12. **Abstract Title:** An Outdoor Adventure Program for Young Adults with Cancer: Positive Effects on Body Image and Psychosocial Functioning  
**Focus Area:** Outreach and Connectivity  
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This study evaluated the psychological effects of an outdoor adventure program on young adult cancer survivors (ages 18-39). The six-day adventure program included personal instruction and supervision on the basics of kayaking, surfing, or climbing. Compared to a wait-list control group, participants who took part in the program for the first time had improved (relative to pre-test) body image, self-compassion, self-esteem, and less depression and alienation. Participants who took part for the second time, although also helped by the program in similar ways, were no better off psychologically than participants who took part for the first time. Possible explanations for both the positive effects and their apparent short duration are offered.

We investigated the effects of an outdoor adventure program on a range of psychological characteristics of young adult cancer survivors. Two groups of participants took part in the adventure program: those for whom it was their first outdoor adventure program (P1) and those for whom it was their second such program (P2). We predicted that participants in the P1 group would improve psychologically compared to a wait-list control group (WL). To assess such possible effects, we compared the difference in how both groups fared from pretest to post-test. We also predicted that pretest participants in P2 would be psychologically better off than participants in P1. To assess such a possible effect, we compared both groups at pretest. Moreover, we expected participants in the P2 group to be sensitized to the effects of the program, and thus to benefit more from it. Therefore, we also compared the difference in how both groups fared from pretest to post-test.

Compared to the WL control participants, people who took part in the program for the first time (P1) had significantly better body image, self-compassion, self-esteem, and less depression and alienation after completing the program. In addition, their psychological distress, fatigue and low energy, memory and concentration, and anxiety about bodily symptoms improved significantly compared to the WL group. However, the improvement in the last three variables may be a result of decreased symptoms of depression, such as decreased energy, memory and concentration problems, and bodily symptoms of anxiety. But even if the improvement in these three types of symptoms is indirectly caused by the program's reducing symptoms of depression, these benefits still are effects of the program.

A six-day outdoor adventure program for cancer survivors improved the participants' body image, self-compassion, self-esteem, depression and alienation from pretest to post-test, compared to a wait-list control. Participants on their second adventure program were not, at pretest, significantly better off than participants who had not yet been on their first program. One possible explanation for this finding is that the effects of the adventure program may not endure, at least for participants who want to enroll in a second program - which may be why those participants want to enroll in a second program.