Koru Foundation Climbs to New Heights

Koru Foundation kicked off its summer programing on June 27th with Outdoor Rock Climbing. Our group met up in Golden, Colorado and found a patch of grass in the shade to introduce ourselves and check-in. All participants brought a great deal of energy and vulnerability. Themes emerged from our check-in and many of us spoke to nerves, emotions, desire for connection, joy, happiness, learning, and desire to try new things. Intentions were set for the adventure upon us and then it was time to take a short drive to the mouth of Clear Creek Canyon. After listening to a safety speech the team embarked on the twenty minute approach to the Canal Zone climbing crag. A prominent feature of the hike is crossing a bridge over a raging Clear Creek. This seemed to be the metaphorical threshold of crossing out of the urban setting and entering wilderness. Once at the crag the group again had some down time, while waiting for their climb, to check-in further and work on our intentions of “getting to know and connect with one another.”  It was at this point that some deeper reasons for why we were here, including our personal history, came forward. The content related to personal story and, in some cases, reflection on mistakes made, offered opportunity to explore why outdoor rock climbing might be beneficial. Utilizing the climb as a metaphor for overcoming self-perceived limitations and working though challenges, we were able to establish and focus personal goals for each participant. Getting on the climb meant learning the technical skills to take personal accountability for one’s own safety and establishing clear, direct communications with both the climber and belayer. Each climb was unique in both its challenges and its takeaways. Subsequent to each climb we took time to continue processing what the experience was like to climb, how we were doing in the moment, and exploring our successes. After the final climb one participant remarked, “That was amazing. That was the most fun thing I have done in forever.” To help create context to his statement, this particular participant climbed the same route three times and worked through anxiety, personal process, and a paralyzing fear of heights to reach the anchors at the top of the climb, which happened on his third attempt. Reflecting on how intense and unwanted feelings can be present and not pushed away, acknowledged yet still not overpower our desire for accomplishing our goals; left me feeling exactly like one of the participants who said, “I’m proud of myself, I did it”.

This outdoor rock climbing experience was led by Koru Foundation in partnership with Colorado Wilderness Rides and Guides. CWRAG’s generous sponsorship has allowed Koru to maintain minimal costs, increase our outdoor access, and ensure safety at the highest industry standard.

~ Zachary Weinzetl Koru Foundation Field Supervisor/Mentor