Engaging with the Term “Therapy” as Intentional Practice in Bush-Adventure Therapy

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My Background
My Intent

Awareness
• How research and evidence can be used to strengthen BAT practice
• How to apply conceptual and therapeutic practice models to strengthen program impact
• What is program integrity and intentional practice, and why are they important

Skill
• Intentionally delivered program facilitation

Mindset
• Research and practice can exist side-by-side (and both are important)
• Creative and intentional therapeutic approaches are valued within BAT
My Lens

Clinical and forensic psychology, youth work

Research (evidence)

Practice

Wilderness therapy

Adventure therapy

Eco-therapy

Wilderness-adventure therapy

Eco-therapy

Boot camps

Outdoor behavioral healthcare

Experiential education

Bush-adventure therapy

Wilderness-challenge programs
What Programs or Interventions Deliver High Impact (Wider Literature)

- Conceptually sound
- Skill focused
- Targeted
- Responsive
- Program integrity
What about BAT?

Large variability in program impact
Defining BAT Interventions As

Therapy
Camp
Education
Program

Intensive Wilderness Programming

A clearly defined and structured group-based program that is delivered within a remote or wilderness area, which is experienced by the participants as both physically and psychological demanding (or intense) in nature (Raymond, 2014).
What is “Therapy”

“the treatment of physical, mental or social disorders or disease” (Collins Dictionary, 1998)

“the treatment of disease or disorders, as by some remedial, rehabilitating, or curative process” (Online dictionary)

“treatment intended to relieve or heal a disorder” (Online dictionary)
Therapy as “Process to Outcome”

Process / Strategies (Treatment) → Outcome (Growth of physical, psychological, medical or social)

Intentional
Medical Example

Panadol / Paracetamol (Process/Strategy) → Reduce Headache (Outcome)

Intentional
Bush Adventure Therapy is a diverse field of practice combining adventure and outdoor environments with the intention to achieve therapeutic outcomes for those involved.
Program or Dosage Consistency (Integrity/Fidelity)

500mg Paracetamol

Reduced Headache

Process / Strategy

Outcome

Intentionality
Across the forensic, educational, medical and psychological literature, reviews indicate that programs or interventions that are delivered with high program integrity (e.g., as they were designed and intended, in a consistent manner), achieve the strongest outcomes.

Bringing attention to program integrity/fidelity remains foundational to program developers and researchers. It is largely neglected in this field.


Qualitative Evidence of Many BAT Programs: Uncertain Conceptual Underpinnings and Low Integrity/Fidelity

Inconsistent Implementation of Strategies or Program Components

Unclear of Outcomes

Intentionality is hit and miss
Barriers of Program Integrity/Fidelity

- Recruitment focus on hard skills not soft skills
- Low staff training
- Staff are outcome focused (get to destination) as opposed to process (journey) focused
- Lack of organisational policies or documentation
- Low awareness of program integrity importance
- Lack of clear conceptual framework or program logic to support program implementation
Hierarchy of Outcomes (Program Logic)

- Strategies/Processes
- Short
- Medium
- Long

Intentional Practice
Medical Example

Physical exercise → Fitter → Reduce Plaque Build Up in Arteries → Reduce Risk of Heart Attack

Hierarchies of Outcomes:
- Short: Fitter
- Medium: Reduce Plaque Build Up in Arteries
- Long: Reduce Risk of Heart Attack

Intentional Practice
Bush Adventure Therapy Example

**Process/Strategies**
- Extended period alone away from family in a remote setting

**Increased connection to intrinsic values**

**Improved relations with family**

**Improved coping and happiness**

**Hierarchy of Outcomes**
- Short
- Medium
- Long

**Intentional Practice**
Bush Adventure Therapy Example

Completion of intensive physical challenges → Increased self-esteem → Reduced offending behaviour → Prosocial community member

Hierarchy of Outcomes

Process/Strategies

Intentional Practice

Underpinned by theory or evidence (conceptually sound)
Theory - Process - Outcome

- Theory or Evidence
- Process / Strategies (Treatment)
- Outcome (Growth of physical, psychological, medical or social)
Catalyst for Change

Raymond, I.J. (2015). The evidence supporting the catalytic properties of brief and intensive wilderness programs for youth at risk. *Australian Psychological Society Annual Conference, Gold Coast, 29th September to 2nd October 2015.*
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7JFWu2lhA-M
Transtheoretical Model

Stages of Change or Transtheoretical Model (Prochaska, Di Clemente & Norcross, 1992) was applied to operationalise the catalytic properties.

1. Pre-Contemplative
2. Contemplative
3. Preparation
4. Action
5. Maintenance
Bush-Adventure Therapy as “Intentional Practice”

Intentionality can be brought to:
• Program Development
• Program Facilitation

Intentionality becomes more important when there are funded benchmarks or outcomes, and when you work with clinical or at-risk population groups (notably populations with trauma backgrounds).

www.lifebuoyancy.org/intentional-practice
“Life Buoyancy Model” as Framework for Intentional Practice

Model founded upon:
- Positive psychology and strength-based practice (growth focused)
- Neuro-sequential brain development
- Program logic modelling
- Attachment theory
- Academic buoyancy
“Life Buoyancy Model” as Framework for Intentional Practice

It has applications to:

• Any intervention or program where an intentional or therapeutic practice approach is warranted
• Occasions where psychological or behavioural growth objectives are desired through a relationship-based intervention
• Both professional and non-professional staff (inclusive model)
• Strengthen program integrity of relationship-based interventions
Curiosity

“I wonder”

Awareness

Skills

Mindset

Focus of Intent
(Short-Term Outcomes)

Life Engagement and Wellbeing
(Medium-Term Outcomes)

Life Engagement

Wellbeing

Life Buoyancy
Experience positive affective states (buoyant) and can bounce back (or be buoyant) under stress.

Coaching

“What” and “how”

Validation

“I notice”

Impact
(Longer-Term Outcomes)

Brain Development 101

What is my intent?
Curiosity
- Consequences of actions
- Culture and identity
- Emotional awareness

Awareness
- Consequences of actions
- Culture and identity
- Emotional awareness

Skills
- Self control
- Assertiveness
- Mindfulness

Mindset
- Adults are safe and caring
- I am valued by others
- I am proud of my culture

Coaching
- Cultural activities
- Remote wilderness environment
- Group discussions around a fire
- Abseiling

Validation

Program Components or Activities
Activating Experiences (Program Processes)
Focus of Intent (Short-Term Outcomes)
“Life Buoyancy Model” as Framework for Intentional Practice (Program Development)

Program development applications through program logic modelling, supported by a program theory.


Summary

Therapy can be described as “intentional practice”, where there is a clear logic (supported by evidence) between the delivery of intervention processes/components and intended outcomes.

Intentional practice can be operationalised through both (1) program development and (2) program facilitation.

Intentional practice enhances “program fidelity/integrity”; a predictor of stronger program/intervention outcomes.

Take home message: “What is your intent?”
Was my Intent Achieved

Awareness
• How you can use research and evidence to strengthen your BAT practice
• How to apply conceptual and therapeutic practice models to strengthen program impact
• What is program integrity and intentional practice, and why are they important

Skill
• Intentionally delivered program facilitation and training

Mindset
• Research and practice can exist side-by-side (and both are important)
• Creative and intentional therapeutic approaches are valued within BAT
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