"When I left on my Journey trip I was one person with problems. When I came back I was part of a team that had solutions."
Journey
Skills for Life

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Journey is committed to developing relationship, self-management, and social perspective skills within youth, families, and communities through *experiential-based learning.*
What is Journey?

Internationally recognized as an innovative provider of wilderness and adventure-based programming within an outpatient setting, Journey is OMNI Youth Services’ wilderness therapy program. Under the guidance of licensed/certified professionals, adolescents are challenged in outdoor settings. During a Journey experience, the wilderness confronts youth and families with the natural consequences of their good and bad decisions.

On the Journey trip, your youth will learn to work with others, improve team leadership skills, develop trust, take appropriate risks, increase his or her self-esteem, and have appropriate fun. Journey will allow your youth to test his or her limits as well as encourage him or her to set new personal goals. At the end of the trip your adolescent will experience a sense of accomplishment and achievement. Additionally, your teen will have the chance to interact with the outdoors in a way they have not had previously.

While the Journey experience can be valuable by itself, it works best as part of a complete treatment plan to address the needs of the youth and the entire family. Journey jumpstarts treatment and aids in solidifying the successes gained in counseling. The experience helps young people remember the lessons they learned in treatment for a longer time. In many cases, youth and families who participate in Journey complete treatment in a much shorter time than those who do not.

Treatment goals addressed on Journey trips closely parallel treatment issues at home. Tailored to the individual circumstances of each youth, trip goals are established in a cooperative effort between the youth, family, referring counselor and Journey trip staff.

Trips are easily accessible and vary from day-long rock-climbing trips to twenty one day Alaskan expeditions. We offer trips during school breaks as well as weekends to aid busy families in finding the time to work together on issues that have disrupted life at home, school, or in the community. Journey trip locations occur throughout North America and feature activities such as ice-climbing, backpacking, rock-climbing, coastal kayaking, and whitewater rafting. Our professional staff have the skills to provide counseling, wilderness travel and activities, first responder medicine and the use of experiential counseling within a wilderness setting.
Have you found that traditional counseling is not getting the attention of your youth? Journey’s progressive approach is based on wilderness therapy techniques that address the underlying behaviors of youth in an active outdoor setting. Therapy is no longer limited to sitting across the table from a counselor. Wilderness therapy will enrich your youth’s counseling experience by actively involving him or her in treatment and reflection. Integrating these experiences with the best that traditional therapy has to offer, our experiential approach incorporates a variety of outdoor activities.

Wilderness settings separate your youth from negative influences they face in their everyday routine and remove him or her from their comfort zone. By doing so, our trained staff are able to break through barriers that can hinder typical one-on-one counseling sessions that result in months or even years of unproductive treatment.

Wilderness therapy programs can be physically strenuous. While your youth is on trail with Journey he or she will be hiking, cooking their own meals, setting up a campsite, and learning valuable survival skills. This structure requires your youth to take responsibility for him or herself and his or her actions.

Once removed from their normal surroundings, your youth will recognize a need for the expertise that our counselors bring. Adolescents are naturally resistant to authority figures. In fact, for many struggling adolescents, being oppositional is a large part of their identity and treatment resistance can become a source of pride. However, in the wilderness, counselors bring knowledge and expertise in navigating terrain, avoiding bugs and sunburn, and rationing food and water supplies. This earns the respect of participants because the OMNI staff that are on the trail have the tools that they need to successfully complete the experience in a comfortable fashion.

Journey professional staff are full participants in the program, experiencing the same struggles and triumphs as the clients. This provides an extraordinary opportunity to create meaningful therapeutic relationships. Relationships established with your youth on trail are built on a foundation of trust and respect, challenging the youth’s perception of authority.
The same practitioners who prepare your youth for a JOURNEY trip will also be on the trip, and will follow up with your youth after the trip to help them apply lessons learned for months to come.

OMNI demonstrates our commitment to brief, solution-focused treatment as we strive to make every experience meaningful and intentional. Our comprehensive experiential philosophy pursues a vision of providing youth with “skills for life”. We believe that experiential learning, coupled with traditional talk therapy, is the most effective method to date. The learning process becomes more real and meaningful as it is applied over an extended period of time to a variety of situations. Consequently, the individual develops the ability to adapt these learned skills to real life situations that arise throughout life.

Unlike many wilderness therapy programs, Journey has individual goals for each youth on the trip. Professional staff talks with youth as they walk on trail, set up their tents and do numerous other quiet moments. This allows the professional staff more time to get to know the youth, understand their thought processes and change negative behaviors and beliefs. With a constant attention to treatment goals the staff can use any small occasion to illustrate a life lesson without the youth feeling that they are being counseled.

Our trip staff collaborate with the ongoing counselor to assist youth and families make important connections between things learned through a trip experience and situations at home, school, or in the community. This consistent attention to individual growth offers participants the opportunity to make considerable gains in therapy in a brief period of time. In essence, a week-long Journey trip provides more than 80 hours of clinical contact, equal to several months if not a year of traditional outpatient counseling.

Our trip staff are also practitioners in the office, providing an array of individual, family, group, and multi-family group counseling/prevention services. Participants often have close contact with trip staff before and after a trip, seeing them around the office, having them as a group therapist, or even seeing them in individual and family sessions. This familiarity provides a basis of trust that eases anxiety and accelerates growth from the trip experience.

The success of our approach has been reinforced by youth who were involved in our program. Several youth have recently to thank us because what they learned in our experiential programs has been beneficial to them as young adults in college, in employment situations, during military service while deployed in Iraq, and now as parents.
OMNI Youth Services has offered wilderness therapy trips for more than twenty years. Our nationally recognized program is the only outpatient wilderness therapy program in the state of Illinois, and one of a handful of programs in the United States. In fact, OMNI staff have contributed in the development of many similar programs across the nation.

Journey is considered an international model for other organizations to follow. In 2005 OMNI Youth Services’ innovative and outstanding experiential programs earned the Association for Experiential Education’s Organizational Member of the Year Award. The award recognizes an organization that has, for a minimum of five consecutive years, demonstrated clear vision and leadership in the field and offered invaluable contributions in support of experiential programming. OMNI was selected out of the 400 organizational members of The Association for Experiential Education and incorporates the philosophy that youth learn best through active experiences that illustrate life lessons.

OMNI is consistently recognized as a leader in providing innovative and effective programming for youth and families. OMNI is also viewed as a source of quality training and consultation to other professionals and organizations in the areas of youth development, adolescent substance abuse treatment, juvenile delinquency, and experiential and wilderness therapy. We regularly conduct training at local, regional, and international conferences including the Association for Experiential Education and the International Adventure Therapy Conference.

OMNI Youth Services earned the Association for Experiential Education’s Organizational Member of the Year Award.
Journey provides a wide variety of locations and activities for youth and families to address their individual goals. Program trips range from one to twenty one days, with the majority occurring during week-ends or long school breaks. Our trained and experienced staff lead trips in the following locales…

**Backpacking**
- Denali State Park, AK
- Banff-Jasper Provincial Park, AB, Canada
- Grand Canyon National Park, AZ
- Grand Teton National Park, WY
- Yosemite National Park, CA
- Big Bend National Park, TX

**Ice Climbing/Winter Camping**
- Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore, MI

**Kayaking**
- Glacier Bay, AK
- Georgian Bay, ON, Canada
- New Meadows River/Atlantic Ocean, ME
- Lake Powell National Recreation Area, UT
- Everglades National Park, FL
- Matagorda Island, TX

**Rafting**
- Salmon River, ID
- Peshtigo River, WI

**Rock-climbing**
- Devil’s Lake State Park, WI
- Devil’s Tower National Monument, SD
- The Needles/Custer State Park, SD

**Canoeing**
- Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, MN
- Mississippi River/Mississippi Palisades State Park, IL

**Bicycling**
- Elroy-Sparta Trail, WI

Where does Journey go?...
Safety of participants is the top priority during all Journey activities.

We believe that there are inherent risks in participating in any activity including participation in a Journey trip. Prior to each trip there are “Pre-trip” meetings that include a trip schedule and review the potential strengths and hazards of a particular course area. We believe that parents and youth need to make educated decisions about the youth’s participation. They are encouraged to ask questions and learn more about the Journey experience. We collaborate with parents in mitigating the risk for their youth prior to and during a Journey trip. If a parent does not believe that their youth will be successful we ask that they share their concerns with us and potentially delay their youth’s involvement with Journey.

Our staff focus on minimization of risk through prevention, as well as educating participants about techniques and behaviors they can use to maintain the safety of themselves and the other members of the group. Partnering with the Leave No Trace organization, staff provide guidance to trip participants in wilderness ethics and preservation practices to promote individual safety and protection of the environment.

OMNI is accredited by the Council on Accreditation (COA), ensuring that our policies and programs meet the highest standards in the industry. OMNI is licensed by the State of Illinois to provide substance abuse, and child welfare intervention services to youth and families.

OMNI is a member of the Outdoor Behavior Healthcare Industry Council, a leading trade organization in the field of wilderness therapy that seeks to establish pre-eminent standards in its member organizations. Additionally, OMNI participates in advancing clinical study of the impact of wilderness therapy through our involvement in the Outdoor Behavior Healthcare Research Cooperative (OBHRC).
How many kids/adults will be on my youth’s Journey trip?
Group size is typically eight adolescents and three trained professional staff with significant wilderness experience and advanced safety certifications.

What does my youth need to pack?
There are different packing lists depending on which trip your child will take. A trip specific gear list will be provided about one week prior to trip departure. You will be responsible for personal clothing and toilettry items, most of which you already own. OMNI Youth Services will provide all of the additional items such as a sleeping bag, tent, and backpack.

What will my youth eat?
Our meals provide the needed calories in an easily portable form. Many foods are familiar to most youth including spaghetti, chicken and rice, peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, oatmeal, and cereal bars. Our menus are varied, reviewed by a registered dietician, and are easy for youth to prepare.

How will my youth get to the trip destination?
OMNI provides a variety of means of transportation to Journey destinations. Specific types of vehicles will be discussed at the Pre-trip meetings.

What would a typical day on a Journey trip be like?
A typical day includes the members of the group rising and packing their individual belongings for the day's travel, a group meal, travel for the day including a stop for lunch, arrival at the evening campsite, group chores and free time, personal reflection and journaling, group meal, and evening process group or check-in. As we move campsites every day, there is plenty of time for staff to speak with individuals about treatment issues, connect on the difficulty of the route, weather, or terrain, or just appreciate the beauty of the location.

Will my youth have fun?
We expect that everyone will have fun on a Journey trip, but it is not the focus of the trip. Safety, respect, commitment to change, and cooperation always precede fun. OMNI serves a wide variety of youth, and our experience has been that many youth have fun on a Journey trip and accomplish their individual goals. The “fun factor” helps a great deal with integrating the learning gained through the experience. Youth should expect that some days will be harder than others. They will grow from challenges of inclement weather, bug bites, peer conflicts and long, hard days of travel.
How long are the trips? Trips range in length from one to twenty one days.

Can my youth contact home? Can I contact my youth while he or she is on the trip? Contact is extremely limited as we are in remote, wilderness settings. Youth may have the option of calling from a public phone during the travel to or from OMNI. Once the group is in the backcountry, the group is self-sufficient and out of regular communication. OMNI has an emergency communication plan in place for each trip if it becomes necessary.

What happens if someone gets hurt or sick on the trip? What kind of medical training does the staff have? Each trip is staffed with professionals who have received advanced training in wilderness medicine and risk management. Many staff hold national certifications as Wilderness First Responders. As part of this training, staff learn to anticipate and minimize risks as well as treat a variety of potential illnesses or injuries. Prior to each trip, an evacuation or transportation plan is established that indicates routes to the nearest medical treatment facility.

Will my youth be on a trip with youth of the opposite sex? OMNI offers single gender as well as co-ed trips designed to address individual treatment issues while creating an atmosphere of support, free from harassment or ridicule. The particular make-up of the trip is determined by who signs up and staff selection based on treatment issues. All tent/sleeping assignments are single gender.

What if my youth is not physically fit? Will he or she be able to keep up? Our experience has shown that many participants are able to accomplish more than they expected, given adequate support and encouragement. Our staff are experienced in providing an accurate assessment of the physical challenges of each trip as well as offering options to ensure participant success.

How does OMNI staff maintain discipline over a large group? Will my youth get enough individual attention in this setting? We limit the size of groups to maximize the healthy interaction between participants as well as afford each individual adequate access to counselors. Given the unfamiliar setting and group living format of our trips, most youth demonstrate investment in creating a positive group culture, providing accountability and supporting to their peers.

What kind of follow-up is there to make sure my youth values and incorporates what they learned on this trip? OMNI Youth Services is committed to providing a clinically integrated experience for every participant. Clients involved in on-going services with OMNI are encouraged by their individual and group counselors to frequently refer back to the experience of a trip when addressing current or future issues. This ongoing focus on learning from an experience is critical to maintaining the gains made during a trip. Trip staff are available to consult with families and referring counselors to highlight participant strengths as well as areas for growth. While not all youth who go on Journey trips participate in ongoing therapeutic services with OMNI, the impact of a Journey experience is often highest when it is part of a more comprehensive program of therapeutic services.

What are my responsibilities as a parent to ensure the success of this trip for my child? OMNI encourages parents, family members, and allied professionals to create a supportive atmosphere for the participant, recognizing that the youth is being asked to travel to a distant location, interact with unfamiliar peers, participate in a new activity, all while addressing individual counseling goals. We expect that parents will attend mandatory trip meetings as well as participate in recommended services to increase the benefits of this experience for the entire family. If possible, we recommend that families participate together in a weekend multi-family trip offered throughout the year.

Are there any youth that cannot go on a Journey trip? Youth who are actively suicidal, currently engaging in self-harming behaviors, or who demonstrate threat to harm self or others.
Since 1972, OMNI Youth Services has been a leader in providing life-changing outpatient counseling and prevention services to at-risk youth and families. Recognized nationwide for innovative outpatient services that integrate traditional counseling with experiential and adventure-based modalities, OMNI is uniquely based on the philosophy that adolescents learn best when talking is combined with actual experience. Through this experiential approach, OMNI programs provide a unique and effective way for youth and families to develop strengths and build skills they can use for a lifetime.

OMNI is also unique in that all are programs are facilitated by trained practitioners, increasing the clinical utility of the experiences. Services include individual, group, and family therapy, each of which incorporates experiential activities into a number of sessions.

As a comprehensive provider of outpatient services, OMNI Youth Services also provides 24-hour crisis intervention, substance abuse prevention and treatment, youth and parent mentoring, family preservation, juvenile justice services, youth development and multicultural resource centers. OMNI can also work with referral sources and families to provide individualized programming for families with unique needs. OMNI's clinical staff are experienced with a range of clinical issues, including depression and anxiety, suicidality and self-harming behavior, mental health issues, juvenile delinquency, and substance abuse.

Services are customized to fit your individual needs and can be provided in your home.

OMNI's Services include: Individual Counseling, Family Counseling, Group Counseling, Multi Family Group Counseling, 24-Hour Crisis Assistance, Parent Support Services, Youth Development and Mentoring.
On our Journey trips, OMNI seeks to provide youth with a safe and positive experience at a price that is affordable. A daily rate of $250 per day per person covers all professional staff time, food, equipment, transportation, permits, and rental fees for the trip.

Need-based scholarships and payment plans are available. OMNI services may be covered by your medical insurance. OMNI can work with your insurance to identify coverage.

While youth are welcome to participate in one of our wilderness experiences without additional psychotherapy, the most value from an experience is achieved when youth and families use individual, family and group counseling services concurrently. Through this type of multilevel therapeutic participation, learning is achieved and integrated in a variety of ways. Individualized programs are developed across the wide array of services that OMNI provides, and the appropriate level of participation will be discussed with our experienced admissions staff. Please call for the cost for these services.

For more information or to sign your child up for a Journey trip, please contact:

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What does Journey cost?