace" ethic, your job is to deliver context—what is this nature stuff all about? Why is it so great? How does one come to love it? To discover it?—and nurture a sense of appreciation for and comfort in a variety of wilderness settings.

You can...

Principle Five **SAY "YES"**

Saying "yes" means keeping yourself open to possibility and letting your group experiment and explore. Trips—and young adulthood for that matter—afford great opportunities for this. Without ever compromising safety, we

want our trippers to move through their trips with an eye toward trying new things and finding creative ways to pass their days. Who knows what opportunities might present themselves along the way? Your job is to create a safe space that allows for the opportunity to fail well. Careful and thoughtful planning and preparation will help you to say “yes” more often.

You can...

Principle Six **IT’S YOUR TRIP!**

This one is all about giving yourself (and your trippers) a kind of permission to customize your trip experience, as necessary, out in the field. There is no absolute “right” way to lead any one trip. There is no singular definition of what trip “success” looks like. You always have options. Unexpected variables always come up. Different groups have different needs. Some like pancakes. Some like rock-climbing. Some meet with good weather and some meet with bad. The point is that any one of these factors may require you to adjust your trip’s pace or focus or dynamic. You may need to match your leadership style to best meet the needs of your group. And that’s okay. Not just okay, it’s great. You’ve been hired to use your best judgment and make good decisions on-the-fly. Think of your trip itinerary as a framework more than a prescriptive set of hourly activities and carved-in-stone map points. Yes, you always want to honor your trip’s intent as much as you can. Yes, you always want to deliver, to the best of your abilities, the trip that’s been pre-planned. But your trip is your trip, you and your group own it, and it’s up to all of you to adapt and make it work however it works best.

You can...