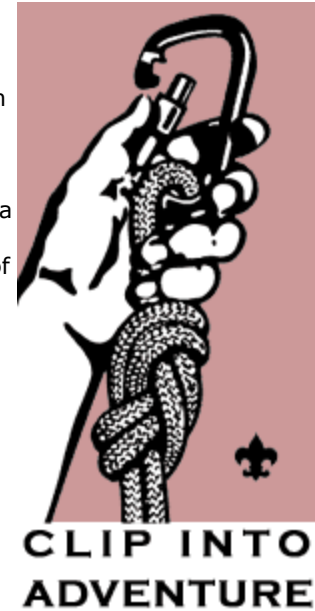


Project COPE

What Is Project COPE?

Since its founding in 1910, the Boy Scouts of America has offered its members an outdoor program stressing personal fitness. Project COPE is an acronym for Challenging Outdoor Personal Experience. It comprises a series of outdoor challenges, beginning with basic group initiative games and progressing to more complicated low-course and high-course activities. Some of these events involve a group effort, whereas others test individual skills and agility. Participants climb, swing, balance, jump, and rappel as well as think through solutions to a variety of challenges. Most participants find that they can do much more than they initially thought that they could.

Project COPE is an exciting outdoor activity that can attract and keep older boys in Scouting. It is designed to meet the needs of today's youth who are seeking greater physical and mental challenges. The underlying goals of a Project COPE course are consistent with the methods of Scouting. Group activities are ideal for emphasizing the patrol method and developing leadership. Individual activities help promote personal growth. Participation is entirely voluntary.



History and Background

The 1979 Dalajamb International Encampment in Sweden provided a number of challenging events of great interest to Scouts from the United States. Foremost among them was the pioneering course constructed by a group of veteran Swedish Scouts. This course was laid out in a heavily wooded area and utilized terrain elevations as part of the design. Bridges were built across ravines of varying widths and depths. Zip lines hung for traversing the ravines, and novel constructions were used for climbing.

Successful Experiment

A Project COPE course provides an opportunity for each participant to achieve success as an individual and as a member of a patrol or team. The activities are not designed to be competitive or to be races against time. The objectives include building teams, solving problems, making decisions, and developing trust, communication, leadership, planning, and self-esteem as team members cooperate to achieve goals upon which they have agreed. The course is designed to foster personal growth among both youth and adult groups.

Objectives

Before implementing a course, the council should determine what it seeks to accomplish. Eight major goals are commonly associated with Project COPE activities:

1. Communication
2. Planning
3. Teamwork
4. Trust
5. Leadership development
6. Decision making
7. Problem solving
8. Self-esteem

Participants should be challenged to develop team goals for each activity. After several activities a reflection is accomplished through nondirective questioning that encourages participants to analyze how they did as a group and as individuals, how they could do better in future endeavors including life skills, and how the learning applies to school, jobs, and their future life.