

# Working With Trauma at Trails Carolina



Drawing from the collective experience of over 90 years of wilderness and experiential-based therapy we incorporate a variety of interventions drawing from a vast array of experiential modalities. Research has proven the success of wilderness and expedition interventions in helping troubled adolescents overcome traumatic life experiences, learn coping mechanisms, and gain the ability to recognize triggers that cause adolescents to initiate self destructive patterns.

Trauma shows up in a variety of ways from withdrawal or dissociation to anger and rage. When an individual has experienced trauma, it may become lodged in the body. Although the original experience or "danger" has passed, the body/mind may become "stuck" in fight/flight or freeze responses. The result is emotional and nervous system deregulation. A wide variety of unhealthy coping mechanisms are then employed to compensate for this deregulation. By simultaneously treating the symptoms and the underlying cause, healing is more sustainable and long-term.

## THE PROCESS:

### Understand The Bio-physical Dynamics Of Trauma

Trauma is the result of the Body-mind's natural protective mechanism and response to danger gone awry. When there is any sort of threat or perceived threat, all animals including humans enter into a physiological state of fight or flight. If neither of these actions is successfully accomplished, we go into the freeze state, which is simultaneously numbing and activated. By understanding this response and its natural course of resolution, our clinicians can then support the healthy emotional growth progression towards more long-term healing.

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### Wilderness As A Co-therapist

Wilderness therapy provides a unique opportunity to draw on the inherent healing elements of the natural world to support individual treatment goals. Trails therapists are trained to effectively access the range of creative elements available, the wilderness becomes much more than an outdoor office; skilled collaboration with the wilderness creates unparalleled opportunities for therapeutic growth. By using experiential methods, philosophies, and the intense beauty and isolation of the wilderness we are successful at gaining optimize therapeutic outcomes. By drawing on the inherent healing properties of the natural world and utilizing traditional clinical theory and methods that are embedded in the process we are successful at helping our students to develop sustainable emotional stability which translates into long term emotional growth.



## Developing A Repertoire Of Wilderness Therapy Interventions And Tools



Primitive skills, ritual & ceremony, and other experiential activities all work to enhance each student's experience while providing tremendous data which we use to augment each student's ongoing individual treatment plan. By tapping into the innate healing properties associated with one's self-esteem we are able to provide supportive experiential-based metaphorical activities that allow for safe, calculated decision making with natural consequence based outcomes. This process is designed to be challenging but not physically overwhelming.

### Family Support: You're Not Alone

Trauma affects not only the victim in negative ways, it affects the entire family. Family involvement is crucial as parents "Follow a Parallel Path" with their adolescent. Research has shown that family involvement not only allows the whole family to heal but it can also increase the adolescent's success—short and long term. By examining the family system and making positive changes as a whole, families can be a huge catalyst in the growth that is taking place within their adolescent. It is for this reason that family is such an integral part of the Trails program.

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### The Eventual Outcomes

- 57% of students have been in some form of outpatient treatment
- 17% inpatient
- 13% both in and outpatient treatment.
- The results of outcome studies indicate that 83% of participants made significant clinical improvement upon transition.
- 12 months post wilderness treatment participants have either maintained or continued to improve on initial outcomes.
- 24 months post wilderness 80% of families and 93% of participants report that "they believe their treatment was effective."



***Trails Carolina is a challenging therapeutic wilderness program set amid the scenic Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina. Owned and operated by seasoned professionals with over 80 years of combined experience, our proven methods and clinical therapies help change troubling behavior, guide adolescents up new paths of self-awareness, and lead families toward healing.***

