

### Identifying Natural Climbing Anchors

*A brief description:* This field experience will teach students the importance of identifying and assessing good natural anchors. Why is it important to take anchor building into consideration, and how do we safely identify & assess our anchors?

#### Instructor Block

##### Desired Learning Outcomes:

As a result of this lesson, students will have the skills and knowledge to be able to identify and assess natural anchors.

**Time Requirements:** 5 Minutes

**Location Requirements:** Area with sufficient space for students, also with nearby examples of anchors, ie: trees, rocks. Before hand scout out a ground area with sufficient space, and for rock and tree anchor examples.

**Resources:** Nearby examples of rocks and trees. Premade note cards.

**Instructor Caveat:** Knowledge of identifying and assessing natural anchors.

#### Setup:

Before hand scout out a ground area with sufficient space, for rock and tree anchor examples.

#### Framing:

Gather participants in the predetermined area. Explain that as a result to this lesson they will be able to identify and assess natural anchors. I intend to focus everyone attention on myself by giving some very interesting background information on anchors to begin with.

#### Activity

**Step 1** – Introduce my topic: Identifying Natural anchors.

**Step 2** – Explain your DLO. “Students, as a result of this lesson, they will be able to identify and assess natural climbing anchors.”

**Step 3** – Introduce the 3 types of anchors you will be discussing: Trees, Boulders, and Chock stones.

**Step 4** – Trees: Explain “5 & Alive,” discuss the trees “root base,” and a visual assessment “check” on an actual tree, by trying to yank it out of ground, kick it, push it, knock on it for hollow sounds.

**Step 5** – Explain that if a tree passes all of the tests you give it, 5 & alive, visual root check, and the hands on tree “shake down,” then using your better judgment, use the tree or move on to another.

**Step 6** – Boulders: Main Point: The boulder must have good contact with the ground. Explain that without contact your rope could easily pancake the rock, slip under the rock, or the rock could move, nail the point home that the boulder must have good contact with ground. Segue to next step: How to assess boulder contact?

**Step 7** – Have found a boulder example on the ground

**Step 8** – Boulder assessment: Is the boulder steady? Use visual examples by pushing and kicking the boulder with hands and legs.

**Step 9** – Cont. Is the boulder large enough, would you trust your life with it? Explain to students to give the boulder a visual eye once over.

**Step 10** – Cont. Is the boulder solid? Use visual examples, knock on boulder, and listen for hollow sounds. Explain to look for cracks or crumbling rock.

**Step 11** - Explain that if the boulder passes all of the tests you give it, then using your better judgment, use the boulder or move on to another.

**Step 12** – Chock Stones. Describe what a Chock Stone, and then give definition.

**Step 13** – Chock stone assessment: Can it move? Rotate or Wiggle?

**Step 14** – Cont. is it solid? Explain that sandstone is one of the soft and more brittle rocks and can sometimes crumble under force.

**Step 15** - Give students a minute or two, to use the skills they have learned to assess trees and boulders in the area around where the teaching is taking place.

**Step 16** – Gather students back around, Review main points from each Anchor. **Trees:** 5 & Alive, root base, and visual check. **Boulders:** Good contact with ground, steady boulder, solid, large enough? **Chock Stone:** Can it move, rotate, or wiggle? Is it solid?

**Step 17** – Ask students if they have any questions for me?

### Closing

Ask for general questions on topic. Recap main points on anchors. Ask for a volunteers to list off a few of the main points, for a specific anchor. ie: tree or boulder.

### Resources:

Using Natural Protection. Retrieved from <http://www.climbingtechniques.org/using-natural-protection.html>

J. Martin. (2011, July 29) American Alpine Institute: Natural Anchors. Retrieved from <http://alpineinstitute.blogspot.com/2011/07/natural-anchors.html>

Mountaineering and Mountain Survival. *Natural Anchors*. Retrieved from <http://www.mountain-survival.net/chapter5/natural-anchors.html>

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Teaching Reflection  
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### **Identifying Natural Anchors Reflection**

My topic for this teaching assignment was identifying natural anchors. I thoroughly enjoyed researching this topic I found the information very helpful. During my research I checked many different references to make sure they were very similar. I would hate to have given faulty information on identifying natural anchors. Then, not likely but potentially, someone could have gone out and harmed themselves when using unstable anchors. So I prided myself in finding reliable sources.

Prior to my teaching I was quite nervous. I think it helped a lot that I had just repelled down a mountainside, so my teaching couldn't be as scary as repelling down the mountain. Nevertheless I was still a bit nervous. Before I started my lesson I had a few minutes to go over my note cards, figure out the order I wanted to present my information, and the final details. When I get nervous I generally want to just get things over with, so I was ready to begin my topic, lay down the information, and be done with it.

I began my lesson by introducing the topic, and stating the intended outcomes. Some of the feedback I got from Derek was that my intended outcomes were a little broad. He thought I might have been able to focus them down a little more, something more along the lines of, being able to identify great natural tree anchors, or stellar boulders to use when climbing. I then introduced trees as the first natural anchor by saying, "first we have trees, which are the most common type of anchor." Derek later told me that yes in the southeast trees may be the most common anchors, but what about out west, or up north? He mentioned boulders might be more predominate. While yes my statement was partially true, he recommended that I should have clarified that.

I then moved into some of the guidelines for identifying trees. I found a really catchy statement, that I hope helped my audience remember the guidelines. The statement was, "5 and Alive," trees must be 5 inches in diameter, at least 5 feet tall, good root base, and alive. This statement definitely helped me remember the guidelines as well. Derek also mentioned that "5 and Alive," was a great statement to use during my lesson, it fit in perfect.

I felt most confident in talking about tree anchors rather than boulders or chock stones, because I had found the most information on trees. Also I had previously used trees for anchors, and overall I felt confident in what I was talking about. Boulders I had found some very good information, but I wasn't quite sure how to organize it and in what order I should deliver the information. Since I was a little unsure on delivery of information for boulder I figured I should just visually show my audience. That is why I had chosen the site where I had my lesson. Prior to the lesson I chose that particular site, because it had some great trees and boulders for which I could use as examples in my lesson.

"When it comes to boulders, you want to make sure they have great contact with the ground." So I brought my audience over into the "boulder field" that I had chosen, relayed a bit of information, hopped up on a boulder and started to jump on it to check

whether it was a stable rock or not. After watching my video I realized while I was talking about boulders I was kind of talking in a lower voice while looking around on the ground to assess the boulders. If I could have changed this, I would have relayed the information face to face so my audience could hear me, then looked around for boulders to use as examples. Nevertheless I feel I still got the point across. After relaying the information for assessing boulders and showing examples, I had my participants go out and assess some boulders themselves. While my participants were assessing boulders I went around with them to double check their progress. I realized quite quickly that my participants had spread out tremendously, and because of time constraints I could not check up on everyone.

I then gather everyone back around to introduce my last topic of chock stones. Because we had not worked with chock stone previous, I felt it might be a little difficult to understand what they were. I did though give a great definition of what I chock stone was, and proceeded to talk about guidelines for assessing them.

Following each topic: trees, boulders, and chock stones I had planned on reviewing the key guidelines to assessing each type of anchor, but I totally forgot. I think its because I was still a bit nervous and was going a little to fast throughout the lesson. If I could go back and do it again I would have slowed down my self for sure so that I would have covered everything that I wanted to, and had time to review. Overall though I think I did good, I covered what I wanted to cover, showed some great examples, and asked if anyone had any questions once I wrapped up the lesson.

A few things I learned from my feedback: be more specific in my intended outcomes, more clarity in my statements, the less confusion from my audience. Maintain visual and audible contact with my audience. Because I was nervous played a key role in some of my mistakes, but after watching my video it was quite clear that I need to slow down, take a moment to focus my thoughts and continue. Also If I had taken a little more time prior to my lesson to organize the order of my topics I feel it would have gone a lot smoother. Overall it was a great learning experience for me.