

John Amatt

lifelines



To succeed in life, whether personally or professionally, we have to take risks. The world is changing so fast that yesterday's way is not suited to the future. If we fail to adapt to changing circumstances, we fall into the trap of complacency, which I believe is the biggest danger in life.

As a child, I was very insecure and shy. I wanted to be successful but lacked confidence. When I discovered climbing, I found something I was good at. I began to be recognised by my peers and this gave me the ambition to climb harder and higher routes. I discovered that nothing was impossible if I could find the courage to try.

In extreme mountaineering, you are always in dangerous situations, as there are plenty of dangers such as rockfalls, avalanches or crevasses over which you have no direct control. It is vital to be constantly aware of these dangers and not to panic. In climbing, mental control is just as important as physical prowess. I have found that staying calm and evaluating the situation leads to better decision-making.

Both individual determination and teamwork are critical to success when climbing. You need to rely on the support of your team and share in the achievement. But at the same time, personal focus and determination to keep going despite any adversity is an important contribution to team success.

My greatest achievement in climbing is being the first ever climber to conquer the 5,000-foot Troll Wall in Norway. This rock face is the highest and most vertical in Europe. A stone dropped from the summit will touch nothing until it lands on the valley floor one mile below. Prior to our climb, the experts in Europe had said it was impossible to scale the Troll Wall. But with three companions, I decided to try. It took ten days to make the climb and we slept on ledges no more than a foot wide. Afterwards, I said to myself: 'If I can do that, I can do anything.' Everest has been my greatest endurance test. It took five years to organise, three weeks to

walk the 150 miles from Kathmandu to base camp, and six weeks to climb the final 11,000 feet to the top of the world – the highest point on earth at 29,035 feet. Then you have to spend two weeks removing all the equipment and walking back.

Adventure to me is not just hanging on a rope off the side of a mountain. That is just one arena where adventurous people can constantly challenge themselves. If we look at every day as an adventure we can challenge ourselves and continue to grow throughout our lives. That is the ultimate adventure.

I am the person I am today because of the learning that took place in the mountains, so I wanted to motivate others to climb the metaphorical mountains in their own lives. It was a natural evolution into motivational speaking to corporate groups around the world.

The greatest lessons that businesses can learn from my experiences are to stay focused, and never give up. Many people today are unwilling to take personal responsibility for the results of their own actions. Our society breeds a culture where we always look for blame in adverse situations. Our governments surround us with safety nets, we have insurance policies for every eventuality, and the legal profession encourages us to sue for compensation when something goes wrong.

Our civilisation was built by adventurous people who had the courage to try new things. They endured through adversity and learned lessons from it, then worked together in teams to achieve difficult goals, and adapted to the new world of opportunity every day. We must learn lessons from the past and apply them to the present if we are to succeed in this millennium. ■

John Amatt is a mountain climber, Everest expedition leader, author and professional speaker. For more information visit: www.johnamatt.com