



New Year Message 2008

By Pete Maher (founder of Jump Start)

Why is Jump Start billed as '*the experience of being alive*'?

Skydivers are fond of saying that they never think about worries or work (unless it happens to be skydiving) when they are exiting a plane. Even after hundreds of jumps, the excitement of that moment remains strong enough to be fully present.

Being in the present moment doesn't mean living as if the future won't happen, or as if the past doesn't matter. It simply means being fully engaged in life as it is happening – being present. Jumping from a plane, accompanied as it is by a rush of adrenaline, offers a particularly vivid experience of being present. Adrenaline is the body's response to facing fear, and the fear of falling is perhaps the most primal of human fears.

We know that our fears are all basically the same. Yet fear makes us feel alone. It not only separates us from others, but it also separates us from ourselves. Fear of what might happen can prevent us from being able to act, like a novice climber who cannot go up and cannot go down. Worry, anxiety, regret over some past action – these things all reduce our ability to be present, and to enjoy life to the full.

Life involves challenges, and risks. A chance is a roll of the dice, whereas a risk is something that is known, planned for, and managed. Thanks to the many hours of training, when a skydiver encounters the unexpected, the solution already exists in the muscle memory – just like the driver of a car who brakes instinctively when a dog runs out onto the road.

Training doesn't consist of worrying about the future. Training involves being fully present in order to learn how to do something effectively. And so the response to a challenge, when it occurs, is to be fully and effectively in the moment.

A tandem skydive involves jumping with someone who has done the training for you. Your part is to trust that person, follow instructions, and have fun! It's an opportunity to experience the rush of adrenaline, the experience of being in the moment, without having to do all the training.

However, trusting someone else to pull the ripcord won't in any way reduce the fear that will confront you as you prepare for your jump, nor will it reduce your victory over fear in making the jump. The elation you feel afterwards translates into a lasting confidence that "I did it!"

Project K and CanTeen are dedicated to helping young people to effectively face the challenges in their lives. Jump Start offers their members a taste of the benefit – the experience of being alive....

Further information on Jump Start 2008:

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