

MAY – SOMETHING EDGE-Y

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BRYAN: Hello, and welcome to the May ScoutCast. I'm *Bryan on Scouting* blogger, Bryan Wendell alongside Lee Shaw, Team Lead of National Alliance. Hey Lee.

LEE: Hey Bryan. Say, I read in the May/June issue of *Scouting Magazine* that you accompanied a troop on a pretty exciting canoeing adventure to Yellowstone National Park.

BRYAN: That is right, yeah. We had such a great time with Troop 7031 of Flagstaff, Arizona, and we went on a three-day paddling trek through Yellowstone observing the incredible leadership of Matt Nichols, the Assistant Scoutmaster. I witnessed as he kind of brought the Teaching EDGE to life. Now, if you're wondering what Teaching EDGE is, we're going to tell you all that. But seeing it in action was pretty awesome because the Scouts learned a lot but they didn't really know they were learning, so I call it "sneaky learning."

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BRYAN: And so, Lee and I were talking with our producer and we thought we should invite Matt Nichols to talk about Teaching EDGE, Leading EDGE and how you put them into practice in your own troop and crew. Matt is the Assistant Scoutmaster and the Outing Coordinator for Troop 7031. He's also an Adult Advisor this summer for his troops' Philmont Crew. So, Matt, we want to welcome you to ScoutCast.

MATT: Thanks for having me.

BRYAN: So, first off, we'd better just remind everyone what EDGE stands for, so E-D-G-E.

MATT: It's quite basic and simple but it's very effective. It's that four-step method that we use in Scouting for teaching the skill. It's sometimes called Scouting's Teaching EDGE and E stands for Explain, D is Demonstrate, G is Guide and E is Enable, so it's real easy to remember.

LEE: I'd say that is easy to remember. So tell me, what's the difference between Teaching EDGE and, and Leading EDGE?

MATT: That a good question. I've mostly use the Teaching EDGE in my experience with Scouting. When you're trying to teach a skill to one or two individuals you really can use the Teaching EDGE effectively, but certainly there's times when you've got a group involved or a team, maybe a patrol, that's trying to get through a specific skill. The Leading EDGE uses the same four steps, if you will, but it's where you have a leader that's describing the behavior of how the leader actually moves a team or witnesses a team through those stages of development. Oftentimes when a team gets together they don't always work well together, they'll start to what we call, storm a little bit. They're not ready to actually get a sense of how to do the skill. So, for example, if we're witnessing a group start to storm, we may need to get in there as a leader and demonstrate. We'd apply the step Demonstrate to show how that skill is actually worked to get

those Scouts to that higher level of skill knowledge and hopefully have that high level of commitment as well.

BRYAN: So, Matt, why do we use the EDGE method? Why don't we just toss the Canoeing Merit Badge pamphlet at Scouts and say, "All right, good luck, you guys?"

MATT: As you probably witnessed, the Canoeing Merit Badge, although it may seem pretty simple - just get out there and get in the canoe and start paddling around - there's a lot of specific skills and certainly there are some things we need to teach about safety as well.

BRYAN: Especially when the wind picks up on the lake and you're trying to solo paddle 50 yards.

MATT: Absolutely. For anyone to teach a skill you've got to break it down step by step. So, when you do that, you really can teach it effectively.

LEE: So, Matt, talk about your trip in terms of applying the Teaching EDGE, starting with Explain?

MATT: Sure. Being a Merit Badge Counselor that's trained in canoeing, our troop does a lot of water sports and we're always on the water, and if we're going to be on the two lakes in Yellowstone, it just seems like a good connection there to teach the Canoeing Merit Badge. I had willing Scouts

that wanted to make that commitment. So, the easiest way to explain how I used the EDGE is through the Canoeing Merit Badge. With the EDGE, you're trying to explain what all those skills that you need to be an effective and safe canoeist, in order to learn that knowledge and skills to earn the badge.

BRYAN: So, the next step is to Demonstrate and one thing I noticed right away was day one we're getting ready to get in the water and you've got all the canoes on the trailer. And you would think, okay, that's pretty easy, just, take the canoes off the trailer, but these are heavy aluminum canoes, and so the first you did was say, "Okay, here's the right way to take a canoe off the trailer without having it fall on yourself," and that was the Explain part. And then you've moved on to "Demonstrate", which is the D in the EDGE method, so you and Jeff, one of the other leaders showed them the right to do it. So what is important to remember in that second step, the Demonstrates step, Matt?

MATT: You really are teaching the skill by demonstrating it. So as we started to learn all of the different strokes – forward stroke, backward stroke, the sweep stroke and so forth – all of those strokes necessary for proper paddling, you're really giving them that example to sort of see just what you are looking for learn to learn that skill. It's a vital part as all four of them are, but the Demonstration step is really key to making sure they actually get it.

LEE: Well, we got the E covered, we got the D covered; now for the G and the Guiding.

MATT: The Guide is really that real challenge, for me anyway, because you've really got to have that patience with the Scouts as you guide them through the skill. You want to try to let them do it on their own, and so you've demonstrated, okay, here, you try it. They're beginning to get it, but they're still going to need some guidance toward the finer points. But you've got to have that patience because it's not going to happen right out of the bat. They're going to need some, "Okay, you're not quite doing the forward stroke, why don't you do this a little bit differently or try this", and really guide them through.

BRYAN: Okay, so we went through the first three letters: E, D and G, Explain, Demonstrate and Guide. So let's talk about Enable.

MATT: Hopefully after they've got it, that last step, Enable, they can go out and actually do it on their own without any without any guidance from you. They've actually got it down. Just enable those Scouts to independently practice but also to apply those strokes and another canoeing skills that they learned like, swamping the canoe, you probably remember, we did *(Bryan laughs)* a little bit of that as well.

BRYAN: Yeah, and that was all intentional though, right? *(Laughs)*

MATT: Oh, yeah, yeah.

BRYAN: Yeah. So, Matt, you went through them all: Explain Demonstrate, Guide and Enable. And I'd like to know how, because you talked about this a

little bit with the Guide step; to me that's the most difficult one because you want to step in if you see them not doing it right but, like you said, you have to just kind of bite your tongue at times. And even on our trip with your own son you had to just let him go out there and do it himself a lot of times. So how do you as a parent and as a Scout leader step back at the right time during the EDGE method and say, "Okay, they're going to learn more if I'm letting them, from this point on, do this skill on their own?"

MATT: As a Scout leader, that's really what Scouting is all about, taking risks and just know that you've done your job and you've at least guided them through by demonstrating it and you've got to just let them take that next step and know that they are likely going to trip and fall along the way, but you can pick it right back. That's the beautiful thing about the EDGE; it's simple enough to where you just remember, oh, okay, they're struggling. Maybe I need to re-demonstrate that again and help guide them through it. You just have to have the faith that it's okay to not get it on the first shot - that's part of learning a new skill and that's what Scouting is all about - learning new skills.

LEE: Yeah. I'd say, Matt, that's what life's all about, right, just being able to learn as you go and to make the adjustments that are necessary. If you go through what you just demonstrated in this EDGE, all your Scouts will be successful. Do you have any examples of how your Scouts in the unit actually apply the EDGE method in or out of Scouting?

MATT: I'm glad you asked that question, Lee. We get them involved every week. The patrols will make a presentation and actually use the EDGE technique to teach whatever that presentation might be. So, for example, my son,

Jack, last week taught a presentation on the cyber chip, (and) did his EDGE there as well. So it just becomes part of the program, and before you know it they don't even realize they're teaching the finer parts of the EDGE because they've actually applied it so much. EDGE makes teaching skills simple. Whether or not you're in school or on the job or in Scouts, using this EDGE technique allows Scouts to share their expertise with others, and that might be; in their job setting, maybe when they're faced with overcoming challenges or looking for a promotion because they're going to all of a sudden look like the experts because they know how to teach in a way that they've learned through Scouting. They know how to share that knowledge and those skills that they've learned, not just the content but a teaching technique like the EDGE. More importantly, the EDGE technique itself lives on no matter what that skill is that they're teaching. They've got an actual teaching technique. And so that's where this applies outside of Scouting is you can't be an effective leader without being a good teacher and whether or not it's to individuals or to groups. And certainly, we've got to know how to work with people and the EDGE allows us to do that.

BRYAN: And even if they might not remember those letters E-D-G-E, they still know that this is how I teach a skill to somebody else, right? I start by explaining, then I demonstrate the skill, then I guide them, and then finally I step back and I enable them. So, even if they don't remember those four letters your Scouts will always remember the process. It's that sneaky learning again. I love it.

MATT: It's an integral part of what we do in the troop and they're going to use that in school and apply that to whatever they end up doing outside of Scouting as well.

LEE: I would agree with that. Hey, Matt, can you tell our listeners where they can go to learn more about the EDGE principles?

MATT: The latest Boy Scout Handbook does a great job of explaining what the EDGE is. Nothing does a finer job than the Boy Scout Handbook but certainly the Internet is not a bad way to go as well.

BRYAN: So, Matt, one more thing I noticed on this trip and it's kind of related to EDGE; I often heard you and Jeff, the other adult leader on the trip, say this phrase again and again. The Scouts would come up to you and ask you a question and you'd say, "Ask your crew leader." They'd say, "Okay, what are we going to do next? Ask your crew leader." So, what was the thinking that went into that response?

MATT: That's a good question. Scouting is a boy-led organization and the adults are kind of just there in the background to keep things safe, giving the Scouts the opportunities for furthering their leadership skills. There's really no finer way to become a better leader than to really get them the experience that they need.

LEE: When you empower young men and you allow them to kind of set the standard, oftentimes they go higher than what you even think they're gonna go just based on the ability that they have. Maybe they don't know that they have such abilities. But by empowering them you certainly teach them to grow out of their comfort zone.

MATT: Absolutely. Empowering your Scouts to try the EDGE for the sake of learning the EDGE; we want Scouts to learn the skills and to be taught well, but taking that risk to teach using this technique is equally as valuable as the content itself.

BRYAN: That's a good point. Yeah, there's a lesson even in the mechanism for delivering the lesson. So, Matt, thanks so much for joining us and thanks for letting *Scouting Magazine* and *Boys' Life* come along on that trip last summer. I had the time of my life and, more importantly, the Scouts had such a terrific time, and we want to thank you on behalf of the ScoutCast listeners for lending us some of your wisdom today about the EDGE method.

MATT: Thank you both. Hopefully we'll do it again sometime.

LEE: Now let's head over to Safety Moment. Then we'll be back with Reminders and Tips.

(May Safety Moment – Zip Lines)

LEE: And now for timely Reminders and Tips. This is a busy time of year for outings, and since the BSA has discontinued the Tour and Activity Plan, be sure your unit has adopted the Risk Assessment Strategy.

BRYAN: That's right, The Risk Assessment Plan helps ensure that the unit is properly prepared, that qualified and trained leaders are in place, and that the right equipment is available. Now, you can find checklists and other resources to assess risk online at [Scouting.org/HealthandSafety](https://www.scouting.org/HealthandSafety).

LEE: Also, you should be recruiting your Popcorn Kernel or other fundraising coordinators right about now. The Committee Chair is the person responsible for appointing someone, but if you know someone who would make a good candidate, go ahead and pass that suggestion along to your Committee Chair.

BRYAN: In this month's issue of *Boys' Life Magazine*, you can take a look at the same Yellowstone Adventure that Matt just talked about, but this time through the Scout's point of view. And there's lots of great outdoor content in the May/June issue of *Scouting Magazine* preparing you for your next adventure.

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BRYAN: But, Lee, the adventure of this episode is now coming to an end, so we want to thank Matt Nichols for tell us all about the EDGE method, and thanks to you for listening. Be sure your fellow leaders are tuning in. You can suggest that they do what you do and subscribe to ScoutCast on iTunes or through their favorite podcasting app.

LEE: That's right, Bryan. Now, for all of our listeners, is there a topic you'd like to hear about? Let us know by sending us an email to scoutcast@scouting.org, or tweet us @bsascoutcast. And with that, I'm Lee Shaw.

BRYAN: And I'm Bryan Wendell. We've got a special episode coming June 1st that you won't want to miss, so we will talk to you then.

Music Full to Finish