

Describe an outdoor learning experience that taught you some life skills. Why were these life skills important?

Exemplar written by Aaron Goh 3SA

“Come on Aaron!” You can do it!” My fellow classmate, John shouted in encouragement, as he waited for me to repel down the huge rock. Although the term “Outdoor learning” is not too popular among Singaporeans today, it too can be a place where students can learn important life skills. Today, I would like to share with you how outdoor learning has taught me the importance of perseverance in our lives, and how unity and teamwork help us achieve our goals.

Back in 2016, I had the privilege to enter an exchange student program with a school in China. While we were there, we did many activities such as visiting their museums and strolling through their street markets. However, one activity stood out from the rest - the trekking. As part of our trip, we had to spend a night at the top of a hilly mountain top, while preparing the necessary survival equipment such as starting a fire, and pitching the tents. On the way up the mountain, we could see the magnificent rolling hills, and gazed in awe at the spectacular waterfall. As winter was approaching, the once bright orange autumn leaves littered the ground, while trees stood proudly with their naked, bare branches. After reaching the campsite, with the help of my team, we managed to start the fire and got all our tents up. Thanks to John, we also managed to filter out some freshwater from the nearby stream, something which our team desperately needed after doing the back-breaking tasks. Soon after our short water break, we had to repel down a huge mossy rock to reach our objective point. Despite the fear of slipping on the bright green slippery moss which covered the rock's surface, I found the resilience and determination in John's words, allowing me to repel down with ease. With our teamwork and perseverance, we managed to reach the goal set for us, instilling in us a sense of pride and teaching us important skills for years to come.

Why then are these skills important to our lives now? Firstly, perseverance helps us overcome the challenges in life. Despite the feeling of giving up while setting up our camp, our team did not give in to our fatigue, but pushed through to get the job done. In our school life, when we are faced with adversity, perseverance would help push us to achieve greater goals, going through with them even when the going gets tough. For example, during this WA1 season, perseverance can help one to be more disciplined in studying or revising for one's work, not giving in to his own desires such as playing video games or resting. This resilient and persevering attitude would allow us to grow stronger as a person, and reach heights we never thought we could reach.

Secondly, unity helps us get through tough situations. As an author once said, “If you want to go fast, go alone, if you want to go far, go together.” Just like at our campsite, we all had our own duties and responsibilities to carry out. By doing our task with diligence, our team could get the job done quickly and efficiently, hence allowing all of us to savour the fruits of our labour together. As situations get tougher through life, unity and teamwork allow us to support one another and share the

weight of the tasks at hand. By doing so, we stand on each other's shoulders, allowing not only an individual, but a team to achieve great heights together.

In conclusion, I remember a famous quote, "As the going gets tough, the tough gets going." While we venture through this journey of life, we must remember to never give up on ourselves - having the resilience to not only face challenges, but having the unity to complete the race with others as well.

Exemplar written by Pujit Vora Sec 3SA

"Come on Jack! You can do it!" My team members shouted and cheered me on as I played the Tug-of-war game against my opponent. This was during my camp in Primary Five. I believe that outdoor education is very important as it is a holistic method of education. Outdoor education experiences like camps teach you some important life skills which are very helpful for the future. A few skills that you can learn from these experiences are social skills and rational decision making.

During my Primary Five camp, we had completed a myriad of activities over the period of three days. One of them was a relay competition where, in groups of five, we had to complete an obstacle course. Much like the popular show 'Survivor', this activity was based on communication skills. I learnt a lot about my peers through this activity. An interesting incident also occurred when we were attempting the obstacle course. One of my groupmates had suffered a heatstroke and fell unconscious on the ground. Being a member of my school's Red Cross Co-Curricular Activity (CCA), I quickly jumped to action and performed First Aid on him with the nearby First Aid kit. Much to our relief, he regained consciousness. It was then that I first realised how important quick decision making is. From the obstacle course challenge, I learnt about the significance of communication.

Now that I am in Secondary Three, I experienced many projects that we had to do. In all of them, communication was extremely important to achieve a good grade for the project. Understanding your peers' opinions and techniques on how to get things done is extremely crucial. Not doing so may result in miscommunication during the process of a project. Learning these social skills at a young age is very beneficial for the future. In a corporate office, one needs to communicate effectively in order to overcome obstacles, improve collegiality and enhance synergy amongst colleagues in order to reach optimal levels of productivity which is essential for any organisation to flourish.

From the experience of saving my teammate during the challenge, I realised the importance of learning to make swift and responsible decisions. Sometimes, you can find yourself in a deep pit of trouble and the only way out would be to think on your feet and react quickly and wisely. Quick thinking is necessary in life - especially in life-and-death situations. Failure to do so may lead to wrong choices that result in regret later on. Outdoor education teaches this skill very well when we find ourselves in challenging situations. For example, when my team was one of the last in the race, we had to make some quick choices that resulted in us clinching the winner's prize. In activities like investing, clever and fast thinking are very much needed to make good investments.

In conclusion, outdoor education is a valuable platform for essential life skills to be cultivated. Hands-on experiences beyond the four walls of the classroom can help us apply the concepts and definitions we learn in school. Rudimentary life skills such as efficient communication and coherent decision making are beneficial for the future. As the proverb goes, "Outdoor education is merely a practical experience of the concepts we learn."

Exemplar written by Kendric Chang 3SA

Outdoor education in recent years has become more ubiquitous in schools. Educators have found that when students are brought out of the classroom, there are invaluable opportunities to expand their repertoire of skills beyond the rudimentary level of learning done in a regular classroom. Whenever outdoor learning takes place, many life skills are taught. These life skills which include social skills, problem-solving and independence are very important.

One outdoor learning experience I vividly remember is my Primary Five Camp. I had just started Primary Five with a new class and new teachers. My experience started off with me communicating with my fellow classmates. We shared anecdotes and learnt more about each other. Moreover, there were a lot of interesting games and quizzes that were both fun and challenging. For example, we had to use our problem-solving skills to figure out how to get all the class members to manoeuvre over a wooden wall. Although we tried our very best to think of innovative ways to get over it, our efforts were to no avail. We also had to learn to be independent as we were sometimes just thrown in at the deep end. For example, we had to find a way to cook our own food. The instructor gave us some wood, a matchstick and some metal tins. There was no one to ask for help and we were all alone. With teamwork and resilience, we proved that we could do it and managed to cook our meals. This outdoor learning experience was really fun and it helped me to learn many life skills.

One important life skill that I had learnt was social skills. In life and in the workforce, one has to learn how to communicate and make friends. This is a very important skill so that you can meet new people that can potentially help you in your life. Furthermore, studies have shown that you're likely to learn social skills and make friends outdoors than in the tense and serious learning environment in school. Making friends is also crucial to leading a happy life. Friends make you happy and friends are people you can count on when you need help. Thus, social skills are very important as you can make lots of friends.

In addition to social skills outdoor education also equips you with skills such as self-determination and problem-solving. Imagine you are running a home all by yourself. There is no longer the option to call your "mummy" or "daddy" for help. Sometimes, it is hard for students to learn independence in a classroom, however there are more opportunities to learn them outdoors. Students need to learn to depend on themselves more so that they will not be shocked by the fact that they have to do everything by themselves in the future. Problem-solving is equally important. You will be required to make quick decisions and know how to solve problems before the

situation becomes a calamity. Outdoor education gives you a head start to learn how to solve problems and come up with innovative and interesting solutions.

In a nutshell, outdoor learning teaches life skills such as problem-solving, independence, and how to be more sociable. These skills are very important for the day-to-day decision making, the workforce and for the future. They help us make friends, come up with smart ideas and learn to rely on ourselves more. Indeed outdoor education teaches us important skills that will help us in life. As the saying goes, 'teach a man to fish, and you will feed him for a lifetime.'

Describe the lessons that you have learnt in the past year. How were they significant to you?

Exemplar written by Shridhar Raj, 3SA

Twenty-twenty vision- that is how an optometrist would describe someone with perfect eyesight. Ironically, this term brought to mind the never-ending waves of shock that hit us in the year 2020. From several forest fires raging in Australia to the Coronavirus pandemic, I would be surprised if anyone accurately predicted the way last year would turn out. I too found the past year extremely testing. However, as the saying goes, "Adversity builds character." As such, the difficulties that I faced last year taught me a few great lessons: resilience in the face of adversity, the ability to accept what was beyond my control and self-confidence.

Firstly, the events of the past year instilled tenacity in me. Due to the severity of the Coronavirus pandemic, the Singapore government made the decision to place the nation on a soft lockdown. This meant that Home-Based Learning (HBL) - or how I liked to call it - Home-Based Horrors, took place. Being an auditory learner, I had always benefited from hearing the explanations of my teachers. Therefore, the absence of a teacher verbalising the lesson affected my ability to retain the knowledge on the screen, causing me to delay my online assignments and procrastinate. I was drowning in a sea of missed deadlines, conference calls and un-attempted questions. Luckily, my parents saw my moments of listlessness and realised that I had not been doing my work promptly. Immediately, they swooped in and helped me find my footing under the new regime. They kept track of my assignments that were due and monitored how I was spending my time. Seeing how much they cared for me made me realise that I too needed to put in effort and persevere through the obstacles I was facing. Diligently, I completed my assignments promptly and began to manage my time and soon got used to HBL. If not for the occurrence of HBL, I would not have become the resilient person that I am today.

Secondly, I learnt to accept the things that were out of my control. Last year, as I was in Secondary Two, I had to go through the streaming exercise to determine the subjects that I would be taking for my national examinations. Needless to say, this was a crucial factor in deciding my future. The immense pressure of the examinations had gotten to me and I was buckling under my feelings of anxiety. I

often pinned the blame of the overbearing stress on the difficulty of the examinations in order to cope. Undoubtedly, this led me to resent school and my work. However, something dawned upon me one day as I was playing a game of 'Mario Kart.'. I could not control the hurdles that were being thrown at my avatar. The only thing I could control was my reaction toward them. Similarly, I had no control over the nature of my examination paper. I could only decide preparedness for them. Once I realised this, I put aside my negative thoughts and started studying harder for the papers. Hence, the stress that I went through last year gave me the ability to accept the things that I had no power over.

Thirdly, the past year taught me to be confident in myself. Previously, I would always doubt my abilities and aptitude. This was because I had a low self-esteem and did not believe in my potential. As a result, I often prematurely gave up when I was faced with challenges or even worse- not start to begin with due to a fear of failure. Therefore, I was standing in my own way and preventing myself from reaching my goals. I came across a 'TedX' video on YouTube explaining the physiology behind a person's 'Inner Saboteur'. In the video, the speaker explained that everyone has a little voice in their head that convinces them that they are not good enough, stemming from high self-expectations and anxiety. However, the speaker explained that this problem was easily dealt with. He provided many easy solutions such as writing out your strengths and weaknesses to appreciate yourself for your flaws and all. Incorporating all these techniques in my daily life, my self-confidence grew and I was able to fulfil my potential by believing in what I was capable of. Hence, the past year gave me the tools to defeat my biggest enemy- my insecurities- and become more confident.

In conclusion, challenges are not something we should run away from, but rather something we should welcome. It is the only way we can grow and develop as it shows our progress. I believe that the impact that 2020 has had on me can be summed up in the words of the Serenity Prayer, "grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference".