

Reviewing By Doing

by Roger Greenaway

In Part One, 'Doing Reviewing', I explained why I believe that reviewing is of fundamental importance in adventure education. That article ended with the promise that Part Two would describe "a variety of active methods for reviewing adventures". These methods are described below following a brief introduction to a four stage reviewing sequence to which they can be linked. As in Part One, the term 'reviewing' refers to:

"an activity that is used to encourage individuals to reflect, describe, analyse and communicate what they recently experienced." [1]

<p><u>Introduction</u></p> <p><u>The 4 Stage Sequence Explained</u></p>	<p>Examples of Active Reviewing Methods linked to each of the 4 stages</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. <u>EXPERIENCE "What happened?"</u>2. <u>EXPRESS "What was it like?"</u>3. <u>EXAMINE "What do you think?"</u>4. <u>EXPLORE "What next?"</u>
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Active Reviewing

'Active reviewing' is not necessarily any better nor any more 'advanced' than reviewing by talking. If the discussion after an adventure is an engaging one and is helping young people to learn from their experience, then it is probably best not to interrupt the 'flow' with an 'active review technique' (or with a new activity). But having an extensive and varied 'toolkit' of active reviewing techniques does increase the chances of finding a suitable method (or combination of methods) for making the best use of time spent reviewing.

Choosing a method

The choice of technique may be an intuitive one. It may *feel* right to provide a contrast, such as by following a chaotic activity with a structured review, by following a slow activity with a busy review, or following a challenge with something easygoing. On the other hand, it may feel right to stay with the mood

of the moment and, for example, follow an energetic activity with an energetic review, or follow an inspirational adventure with an equally stimulating review.

But the choice of technique need not be wholly intuitive: there are a number of theoretical models which serve as a useful guide to shaping reviews and to choosing the methods which are most likely to work well.

Sequencing

Several American writers [2], emphasise the importance of 'sequencing' in 'debriefing' or 'processing' (i.e. reviewing). The concept of sequencing typically refers to the order in which questions are asked by the facilitator in a discussion-based review. It can be equally important for 'active' reviews to follow a sequence - preferably one supported by a theoretical model from the fields of groupwork, educational drama or experiential learning. One model that I find particularly useful as a guide for both 'conversational' and 'active' reviewing is Juch's synthesis of several experiential learning theories into a four stage cycle [3]:

For my training workshops in reviewing skills, I have developed variations of this basic sequence, the second of which 'XXXX' provides the main structure for this article.

THE FOUR STAGE REVIEWING CYCLE

stage 1		stage 2		stage 3		stage 4
DOING	→	SENSING	→	THINKING	→	PLANNING
FACTS	→	FEELINGS	→	FINDINGS	→	FANTASIES!*
EXPERIENCE	→	EXPRESS	→	EXAMINE	→	EXPLORE

[* since renamed 'FUTURES' in Playback to make dreams more attainable]

A four stage reviewing sequence

1. **EXPERIENCE** The first stage is to establish or 'relive' what happened. This stage can serve as a useful reminder of significant incidents that may have been forgotten or overlooked. If the event under review was a success, this stage might take the form of a celebration. If there were problems, this stage would be more like the collecting of evidence. Young people may be surprised to learn of the different perspectives that other group members may have of the 'same' event. The main focus of this first stage is on what happened.

2. **EXPRESS The second stage** is a vital one, but tends to be the stage most at risk if review time is limited. This stage recognises that experiences (especially adventurous ones) stimulate the senses and arouse emotions. This stage focuses on the quality of the experience: "What was it like?", "How did it feel?" Young people may have difficulty expressing themselves. If the experience was new and different, they may need to find new and different ways of communicating their experiences - perhaps through using drama and other expressive arts.
3. **EXAMINE The third stage** is more analytical and rational. 'All-talk' reviews tend to arrive too soon at this stage, especially if reviewers are too impatient to draw out the learning from the activity. If the experience has been a 'whole person' experience, it is important to use review methods which match the fullness of the experience - using review methods, for example, which encourage the creative and analytical parts of our brains to communicate with each other. Analytical thinking is an important feature of any reviewing process, but it can be easier to capture the broader 'developmental' benefits of adventure at the earlier 'expressive' stage of this learning sequence.
4. **EXPLORE The fourth stage** is the most practical stage. It involves trying out something that has been prompted by earlier stages of the cycle. It might involve preparing carefully for the next adventure, but it could equally involve making a commitment to 'dive in' and find the confidence and courage to take bigger risks. This 'planning' stage would usually involve setting targets and raising safety awareness, but it is equally important to keep the sense of curiosity and exploration alive - if the experience is to be both educational and adventurous.

Active reviewing methods: examples

1: EXPERIENCE "What happened?"

ACTION REPLAY

A highly versatile active review method for all stages, but especially this one, is re-enactment or 'action replay':

"Just as on television, the action is 'played back' either to examine an incident more closely or to re-run an event worth celebrating ... action replays as a reviewing technique break free from the constraints and expense of television, and involve group members in re-enacting the incidents. The purpose is the

same (i.e. to examine or celebrate what has just happened) but initially action replays can be a fun activity of their own. Once the leader has demonstrated the possibilities, group members can take it in turns to direct the action, deciding what to replay, when to hold, reverse, repeat, slow down or fast forward." [4]

The purposes and variations of action replays are endless:

- they are lively and fun;
- they encourage honest accounts of what happened;
- they bring out alternative perspectives of the 'same' event;
- they help to bring out key issues;
- they stimulate interest in group dynamics;
- they encourage young people to be more observant.

REPLAY WITH 'PUPPETS'

An alternative form of 'action replay' is for group members to choose or make objects to represent themselves, which they then operate as 'puppets'. This is especially useful if space or confidence is limited, but it can be an equally effective way of 'reliving' the experience.

SKETCH MAP

If the experience was a journey, or can be represented in the form of a map, then using a large piece of paper, the group work together to produce a map of their adventure. The map shows incidents, observations, and high and low points along the way. The process of making the map will often quite naturally carry a group forward into the next two stages of this review process.

PERFORMING TO AN AUDIENCE

The above techniques are *not* intended for audiences outside the group, but if a group wishes to communicate their adventure to others (e.g. to celebrate a success, or to be honest about what did not go well) then the above techniques could double as a rehearsal for a performance or presentation to others. Performing in front of others could be an even bigger adventure than the original one on which it is based!

2: EXPRESS "What was it like?"

Most of the techniques for 'stage one' can be continued or adapted to focus attention on expressing feelings associated with the adventure. There are also many new reviewing activities that can be introduced at this stage.

UPS AND DOWNS

One of the most direct ways of finding out about young people's 'ups and downs' is literally to ask them to move their heads (or hands) up and down as someone talks through the experience being reviewed.

A valuable outcome from this exercise is when young people express surprise at another's position. Differences are more likely to show up if participants first record a number (say, 10 = high, 0 = low) for particular moments or stages of the adventure. Discussion can be prompted (if necessary) by encouraging young people to look around and ask questions if anyone else's position interests or surprises them. This feature of the exercise enhances group and social development by increasing young people's awareness of the feelings of others. [5]

'Ups and downs' is a quick and easy way of allowing each individual to 'express' their feelings. These instant snapshots prompt individuals to talk more openly about their feelings. These snapshots may also indicate issues that are worth examining (in stage three).

LINE-UPS

Line-ups are a similar concept to 'ups and downs'. People arrange themselves along an imaginary line which represents a spectrum of feelings. One end can represent feeling 'confident', 'out of my depth', 'right', 'supported', 'influential' etc.. The other end represents an 'opposite' feeling. It is usually better if the language used is suggested by the young people themselves. It is a good idea to use a curved line so that everyone can see each other. Alternatively, the centre of the room (or review space) can represent the more 'positive' end of the line, with the walls representing the opposite end. Discussion is encouraged (where necessary) as for 'ups and downs'.

VISUAL METAPHORS

Although 'line-ups' are a useful tool, they are little more than 'warm-ups' for the 'expressive' stage of a review. A more three-dimensional representation of an adventure can be achieved by selecting and developing suitable visual (and active) metaphors.

For example, the phrase 'out of my depth' (mentioned in 'line-ups) could be part of a swimming pool metaphor. Ask the group to imagine that the room (or review space) is a swimming pool. Show them where the edges, shallow end, and deep end are, and ask them to get 'in the right place' for particular stages of the experience under review. This is not simply a line-up from 'shallow' to 'deep': encourage the group to use the metaphor creatively. For example, someone may have felt they were taking it easy - 'floating on an air-bed'. Someone may have felt 'like a pool attendant'. Another may have felt they were 'bomb-diving' others all the time etc. When everyone has found 'the right place', they should find some way of 'showing' what they are doing there.

If the mood and the metaphor are right, then playing creatively with the metaphor, can help young people to find a powerful means of expressing themselves. Listen out for any metaphors that young people are using naturally in their conversation - they may be particularly good ones to play with! [6]

CREATIVE ARTS

The creative arts offer plenty of scope for helping people to describe their experience:

- the art form may 'speak for itself' and be a substitute for words.
- the process of making/creating may help people to sort out their thoughts and feelings after which they can express themselves more clearly in words.
- the process of making/creating (especially if a paired or group task) may require young people to communicate with each other more about the experience.
- the 'art' object (found or made) may serve as a visual aid or confidence booster in helping someone to talk about their experience.

Experiences can be represented creatively in many ways including: a collection of objects or souvenirs, finger painting, a sketch or painting, a collage, mural, cartoon, poster, newspaper story, photographs, video, song, play, model or junk sculpture. [7]

3: EXAMINE "What do you think?"

The first two stages encourage people to 'relive' and 'stay inside' the experience. This is now the stage for 'stepping outside' the experience and 'looking back' on it from a more detached and critical point of view.

THE VISITOR

If a group have been making a collage representing their adventure, now is the time to step back and study the collage, and encourage discussion about it. For example, try asking: "If a visitor turned up and saw your collage what do you think they would notice? What questions might they ask?" This can be followed up by finding a volunteer from the group to take the part of an interested visitor. In effect, the 'visitor' will have become the facilitator of a group discussion, which is based initially on observations and questions which group members will have themselves supplied. [8]

WHERE DO YOU STAND?

This review activity is best done outside as it needs plenty of space! It is a similar concept to 'line-ups', except that it requires people to make assessments and judgements (rather than simply asking people to recall facts and feelings as in stages one and two).

Everyone stands in a line (as if starting a race) and closes their eyes. The facilitator now asks individuals to make judgements about group behaviour during the activity, by asking questions one at a time. For example:

- "How much encouragement did you receive from others?"
- "How good was the group at making decisions?"
- "How determined was the group to succeed?"
- "How well did the group keep to safety requirements?"
- "How successful was the group?"
- "To what extent were the aims achieved?"

The answers are silent ones! After each question, ask everyone to take up to x paces forward for positive answers, and up to x paces backwards for negative answers. After the last questions, group members open their eyes, turn towards each other and talk! The exercise can be repeated with similar questions about individual achievement:

- "How much did you encourage others?"
- "How much do you feel you achieved?" etc.

Variations are endless: combinations of eyes shut and eyes open, or starting off in a large circle, facing inwards or outwards, using questions from the group etc.

PERSONAL GIFTS

There are many variations of this appraisal activity in which young people find, make or mime gifts for each other. The gifts either represent something that the 'donor' appreciates about the person, or they can be in the form of "I wish you could have more of this". The session should be arranged so that 'appreciates' outweigh 'criticisms'. One method of ensuring this is to split the group in two, and to ask each half group to work together to find, make or mime three gifts for each individual in the other half group: two gifts should be in the form, "We admire you for this" and one gift should be in the form, "We wish you had more of this".

Personal appraisal does not need to be related to a particular context, but as a *review* technique, the qualities represented by the gifts should have been in evidence during the activity under review. For example, the gifts might convey the message:

"We admired you for your courage when trying to rescue the bird, but we wish you wouldn't go it alone so much, and had asked us to help too. We admired you for staying calm when *you* needed rescuing."

Once young people realise that *everyone* will be giving and receiving feedback, they sense the fairness and the potential value of this kind of exercise, and become very committed to making it work.

JUMPING TO ACTION

Some assertions made during a review can be tested out immediately. If someone says, "We are very trusting in this group" or, "We are not very trusting in this group", this could be a good cue for a trust exercise to test out the assertion. It may be a fairly crude test of the assertion, but it will at least highlight the issue and provide a fresh angle from which to consider it. Similarly, an assertion that "We *do* listen to each other" or "We are not very good at listening to each other", can be a cue for a listening exercise. It is useful to anticipate likely review issues and have a few quick exercises "ready for action".

This is yet another situation where action replays are a useful standby:

"So you would like this group to be more trusting? Let's see what that might be like. Let's 'replay' the part(s) of the activity where you weren't very trusting and try to be more trusting this time round."

However the replay works out, it should provide a fresh perspective on the issue, and a more detailed picture of what is possible.

4: EXPLORE "What next?"

And now for something completely different? Sometimes it *is* best to make a fresh start and set out on a new adventure with an open mind. But if there have been significant outcomes from the review process so far, it may be important to keep these in mind when setting out on the next activity or adventure.

REPETITION

A group may simply want to repeat an activity because they want to improve in some way second time round. Check with the group, "What are you trying to find out by doing this activity again?" Once you (and they) are clear about their motivation, it may be possible to suggest variations which will make the repetition more worthwhile - for example, by changing roles or responsibilities, or by reducing or increasing the challenge.

REHEARSAL

If a group is taking on a particularly difficult challenge, or seems likely to repeat mistakes, then it can be useful to 'rehearse' the activity. This can involve trying out different ways of doing the activity - either 'almost for real' or by acting out (as in action replays). This might involve acting out how the group will work together, or it could involve picturing things going wrong, and acting out how they would cope.

SEEING INTO THE FUTURE

Most of the techniques already described for 'looking at' the past can also be used to for 'looking at' the future. Just as re-enactments can be adapted to apply to the future (pre-enactments!), so can 'ups and downs', 'line-ups', 'visual metaphors' and 'creative arts'. All of these techniques can be used to create 'pictures' of how a group (or an individual) would like things to be for the next activity. Once group members have pictured a future state that they would like to achieve, they can work out the steps towards it. Rather than simply stating or writing down the steps, each of the steps can be illustrated or acted out, depending on which active or creative medium the group is working in.

THE EXTRA PERSON

An imaginary extra person in the group can be created by asking, "What kind of person would you want to join this group to help you be more successful?". Encourage the group to name, describe and adopt this extra person for the adventure - and look after them during the adventure. If the idea does not capture the imagination of the group, then abandon it! But if the idea takes off, it can provide excellent stimulation for review. The creation of the character in the first place is a way of encouraging the group to analyse what they are lacking. And having an imaginary character can add a fascinating extra dimension to the review process.

These are some of the basic principles and building blocks of active reviewing. They can be brought together in various ways to encourage full involvement in reviewing, and to sustain a lively and supportive climate for learning. The four stage reviewing sequence,

EXPERIENCE → EXPRESS → EXAMINE → EXPLORE

provides a guide for managing the reviewing process. This vivid, all-round approach to reviewing quickly leads to young people remembering or anticipating review issues during an outdoor adventure, and so being more alert and aware during the activity itself. Heightened awareness means that young people will be getting more value from the activity, and will be more able to see and make connections with other events in their lives.

"The ultimate aim of reviewing exercises is to make reviewing a habit, thus stimulating and developing people's ability to learn from experience." [9]

Reviewing Theory and Practice: References and Resources

- 1: L. K. Quinsland and A. Van Ginkel (1984), *How to Process Experience, The Journal of Experiential Education*, 7 (2), p.8-13
- 2a: Reldan Nadler and John Luckner (1990), *Processing the Experience, Theory and Practice*, (Northern Illinois University)
- 2b: Clifford Knapp, *Processing the Adventure Experience*, in: Miles and Priest (1990), *Adventure Education*, (Venture Publishing Inc.)
- 2c: Schoel, Prouty and Radcliffe (1988), *Islands of Healing*, (Project Adventure, Inc.) pp. 65-86 (chapter on sequencing)
- 3: Bert Juch (1983), *Personal Development Theory and Practice in Management Training*, Shell International/Wiley
- 4: Roger Greenaway (1990), *More Than Activities*, Save the Children Fund, p.52 (action replay)

- 5: For more about 'happy charts' see: *More Than Activities* (as above), p.50
6: For using metaphor and related ideas, see: Sue Jennings, *Creative Drama in Groupwork*, (Winslow Press), p.145
7: *More Than Activities* (see 4 above), p.53
8: A tougher version of this idea, 'An Inspector Calls' is described in: John Hunt and Penny Hitchin (1989), *Creative Reviewing*, (Groundwork), p.60
9: *Creative Reviewing* (as above), Staff Training Edition, Supplement, page v.

ARTICLE INFORMATION

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Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Leadership

phone +44 (0)1768 891065

fax +44 (0) 1768 891914

email institute@outdoor-learning.org

website: <http://www.outdoor-learning.org>

AUTHOR INFORMATION

<p style="text-align: center;">ACTIVE REVIEWING</p> <hr/> <p>For the latest information contact:</p>	<p>Roger Greenaway Reviewing Skills Training 9 Drummond Place Lane STIRLING FK8 2JF SCOTLAND phone/fax e-mail: roger@reviewing.co.uk website: www.reviewing.co.uk</p>
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