

A woman with a large red backpack is hiking in a mountainous landscape. She is wearing a dark long-sleeved shirt and olive green pants. The background shows a rocky mountain peak and green vegetation under a blue sky with light clouds.

Women of Courage – ED Program

AN OUTWARD BOUND EXPERIENCE
TO ASSIST RECOVERY



Kernel of Wisdom

Introduction & Intention

My name is Joelle Anderson. I am a Registered Psychotherapist and Canadian Certified Counsellor. I have focused my work on the treatment of eating disorders, both in my private practice and my work at a Toronto-based private hospital.

I am also an alumna and the former National Marketing Director for Outward Bound Canada, as well as a former marketing and branding consultant for Outward Bound International. I have witnessed, first-hand the impact that an Outward Bound course has on participants.

I am reaching out to you in the hopes of discussing a potential opportunity to help those with eating disorders discover their true potential through an Outward Bound adventurous experience in the outdoors.

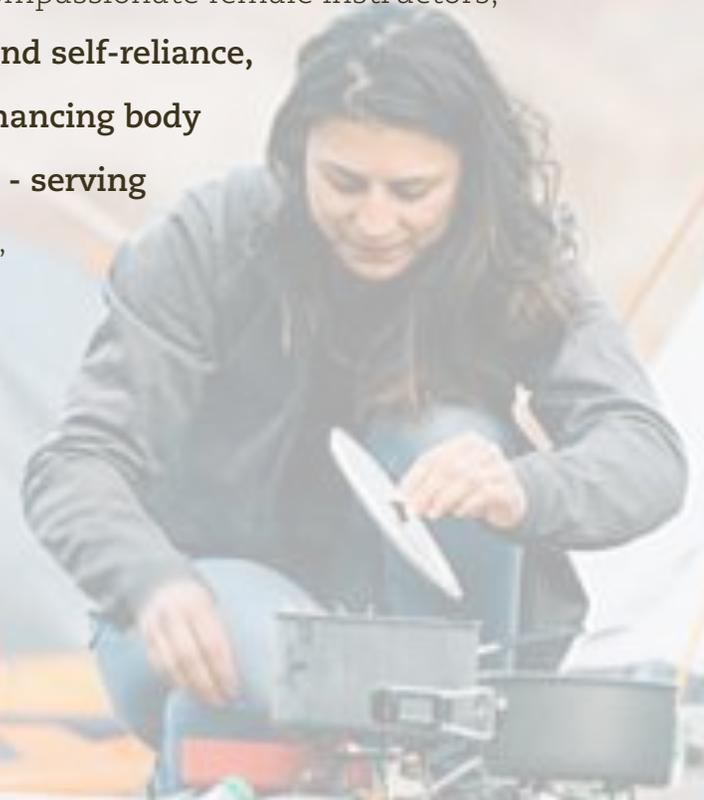


OBC + The Women of Courage Program

Outward Bound Canada (OBC) is a not-for-profit, charitable organization who's mission is to cultivate resilience, leadership, connections and compassion through inspiring and challenging journeys of self-discovery in the natural world.



OBC's Women of Courage Program offers inspiring **journeys of adventure, challenge and healing in the Canadian wilderness for women** who, traditionally, have experienced violence and/or abuse. Led by OBC's expert team of talented and compassionate female instructors, courses **focus predominantly on increasing self-esteem and self-reliance, building supportive relationships with other women, enhancing body awareness and encouraging a sense of physical strength - serving as a catalyst for powerful growth and change.** Since 1988, over 1000 women have experienced this transformative journey with Outward Bound Canada.



Outward Bound & ED

Those fighting against eating disorders often come to a point in recovery where they realize just how significantly they lost their self-knowledge and a sense of identify to the disorder. That reality makes challenging, as without a clear sense of self, it **becomes difficult to motivate one's self enough to build a life worth living, distinct from ED.**



Eating disorders also isolate the sufferer from others and **lose connection with a supportive social circle** – reinforcing challenges of trust, self-worth, assertiveness, and other social skills.

Finally, those with eating disorders also tend to engage in patterns of **experiential avoidance** and show **decreased cognitive and experiential flexibility.**



Outward Bound & ED

Research shows that Outward Bound experiences or similar adventurous, outdoor experiences in the outdoors, have helped individuals with eating disorders.

In sum, Outward Bound programs help women engage in a new sense of self, defined through higher-level values, and allows them to recognize their true potential and rebuild ways of being within supportive communities.



In 2017, Homewood Health Centre in Guelph partnered with Outward Bound Canada to offer ten day-long sessions (the Outdoor Classroom) to participants as an addition to their eight-week residential Program for Traumatic Stress Recovery (PTSR) and Eating Disorders Program (EDP). Outcomes research on that program showed that, **“the experience helped participants shift patterns of experiential avoidance and increase capacity for self-knowledge (see themes 1.1 to 1.5), and make new meaning (new narratives) and increase cognitive and experiential flexibility”** (Arai, Griffin, & Grau, 2018)*.

***The full Homewood Health Centre report on that program can be made available upon request.*

Program Vision

It is proposed that the first course would run in Ontario and include participants from within the province. As such, major activities may include canoeing, hiking, rappelling and/or ropes course. All courses also include a number of group-enhancing activities.

The proposed course would run for **about 1 week**. The staff would include **1-2 OBC instructors** and may include **a counselling/psychotherapy professional with expertise in Eating Disorders**.

All **meals** would be eaten at regular intervals – similar to most ED programming, with the entire group present, and with the supervision of staff. Meals are prepared by staff but prepared and cooked by participants.

As with any Outward Bound course, participants would develop skills and self-confidence over the duration of the course and the experience **culminates with a 24-hour solo experience**.



Participants

The participants envisioned for this program would be women ages 18+ who are at least 1 year out of recovery and have their disordered eating behaviours under control. Still, they may be working to discover and/or communicate a more complete sense of self-identity; are continuing to develop assertiveness, trust, and connection when engaging with others; and/or who may still be working toward more stable self-image and positive body concepts.

As such, clients would need to have a BMI of 16+, be self-directed and need little or no encouragement to eat 3 meals and 3 snacks daily, are no longer engaging in compensatory ED behaviour and have been abstinent from such behaviours for at least 3 months; and are emotionally, cognitively and behaviorally stable enough to receive and follow direction, actively engage in emotional processing within a group setting, and to participate in physical activities on course with little to no risk to their physical health.



How You Can Help



How You Can Help

Women of Courage generally receive full funding in order to attend the program.

The vision is that women on the Women of Courage, ED program would receive that same benefit. This includes transportation to and from the course start and end location as well as all food and living expenses during the course.

The intention is to remove any barriers to access, knowing that there will already be emotional hurdles to surpass in order for these women to attend.



2018 Fundraising Target

The cost for an Ontario-based Outward Bound Canada, Women of Courage course – and **our fundraising target – is \$25,000.**

This target covers all course costs and any administrative costs to register, admit, and screen participants as well as any logistics in getting them to/from course start and end.

The hope is to raise funds in 2018 for a summer/early fall 2019 course date.



Thank You



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Appendix



Additional Rationale + Support

- Many individuals with ED have been shown to score higher on scales for “Adventure and Sensation Seeking” than the general population; although, individuals with Anorexia scored lower than the general population on this scale (Rossier, Bolognini, Plancherel, & Halfon, 2000), an Outward Bound experience can provide a healthy and meaningful outlet for sensation-seeking (Outward Bound Canada, 2017)
- Developing an identity distinct from the eating disorder is an important step in the later phases of eating disorder treatment and recovery (Bulik & Kendler, 2000; Fairburn, 2008; Geller, 2006)
- Individuals in recovery often need support in identifying new and healthy ways to re-define their identity from the ED as they may have lost touch with activities and hobbies that fulfilled them prior to the ED or their ED may have been so longstanding they have little or no sense of who they are, or who they may have been, before the ED (Fairburn, 2008)
- Recognizing clear, cohesive higher-level personal values guides individuals in making autonomous, empowering life decisions, reducing the need to otherwise use maladaptive coping strategies, such as disordered eating (Geller, 2006)



Additional Rationale + Support

- Inquiry and experimentation for the purpose of helping individuals discover their values and assert themselves, allows individuals with ED to challenge previously held maladaptive beliefs and develop, reprioritize or strengthen higher values (Bulik & Kendler, 2000; Geller, 2006; Fairburn, 2008)
- Individuals “at-risk” have benefited significantly from “Adventure Therapy” and report that participants find meaning – particularly in resolving issues related to trust, empowerment, teamwork and in recognizing a sense of personal value (Autry, 2001)

