

13 September 2014, Observation skills, Lodestar Festival

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I Observation skills

We are here to help our guests, and to help our fellow stewards. To do this we need to see and understand hazards. But spotting hazards is hard, because of the way our eyes work, and because of the way our brain works. In order to see, understand and respond well to a hazard, we will learn and practice two exercises.

What is a hazard? A hazard is a sign that something might go wrong, and a threat is something which is going wrong. A barbecue next to a tent is a hazard. A tent on fire is a threat.

Here are two methods to help us see what is in front of us:

I.1 Using our eyes methodically

Move your eyes horizontally from a point on your left to a point on your right, moving your eyes in steps the size of your fist. From the point on your right lift your eyes up a step the size of your fist and move them to the point on your left, and keep on moving your eyes, in steps the size of your fist, in order to cover the entire area you need to scan.

Move your eyes quickly from step to step, letting your eyes rest on the step for not more than half a second. Let your eyes lead the movement of your head, and move your head smoothly.

Imagine that everything you can see is covered by a grid, like a chessboard, and that every grid square is the size of your fist. You have to cover every grid square you look at with fist sized blobs.

I.2 Asking ourselves open questions

Ask yourself open ended questions about the hazards around you, so that you will think about the hazards, and see the hazards. We want to see things which might go wrong, before they go wrong. When our guests are arriving at, or leaving our event, more is happening, so there are more hazards.

Ask yourself questions which help you see hazards at your location, which are related to the activity at your location. The time of day and the weather will also help you choose the hazards.

1. Who is near me?
How do I feel about them? How do they compare to the other guests?
2. What are they doing?
How well does their behaviour fit the time and the place? How are other guests reacting to their behaviour?
3. What could harm our guests?
How clear are the fire exits? How stable is the fencing?

References

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