



**OUTWARD BOUND
CANADA**

Blind-Spot: Near Miss Trauma

Brendan Madden
Director of Learning and
Adventure



Case Study 1

- A white water canoe instructor cancels a contract.
- Discussion reveals that the instructor had been guiding with another company, and had a near miss with several canoes capsizing simultaneously on a flooding, glacially fed river
- The instructor was experiencing anxiety, panic attacks, sleeplessness, especially when she tried to canoe again
- We agreed to find a replacement for the course

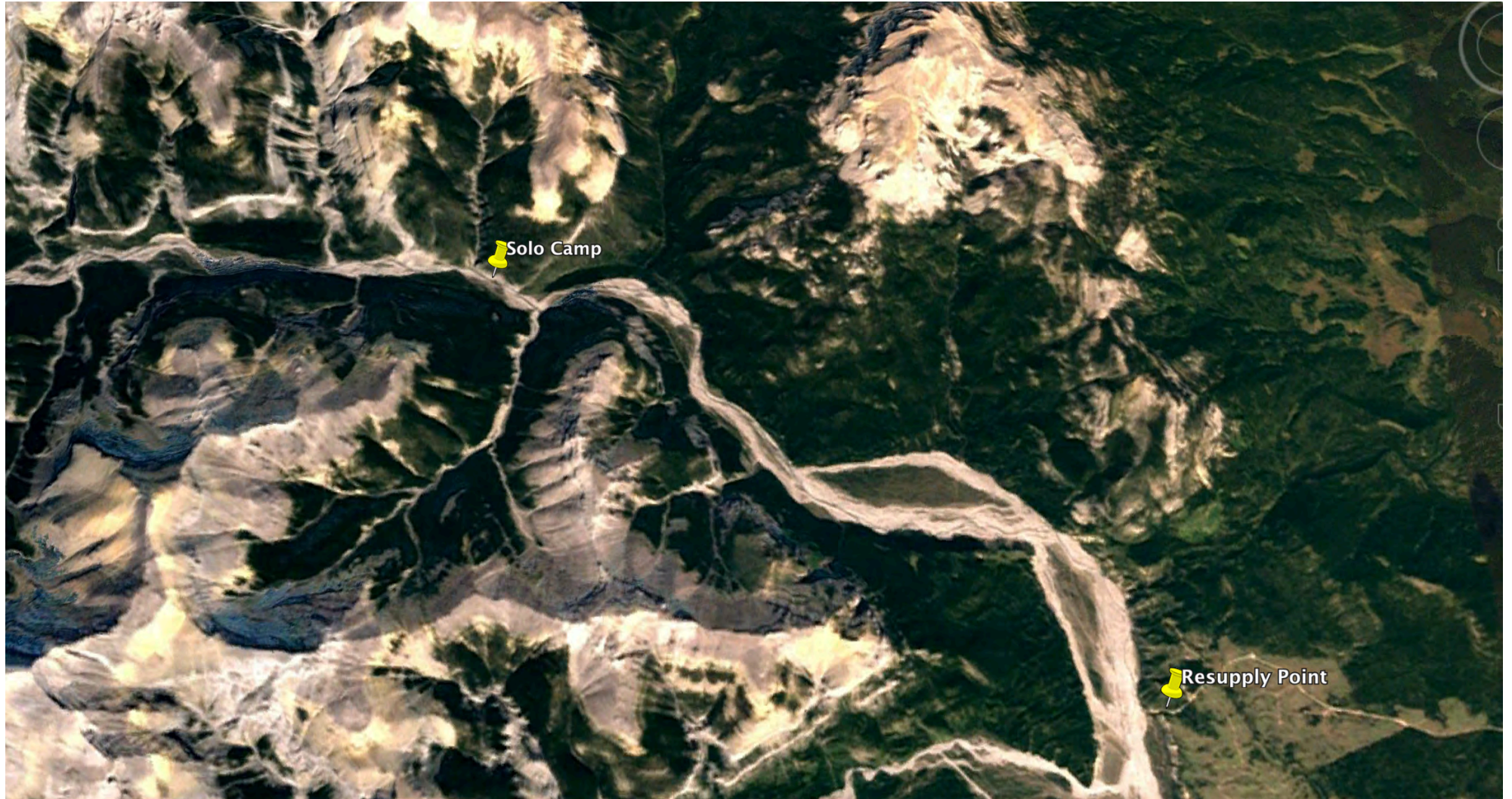
Near Miss Trauma

When a significant Near Miss / Near Death experience happens on a program, participants can experience symptoms of trauma, irrespective of the event's positive outcome

These symptoms can be experienced much more severe in the leaders, due to their heightened position of responsibility and expectations of control.



Case Study #2: Flood on Solo



Case Study 2

A group hiking in the Canadian Rockies is struck by a flash flood while on solo. Two instructors had separated from the group in order to rendezvous with a resupply vehicle. These instructors had a separate near miss while fording the flooding river while making their way back to the group. All three instructors experienced significant trauma symptoms.

Recognition

Evasiveness about debrief
Difficulty talking about event
Atmosphere of nervous
tension
Tears
Anger (at you!?!)
Confusion
*I've never seen a
river/ocean/mountain act like
that before*
Normal vs. Not-Normal





Case Study #3: Alaska

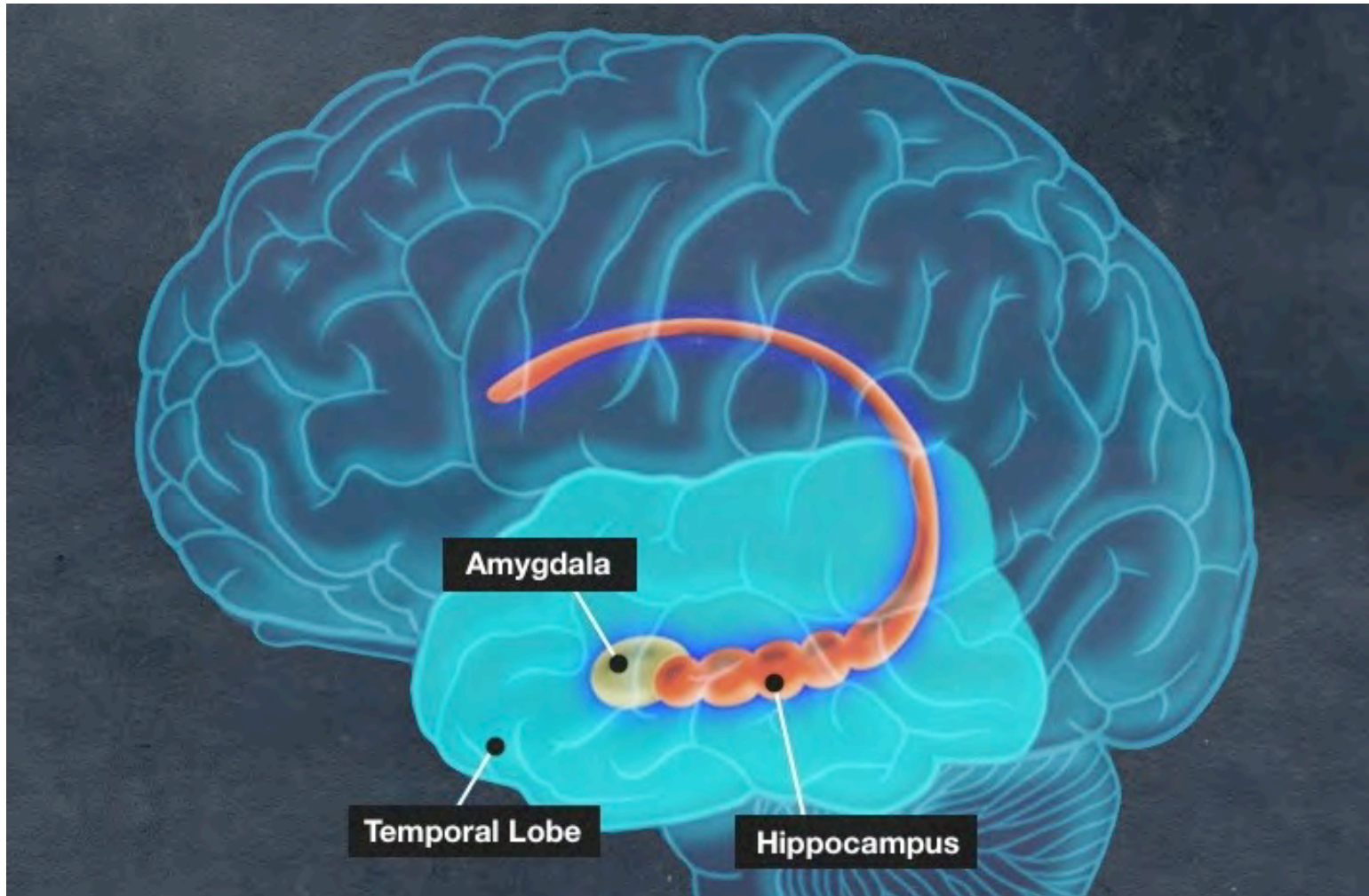


Case Study 3

A group is ascending the Muldrow Glacier route on Mt. Denali, Alaska. At their high camp, they are hit by a storm which brings sub-zero temperatures, blowing snow, and winds gusting in excess of 100 mph. The group loses essential gear to the wind, including ropes and their plastic outer boots. The group spends several days descending the mountain while lacking important equipment. Trauma symptoms seem to scale with the level of responsibility in the instructor team.







POST TRAUMATIC STRESS

Stimulus
Retrieval Cues
Stress Response



Language

Acute Post Traumatic Stress
Response

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

Operational Stress Injury (OSI)

POST TRAUMATIC STRESS

In Some Cases!

Flashbacks

Re-immersion in past event

Panic

Anxiety

Physical Manifestations

Conditioned Responses

Guilt

Shame

Depression

Suicide Ideation

Intentional Culture



Interlude: A Tale of Two Wars

Referenced a study comparing trauma rates in veterans of the Finnish Winter War in 1939 with the US War in Vietnam (1955-1975). The study noted very high rates of PTSD in Vietnam War veterans and almost none in Winter War veterans. The study concluded that the societal response to the war (honouring veterans in the case of the Winter War and deriding them in the case of the Vietnam War) contributed to the extent of PTSD in it's veterans.



Case Study 4

A 30 day canoe trip in the far north of Canada's Yukon Territory experiences flooding conditions. The group manages the river without significant incident, but it is clear that a leadership mistake at any point will likely result in a fatality. The lead instructor notices, a year later, significant tension and terseness when guiding even moderate rivers.

Healing

Amateur



Professional



First Aid



Create a safe place
Gather & confirm facts
Avoid blame
Avoid promising there won't be disciplinary measures
Watch your language! Eg Response vs Injury vs Disorder
Validate: *it seems like you are experiencing a normal reaction to an abnormal situation*
Thank
Discuss first aid options: *what do you need right now?*

Professional Help

\$ Support for Counselling

Worker's Compensation

Recommended Counsellor

EMDR Eye Movement Desensitization & Reprocessing

Other Image Based Therapy

Provide Info on PTS

Medication as short-term intervention





Healing

Peer Support

Time Off/ Other Duties?

Exercise



Growth