

An aerial photograph showing a dense urban area in the foreground, with a river valley and terraced hillsides in the middle ground, and a large, rugged mountain range with significant snow cover in the background under a hazy sky.

The Foreign and The Familiar

International programs benefit wilderness risk management

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2017 WRMC

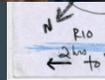
Overview

- Understand the unique variables present in international settings
- Utilize the strengths of international risk management towards more effective wilderness risk management
- Recognize how greater awareness of cultural and social demands can drive more intentional program management and outcomes

Nepal Earthquake - 2015

- April 25 at around noon, 7.5, multiple aftershocks up to 6.8
- One day up a trail in the Nar Phu Valley
- 12 hours from nearest airport - Pokhara, uncertain road conditions
- Steep canyon, no satellite phone
- Learning:
- 5 days to evac from Kathmandu
 - If safe, stay safe
 - Go slowly
 - Trust instructors

Unique Variables



Unique variables lead to valuable insight

Unique variables

- A. Considerably different subjective and objective hazards
- B. Socio-political and intercultural risks
- C. Communication challenges
- D. Increased disparity between perceived and actual risks
- E. Cultural perceptions of risk and risk tolerance
- F. Variable medical infrastructure – many medical responses are “wilderness” responses
- G. Unknown and sometimes unknowable hazards



Valuable insight

- A. Strong relationships and human connection
- B. Cultural awareness and sensitivity
- C. Understand and manage perceived risks AND actual risks
- D. Program complexity and dynamic environments create improved preparation, planning, and awareness

- Course Start
- Transitions
- Transference

- Effective proactive risk management

Leverage
Points

Course Start



- 72-hour curriculum
- Positive Learning Env
- Group container

Transitions



- High risk and high learning
- Proper framing
- Use ceremony and ritual

Course-end & transference



- Manage emotional risks
- Use ceremony and mark rite of passage
- Schedule it in

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Relationships and human connections

- Leaders have most influence over subjective hazards
- Trust building in personal relationships
- Inter-personal skills as a technical skill
- Ava triangle



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Valuable insight

- A. Strong relationships and human connection required
- B. Cultural awareness and sensitivity**
- C. Understand and manage perceived risks AND actual risks
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Cultural Awareness and Sensitivity

- Requires a focus on identity
- Pushes group norms and group culture-building
- Participant agreements have concrete repercussions
- Opens necessity for student-centered design as opposed to a cookie-cutter



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Valuable insight

- A. Strong relationships and human connection
- B. Cultural awareness and sensitivity
- C. **Manage perceived risks AND actual risks**
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Managing perceived and actual risks

- Top rope rock climbing vs. backpacking
- Paris vs. Tibet
- Violent crime
- Oh, and then there's the plague!



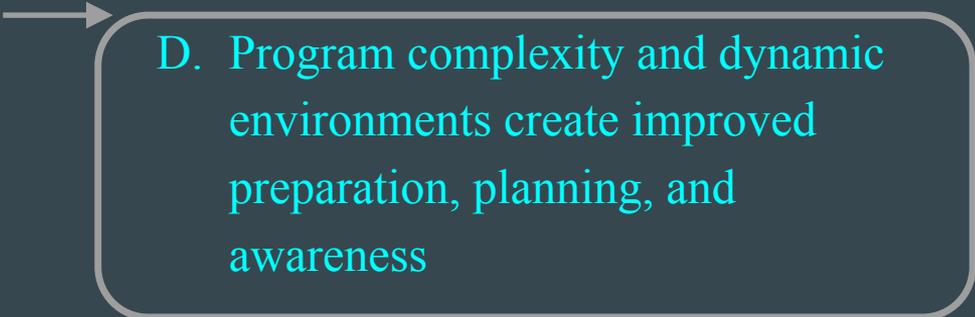
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- C. Manage perceived risks AND actual risks



D. Program complexity and dynamic environments create improved preparation, planning, and awareness

Complexity improves planning and awareness

- Novelty is good for the brain
- Need higher leader ratio, with more varied experience
- Checklist of pre-departure tasks and importance of follow-through
- Student participation - creating risk management
- Consistent need for expedition behavior



Discuss

Leverage Points:

- A. Pre-course/Course Start
- B. Transitions
- C. Course End/Transference

4 Areas of insight:

- A. Strong relationships and human connection
- B. Cultural awareness and sensitivity
- C. Understand and manage perceived risks AND actual risks
- D. Program complexity and dynamic environments create improved preparation, planning, and awareness

Action Steps

- a. Create a clear plan and curriculum for building rapport and healthy relationships within your groups, regardless of your program objectives - create structure for course orientation
- b. Identify areas where low perceived risk may be creating complacency in your risk management
- c. Evaluate the program complexity barriers to addressing risk management in your program and commit to two approaches that overcome these hurdles by converting these complications into better preparation.

Questions?



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