



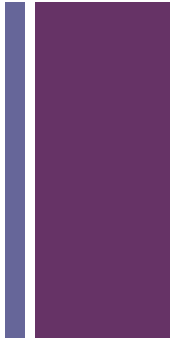
# Crisis & Emergency Phone Calls

**Paul Dreyer, CEO, Avid4 Adventure**  
**America Outdoors Conference**  
**December 6, 2018**



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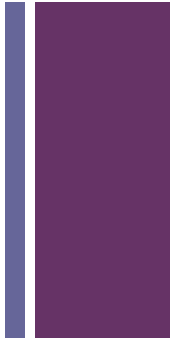
# Our Schedule



- Foundational concepts
- A bit of practice with coaching
- Reflection and Next Steps



# + Defining Success



- Seek partnership
- Represent your organization well
- Communicate clearly
- Gain some resolution or closure
- Minimize emotional impact on you/your staff
- Do Good. Well.



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# Understanding the Players



Parents...

- Care deeply
- Have a lot of emotion

You...

- Have ownership & passion
- May also have a lot of emotion



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# Understanding the Players

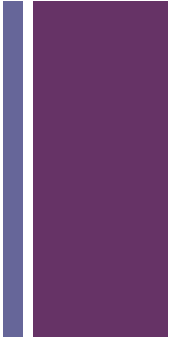


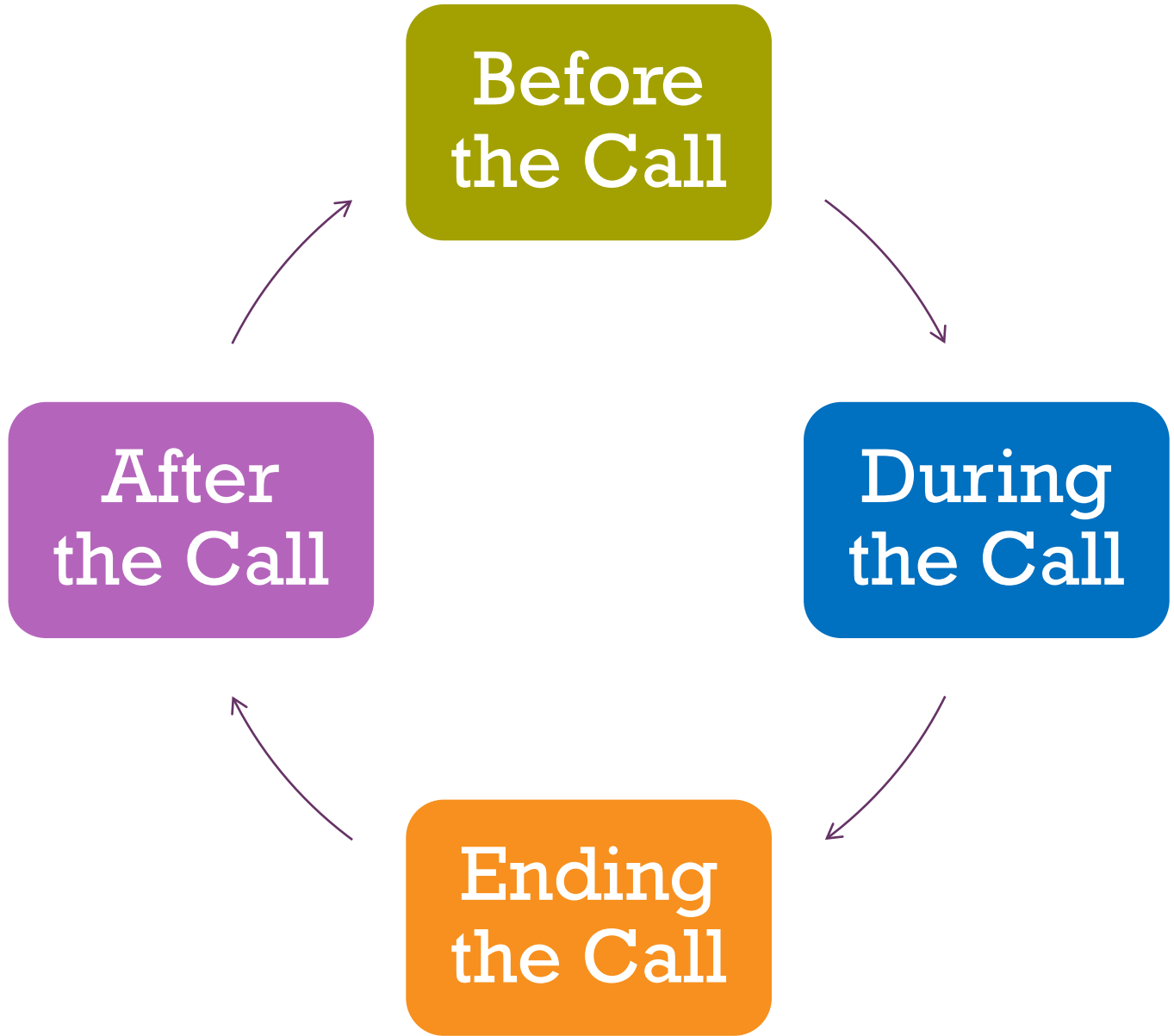
## Parents...

- Are “on-sighting” parenthood
- ~~Will~~ May not hear everything you are saying
- Perspective may be distorted by more pressing concerns

## You...

- May be new to all or part of the situation
- ~~Will~~ May be tired from long hours of work
- Perspective may be distorted by other things happening in your program







# + Before the Call



- Write a script
- Be aware of your timing
- Promptness matters
- Have a plan for voicemail
- Get a coach





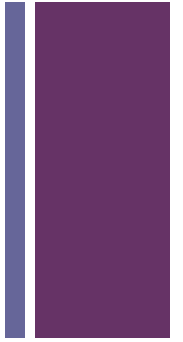
# + During the Call



<b>Do</b>	<b>Try to Avoid</b>
If true, tell them their child is not physically injured	Promises you can't deliver
State the problem and the decision	Lying
Know your policies (e.g. around expulsions and refunds)	Giving your personal phone number
Maintain a consistent point of contact	Field staff talk to parents



# + During the Call



**Listen**

**Empathize**

**Ask Questions**

**Follow Up (make a plan)**



# + During the Call

## Potentially helpful phrases

- “She may not have accomplished all she was hoping, but she did accomplish...”
- “They were respected by their peers for...”
- “We know that sometimes the best learning comes from the consequences of unpleasant experiences.”
- “I understand that it is hard to...”
- “What I need from you right now is to...”





# + During the Call

If things become challenging...



- L.E.A.F.
- Avoid baited hooks
- Allow for silence (breathing is good)
- Be thoughtful about saying, “I’m sorry.”



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# Ending Calls

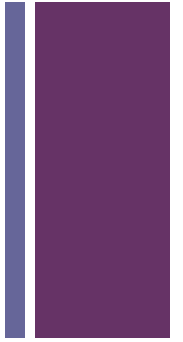


- Review important information and ask them to paraphrase
- End with structure...
  - Clarify the outcome and next steps
  - Schedule and try to be responsible for the next call



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# After the Call



- In the case of divorced or split parents, consider calling both parties
- Document promptly
- Anticipate a follow-up call
- Debrief with your coach



# Coping Strategies and Emotional Armor



- Debrief calls and incidents
- Practice regularly
- Pass the call up if you are not succeeding or are losing your mind



# Coping Strategies and Emotional Armor



- Remind yourself...
  - Do good. Well.
  - They are just doing their job as a parent
  - This will end soon and these people are (likely) a small part of your life





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# Legal Considerations



- Confidentiality
- Parents of minors are entitled to information
- Avoid any appearance of coerced statements
- You are not charged with making an iron-clad legal case

# + Parent Styles

## The BLAMER

- “It’s your fault.”
- Response: stick to the facts



# + Parent Styles

## The VICTIM

- “This is so hard for us. You must be able to help. Can you...”
- Response: empathy, but clarity



# + Parent Styles

## The DENIER

- “That couldn’t have happened.”
- Response: stick to the facts—stay clear of an arguing trap.



# + Parent Styles

## The DISENGAGED

- Emotionally not present, or not willing to engage with the situation
- Response: clarify next steps; ask the parent to repeat the situation and plan back to you.





+ Time to  
**PRACTICE!**

(after you get instructions)

# + Practice Scenarios

- Work in teams of 3
- For each scenario there will be one caller, one parent, one observer/coach
- Caller and Coach will take a few minutes before each call to read the scenario and make a quick plan
- Both parents and callers have a prep sheet





# Practice Scenarios



- Spread out through the whole room
- Caller and Parent should not be able to see each other
- Each “call” should be about 5 minutes, followed by a 3-4 minutes of reflection/debrief
- Goal is two calls per group





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# Practice Scenarios



- Scenarios always have glitches stemming from theoretical information.
- Roll with the punches for the sake of the learning!

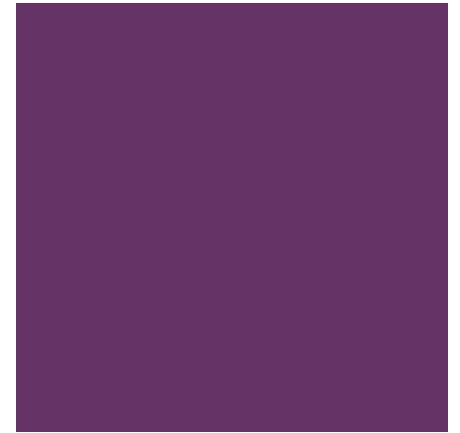




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+ We will gather back together at 11:50



# Looking Ahead



- Identify two characteristics or behaviors of potential parents (or clients) that are likely to hook you into angry or defensive communication. Write down one strategy for responding constructively to each of those behaviors.
- Identify two people in your program or a similar program who can serve as resources for you in preparing for and/or debriefing a challenging parent phone call. Write down their names and contact those people in the next six months about serving as resources for you in the future.





+ **Thank you, and good luck!**

*Paul Dreyer, M.A. Counseling  
CEO, Avid4 Adventure  
Instructor, NOLS Wilderness Medicine  
[Paul@Avid4.com](mailto:Paul@Avid4.com)  
800-977-9873 ext 113*