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## Is the Risk Worth It?

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**Introduction:**

As an avid alpine climber and mountain guide, I find myself in risky situations with increasing regularity. Following some of these risky situations, questions from friends and my parents prompted me to think more about why I take the risks that I do. To myself it almost doesn't feel like an option. I almost feel as though I have to do what I do to be happy. But there is more to it than that. In some ways it is as simple the added risk makes it a little more fun and makes you feel more alive and engaged. It's more complex than this and this video is my attempt to shed light on why we take the risks that we do even when we seemingly have nothing to gain and everything to lose.

**Video:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i9ZiFny9spg>

**Conclusion:**

I was first compelled to make this video and conduct these interviews following some close calls in the mountains. When asked why I do what I do, especially when the consequences are so absolute, I realized that I was unable to convey my reasons for taking the risks that I do. All I knew was that whenever I wasn't climbing in the mountains, I wished I was. And when I was climbing in the mountains, my mind was quiet and I felt in control and in the moment. Talking with Peter, Kyle, and Doug, added some clarity to ways I personally explore and approach risk.

It seems that the climbers I spoke with don't climb in the mountains for all of the same reasons. However, some commonalities that I see between these three climber's reasons and my own is that we all feel more alive and engaged as the situations get riskier. Of course, as Kyle mentioned, if there is too much risk, then we feel more fear than is enjoyable. We all think we know the risk and the consequence. However, there is a lot of uncertainty that is inherent to alpine environments and with this greater uncertainty comes greater risk. Doug says that the experience is richer when you're climbing in alpine terrain, so you're willing to accept more risk. The three climbers I spoke with agree that the risk and uncertainty associated with climbing alpine routes is part of what makes them attractive objectives. These big alpine routes usually have lots of no fall zones. When I am in one of these zones, where a fall would almost certainly result in death, all that is on my mind is executing every move I make perfectly. There is no mental space beyond that to focus on things like falling or "real world problems". This clear and focused head space is what we are after when we are climbing in the mountains. After going through a no fall zone, sometimes I worry about what others would think of the risks I've taken. Peter mentioned that it can be difficult to remove yourself from what other people think the risk would be. It can be very difficult to dismiss outside pressures and just think about risk for ourselves. But when we do, we find a freedom and focus that we can't find anywhere else in our lives. Perhaps, it is in these moments, with our sense distilled down to just what is necessary to survive, we find the most human experience and feel the most alive.

