



## Challenge Course Experience

### Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

#### **1) What is the Challenge Course all about?**

The Camp Reed Challenge Course Program is an incredible opportunity for groups who need team building and group training! This course takes place at Camp Reed on scenic Fan Lake in a unique wilderness setting. Through fun and challenging activities and positive group dynamics, we facilitate individual growth and team bonding. Activities are not designed to be competitive, but are designed to increase confidence, communication, and competence.

Most programs last about 4 hours and combine icebreakers, warm-up activities, low challenge course elements, and one high challenge course element.

#### **2) Who can participate?**

We accept participants 11 years of age and up. All participants must be in good physical condition. When possible, we will accommodate physical limitations.

#### **3) Will I be safe- will my child be safe?**

The Camp Reed Challenge Course has an unmatched safety record. The Camp Reed Challenge Course is inspected annually by Synergo and must meet Association for Challenge Course Technology safety standards. All facilitators have successfully completed a minimum of 40 hours of specialized training on the Camp Reed course including training in belaying, facilitating, and rescues. Each facilitator is required to have current First Aid, CPR and Blood Born Pathogen certifications, and attends two refresher trainings per year. Each facilitator must also pass a Washington State Patrol background check and is required to work a minimum number of groups per season to maintain their certification. Our primary facilitators have a combined experience of over 70 years, and are professional adults, most holding college degrees. Helmets are available to participants at all times, and our equipment is rigorously inspected for safety.

#### **3) Can participants choose what they would like to take part in?**

Absolutely! All participants *will be encouraged* to participate in all events. The elements are not designed to be competitive. However, at times a participant will be uncomfortable with the element, what they are being asked to do, etc. In those instances, that individual is encouraged to exercise challenge by choice. They choose what they will participate in, and will never be forced to play along. Our goal is to build people and build teams, not tear them down!

#### **4) What is appropriate attire for the Challenge Course?**

We require close-toed shoes: hiking boots and tennis shoes are preferable. Absolutely no flip-flops, sandals or crocs are allowed. All participants should wear long pants. No short shorts or skirts are allowed. We encourage our groups to dress in layers for variable weather conditions. Parents- please don't send your child with just a sweatshirt; at times weather can change dramatically over a 4 hour session, and kids get cold quickly. Please leave any expensive jewelry/watches at home- we'll ask you to take jewelry off before beginning the Challenge Course.

### **5) What else should I know?**

Please bring a water bottle, and enough water to last for the session- we do not have any water sources on the Challenge Course Hill. Bugs are a problem in late spring, so plan ahead and bring bug spray! We work in all weather conditions with the exception of thunderstorms. In the event of thunder and lightening, the course will be shut down, and the program will resume indoors until weather conditions improve.

### **6) What is the Low Element Challenge Course all about?**

Low elements are classified as elements that do not require wearing a harness or helmet because the activity is done close to the ground. They can be compared to an obstacle course, but without competition against other groups. These elements emphasize group problem solving, communication, leadership, and other basic teambuilding themes. Each low element experience will be followed by a "debrief." This time of discussion is meant to allow the participants to process their experience through facilitator questions and individual and group responses. The debriefing is critical to the application of new knowledge by each individual.

Low elements are primarily constructed of logs, cables, and rope. The low elements on the YMCA Camp Reed Challenge Course include: TP Shuffle, Spider's Web, The Wall, Slanted Log, Swinging Tires, Mohawk Walk, Triangle Traverse, Trust Fall, Wild Woozy, Swinging Log, King's Finger, Platforms, Egyptian Tires, Nitro Crossing, Water Wheel, All Aboard, and Trolleys. Most groups will participate in 1-3 low elements during a 4 hour course; the number is dependent on the functionality of the group, and length of debrief. Facilitators choose which elements are most appropriate for the group they are working with. Low elements vary in difficulty- some may require balancing on a log or a cable with the support of the team, and some involve lifting team members over or through obstacles. Students will be taught spotting skills prior to doing any elements requiring active spotting by the participants. Helmets are used on the Swinging Tires and the Wall, and helmets are available if participants wish to wear one for the duration of the experience.

### **7) What are High Course Elements?**

For most participants, the high course is the highlight of the programs, the cherry on top of the sundae. After working through portions of the low course, participants are given the opportunity to challenge themselves by completing one high course element. Before participating in a high element, each participant is helped into a harness and helmet, and double-checked by their facilitator. High elements are more individual in nature, but we use a team approach at Camp Reed by involving teams in the process as much as possible. High elements take participants high above the ground, between 25-50 feet up, and therefore, most of our high elements require the participant to be belayed by a facilitator. At Camp Reed we have 7 excellent high elements: Flying Squirrel, Zipline, Catwalk, Monkey Vines, Pamper Pole, Skywalk and Burma Bridge. Each group is assigned to one high element, and each participant will have the opportunity to try that element at least once. Again, we operate using "Challenge by Choice" and never force or manipulate a participant into doing the high element.

### **8) What else does the Challenge Course Program offer?**

For groups looking for different alternatives, we recently developed our Tier 1 Program. Using this program, we will bring the challenge course to you! We work within local classrooms and schools doing an amended version of the low element program. This program can be used with younger kids- we recommend 4<sup>th</sup> grade and up, and can be done in time increments of 2 hours and up. Program time can also be split between classes. This program is also wonderful for teacher/faculty teambuilding, and can be a great experience for adult groups. For adults looking to learn the basics of experiential education, we are also now offering workshops that include continuing education credits. **Camp Reed- it's the best!**