



### Activity: Overcome Your Fear of Heights Courses

#### General

This risk assessment covers all Will4Adventure Overcome Your Fear of Heights courses, run in the Peak District. It is to be taken in conjunction with the RAMS for climbing and abseiling activities for all UK single pitch crags.

1. This risk assessment is written by William Legon who has been running these courses since 2005. The ground upon which we work is familiar terrain.
2. On these courses leader to client ratios should not exceed 1:7 but in reality the ratio rarely exceeds 1:4.
3. All leaders are qualified as a minimum to RCI holder or above (eg RCDI, MCI). The presence of a RCI trainee could count as a second leader, depending upon their specific experience, though the award holder retains responsibility throughout all activities.
4. Where more than one leader is employed to run this course, at least one of the leaders must have extensive experience of working on one of these courses, with these types of clients. This would mean that they will have been employed to work on at least five of these courses previously.
5. Whilst it is impossible to measure or qualify people for their emotional strengths and skills, it remains that the leaders employed on these courses have a track record for their ability to be supportive and understanding.
6. All leaders employed to work on these courses see the ground and receive some induction training before working on the course.
7. Each and every task on this course is demonstrated to the leader team, showing the correct technique to be employed.
8. Clients are invited to share with Will4Adventure any salient aspects to their history with heights, as well as any medical history. This information is shared with the leader team.

| <b>Risk Subject</b>               | <b>Method of Mitigation</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
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| <b>Suitable staff</b>             | All leaders employed will be suitably qualified and skilled.<br>All leaders must ensure they remain up to date with best practice regarding equipment and technique.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Assessing clients' ability</b> | Clients' previous experience should be explored upon booking the course, and then upon meeting, using a range of questions.<br>Through the day clients should be briefed on what to expect before the activity takes place and thus always given the opportunity not to take part.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Suitable objectives</b>        | A thorough assessment of the clients' previous experience, knowledge, ability and aims must be made prior to the course.<br>These courses incrementally build up the levels of challenge. This allows the clients and leaders to help gauge what is appropriately challenging.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Suitable venues</b>            | On these courses we use locations that we feel confident to use as well as always working within the scope of leaders' experience, knowledge, ability, and equipment.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Equipment</b>                  | Leaders must routinely inspect their equipment as per manufacturer guidelines. Equipment with evidence of wear and/or deemed unsafe must be retired and replaced. Staff must ensure equipment is both used in the correct manner, stored in a safe way (following manufacturer advice) and replaced regularly according to level of usage and wear. All equipment must be used in-line with manufacture recommendations.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Client equipment</b>           | At the start of the day, leaders to brief team members and check clothing and equipment for suitability prior to setting off. Consideration must be given to wind, cold, precipitation and heat.<br>Leaders should check clients' own personal protective equipment (PPE) such as helmets are in good condition showing no obvious defects. They should enquire to its origins. If in any doubt as to the clients' PPE clients will be required to use company equipment.<br>All PPE must be the correct size & fit for the participant. Leaders are to regularly inspect PPE to ensure it is being worn correctly.<br>Clients with long hair should be encouraged to tie back their hair with a hair band. |
| <b>Adverse weather conditions</b> | Course leader should check up to date mountain forecast for the area paying attention to wind speed and direction, precipitation, temperature, and UV exposure. Alternative plans which could include cancellation, postponement or a move to a local indoor wall should all be considered beforehand. Will4Adventure will ensure clients are briefed on appropriate dress before setting off for the crag/venue via joining instructions emailed out prior to a course.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Lightning</b>                  | Team should not be outside during lightning storm where possible.<br>In the event that the team are out then the leader should take best course of action to get team to safest (lowest) location away from high ground and trees.<br>All climbing should cease. Team should keep away from caves.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Rockfall</b>                   | Crags known to have excessive loose rock should be avoided. At all venues leaders and clients must wear helmets when within 10m of the base of the crag.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Roadside quarry</b>            | No client should be allowed to approach the top of the quarry without first having been shown how to negotiate the rock step that leads there.<br>On wet days, clients who are not already wearing grippy-soled approach shoes should be encouraged to wear rock shoes for the abseil.<br>Clients should be briefed not to go near the edges where the heather grows and hides the true edge.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

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| <b>Safety near edges</b>         | Routes that have clients top out should be equipped with a ready fixed line/sling with an open screw-gate carabiner. Where possible, a leader must meet the climber at the top to ensure they know what they should be doing, once there. Leader should check stance anchors and forward carabiners, checking that they are hanging down and still secure. Clients need to be kept away from all edges unless roped or attached to an anchor with a sling. Where applicable the leader should brief clients on safe descent routes. Leaders and clients should wear helmets for descent. Abseiling clients should have a safety line attached before moving to the top of the abseiling station. |
| <b>Slips</b>                     | Clients should be briefed on fallibility of walking in rock shoes on grass and moss.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Bouldering</b>                | For bouldering activities leaders should consider the benefits of wearing a helmet or not. No climbers should wear harnesses for bouldering. For each climber there needs to be a competent spotter. Where climbers can top out on boulders that are 2m or higher, the leader must make careful appreciation for height, difficulty of route, climber ability, and the consequences of a ground fall.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Abseiling</b>                 | Leaders should consider carefully the venue for any abseiling. The best venues will have high anchors, a suitable platform from which to abseil, no ledges en route down, and a boulder free and even floor. Where platform lip may be at risk of being slippery due to rain and/or polish, clients should wear rock shoes if they are not wearing approach shoes (for climbing activities).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Stuck climber or abseiler</b> | Leaders should never apply undue pressure to make clients climb up/abseil down anything that they are not happy to do. Leaders should continually monitor individual client's well-being / confidence on the crag. The leader must ensure that systems and equipment in use allow for possible extrication. Where a nervous climber is keen to try something, the leader must first be satisfied that they are in a position to facilitate a rescue if needed. In the event that a client becomes crag fast the first thing all leaders must try is talking the climber down. Only in the last resort should a leader start climbing up to, or abseiling down to a stuck climber.                |
| <b>Emergencies</b>               | <p>All leaders must hold a current outdoor first aid qualification.</p> <p>All leaders must carry suitable first aid kits and ensure that these undergo regular inspection and are renewed according to manufacturer guidelines and current practice.</p> <p>Leaders must ensure they set off with a fully charged mobile phone and consider carrying a spare battery pack for charging.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Understanding the risk</b>    | <p>On our website, on the Fear of Heights page, and in many other publicly accessible locations on the site and YouTube, clients have the freedom to watch a film about the course, showing them what to expect.</p> <p>Throughout the course, the level of risk acceptance for clients should constantly be considered by the leaders.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |