



Scare Tactics!

The Mind And Fear

Whether you're a kamikaze cliff-hucker, a speed thirsty cruiser, or the hottest bumper on the hill, fear is a factor on the any slope. Ignore it. And you'll face consequences; perhaps falling short of your ski potential or suffering and injury from reckless behavior. But if you learn to use fear to your advantage, you'll ski better and enjoy it more.

If an instructor does delve into a mental realm, the goal shouldn't be to eliminate fear, but rather to teach skiers how to manage it. There's a fine line between fear and thrill. If you take the fear away, you take the thrill away. Fear starts in the mind, but it effect radiate through the body; sudden fear shoots a danger signal to your brain's hypothalamus, which in turn stimulates your adrenal glands to produce epinephrine, norepinephrine and hydrocortisone. These hormones trigger a chain reaction designed to help you survive; your pulse quickens to move more blood, the muscles tense for action, and the mind becomes more attentive. To you body, fear is fear: It responds identically whether you catch a ski-edge, leap out of an airplane or watch a midnight airing of the Shinning by yourself in a remote mountain lodge.

How each person handles fear, however, is different. It can motivate you to act, to run, to fight or even to change your life; a person who seeks out the rush of fear has a thrill-seeking personality, Everyone shows fear under certain circumstances, but the thrill seekers thrill comes from overcoming the fear. Risk-taking is a way of life for them.

On the other end of the spectrum are people overwhelming by irrational fears. Many of them live with an accumulation of little fears that are just paper tigers; they avoid thrills and seek predictability.

Most skiers land somewhere in-between the two extremes. Sometimes they forgo the fun of riskd because of excessive fear. Other times they endanger themselves because they don't heed the messages fear sends. But by following a few basic tips, you can turn fear from foe to friend and learn t "stick the snot out of what scares you."

- 1) **Analyze It:** Does fear cause you to rush or lose your form – or retreat altogether? You first need to understand how fear affects your skiing before you can explore how to deal with it.
- 2) **Take modest steps:** Push your comfort level. Ski terrain that's more challenging each time, but noy so challenging that you might not be able to handle it. If you jump into something really scary and you're way over your head, you'll never want to try it again.
- 3) **Relax:** Take some deep breaths from way down in the gut. It's amazing how this calms you down, and it doesn't take sessions of psychotherapy to know how to do it.
- 4) **Prepare mentally:** talk yourself through what you're about to do. Day, "I've been building up to this moment, I'm in control of my skills, and I want to do this."
- 5) **Focus on what you can control:** Think about the line you're going to take, your stance and your fundamentals; if you do, you'll be more confident.
- 6) **Think positively:** When choosing your line, look where you want to go, not where you might end up. If you think too much about what can go wrong, it's bound to happen.
- 7) **Know your limits:** If your fears are sending loud and clear messages to stop, obey them.
- 8) **Don't fear failure:** Travis Mayer was 19 and new to the U.S. Ski Team when he competed in Salt lake City. In the mogul finals, he saw fellow competitors vomiting from nerves and fear, "I decided I wouldn't care about failure", he said. "You've got to ski for yourself. You can't please everyone, anyway."