

TEAM WORK

Adventure Racing is one of the only sports in which you actually have to have your teammates with you, doing exactly what you're doing, glued to your side at all times. That's why Adventure Racing is just as much an interpersonal journey as a physical one. In the best of times, you will experience moments that will bond you to your teammates in a very special way for life; In the worst of times, you will walk away having experienced the worst aspects of human nature and be left to pick up the pieces of your shattered hopes. In my experience, a lack of teamwork skills is responsible for at least 40-50% of the DNF's in Adventure Racing, and it is far too important a factor to overlook in any discussion about the sport. So here's my two cents.

After years of study in what causes a team to rise from "good" to "world class", I've come to the conclusion that the biggest factors are the attitudes and actions of the individual teammates. In the races my team and I have won, we were not the strongest or the fastest, but we were able to create a "human synergy"—an ephemeral quality or "magic" that made the *TEAM* stronger than the collective training and experience of the individual members. If I could bottle it, I would certainly be a millionaire-- but after a good deal of thinking about the subject, I have a pretty good idea of the essential elements required for this human synergy. **Here's the highlight reel-**

The 8 Essential Elements of Human Synergy

T Total Commitment

Does your team have the 4 P's of Commitment: Planning, sense of Purpose, Preparation and Perseverance?

E Empathy and Awareness of Teammates

Do you and your teammates care for one another as much as you care about yourself? You must be able to put yourself in one another's shoes often, and give one another what you need on both a physical and emotional level in order to keep going. Treat one another the way that you would want to be treated.

A Adversity Management

How does your team deal with a race that's not going so smoothly? You must remember that Adventure Races are generally a long series of problems to solve, and not the straightforward race you were hoping for. The right attitude is key. Does your team see roadblocks or challenges? A good team member must also have the skills to lead through adversity. Creating a vision and gathering input from the team is always a great way to go. Relax. This problem, or others like it, will happen to many other teams along the way.

M Mutual Respect

It's important that there be a level of trust, respect, and loyalty on a successful team. Find things to love about your teammates while minimizing the things that bug you. Remember the great skills and attitude that each teammate bring to the table, and try not to gossip and divide the team.

W "We" versus "I" thinking

"We" thinking is about bringing everyone across the finish line with you, and not just being a standout player on your own. Are you constantly thinking about how to utilize your collective resources for the most successful outcome? If you are the strong link, do you just happily enjoy yourself at the front of the pack, or are you realizing that feeling good means you should be carrying more weight for someone who is struggling?

O Ownership of the Project

Choosing the right teammates that can wrap themselves around the goals of the team, heart and soul, are key. Gaining consensus from the team on expectations and goals is vital and should be done before the race starts!

R Relinquishment of Ego

Your ego is the heaviest thing in your backpack! Choose teammates that willingly accept help, ask to help, and ask for help. You will be the strongest link on the team and the weakest link of the team at one point or another. Get over it and don't let your ego get between you and the finish line!

K Kinetic Leadership

A great team allows different leaders to emerge, based on their particular strengths. Don't confuse captainship with leadership. A captain is just the person that ensures that their team has all of the tools that they need to be successful. A leader comes forward when their strength and experience is the most use to the team. On the best teams, the leadership revolves constantly. Military style leadership doesn't work to well in Adventure Racing!

Tips:

*Be the teammate you would want to race with

*Be cognizant of the fact that, due to the intensity of the emotions generated in this sport, the way that you treat people, (especially during their lowest moments) will always be remembered

*In the end the love you take is equal to the love you make (for you Beatles fans)

*Try to "coach" versus criticize. Extending a hand always makes more of an impact than pointing a finger

*Remember your priorities--our team's priorities, in order, are to: stay safe, stay friends, and go like hell

*Check your ego at the start line