



outliving it

AN INTRODUCTION TO FIRST DESCENTS

OUR MISSION

First Descents is a national nonprofit that provides free, life-changing outdoor adventures for young adults (18-45) impacted by cancer and other serious health conditions.

WHY YOUNG ADULTS?

Unique Survivorship Challenges

THE SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

- Cancer is the leading disease-related cause of death in adolescents and young adults (AYAs).
- More than 90,000 AYAs are newly diagnosed annually.
- AYAs comprise the fastest-growing and most underserved oncology age demographic.
- Multiple sclerosis is the most common neuroinflammatory disease affecting AYAs and is diagnosed primarily between the ages of 20 and 40.

LIMITED AGE-APPROPRIATE RESOURCES

Serious health conditions present unique challenges and obstacles to survivorship for AYAs, including the disruption of normative adult milestones and the lack of age-appropriate resources.

COMMON AYA IMPACTS:

- Missed or late diagnosis
- Medical debt and financial toxicity
- Infertility
- Missed work or school
- Emotional, mental, and physical distress
- Social isolation
- Loss of identity and independence



PATHWAYS TO HEALING

WHAT WE DO

FD programs bring challenge-by-choice adventures and healthy behavior principles to life in the outdoors. By creating immersive experiences with peer groups, we inspire lasting physical activity, and social connections that extend well beyond the clinical setting.

Program Delivery Channels: Pillars of Service



Core Program Destinations

(5-6 days; professionally guided; all-inclusive)

Free weeklong whitewater kayaking, rock climbing, and surfing adventures in epic destinations around the country



Community Adventures

(local, low/no-cost, year-round engagement)

Local outdoor experiences created and facilitated by the FD alumni community for anyone age 18+



Lifestyle Pathways

(ongoing)

Nutrition, mindfulness, and wellness resources, peer networks, and digital touchpoints to sustain behavior change



PILLARS OF SERVICE #1

CORE PROGRAMS



Core Programs are **FREE weeklong whitewater kayaking, rock climbing and surfing adventures** in epic destinations around the country. Each program includes lodging, gear, professional guides and instruction, chef-prepared meals, and time to relax with fellow members of our supportive, inclusive FD community. Core Programs are available to eligible young adults impacted by cancer and multiple sclerosis, as well as caregivers and healthcare workers in those medical fields.

SINCE 2001, we've served young adults in the prime of their lives who are facing trauma, identity loss, and isolation.

14,000+ PARTICIPANT EXPERIENCES

1,000+ PROGRAMS





PILLARS OF SERVICE #2

COMMUNITY ADVENTURES



Community Adventures are all about connection and shared outdoor experiences. These free or low-cost adventurous activities – hiking, biking, paddleboarding, climbing, and more – are coordinated around the country and **led by local community members**. Adventures are available for all skill levels and range from 1-2 hours to daylong or multi-day excursions, and they are open to **anyone ages 18+**, including patients, friends and family, supporters, and partners.

350+ COMMUNITY ADVENTURES

3,000+ ATTENDEES

50+ LOCATIONS NATIONWIDE



PILLARS OF SERVICE #3

LIFESTYLE PATHWAYS



First Descents enhances its programming through a whole healthcare approach recognizing the benefits of various modalities including yoga, mindfulness and nutrition.

We partner with health-supportive chefs who create menus emphasizing a fresh, whole-foods approach to eating. Mindfulness and movement practices also play an important role, designed by a trauma-informed yoga therapist.

Participants have [ongoing access to resources and tools](#) before and after programs and events to support lasting wellness.

COMMUNITIES WE SERVE

STRENGTHENING THE ENTIRE ECOSYSTEM

We believe that serving the whole network of care is needed to truly address the needs of those dealing with cancer, multiples sclerosis, and other serious health issues.



Patients, at any point during, immediately post, or anytime after active clinical treatment



Participants must have been diagnosed with cancer or MS between the ages of 15-39 and currently be between 18-45.

Caregivers, to strengthen family-system and network resilience



Participants must currently be between ages 18-45 and have cared for an individual who qualifies for our Oncology or MS programs. Eligible individuals may have only ONE caregiver apply for our Core Programs.

Healthcare providers, via focused programs that address burnout and reconnecting to purpose

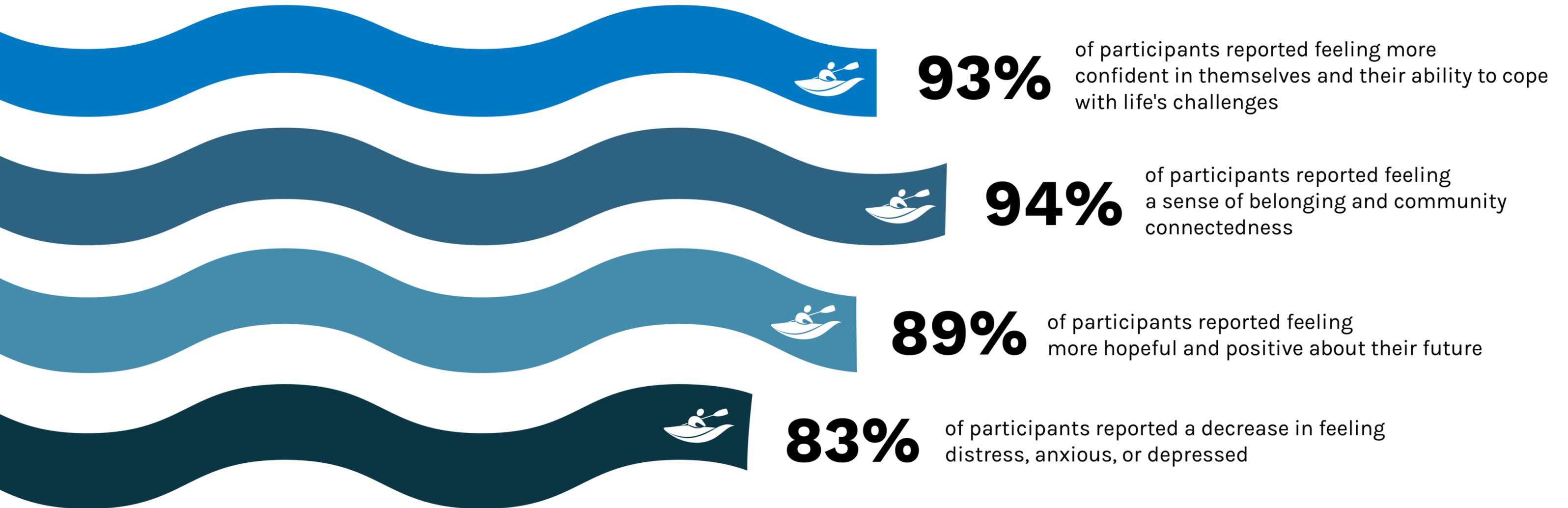


Participants must currently be between the ages of 18-45 and work within the healthcare industry serving MS and/or oncology patients.

THE HEALING POWER OF ADVENTURE

At the end of every Core Program season, participants are invited to complete a survey about their First Descents experience and how it impacts their daily lives.

Through 2025 our impact included:



**First Descents also participated in two formal oncology impact studies that found improvements in coping skills: firstdescents.org/our-impact.*

JOIN US: FUNDRAISE TO SUPPORT
HEALING ADVENTURES

OUT LIVING IT PROJECT (OLIP)

The Out Living It Project (OLIP) is First Descents' grassroots fundraising platform that combines adventure, creativity, and philanthropy. Launch your own unique fundraiser – we can help with that! – or join a team event to raise funds and awareness.

Over 20% of our funding comes from people like you who step up to help our community heal through adventure by hosting an event!

All funds raised go directly to FD's mission of providing outdoor adventures for young adults impacted by cancer, MS, and other serious health conditions.

\$9 MILLION+

RAISED TO DATE BY
MORE THAN 62,000
SUPPORTERS



OUR HEALTHCARE PARTNERS

PRESCRIBE ADVENTURE

300+

MEDICAL CENTERS AND HEALTHCARE ORGANIZATIONS REFERRING PATIENTS

First Descents partners with medical centers to extend our free adventure programs to more young adults in need of psychosocial support. Research shows that our Core Programs improve quality of life, and we're reaching more young adults through our growing network of healthcare professionals than ever before.

Prescribe Adventure is our ongoing initiative to engage healthcare professionals in empowering their patients by referring them to experience community connection and life-changing adventure with First Descents.





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