

# Practical Risk Management

*how not to over do it*

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How do we ensure the health and safety of participants yet not 'kill' the spirit of the outdoors – challenge and adventure?

Can we run a well managed program that allows for spontaneity and creativity?

How do we apply RM and yet encourage responsible decision making?

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# What is the *real* purpose of RM?

Is it:

To protect the people or the company?

Or is it:

To enable us to create the optimal learning environment?

Or balancing the two?

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# Today's challenges



People want 'the outdoors' -  
but do not want to have to deal  
with some of the consequences of  
being outdoors

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# Case A

Risk Management Manual / Policies that “address it all”.

Observing, reading and dealing with the world is done for the people (participant/staff) with policies and procedures for “everything”.

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# Leads to:

“I don’t need to pay attention”

“If there is a problem I get others (staff, management, parents, OHS, etc) to deal with it”

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# Outcomes:

Fewer small things go wrong = false sense of control and security.

The plan is based on pre-determined controls, not on adapting to a changing environment.

When something does go wrong it is catastrophic – ‘where did that come from?’

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# Case B

Reading and dealing with hazards and risks unfamiliar to the 'lay person' is done by experts, and the participants.

People (staff and participants) deal with the day to day common sense stuff.

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# Leads to:

Being aware and attentive helps me to interact with a changing environment.

Problems – I act to prevent or solve them.

I am responsible for, and well equipped to think – I deal with the consequences of my actions.

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# Outcomes:

More small things 'go wrong' but we can deal with things as they arise.

Time and energy is spent on observing and learning.

When something goes wrong, the 'weak spots' are known so there is a Plan B.

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## RM concepts / definitions

Hazard

Risk: subjective / objective

RM system

- Hazard id and rank (expert)
  - activity, environment, venue and route specific, equipment / resources, people specific
  - Dynamic vs static
- Controls:
  - Equipment,
  - Procedures (SOP's)
  - staff training / preparedness
  - Client role in RM (briefings, instruction, dependant...)
  - Cancellation/change
- Level: OK or not?
  - Organizational risk tolerance?
- Prioritizations / context

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# A place for policies

Who makes the decisions?

Paper or people?

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# What are policies for?

To remove decision making (aka judgement/experience) from people

To focus on controls, and eliminate hazard evaluation and risk assessment from the process

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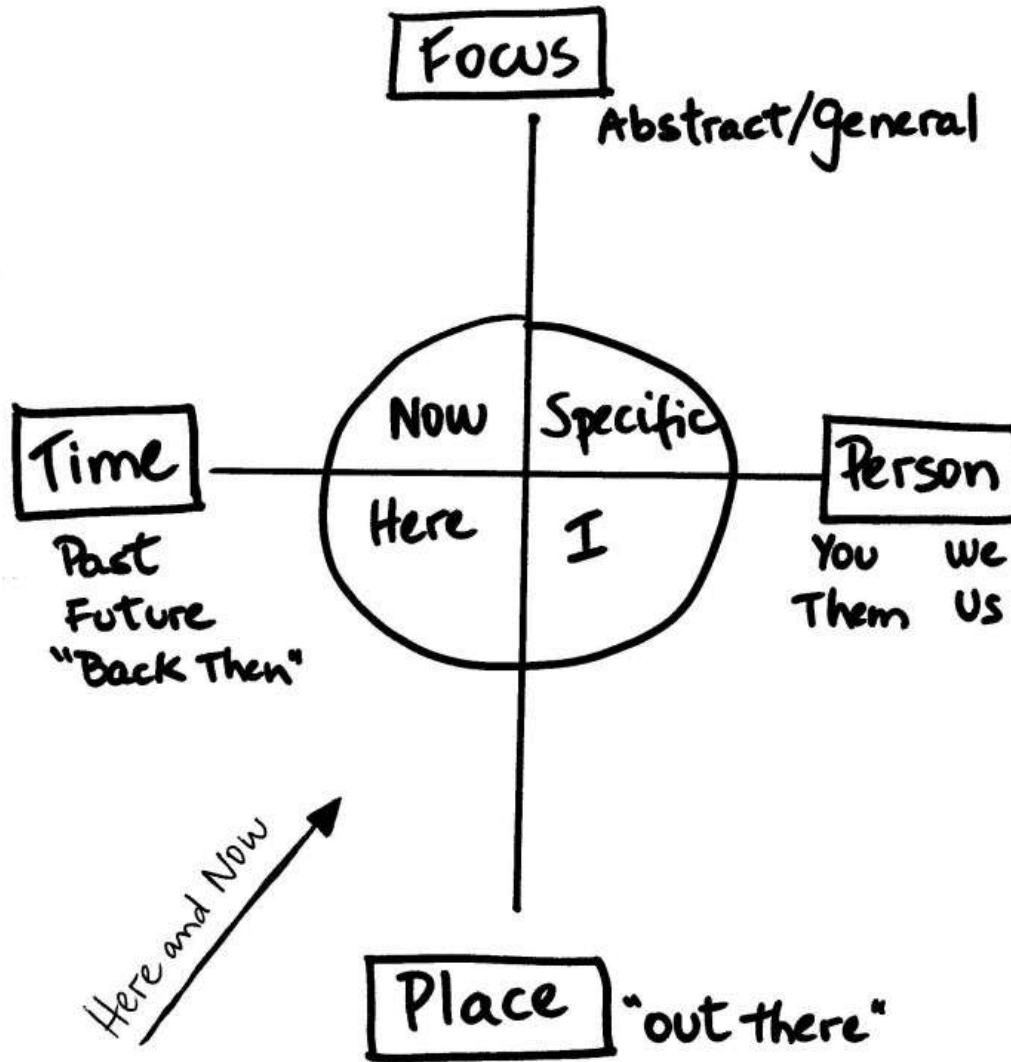
To draw this  
back to the  
participant...



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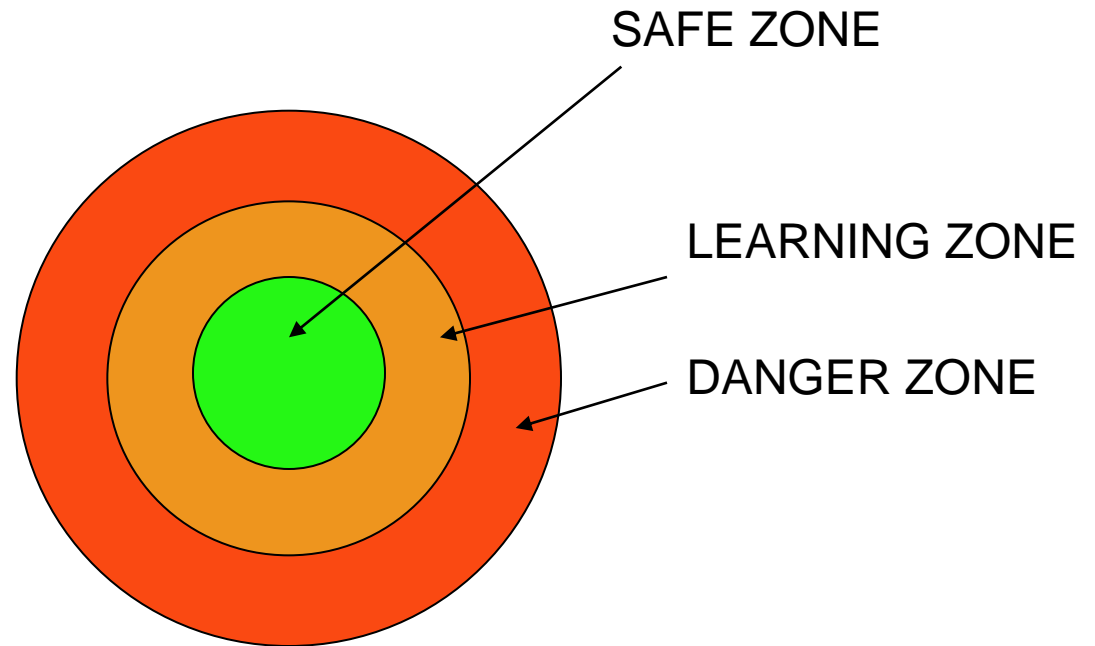
# Risk and learning

- (Psychologist Dr Simon Crisp, a specialist in youth issues) says one of the worst things a parent can do is protect their child from failure. "You can never get enough of it! The road to success is paved with a thousand failures. Failure provides important feedback about what works and what doesn't. It helps develop persistence and the ability to continue in the face of hardship and setbacks."
- In fact, he believes one of the jobs of a parent is to actually enable failure. "That can be as simple as allowing your toddler to fall down. They're learning the limits of their balance and stability. From that they improve co-ordination and balance. *Teenagers and young adults need to experience setbacks and learn from that - that helps build their skills and abilities and ultimately leads to greater success.*"

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# 'Zones' in outdoor activities



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- It is OK to get lost (indeed we should encourage the willingness to explore) – what matters is how you *deal with* getting lost and what can be learned from the experience = *transferral of learning*.
- The best programs / camps are the ones where participants must deal with adversity – social, physical or emotional. Who remembers the ideal camp where ‘nothing happened’ beyond the weekend?

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# The 'ideal' use of RM?

Activities are real and carry (managed) consequences.

Organisational tolerance dictates the thresholds.

People are competent in making the decisions they are faced with.

Wise use of policies.

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