

Outdoor Insight Cliff Face Lessons

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The paralysis of fear crumbles in the light of love's commitment to itself. *J. Lewis*

Halfway up a cliff on an unnamed peak above Marion Lake in the eastern Sierra, I found myself clinging to a wall without climbing equipment ... no way of going down and no apparent way up. It was confusion that got me there and the result of one bad choice compounding into another. I was paralyzed on an edge separating present and future, as if nature meant to dramatize a literal representation of the thin line between life and death, between clarity and confusion, between now and then. Fear was rapidly turning to panic, an all too real disaster unfolding. I needed to get very purposeful figuring out what to do next.

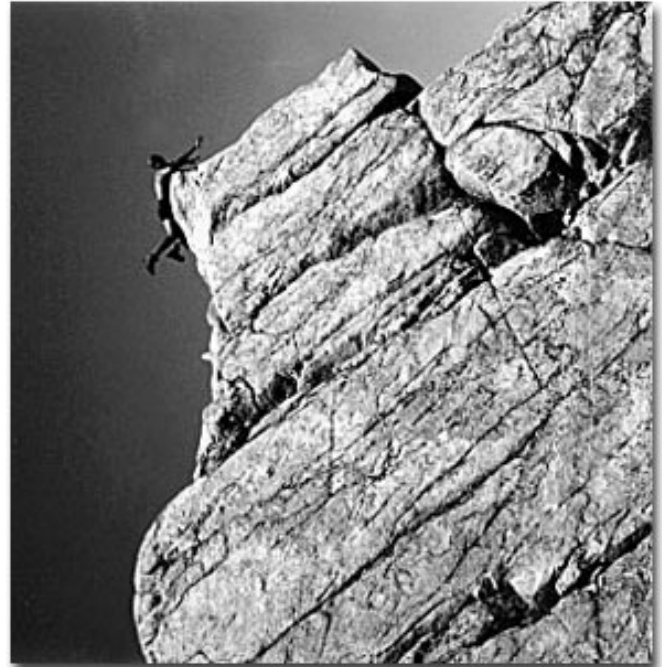
To stop a bad situation from getting worse, I had to go to another place, a place within to transcend the reality of a rock ledge, two-inches wide, the only thing preventing me from plummeting. Flattening myself as tightly as possible, I put as much distance as I could between me and the sweeping abyss at my back. Turning my head to the side, palms forward, I clung to the wall, cold, granite scratching against my cheek.

Dust swirled off the rock with each heavy gasp. Sweat soaked my entire body. The beating in my chest felt strong enough to push me backwards, right off the edge. I knew if I didn't do something quickly I wouldn't make it. Closing my eyes only intensified the jangled feeling of adrenalin coursing through my body. If I didn't fall I just might burst!

I knew I had to bring myself to a more resourceful state. Purposefully, I shifted my focus concentrating solely on breathing, counting my shuddering inhalations to shut out the panicked voices in my head. Wuh, wuh, one... Ta, ta, two... Thuh, thuh, three... During those moments, I fought for control over my body's tired, quivering muscles and against fear screaming their terrifying "What ifs" in my head. I concentrated only on breathing, excluding everything else competing for my attention, noticing the details of only one thing, the air I was drawing into and out of my lungs.

Teetering both physically and emotionally on the edge of control and certainty, a battle with the highest possible stakes raged inside me. But through all that there was a part of me that watched as if from some other place, detached from the emotion, unaffected by the peril and unconcerned about any outcome. A part of me wondered, as the contest between panic and calm continued, what would happen. It was this other me who noticed the quiver in my legs begin to subside and my breathing slow and become smooth again. It seemed like an eternity, but the panic gradually receded.

As my breathing calmed and the ghost echoes of fear quieted, something miraculous happened. Voices of panic were replaced with voices of praise. The sounds were familiar, the presence of loved ones from hundreds of miles away were speaking to me in that





moment, as if they somehow knew I was in need. Their voices, grew louder and louder, completely drowning out the antagonizing voice of fear. This gift brought me back to a place of peace, clarity and resourcefulness.

When I opened my eyes my external reality hadn't changed, but my internal reality had. I felt a new confidence and began again to search for a way off the ledge, to safety. Moments later my fingers found the handhold that would be my deliverance. I could hardly believe it.

How could I have missed something so obvious? Clearly, my mind's turmoil was obscuring the solution right in front of me. Stopping the obstructive mind chatter allowed a miracle to occur, a simple shift in my perception from fear to love. The invisible presence of spirit then appeared as calming voices and a rock hand hold. The magic of spirit

made the elusive obvious.

This was nature's lesson teaching me how to confront fear with love, adopt a resourceful state of mind before moving forward and trust that even when nobody's with me, I'm not alone. The blocks and breakdowns in life are the derivatives of fear and being out of touch with the present moment. Departing from the present moment through fear is the trigger for break downs and the clearest call for a return to the power and clarity of now where love's presence unites us.

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Jon uses nature and photography as a unique pathway to explore personal insight. Living in Leucadia near San Diego, he is the founder of Life Tools Coaching and Photography offering inspirational photographic art, workshops, outdoor learning adventures and group or one on one coaching. To contact or learn more about Jon and Life Tools, visit his website at www.lifetools.org, call (760) 230-1367 or send an e-mail to jon@lifetools.org.

