

Assembly Talk Outward Bound 2012

First of all, imagine what our life will be if we were deprived of the right to use the mobile phone, internet, bed and even the bathroom. It won't be a problem if it is just for one or two days, but how about 5 days? Can we still survive five days staying in the woods without parents and friends, but many unpopular visitors such as cockroaches, bees, mosquitoes, lizards, ants, dogs, cows and even snakes. And imagine having 3 to 5 boys squeezing in a tent with countless droppings around it, occasionally soiled your shoes and left nasty smell afterwards. I am here to tell you more about our hardly forgettable experiences.

“Water Trip / 水之旅 ” is our slogan for the five-day Outward Bound course. 水之旅 does not simply mean a trip for us to enjoy sailing, kayaking or canoeing. It actually implies that our trip will be less meaningful without the five components - blood, sweat, rain, sea and tears. Thanks to Mr. Wong for creating such a cynical slogan. The outward bound training did offer the opportunities for us to leave our comfort zone in order to learn more about the nature and develop our potential to the full. It has surely brought some drastic changes in our values and beliefs.

Around 144 students joined the Outward Bound in March. Half of them had the sea trip while the rest took part in the land adventure. I would like to focus more on the land adventure while Anthony will tell you more about the sea trip.

Before we share our stories of getting lost in the woods and being swallowed by the waves, I would like to mention our preparation for the training. Before the trip, we had a task to set our targets and write down our expectations online. Also, eleven students were asked to form an organizing committee to look after the pre and post-training affairs. For example, we needed to arrange transportation, run two briefing sections, one for students and one for parents. We also need to maintain the online system and the Facebook Fans page. The productions of t-shirt, banner and logo were also part of our responsibilities. These additional tasks offered us precious opportunities to sharpen our leadership and interpersonal skills.

Concerning the land adventure, we had to get up at dawn every day. Having packed up everything, light or heavy, even the rubbish, we cooked a simple breakfast and cleaned the utensils before we set off climbing up a designated mountain in the heat. We might find a shade for a light lunch and have a rest before conquering another steeper mountain. We then set up the tents before sunset, made dinner and stayed there overnight until dawn. Wasn't it too harsh? Don't forget, each one of us had to carry a crazy backpack weighing 30kg or over. You know, before the trip, I had prepared five sets of clothes for five days. I also prepared necessities such as anti-mosquito spray,

snacks, torch, cap, sunscreen lotion and all sorts of things that I consider useful. Of course, I had overdone and bought too many as the real situation was another story. I strongly recommend the coming group not to bring too many and always expect the worst.

For our cooking experiences with no doubt, the majority of us know nothing about cooking, not even making a simple meal with plain rice or pasta. Maybe we are all instant noodle experts, but cooking it in the dark can be very clumsy. Fortunately, we had four teammates who were alright at cooking, including me! We did a total of 12 meals in five days, and all of us still survived without visiting the casualty. As I know, some groups were less fortunate. They ate either raw or overcooked food all the time. So, I suggest that you should learn some basic cooking techniques beforehand.

Frankly speaking, the land trip was very harsh but it doesn't mean that it was very boring. In contrast, you may miss it a lot as we did when we got used to it and started to enjoy the gorgeous hiking experiences, especially when hiking with teammates who were downright silly, naïve and sometimes provocative. Our ups and downs, ebbs and flows formed a bond among us and gave a strong feeling of brotherhood.

The journey at sea was never pleasant. We were first taught of how to use the paddle, which was not an easy task. Then we were tested whether we knew how to swim. The water was freezing cold and we couldn't help but shiver. After the swimming test, we were taught what to do when we capsized (the kayak turns over). The experience was daunting and we almost suffocated. Swiftly, we started to raft but in a zigzag direction. We all reached our designated campsites and we set up tents and the canopy, then we had our supper.

The next two days were tough. We rafted for a very long distance. Partners had to cooperate well in order to control the direction. Our hands soured but we couldn't stop because waves would carry us away. Apart from the agonizing pain on our arms, water kept entering our kayak. Soon, our feet were drenched with water. And believe me, that damp feeling was bad. Besides, the scorching heat from the sun never faded. Our face seemed to be burnt into crisps. However, all of us broke through the limits, we struggled on boldly with teamwork and unbending perseverance. Soon, we managed to arrive at another campsite. But we still could not call it a day because we had to carry all the kayaks to the land so as to prevent it from washing away. We were all exhausted and worn out as the kayaks were terribly heavy.

The fourth day was better because we didn't spend too much time rafting, instead we went to an island to try another challenge - the giant ladder. That was a really

frightening experience because the ladders led to a very high distance from the ground. After all kinds of discovery and poses, students managed to get to the top and rang the bell loudly and proudly. It was such a marvelous view up there, glancing the waves rushing to the shore and breezes kissing our faces.

On the final day, we woke up exceptionally early, got everything ready and double checked the rafts. At last, we all paddled like professionals, with no difficulty controlling the directions. After some time, we reached the training base. We were all amazed by what we had accomplished and the unbelievable speed we rafted. But then, we were told to get into our swimming trunks for one last challenge - jumping the pier. This really tested our bravery. One by one, we yelled our wishes, closed our eyes, and enjoyed the plunge. In a jiffy, we were all in the water.

From the Outward Bound Course, we learn to be independent as nobody looked after us except ourselves, and we needed to do everything on our own. We also become more considerate and understanding. We sharpen our communication skills as well, as we needed to discuss with others in numerous situations. We value the team spirit and brotherhood during those 5 special days. We worked together selflessly and did the best we could. More importantly, we feel confident in leaving our comfort zone and have the nerve to face more challenges. After all, I recommend junior form students to get prepared, physically and psychologically for the Outward Bound Course which is a great privilege to you, not simply a challenge. Of course, it is also a torture, but a torture that you can't afford to miss.

On behalf of the organizing committee and the participants, I would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude to

- i) the Outward Bound instructors for their guidance and patience
- ii) the accompanying teachers, Mr. Wong Wai Hou, Mr. Wong Wai Kiu and Mr. Mak Wing Wah for their care and trust
- iii) the members of the organizing committee who worked behind the scenes to make sure that the course was safe and sound.

Last but not least, without the generous support of the College Council and our Principal, Dr Kennard, running such a fruitful event annually is impossible.

The upcoming Outward Bound Training Course for F.4 Students will be held in April between 22nd and 26th. I strongly encourage you to get ready for it.

Let's enjoy the video prepared by Wong King Fung, King in 5F. Thank you.