

Why?

The Challenge Course at Mt. Aetna is a series of activities using various props and equipment that allow us to lead individuals and groups to expand their experience and learn skills that can be applied to many of life's more challenging situations.

Our program typically involves small groups of participants who study, work, worship or minister together. Over an intense period of time, the participants take part in a series of activities which increase in difficulty and focus variously on participants' physical, emotional, social, and spiritual growth.



We encourage groups to start with simple activities which we call group initiatives. After each activity the facilitator helps the group discuss what happened, and what they can learn from it.

Over the course of the session they progress to more difficult activities on the Team Challenge, High Challenge and finally the climbing tower/zip line. Areas that receive special attention include group dynamics, leadership styles and techniques, communication skills, trust issues, spiritual lessons and overcoming fear.

The inherent fear of height is the common experience that allows us to practice methods that will enable participants to face other life issues. By directly engaging this fear in supportive, safe conditions, our facilitators provide a transforming experience that increases participants capacity for handling fear in other settings.



Mt. Aetna Camp and Retreat Center is a facility dedicated to supporting Christian ministries by providing them a place to regroup, reconnect and relax in the splendor of God's woodlands.

We have heated cabins and guest rooms to sleep up to 200, a cafeteria that seats 175, meeting rooms for groups large and small, a seasonal swimming pool, hiking trails, canoeing, basketball and a fabulous nature center.

We offer summer camp programs for children and youth, and outdoor school sessions in the spring and fall for 5th through 8th grade. We also offer challenge course/team building programs for ages ten and up.

The center is located just an hour northwest of Washington DC, an hour west of Baltimore, and only 3 miles off Interstate 70 at Exit 35.

If your ministry, church, club or association could use such a semi-rural facility, then give us a call at 301-824-6045.



SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH
www.adventist.org

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The Challenge Course

An explanation of the purpose, levels, and activities of the course at Mt. Aetna





Step 1 Initiative games

These games are fun problem-solving tasks designed to help group members develop their capacity to work effectively together. Some are simple children's games, others are much more complex and require a lot of discussion, planning and reasoning.

Your facilitator will lead the group to a wide variety of different experiences and unique outcomes. Each is unique due to the particular mix of participants. Our goal is that with even the simplest game will come a significant experience for the participants.

While the activities are fun, in and of themselves, it is not our purpose to "just have a good time." The important part of these exercises is participants' reflection and discussion about the activity, how they approached the situation, and possible points of learning.

Group size is 8-12. Up to three groups can run at a time. Normal duration is 2.5 to 4 hours, depending on your schedule. Participants on all challenge course activities must be at least 10 years old.



Step 2 Team Challenge

The purposes and activities of the Team Challenge are very similar to the initiative games, except that they take place on a series of elements permanently located in a secluded section of the woods.

Here is where we begin to address the base fear of heights by moving the activities about a foot off the ground.

Participants learn to "spot" each other, that is, to act as safety officers, and they begin to develop trust in their team members and equipment. Element difficulties vary, so the facilitator selects the activities based on their observation of group trends, skills and needs.

The course includes 12 stations (or as we call them: elements) many of which can be used for multiple activities.

Group size is 8-12. Up to three groups can run at a time. Normal duration is 2.5 to 4 hours, depending on your schedule. The Team Challenge will always include some initiative games at the beginning of the session. Waivers must be signed.

Step 3 High Challenge

This course focuses on encouraging participants to directly face their fears.

Utilizing the skills and trust developed on the team challenge, the participant is now given the opportunity to face individual challenges twenty to thirty five feet up on our custom designed course of 10 elements.

Some activities require team support or participation, but most are done on an individual basis. Of course, helmets, safety harnesses and ever watchful facilitators are required.

Group size is 8-24. Normal duration is 2.5 to 4 hours, depending on your schedule, the number of participants and the number of elements attempted. Waivers must be signed.



Step 4 The climbing tower & zip line

The 42 foot climbing tower is the pinnacle of the challenge course. It is where all of those newly developed fear controlling skills come into play.

The tower offers several routes to the top:

- Green route uses a ladder system.
- The yellow route uses rock climbing holds.
- The red route uses rock climbing holds with the addition of an overhang and reverse slope that must be conquered.

Participants wear helmets, safety harnesses, and are on dynamic belay with a trained facilitator.

From the top of the climbing wall, climbers may choose the zip line for a thrilling ride back to the ground.

Requires a minimum of 9 to open the tower. We can handle up to 24 in a session. Normal duration is 3.5 to 4 hours, depending on the number of climbers. Waivers must be signed.