



Stories from the Field: A History of Wilderness Therapy

Will White

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Wilderness therapy for “wayward teens” has been in existence, in some form, for over a hundred and thirty years but until now, no comprehensive history existed of the many influences that shaped its evolution. Following up on his doctoral dissertation, Will White looks back and constructs a thorough history from 1860-1988, opening *Stories from the Field* with the 19th century character camps of New England and progressing over the decades, with the invitation to young women and eventually, adolescents in need of therapeutic help. Will first assimilates the emergent influences of the prevailing social theory, regarding the hazards of leisure in the burgeoning upper class of America, the iconography of outdoor adventures and a few philanthropic visionaries. In this way, *Stories from the Field* expands the staid history of dates and names, breathing life into the characters and context of old. Will condenses the disparate trends of a century of experimentation into a cogent framework of what is now loosely called “wilderness therapy”. Atop this rich chronicle of the previously unsung originators, Will then invited recent game-changers to add to the communal story, providing their enhancements and visions to the account of the continuously evolving treatment model of “outdoor behavioral healthcare.” The other pages hold contemporary *Stories from the Field*, providing narrative accounts from founders and/or leaders of wilderness therapy organizations developed since 1988 and which provide treatment for families today. These authors have contributed their company stories to help illuminate the diversity and intentions of the present field, confirm the validity and attention that supports the work, and knowing full-well that this inspires tomorrow’s innovators to climb higher and doing even better work for the families we serve.

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