

# THE FIRST 72 HOURS: CREATING A CULTURE OF RISK AWARENESS

HOW DO YOU CREATE AND MAINTAIN SYSTEMS OF  
COURSE INTEGRITY AND STUDENT SAFETY?



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PRESENTATION GIVEN TO THE NOLS WILDERNESS RISK MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE  
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## DRAGONS' MISSION STATEMENT

Through remote, personally attentive and unconventional travel experiences that benefit from deep and sustained personal connections within the countries to which we travel, Dragons provides rugged learning adventures that introduce participants to a complex range of human relationships that affect shared resources and that provide opportunities for exploration of self, skill building and leadership training, and cultivation of global citizenship.

\* \* \* \* \*

In Dragons' student programming we employ experiential education to address question in adolescents, "who am I and why do I matter," while embracing a leadership model of leading-from-behind, such that students are encouraged to be self-actualized, self-directed leaders of collective fate.

### CREATING A SPACE FOR GROWTH

The Magic is in the spaces, not the lines. The more clearly defined the lines, the more freedom students have to explore magic in the spaces without fear or uncertainty.

Dragons aspires to create an institution that in practice and in product promotes learning environments in which participants can see themselves with greater clarity. In placing students in environments of extreme difference, we are removing from them environmental points of reference that have come to help them define who they are and what they stand for. We strive to create an atmosphere of uncertainty, where one is challenged to see oneself devoid of the social, physical and cultural constructs that have come to define the participant, while inspiring them to develop a more highly evolved relationship with the other. We aim to provide them the supported freedom to redefine what is most important to them and to set goals for themselves around their definition of their highest potential.

In this place of void and potential, it is the instructor's responsibility to create the parameters that defines the potential for the experience, for learning, stretching and growth; a space in which students can encounter themselves more broadly. At Dragons, we don't want to define our students; rather we want to define the parameters that open spaces for our students to develop a personally-realized definition of self, believing that when students do so they are more likely to catch our core values. The Educator's Resource and Instructor Manual work together to describe how Dragons courses effectively and safely opens spaces for students to catch our core values.

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## THE CONTAINER DEFINES THE SPACE

The materials, communication, activities, concepts and participants that go into defining the organizational structure and integrity of Dragons experience can be referred to as the "container" of the experience. The container defines the opportunities and limitations of a participant's engagement with the other. Within a Dragons course, there are numerous overlapping layers of structure and integrity, i.e. numerous containers, that work together to shape the parameters of the experience. These containers are:

The individual container: The container at its simplest form is the identity of the individual and the frames of reference that an individual brings with him or her that ground the person in who s/he is. This container frames that person's reality. While an individuals' container will likely grow and change on a Dragons course, it is not our task to construct an individual's container. Nonetheless, at times of personal crisis, such as emotional or physical trauma, our job may be to prop up the individual's personal container with references to home, familiar comforts, and direct emotional support.

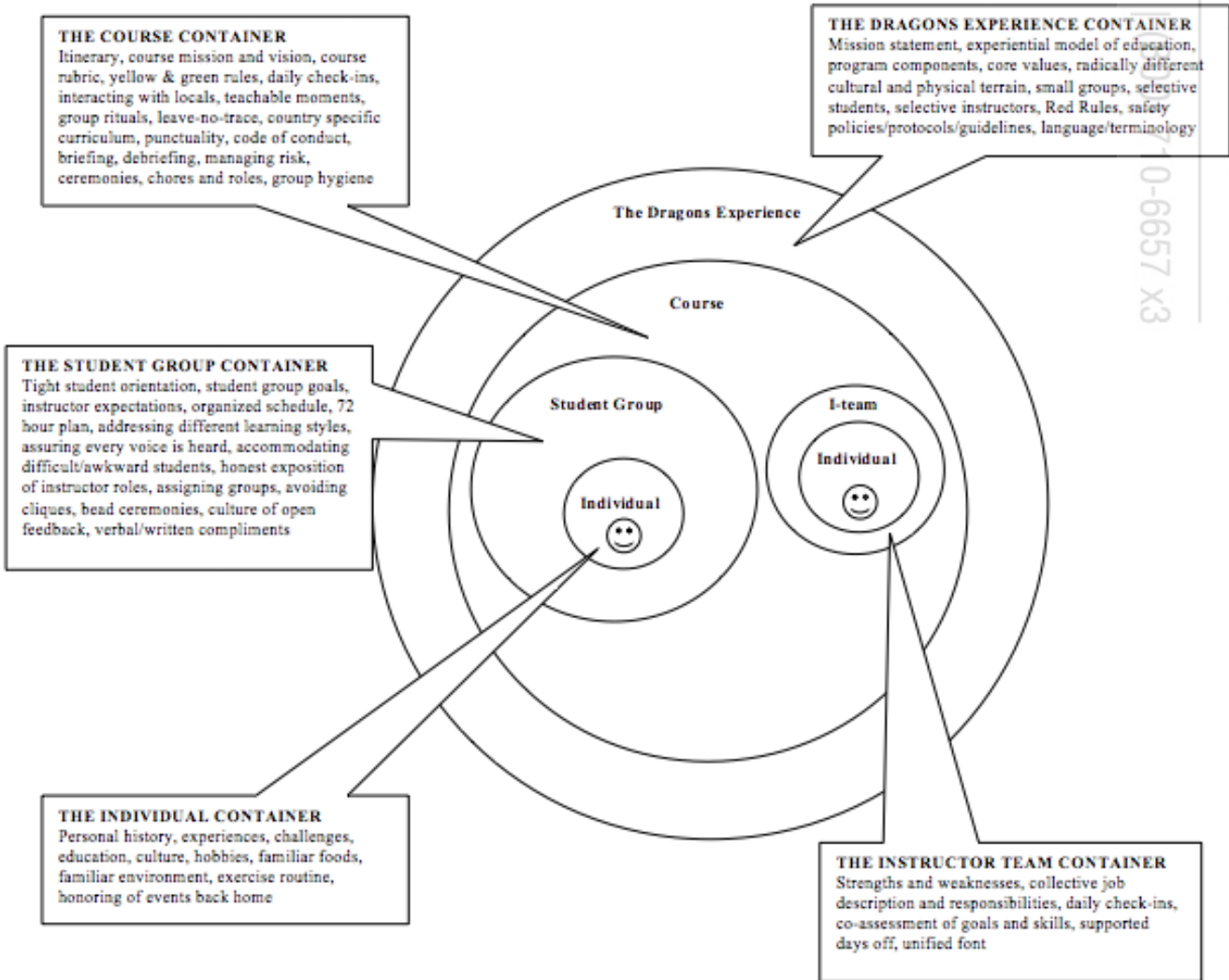
The student group container: Beginning during pre-course, and especially when together, the student group creates a container of its own. The student-group container forms organically as students bond and can trend towards healthy and integrated or unhealthy and exclusive. The instructor team can affect the outcome of this dynamic by tone-setting and enforcing limitations on exclusive/alienating behaviors and promoting inclusive behaviors.

The instructor-team container: Within an experiential education program, there are identities of the instructor-team and the container that defines them and their work. The instructor-team container is defined by Dragons through contractual relationships but is also built stronger and made more resilient through intentional care and maintenance. Open sharing of goals and expectations, positive reinforcement, I-team rituals, norms of professionalism and timeliness, and a culture of open communication and feedback all bolster the instructor-team container.

The course container: The integrity and structure of each program, with its unique itinerary, goals, activities, participants and norms of behavior has its own identity. The ways in which the program marketing message aligns with what students experience in the field, the Yak Yak prompts, fluidity of arrival in-country, and use of Dragons Core and Country-Specific Curriculum will largely define the Course Container.

The container of the Dragons experience: Finally, there are the institutional definitions, norms, expectations, language, and protocols that give definition to a Dragons Experience. To create a space in which the student is open to growth, willing and able to be present and to inspect himself and engage in a more authentic reality, we need to build and maintain solid outside containers, beginning with the outer-most container.

# THE CONTAINERS OF A DRAGONS COURSE



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# COURSE REQUIREMENTS

## FIRST 72 HOURS

The management of an in-field student orientation during the first 72 hours of any program is paramount to effective risk management and the quality of experience throughout the entire trip. These first field days are when the initial tone for the course is set, including the formation of a group culture grounded in risk awareness and open communication. A well-planned and executed 72-hour plan can open healthy communication lines, promote positive behaviors, and ensure consistency across courses. Instructors need to have a detailed plan for their students' arrival, with an agenda that fills just about every minute of the first 72 hours. If given too much unstructured time, students will immediately go to the behavior patterns that they are most familiar.

A tight agenda will make you look professional, instill confidence among your group, and assuage students' "What am I doing here?" insecurities.

Type up the first 72 hour agenda. Have a master copy for your use, and make a student copy for their welcome packets.

**Cross-Program Check-lists:** These checklists – given to you at Orientation, found in the Course Log – are meant to ensure that you teach the most fundamental lessons and handle the necessary evaluation, feedback, and communication with the Dragons office to ensure a safe, high quality experience for your students. They also help to ensure consistency between diverse programs. You will have time during Orientation to “dial” these first three days. Mark “Date Planned.” Once the lesson has been facilitated/delivered, please indicate this under “Date Delivered.” These checklists will be reviewed by Dragons administration at the end of your course.

**Transference:** It is important to begin tone setting for transference early on in the course. The more you are able to present the course as a process that goes beyond the students' time abroad, the more fluid and meaningful their transition back home will be. If the first 72 hours tone sets for their time in-country, transference tone sets for how their experience abroad will affect the rest of their lives.

## PREPARATION FOR YOUR STUDENTS' ARRIVALS

**Time:** How much time do you have? When does your first student arrive, and what about the last? What will you do with the other students while you are waiting (see below)? By what time do you need to be at the airport to check in? Have you arranged shuttle transportation to the airport for your group? Do you have a plan for students who come in late, lose a bag, etc?

**Food:** How can you use a small amount of the budget money to appease your students' appetites over until they board the plane? Have you considered students' special dietary needs? Have you checked in with the airline regarding your students' special dietary needs?

**Prepare some cool welcome materials for your students.** This small token will help calm their nerves and get them stoked. Some things you may want to prepare/include:

- A map
- Inspirational quotes and/or a poem
- A copy of the itinerary
- Materials for a letter-to-self
- A questionnaire for the plane ride (aka In-Air Questionnaire) that addresses country-specific topics and encourages students to get their guidebooks out to start learning about the place they're traveling to

**Timelines:** Do your students know when their flight is departing? When do all students need to be ready to leave?

**Transportation:** Do you need the vans to go somewhere? (Only for groups who have a long time between student arrivals and group departure.)

**Space:** Have a system for bag-checks and bag storage figured out before they arrive. Do you have a private space/room that you can use to do bag checks? If you have more than a few hours to kill before heading to the airport, do you have a place to safely store baggage so that you can participate in orientation activities without worrying?

**Group management:** Do you have everything wrapped up so that you can focus in on holding the group together and getting the group psyched? What are you going to do if you unexpectedly find some spare time on your hands (due to a delay, etc)? Ideas: language lesson, map and itinerary review, history lesson, etc.

**Personal needs:** Have you adequately tended to your own personal needs? Are you ready to devote all of your energies to your students and running the course?

**Shared Voice:** How are you going to ensure that each instructor has a voice? Who is going to take the lead in which aspects of your initial course introduction?

## WELCOMING STUDENTS

**Have all pre-course worked wrapped up.** They'll be nervous, but much less so if you are calm and in control. Even if you have unfinished business, stop when your students arrive and take the time to be present with them.

**Designate a meeting space for your group, and pimp it out.** Do you look organized, calm, and prepared? Do you have a nice space that's out of the way so that your students feel like they can get comfortable and so that you can chat with parents who drop their son/daughter off by car?

**Do a professional and thorough individual check-in with each student.** If parents are around, great! Do it while they're there so that they can take back anything that the student has packed that won't be needed on the course.



- **Pack check:** You'll find that some students have brought WAY too much. Have them ditch the gallon size bottles of Purell, and don't let them travel with economy size bottles of shampoo!
- **Med collection/check in:** Collect all prescription meds, mark them with the student's name. If they ask why... "It's Dragons policy." Be sure to check this all over with the info listed on their medical form. If they have a new medical issue, or if they are carrying medications that they shouldn't be carrying, please be sure to communicate this information to someone in the Dragons Admissions Director and/or Update@/PD.

**Keep them busy!**

- PHONE THEIR PARENTS to let them know that they made it safely and that they are with the group and the instructors!!
- Have magazines and art supplies, and asking students to decorate their group journal, or their personal water bottles, etc
- Provide a budget to a small group of students and asking them to get some snacks or dinner supplies
- Make nametags for themselves or each other; personal journal exercise; identify one or more interesting things about the places they'll be visiting

**TAKE A GROUP PHOTO AND POST IT TO THE YAK BOARD!** And while you're at it, write a quick note letting parents know that it's all good and that the group is charged and ready for the adventure ahead!

See the Educator's Resource for additional ideas on GROUP FORMING activities.

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## 72 HOUR SAMPLE: MOROCCO

### AIRPORT/TRAVEL DAY- JUNE 28

Instructors should arrive by 12:00 and ready to meet students at 1:00. Our flight leaves at 8:20 pm. As soon as all students are present we will go through security. The international terminal can be crowded, so we want to get inside as quickly as possible to find a large space to be in.

#### BEFORE CHECKING IN:

- Give students welcome packet and explain. Examples of things to go in welcome packet:
  - A map of Morocco
  - Inspirational quotes
  - A self addressed envelope for a letter to themselves
  - A copy of the itinerary
  - An on-the-plane questionnaire that addresses country-specific topics and acts as an assessment to see what students know
  - Snacks
  - Name tags
- Collect all medications (the instructor who we designate as the "doctor") and go over current state of health and any health concerns, new medical conditions since last checked in with office, problems (i.e. allergies). Talk with students about how instructors will distribute meds. Review basic health and safety guidelines. Send any updates on med information to office
  - ACTIVITY: something for other students to do while individuals check in with the doctor.
- ALL students phone their parents!!
- Collect any cell phones/IPODS that students brought
- Find out if students will have any special meal needs to tell airlines when checking in

CHECK IN: Check in as a group- students can check in individually and once everyone is through security, instructors should collect passports.

#### WHILE WAITING FOR FLIGHT:

- Give students budget for dinner (\$10- make sure to have small denominations).
  - Introduce Roles of the Day. We don't have to assign them here, but just so they are familiar..
- Group Goals/Mission Statement/Contract (Dragons recommends that we do this before leaving the US)
  - RED/YELLOW/GREEN RULES
  - Review Red Rules and Reason
  - Write and sign contract
- Brief overview of itinerary, focusing on first few days
- Safety Lesson # 1:
  - Review of Illness Prevention/Health Policies and Guidelines



- o How/Where to eat safe (wipe silverware, dishes, and glasses- no water droplets, uncooked vegetables)
- o Water and drinks: "always question them"
  - Hydration while traveling: options
  - Dos and don'ts
  - Ice, showers and open mouths
  - Bottled drinks
  - Sharing, etc (Moroccan shared water glass)
- o How to stay clean and discreet
  - Brushing teeth
- o Anticipated hazards of this course/country/local knowledge
- o Avoiding animal bites
  - Do not pet animals
  - Teach to carry/throw rocks and be vigilant when dogs are present
- o Contact cards/Lost and alone, what to do
- o After dark protocols
- o Dress and behavior codes
- o Gender Roles and women's safety
- o Banned transport—motorcycles
- o Money and valuables

GENERAL ACTIVITIES TO FILL SPARE TIME:

- Language lesson : Greetings (Cara)
- Fears in a Hat
- History Lesson
- Ice Breakers (find things in common, step in, etc. )
- Name games
- Introduce and begin group journal
- Write a letter to yourself
- Introductions
- Have students identify one or more interesting things about places they will visit (itinerary)

FLIGHT

- Start individual student check-ins. These should be completed in first 72 hours:
  - o Physical and emotional health
  - o Are they feeling good and excited about the Group, Itinerary, Etc?
  - o Homesickness? Anxieties? Anything to express outside group meetings?
  - o Home-stay and ISPs: do they have thoughts or preferences?

- Have students complete possible questionnaire in their welcome packet.
- Encourage students to sleep!

### LAYOVER-JUNE 29

- Arrive at 7:45 AM, Depart at 9:50 AM
- Language lesson
- Have students figure out arrival logistics. Look at map of Marrakesh- where is our hostel? How much do we think a taxi will cost from the airport? Are there restaurants near by our hostel? Should we purchase water at the airport
- Continue Individual Check ins

### JUNE 29

- 10:30 AM Arrive in Kesh  
 Arrange two grand taxis from the airport to hostel (make sure to take at least 2 students with when arranging!)
- 11:30 AM Arrive at Youth Hostel/ First group meeting (health and emotional check in, logistics, quote)
- 12:00 PM Lunch nearby café (discuss food safety) / short rest
- 2:00 PM Chat with Fullbright folks (maybe we can find a cool café— something comfortable so students aren't too hot.
- 3:00 PM Tour of Medina
- 4:00 PM Scavenger hunt
- 5:00 PM Tea/Snack/Journal at Jamaa
- 6:00 PM Students get us back to hotel
- 7:00 PM Dinner
- 8:30 PM Evening meeting (debrief, logistics for next day)/Bag Check

\* This is a busy day, but we could do a ceremony this evening, or we could wait.

- Instructor meeting!
- "Camel" or instructor should get adequate water for today and travels tomorrow
- How to post a Yak Yak and expectations
- Students and Instructors both post a Yak about arrival in country!
- Instructors send Boulder local contact info
- Continue Individual check-ins
- Establish a curfew –students should know that they shouldn't walk around alone.

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## JUNE 30

- Set the tone! Have group ready for morning reading, health check in, suggested questions/reflection for the day and breakfast at 7:30 AM
- Goal Setting- personal goals ceremony
  - Individual goals reflection: "How did I get here?" "Why am I here?" "What do I want to get out of this experience?" "What are my goals/hopes? How can I achieve them? What will stand in the way of achieving them?"
  - Perhaps a letter to self that they can get ½ way through trip.
- Frontload for transference at course conclusion and beyond
- Continue individual check-ins
- Female specific health and hygiene tips
- How to go to the bathroom
- Dragons 101 / Itinerary lesson
  - Course educational flow
- Overview of course itinerary and course educational flow
- Course Expectations:
  - Instructor Expectations, Student Expectations (How did I get here?, Why am I here?, What excites us most as a group?), level of participation, level of independence and supervision.
- Instructor roles:
  - Time off
  - How and when to contact instructors
  - Explain that instructors are "mandatory reporters" and may need to share certain information with the administration or authorities; confidentiality vs. obligation to report. Be transparent!
- Addressing group issues/working together as a team
- Language lesson
- Debrief on the day/logistics for next day

## JULY 1

- Set the tone! Have group ready for morning reading, health check in, and breakfast at 8:00 AM
- Finish Individual check ins
- Town orientation and scavenger hunt
- Language lesson
- Cooking lesson (help make tajine/tea for lunch ?)
- Speakers
- Lesson: Cultural norms
- Safety 2:
  - Communications: How to use phones and e-mails, area codes, phone cards, mobiles, landlines, how can parents contact students, how and when to contact Boulder directly
  - Avoid demonstrations and political gatherings
  - Local laws, alcohol, drugs, police and corruption

- o Cultural do's and don't (local expectations)
  - Bargaining, when in doubt watch the locals, gestures and greetings, photography, religious sites, beggars, home stay respect, stereotypes of Americans, local views of sexuality/public displays of affection
- o Medical Bag: who, what why?
- o Local pharmacies/Local medicine
- o Medical care options in this place: Hospitals and clinics
- o GI issues:
  - Common issues and how to avoid them
  - What to do if it happens
  - When to come to instructors
- 2nd Review of Red Rules and Reasons
- Review student medical information and changes and send to update@
- All students post a Yak upon arrival
- Cultural activity in the evening
- Debrief on the day/logistics for next day
- Assign Student roles of the day

**\*BEGIN REFERRING TO CALENDAR FOR WEEKLY SCHEDULE!**

To support the delivery of the "Skills and Acquisition" phase of the GENERAL section on your Instructor Map, please reference this task list for your 24 and 72 Hour Checklists. Covering the following bullet points within the first 72 hours of your course is MANDATORY. Please consult the Instructor Manual for supporting policies and guidelines.

**Within the first 24 hours:**

How to post Yaks / rules & expectations

All students post Yak from country ASAP →

Second review "Red Rules and Rationale"

- o Have students commit again and consider including in written group contract, a verbal commitment to each other, etc.

Safety 1: Anticipated hazards of course/country

- Solo Travel & Boundaries (IM p.57)
- Animal Bites (IM p.133-137)
- o An animal bite is a serious incident and may require evacuation. Please give a thorough (>10 minute) briefing and review as necessary with attention to the following:
  - **Awareness:** Animal safety is different abroad than at home, even

a small bite can be cause for evacuation and disruption of the course, students should be aware of animal risks.

- Prevention: Not petting or approaching animals, carrying rocks at night, buddy systems, being aware of areas with dogs, "fake rock throws," etc.
- Response: Students should notify instructors immediately if bitten. Rabies can be life-threatening and even with the rabies vaccinations, additional treatment will be required.
- Hitch-hiking
- After Dark Protocols
- Dress and behavioral codes
- Gender roles & women's safety [one of our biggest risks; please be thorough; >10 minutes!]
- Mandatory Reporter (IM p.46-47)
  - Explain that instructors are "mandatory reporters" and may be obligated to share certain information with the administration and other authorities. Confidentiality vs. obligation to report...be transparent!
- Banned Transport - motorcycles
- Money and Valuables
- Contact Cards
  - Lost and alone – what to do?

Hygiene/Health

- How to use bathrooms
- How/Where to eat safely
  - Wipe silverware, dishes and glasses (no water droplets)
- How to stay clean (attention to gender specific issues as well)
- Water & drinks: "always question them"
  - Hydration while traveling: Students should know where/how they can access potable water
  - Ice
  - Showers and open mouths
  - Bottled drinks
  - Sharing food/drinks
  - Brushing teeth

Collect student medications (IM p.83-84)

- If couldn't before international flight

Within the first 72 hours (IM p.21-37):

Instructors send PD/update@ team contact info

## Brief students on course itinerary and educational flow

### Course Expectations

- Instructor Expectations
  - o Time off; how to contact instructors; roles
- Student Expectations:
  - o How did I get here?
  - o Why am I here?
  - o What excites you most as a group?
  - o Red, Yellow, and Green rules; consider a group contract
- Level of participation, independence, and supervision
- Program House Rules (if applicable)

### Safety 2:

- Communication:
  - o How to use phones and internet
  - o Country codes/Area codes
  - o How can parents contact you / mail things to you
  - o How and when to contact Dragons n Boulder directly
- How to get around on local transport
- Avoid demonstrations and political gatherings
- Local laws, Alcohol, Drugs, Police, and Corruption
- Cultural Do's and Don'ts (When in doubt Watch the Locals)
  - o Bargaining
  - o Gestures and greetings
  - o Photography
  - o Religious sites
  - o Beggars
  - o Home-stay respect
  - o Stereotypes of Americans
  - o Local Views of Sexuality/Public Displays of Affection
- Medical Kit: Who, what, why?
- Local Pharmacies/Local medicine
- Locations of Hospitals and Clinics
- GI issues (almost 50% of all our incident reports are GI related. Be proactive!):
  - o Common Issues & how to avoid them
    - Incorporate hygienic rituals into group culture: eg, hand holding circle before eating and everyone must wash hands before entering the circle



- Designate a “health czar” as a student role
  - Provide good decision making tools re: food/water
  - Instructors: Ensure that home-stay families and restaurants (whenever possible) understand hygienic standards
  - Be proactive!!!
- o What to do if it happens
  - o When to come to Instructors

### Individual Student Check-ins

- Anxieties
- Home-stay interests
- ISP interests
- Goal setting

Review student med. info w/ Co-Instrs.& inform PD/update@ w/ changes

### Language Lesson 1:

- 5 key questions and/or phrases to facilitate further discovery and safety
- Group goal setting & expectations re: expedition behavior

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