ABSTRACT

TITLE:	Comparing Burnout Between Therapeutic and Developmental Outdoor Educators
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ABSTRACT: During the employment season, many therapeutic and developmental field staff experience symptoms of burnout due to the demanding expectations of extensive work hours in remote wilderness areas, responsible for the safety and well-being of their clients. In addition to these challenges, instructors employed in wilderness therapy must also cope with the duties of working with their students on emotional issues. The purpose of this research was to compare burnout levels between therapeutic and developmental outdoor education professionals. The Maslach Burnout Inventory - Educators Survey (Maslach, Jackson & Leiter, 1986), categorizes burnout into three subscales (feelings of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment). The hypothesis of this study stated that wilderness therapy instructors experience higher levels of burnout than developmental instructors. Overall, 37 field staff from two outdoor programs volunteered to participate in the survey. Eighteen instructors came from wilderness therapy and the remaining 19 from a developmental program. Scores of each survey were calculated, and the means were compared between the two groups. Results revealed significance ($p = 0.036$) in the depersonalization subscale of burnout, but not in the emotional exhaustion ($p = 0.085$) or personal accomplishment ($p = 0.490$) subscales. The hypothesis of this study was rejected due to the insignificance in two of the subscales. Although the hypothesis was rejected, the following research indicates that, in relation to interaction with patients, wilderness therapy instructors do experience higher levels of stress and burnout than developmental instructors.