

# NEO AIR

## PARTICIPANT MANUAL

NORTH EAST OPEN AIR FACILITATORS CONFERENCE







# Northeast Open Air Facilitators Conference

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## Causation & Invitation:

Q: What are your options for professional development in the Northeast?

A: You could attend a conference put on by the Association for Experiential Education (Regional &/or International), the Association for Challenge Course Technology (International only) or the American Camp Association (Regional &/or International). You could also attend an open enrollment workshop or custom training through any number of individual or organizational vendors such as High 5, Project Adventure, The Browne Center, & Jen Stanchfield. All are great options for honing your craft.

Speaking personally, some of the most beneficial tools I've picked up over the years have been from the colleagues and co-facilitators I work with every day; right here in the North East. Swat Tag? Someone taught me that at Project Adventure. Popper tag? I got that from the Browne Center. Peek-a-who? I think that someone taught me that one when I was a student at UNH ten years ago.

How about expense? I've traveled coast to coast pursuing the next step; looking for that great training, mentor, or skill, and like everyone else, paid that financial expense that often goes along with it. I've learned over the years that Professional Development can be prohibitively expensive, especially if you are paying for it yourself. I often wonder why it needs to be so?

Some of the most amazing facilitators are working just feet from us every day, but we rarely have the opportunity to learn from them because it's "business as usual;" and we're all running our own groups or programs; working often in what feels like a vacuum. It is a rarity to get to work with each other; to co-facilitate. It's these rare moments though, just before or just after a program, at lunch, when low numbers force us to co-facilitate, or just overheard through the trees, when I learn the most valuable things... that next turn of phrase or debrief question that seems to open doors and minds.

So why not create an opportunity that brings us together as colleagues to learn from each other? Who better to be our educators, than the people that are closest to us?

Using Harrison Owens' Open Space model in the most organic way possible, we'd like to invite you to join us to be part of the second Northeast Open Air Conference. Like the first NEO Air in 2012, NEO Air 2014 will provide a unique opportunity to further your personal and professional development and truly help foster our community..maybe even change the Professional developmental paradigm a bit further.



## What you'll need:

Read through this information and take ownership of it. Our participants are our presenters, and our presenters our participants. We ask all of you to prepare by doing the following:

- Begin by thinking about your *practice*, or your *craft*, whatever it may be. Imagine what you need to improve; where do you have room to grow, develop, or hone?
- Then think about what you need to better *yourself*. Where do you need to take better care, pay more attention, focus on?
- Finally, think about what you can *offer to others* so that they may better themselves. What hard-won lessons and "Ah Ha!" moments would you like to pass on, mentor, or tutor?
- Next, answer specifically, the three following questions. *(The corresponding sheets can be found at the end of this packet)*
  1. On what can I present?
  2. What do I want to learn?
  3. What would I like to explore?

## Conference Design:

The design is simple, and its simplicity is what makes it a success. Each day of the conference will be broken down into sessions; the content, duration, and location of which are determined by you, the participant.



The creation of the weekend's schedule, the development of a Full Value Contract (Friday Evening), and a closing on Sunday will be facilitated by the host committee (with help from conferees).

| <b>Friday</b>                          | <b>Saturday</b>       | <b>Sunday</b>                     |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>3:00 PM</b>                         | <b>8:00 AM</b>        | <b>8:00 AM</b>                    |
| Check in                               | Continental Breakfast | Continental Breakfast             |
| <b>4:30 PM</b>                         | <b>8:45 AM</b>        | <b>9:00 AM</b>                    |
| Welcome                                | Words from the Host   | Session 7                         |
| <b>5:30 PM</b>                         | <b>9:00 AM</b>        | <b>10:30 AM</b>                   |
| Working Dinner                         | Session 2             | Session 8                         |
| <b>6:30 PM</b>                         | <b>10:30 AM</b>       | <b>12:00 PM</b>                   |
| Session 1<br>Intro to Open Space Model | Session 3             | Lunch                             |
| <b>9:00 PM</b>                         | <b>12:00 PM</b>       | <b>1:00 PM</b>                    |
|  | Lunch                 | Session 9                         |
|  | <b>1:00 PM</b>        | <b>2:30 PM</b>                    |
|  | Session 4             | Closing Remarks by Host Committee |
|  | <b>2:30 PM</b>        | <b>3:00 PM</b>                    |
|  | Session 5             |                                   |
|  | <b>4:00 PM</b>        |                                   |
|  | Session 6             |                                   |
|  | <b>5:30 PM</b>        |                                   |
|  | Dinner                |                                   |
|  | <b>7:00 AM</b>        |                                   |
|  | Break Out             |                                   |
|  | <b>9:00 PM</b>        |                                   |

Our Host Committee will cover the following information during the first session but to give you a general idea around the principals and design we have added it to this packet.



## Social Contract:

1. Allow this place to be a safe supportive environment & assume the best intentions of conferees
2. Challenge by Choice; Choose to engage yourself and push yourself to the edge of your growth zone. Learn what it is you're interested to learn.
3. Engage new people.

## Four Principles:

1. Whoever comes are the right people. This reminds us that getting something done, anything done, really, is not a matter of having 100,000 "hands" and a "chairman of the board." Rather, the fundamental requirement is having people who are invested and willing to work towards a common goal. And by showing up and participating, that essential requirement is met.
2. Whatever happens is the only thing that could have happened. This Principle keeps us focused on the here and now, and eliminates all of the "could-have-beens", "should-have-beens" or "might-have-beens." What *is*, is the only thing of import in the moment.
3. Whenever "it" starts is the right time. This alerts people to the fact that inspired performance and genuine creativity rarely, if ever, pay attention to the clock. They happen (or not) when they happen.
4. Lastly, When it's over, it's over. In a word (or three), don't waste time. Do what you have to do, and when it's done, move on to something more useful.

## One Law:

The one Law is the Law of Two Feet, which states simply, that if at any time, you find yourself in any situation where you are neither learning nor contributing – use you two feet and move to some place more to your liking. Such a place might be another group, or even outside into the sunshine. No matter what, don't sit there feeling miserable. The law, as stated, may sound like rank hedonism, but even hedonism has its place, reminding us that unhappy people are unlikely to be productive people.

## The Process:

The process is the keystone for an Open Air style conference; it's also where we define our roles as participants and presenters. In order for the conference to be effective and enjoyable, we as a collective need to understand and commit to filling and executing these roles...else who will?



Our focus for this conference is on the 'Challenge Course Facilitator' and the craft of facilitation (as opposed to technical skills). We understand that our principals could allow for *anything* to happen, however, we need to be somewhat intentional in steering the process towards a common goal.

With this intent there are three types of sessions that we'll be working with/creating:

- **I can present on the following...**
  - This session is in a *presentation* style and though it needs to be delivered/facilitated by someone who has expertise in the given topic: that person may or may not have prepared a workshop in advance (although this is helpful).
- **I want to learn more about...(This may come in two forms)**
  - **Workshop**
    - Like the above presentation this session will be conducted by someone who has expertise in a topic. However this is less formal and is usually done in a response to the request of another conferee. This allows for some dynamic and organic learning to take place.
  - **Discussion**
    - This session is just what it sounds like. If no one is able to respond to a request for a given topic in the form of a workshop, with expertise as the catalyst, this option allows the requestor to hold a group discussion around a single topic.
- **I'd like to explore...**
  - New stuff, Old stuff, No Prop, Low Prop...games, initiatives, whatever it may be that the requestor would like to explore... the only prerequisite is laughter!

Three types of sessions allow participants to attend a topic, and type of session that best fits their needs. Each day participants are reminded about the 'Law of Two feet' and given permission to leave a session or create a new one if that session is not meeting their needs or goals. If, after the session has ended the participants wish to continue their topic, they have a few choices.

- They can request use of an open space to continue the experience and energy.
- They can schedule a second session during one of the meal times with the majority of the group present



During the Friday night Intro we'll look to share these questions amongst each other and from there we'll begin to create the schedule...bit by bit, space by space, session by session. As it takes shape, certain things need to be considered: location, facility needs, level of interest, number of sessions required, etc. . Everyone has a say in the content of this conference and negotiations may begin to occur as the session proceeds.

Once everyone feels like they can move on, opportunities to make further changes to the schedule will be provided at mealtimes.

### **Participant Questions:**

I can present on the following...

Blue Paper

I want to learn more about...

Pink Paper

I'd like to explore...

Green Paper





I can present on  
the following...

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Blue Paper



I want to learn  
more about...

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Pink Paper





# I'd like to explore...

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Green Paper