

# MACWARD BOUND

## Fitness and Self Care



### **Mental Preparation**

While there are countless studies that link benefits to spending time in nature, and physical activity like backpacking, we understand that for many this may be an overwhelming experience, or one that is completely out of your comfort zone. Remember that self-care and mental health are important while on trail, and that you can always reach out for help. Our leaders are there to listen and are knowledgeable about on-campus resources you can seek once back at Macalester. Here are a few things to think about in terms of your mental preparation for the trip:

#### **Nutrition**

Both before and during the trip, proper nutrition is key. Make sure your diet is balanced between proteins and complex carbohydrates. This will give you lots of energy while on the trail. Consider cutting out unhealthy foods in preparation for the withdrawal symptoms your body may experience while on trail.

#### **Sleep**

Getting good sleep for the days leading up to the trip as well as on the trip are critical for a more positive outlook and a better overall experience. If possible, go camping and practice sleeping on the ground/in a sleeping bag so you know what to expect, or set yourself up for a more comfortable night's sleep by bringing earplugs or a small eye-mask.

#### **Demeanor**

Your attitude and openness to new experiences, people, and situations will be a factor in your success on the trip. Be ready to be a member of a team and adopt a positive and flexible mindset for your expectations, considering things often can look different than you thought or not go as planned. If needed, find a quiet moment to help you recenter. We recommend bringing a small journal to write down thoughts, questions, and reflections.

#### **Pre-Trip Prep**

Things like upping your fitness level, making sure you have a pair of well-fitting and broken-in hiking boots, and proper clothing can give you much more peace of mind and ease anxiety both going into and during the trip. Cutting back on things like alcohol, junk food, and caffeine before hand will give your body more of a buffer to the shocks it may feel from a sudden lack of these inputs. While there will be some time for this on the trip, consider setting goals for yourself on-trail. Remember to check in with yourself at different points during the trip and ask for support or help in meeting those goals if you are struggling.

#### **Hygiene as Self-Care**

As you will be spending almost a week outdoors, there is an element of embracing the dirt. However, you don't need to feel totally disgusting. You can bring things like unscented baby wipes (to pack out) to "wash" face, armpits, feet or anything else. Even though there is extra effort involved with things like brushing teeth or going to the bathroom, don't ignore your body's signals/needs because of inconvenience or discomfort.

## Other Things to Consider

### Living with Less

Look around your house and the “real” world and think about what you have and what you need. Things you currently take for granted like hot running water, upholstered furniture and sidewalks will not be part of your experience. When you get the rhythm of wilderness living you will see that despite the complexity of your every day life, life on the trail and life at home are both ultimately about food, clothing, shelter, and each other.

### Being Away from Home

Whether it is the first time or the 27th time you have been away from home, you might not ever have been this far away. In most cases you will quickly see that you are not alone but it might take a few days to adjust. Be prepared to stick it out and to lean on your leaders and peers for help. If you think you might feel homesick, let us know. We can help you come up with some ideas to address it.

### Compassion

Be prepared to offer compassion, as well as to expect it from your peers. You will travel with and rely on a group of strangers, all whom have different reasons for attending and will come with different levels of physical and mental strength. You may find that you will need to make compromises in your own expectations to support other members of your group.

### Group Discussion

Macward Bound delivers learning, in large part, by discussing trail and life experiences. By reflecting through group discussion before and after, you are more able to hold onto the value of each experience and will be more likely to take it with you. Be prepared to share your perspective and gain insight from the perspectives of others.

Adapted from Outward Bound



## Fitness and Body-Training

Give yourself up to a month to prepare for your backpacking trip on the Superior Hiking Trail with Macward Bound. You do not need to be in marathon-running shape to go on Macward Bound, but even a little bit of preparation will give you the best chance of having a pleasant backpacking experience.

The best way to train for a hiking trip is to go on hikes! If you live within a reasonable distance of hiking trails, go for a day hike, making sure to wear the same boots you'll wear on your trip. Take yourself on walks and shorter hikes three times a week. You can also pack a slightly heavier bag to get used to carrying weight. Keep in mind that not only will you be carrying your own personal gear, but you will also be expected to carry group gear, tents, and/or food. Not close to nature? Try urban hiking, which is an active walk in an urban environment that goes through parks, stairwells, and intersections. You can wear your hiking boots and a backpack for this, too. Its important to establish a mix of aerobic, strength, flexibility, and recovery in your routine.

To best prevent injury on-trail, follow these general guidelines on how to train:

- Increase strength in major muscles that do the heavy lifting. Stronger legs and core muscles can support heavy loads, while also helping you power up the trail.
- Build endurance in those same muscle groups, as well as the shoulders and lower back, because backpacking is an all-day activity.
- Improve your balance so you have a more stable base that will allow you to take uneven terrain in stride. Strengthen ankles and hips which will be under strain while hiking.
- Don't forget cardio. Focus on endurance to build lung capacity so you can hike comfortably for longer periods of time. Complement strength-training with activities like trail running, biking or another aerobic exercise that you enjoy. Swimming combines cardio, while being non-impact, so is great for recovery days when you are sore.

Keep in mind that the exercises should fit your body, not the other way around. That being said, if something hurts, modify the exercise or skip it—and take extra rest days if you feel the need. Always move at your own pace, going slowly at first. While working up your level of aerobic fitness, make sure you aren't pushing yourself too hard too early. You should always be able to talk without panting. Increase your repetitions or add more resistance or weight as your training progresses. If you are new to exercise, make sure you talk to your physician before starting any-rigorous changes. Keep reading for an example training routine.



# Exercises to Try at Home

## Core Exercises

Crunches | Pushups | Side Plank with Hip-Dip | Bicycles | Plank



## General Strength

Jump Squats | Heel Down One Legged Squats | Step-Ups | Mountain-Climbers | Single-Leg Dead-Lift | Squat Curl-Overhead Press | Diagonal Cross Lift with Exercise Band | Weighted Glute-Bridge



## Flexibility/Joint Protection

Hip Roll Standing on One Foot | Jogging or Walking on Sand | One Legged Line Hops | Bulgarian Split-Squats | Sun Salutations or Yoga Flow | Hamstring Curl on Exercise Ball | Standing Heel Raises



## Example Schedule

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
Strength training	Cardio training	Rest day stretching or flexibility exercises	Cardio training Strength training	Cardio training	Rest day stretching or flexibility exercises	Strength training or some light recovery cardio