


# HEROES CLIMB

THE ASCENT FROM I TO US



New York Times  
Bestselling Author

VINCE POSCENTE

# **Heroes Climb**

## **The Ascent from I to US**

by Vince Poscente

**Dedicated To**

Chris Capozzoli, Herb Carver, Nathan France, Tyler France, James Gleason, Everett McKinley, Mark Lowery, Gail Melvin, Bill Miller, Ankit Sood, Panki Sood & Jeff Salz

The gift you gave with your examples of fearlessness, selflessness, compassion, humility and persistence gave life to the Heroes Climb.

**Heroes Climb – Ascent from I to Us**

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**HEROES▲CLIMB**

## **Introduction**

You are already a hero. It is time for you to quit playing small and reveal that hero within you. Come, be big, so others can not only delight in your presence but be elevated by your character.

Think back to the first time you realized you were meant for something greater. That thought, was your first step. You set-out towards a peak beyond your sights. What happened to that journey of yours? Did you set up camp? Have you climbed with purpose? Are you ready to take the heroes climb?

There are scores of heroes who are already around you. They are not the iconic heroes of legend or stardom. These are heroes who have turned your gaze from I to us, from within to an ever broadening dynamic impact and influence. As you widen the scope of your gaze you become aware of a mountain, patiently waiting for you. There are many paths. You only need to choose, and to climb. As you ascend your power shifts from I to us.

Recently an unfiltered voice spoke the truth, “Vince, you spent the first half of your life going downhill. The second half going up.” What can you learn from that?

Going downhill was all about what “I” did to go from recreational skier to the Olympics in just four years. This was followed by how others could accelerate towards their goals through an award winning speaking career and as a New York Times bestselling author. Then, the “Great Recession” hit. And the journey uphill to find “Us” began.

At the summit you will find qualities you seek to embody.

The quest is not about rugged individualism. The passageway is about how you can be better. How you can be stronger and more enlightened. How WE can be part of the solution rather than just, “What’s in it for ME?”

**Focus on “What’s in it for us?”  
over  
“What’s in it for me?”**

We live in an explosive environment. The chaos is not only around us; the volatility is under our very feet. The steps we take are beyond thriving, it even supersedes survival. Our ascent together is how we live and work jointly in grace and gratitude; how we embody qualities to give us a better vista with which to share and enjoy; how we grow through leading by a superb example? This is why The Heroes Climb came into being.

As you will learn, there were a number of treks leading up to the first Heroes Climb expedition to the Himalayas. Each mountain lead to nothing more than a rhetorical curiosity. “Wouldn’t it be cool to name a mountain.” But this “#nameamountain” smacked of ego and self-aggrandizement. Naming a mountain seemed like an adolescent eye-roll to the majesty of mother nature. Yes, it would be cool to name a mountain, but how to take the corrosive ego out of it became the big question.

The scope widened and the idea of heroes came into play.

### **Types of Heroes**

- There are ‘**situational heroes.**’ Those people, through circumstance become heroes by jumping into a subway to save a person who accidentally fell in or a neighbor who is caught in a burning building and needs immediate help to escape.

- Then there are ‘**unsung heroes.**’ Here, the system, pays teachers, police officers and military personnel trivial incomes. Then, society honorably holds them up as choice examples of individual, admired, heroic figures.
- ‘**Occupational heroes**’ are justly celebrated when, without any loss of life, he lands a passenger jet in the Hudson or she swims across the English Channel.
- There are ‘**societal heroes**’ who amend the trajectory of humanity, like Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela and Mother Theresa.
- There are ‘**athletic heroes**’ who rewrite record books; Serena Williams, Wayne Gretzky and Usain Bolt.
- We have even rationalized celebrities and some business leaders into the heroic stratosphere.

But the separation between these larger-than-life heroes and us, seems beyond our grasp. These exceptional figures are atop a tower of marble. Unlikely to be touched by our everyday existence. But, within our reach are ‘everyday heroes.’

### **Who are Everyday Heroes?**

Everyday heroes are people like you and me – but the trajectory they find themselves in is much different. Everyday heroes, by their example, lead the way for us to hold ourselves accountable by our own actions. It is not so much WHAT they accomplish but HOW. Everyday heroes touch your life deeply. You know a person who, simply by his or her character and actions, is a beacon for living in a higher state of personal integrity. And, as the saying goes, “A rising tide raises all boats.” We are each buoyed by their proximity. Ego and selfishness disappear when you are in their presence.

Everyday heroes impact people in their inner circle. Around this kind of hero, we experience someone who is not defined by their setbacks but defined by where they want to go in life. They

are not constrained by what they cannot do but what they can set their mind, and heart, to. They simply lead by the example of being fearless, selfless, humble, compassionate and persistent.

By framing “heroes” in this context, the tower of marble separating the classical hero from the rest of us ordinary mortals, disappears. We see, and know, these traits in ourselves. We realize we don’t need tragedy or misfortune to climb from “I” to “Us.” We find ourselves shift from an inward focus to an intention of service. Whether we are at work, in the marketplace, at home or in our community we exhibit courage, generosity, modesty, empathy and tenacity. How different would everyone’s experience be on the job, with our customers, around family or friends if we too had the qualities of everyday heroes?

## **Everyday heroes:**

- **Touch your life deeply.**
- **Raise everyone’s spirits.**
- **Impact their inner circle.**
- **Lead by the example of fearless, selfless, humble, compassionate and persistent.**

Let’s explore the heroes climb through the backdrop of a series of expeditions over a two-decade timeline. We will skip the whole 135 miles per hour descent on the Olympic mountain.

Countless have heard that downhill story.

Alter your focus from “I” to “Us.” Climb towards learning how be the hero you were meant to be. Your world is counting on it!

## **Chapter One**

### **Four Words to Change Your Trajectory**

The new trajectory, the “second half of life going up-hill” started when I heard four words in the question, “Do you like adventure?”

In a way, the Heroes Climb began with the response, “Yup, I like adventure. Why?”

What can set you on a hero’s trajectory is to start with a “Start...Finish” mentality. Once you start something, you are obligated to complete it. Here is an excerpt from my first book, *Invinceable Principles*, explaining this mindset:

When quitting is not an option, it is called the start ... finish mentality. It wasn’t until a few years ago that I thought everyone thought the same way I did. One glowing example of this happened when I joined a group of friends on a rigorous trek along the famous West Coast Trail in British Columbia.

The West Coast Trail covers a forty-seven-mile-long (seventy-seven-kilometer) route between Renfrew and Bamfield on the unprotected west coast of Vancouver Island. Its origin was as a “life-saving trail” for nineteenth century shipwrecks. It is now a protected area that is federally maintained by Pacific Rim National Park Services.

The terrain is far from easy to traverse. It is a test of fortitude and determination. Along the way the forest trails are surrounded by western red cedar, hemlock and Sitka spruce. The sandstone beaches are exposed at low tide, combined with striking, and sometimes dangerous tidal surge channels. Taking a break from the huffing and puffing along the way, there are scenes of osprey snatching salmon from the ocean, whales, curious seals and unbelievable sunsets. To make the four- to seven-day hike even more challenging, there are the intermittent torrential downpours

that soak the dirt trails and the trekkers. With frequent rainfalls, there is plenty of water in the cascading creeks and a vibrant green in the thick rain forest.

On our trip there were six people, each loaded with forty- to fifty-pound packs. Since the West Coast Trail is not serviced with amenities, you must bring everything that you feel you will need along the way. The night before our departure, we split up the provisions and ensured each person took a fair share of the load. On the first night, we camped outside of the park boundaries, preparing for our early-morning departure. That night it was raining lightly, but steadily.

All the next day it rained and was somewhat dark from the clouds. With each step the ground got softer and the pack got heavier from the rain that found its way past the waterproof covering. With each passing hour the mood became darker and darker. After we hiked for eight hours and covered just nine miles, the rain quit and we stopped by a picturesque waterfall. Red and orange hues bouncing off the scattering clouds. Our spirits started to pick up. All was well until we woke up the next morning.

Nature's alarm clock was the incessant sound of rain hitting the nylon covers of the tents. It was a classic West Coast downpour and everything was either wet or damp. The packs seemed to weigh seventy-five pounds each, and every other step was a slip in one direction or the other. The mood of the group turned sour very quickly. In fact, people started to snap at each other and it was becoming very uncomfortable, notwithstanding being wet and chilled to the bone. The rain never let up. In fact, the clouds got darker and it seemed like night at 2 P.M. After a few more miles we came across the Nit Nat Lake crossing. There, a First Nations family makes a small fortune shuttling people from one side of the lake to the other. During the crossing, unknown to the rest of the group, one person in the group decided that she could not go on any further. She told her husband and his choice was obvious. Despite the fact that he had coordinated the whole trip, he had to stay with his wife.

Normally, on the West Coast Trail, the only way out is by an emergency helicopter that patrols the trail once or twice a day. You could signal the coast guard with flares or a fire, but quitting was typically not an option. There are no phones on the West Coast Trail and when you make the decision to start ... you finish.

In a clearing, not far from the lake, we assembled for a team meeting. The couple announced their intentions to quit and take the boat up to Nit Nat Village. Within seconds, three other members of the group decided that they would quit, too. These were people in their twenties and thirties. They were fit and healthy. Yet, given the opportunity to quit, they did. I just stood there with my mouth open.

“We can’t quit, we just started,” I protested. But with the rain coming down and the sun obliterated by dark clouds, my cajoling was pointless. I was faced with a decision. I had no hiking experience. Traveling alone meant that if I got into trouble, I would have to pray it was on the trail where others might come by and help; and I would have to carry a greater load, since I would have to carry all the camping gear plus food. But the more I thought about it, the more I couldn’t accept quitting. “We aren’t dying; we are just uncomfortable,” I thought to myself.

“Fine,” I said, “anyone who wants to change their mind can come with me. I’m going. It will be dark soon and I need to get to the next camping area before then.” As I was re-packing and adding gear that others had in their packs, each person separately came over to convince me to reconsider. “It’s probably not safe to go it alone,” they would say. It became obvious that they thought I was being unreasonable. To me, I had no choice. Start ... finish. It’s that simple. At last I was ready to continue and said my goodbyes. One of the females in the group started to cry and kept saying, “Be careful.”

“Don’t worry about me,” I said with as much confidence as I could muster. Then I walked out of the clearing into a break in the trees and brush where I turned right. No sooner did I turn the

corner than I slipped and fell over. When you slip with a sixty-pound pack on it's like a W.W.F. dwarf throwing you down to the ground. I looked around. No one saw me. Since the pack was even heavier than before, I remained temporarily stranded like a turtle flipped on its back. I righted myself and walked on. I kept a brisk pace to reach the next camping area before dark. It was a long and miserable hike in the rain. I wondered multiple times if I had made a mistake, but it seemed like the right thing to do. Nothing ventured; nothing gained seemed like an all-too-appropriate cliché at this point.

By the time I reached the camping area it was dusk. Better still, it stopped raining. The camp was simply a beach where there were three other groups. I set up near a couple of hippie/biker types who were very friendly. They made a bonfire that was huge. It was at least eight feet at the base and threw a flame ten to fifteen feet in the air. The fire was purely for practical purposes, to dry clothes. We strung up ropes and dried everything, especially the sleeping bags. It worked great! Before long I got tired and checked my sleeping bag. I felt it up and down and it seemed perfectly dry. I got in my tent, stripped down to my boxer shorts and T-shirt and then slid into the bag. The next feeling was that of disgust and foreboding. I had forgotten to turn my sleeping bag inside out when I was drying it. My thorough check did not involve an inside check. But, I was so exhausted that I just figured it was a fitting end to a very wet couple of days.

The next morning the sun came out. As luck would have it, it remained that way for the balance of the trip. When the skies are clear, the beauty of the West Coast Trail is truly exceptional. Moreover, the balance of the hike took a welcome twist.

Five or six hours after my camp departure, I came across a family that I recognized from the night before. They had an earlier start, but I caught up to them. They were the Byl family; Frank, Lorraine and their two sons, Jeremy and Daniel.

Frank and I walked side-by-side for a half mile or so exchanging small talk. Frank was a big guy. He was about six-foot-three and very broad. Yet, he had a boyish quality about him. We instantly connected. Later on, after a few minutes of silence, Frank looked at me in a curious way. “Do you like adventure?” he said. The question hung in the air.

## **Do you like adventure?**

I didn’t have a clue where this inquiry was heading. I paused, trying to think of what he meant.

Finally, I said, “Yup ... I like adventure. Why?”

“We’re going to take the Adrenaline Surge route.”

I couldn’t believe he just said that. At the trailhead the park wardens forbid the hikers from this route. Each year, inexperienced hikers try to navigate Adrenaline Surge, where the channel meets up with a waterfall and cliff. Since the channel is cut deep into the sandstone beach, one slip and a hiker falls in, they are unable to climb out of the slippery sides— they drown. Two people that year had already died and the route was closed. Plus, Adrenaline Surge was only navigable at low tide. Moreover, Frank’s boys were nine and eleven years old, hardly the ages to cover dangerous territory.

“Are you kidding?” I asked immediately, feeling more than skeptical.

“No, I’m serious. I have hiked the West Coast Trail a dozen times. I teach physical education and I take high school students along here all the time. I know exactly how to get across Adrenaline Surge. It just would be nice to have another strong guy along to be on the other side of the safety rope. Plus, I know a special route most people never get to see.”

He was convincing. I joined up. We proceeded to see and do things I never imagined. We went to an area of a natural waterslide. It was molded, rolling rock that was covered in green algae. We slid down this series of slides from one pool down to the next. It was a blast.

The next day we reached Adrenaline Surge and I then fully understood what all the fuss was about. You actually had to walk through the waterfall while trying to keep a foothold on a little four-inch ledge of rock. There were no handholds and you had to keep your pack on. One slip and you would simply fall directly into the surge channel, which was a sheer and slippery seven feet on either side.

We hooked each boy onto a safety rope with a strap and a carabiner. If they slipped, we would hold them up and get them to regain their footing. We did the same for Lorraine. I was the last to come across.

“What if I fall in?” I asked Frank, trying to make my voice heard over the sound of the waterfall and the crashing waves in the surge channel.

“You’ll get very wet,” he yelled from the other side. He then smiled and held up the rope. I nodded, took a breath, then carefully made my way across the four-inch ledge. Piece of cake (if you know what you’re doing).

From Adrenaline Surge we continued along miles and miles of sandstone beach. The views were stunning. The blues of the ocean contrast to the greens of nature, the earth tones all around us and the wildlife in the sky, ocean and land. It was nothing short of breathtaking every step of the way.

I later learned that the only other route was inland. From all the rain, the trail was muddy. Each step was a struggle. Plus, the view never seemed to change, since the hike was lined with trees

on either side. Many of the hikers I met up with later complained that it was the hardest slogging of the whole trail. Me? I said nothing about my adventure. Why rub it in?

At the end, all I could think about was how grateful I was for the experience I had just had. I felt bad for my former hiking group. They had missed an experience of a lifetime simply because they had quit. They did not embrace the start ... finish mentality and they lost out on an extraordinary opportunity.

All it takes sometimes is a well-placed question to set you on a path from I to Us. Frank Byl's question can bounce around in your brain now. "Do you like adventure?"

Adventure does not have to be popularized heroic acts. In this case, adventure is about variety, breaking your routine, trying something new, even if it is a new way home. The heroes climb in your life is set in motion when you change your norms. And, (think back to high school physics class), you can either stay at rest or embrace the law of inertia.

Sir Isaac Newton may have had human nature in mind when he laid out his first law of motion, "An object at rest stays at rest and an object in motion stays in motion with the same speed and in the same direction unless acted upon by an unbalanced force."

Take a hero's step and you are in motion. The "unbalanced force," such as an innocent question, "Do you like adventure?" can set you on a new course that will unfold over the days, weeks and years ahead of you. The trick to climbing higher is to keep adding on more "unbalanced forces." In fact, you need to seek out, or at the very least, pay attention to, more questions, opportunities or challenges in order to fine tune your "speed and direction." But, be wary of unexpected or unwanted 'unbalanced forces.'

**Adventure is about  
variety,  
breaking your routine,  
trying something new,  
even if it is a new way home.**

## **Chapter Two**

### **Marriage in Meltdown Hike**

The first hike on the West Coast Trail was full of adventure and majesty but it lacked the ability to share it with my ‘special someone.’ My first marriage was ending and I swore I’d bring my next serious relationship on the West Coast Trail; for that deeper feeling of connection. Pushing an agenda like that ended up being a not-so-advisable example of a Newtonian, “unbalanced force.”

When I went back to the WCT it was with my justifiably stressed out and overwhelmed wife, Michelle. The 2001 Dot Com bubble aftermath had just rocked her company, and her world. At home were our three kids in diapers, whom we left with Grandma. When the return to the WCT arrived, not only had Michelle missed her flight, this forced a challenge to get to the trailhead by the scheduled, nonnegotiable time. Moreover, the airlines lost one of her bags. She was so stressed out that in the taxi ride from the Victoria airport to the store to replace her lost gear I said something about how she “should have packed differently.” Ooops. The next thing I knew; a hiking boot was boxing my noggin.

Exasperated, I turned to the taxi driver and asked him, “Are you married?”

“Yes, but my wife has never kicked me in the back of my head.”

That should have been a clue to let go of the trek and fully grasp Newton’s idea about “objects at rest tend to stay at rest.”

Instead, I stubbornly insisted we get on the trail and feel connected. Forcing this was an “unbalanced” idea to say the least.

What Michelle thought was “camping” was a seven-day marriage in meltdown death-march. By the halfway point she had a severe pinch in her neck. Her slight frame was already making her look emaciated and any hope of my planned “connection” was entirely impossible. At one point she couldn’t contain her anger and let me have it with a connection of a different sort. We had three and a half more arduous days on the trail. It was torture for her and I felt bad for dragging her into my obstinate plan. I took over all the heavy stuff in her bag. We shared the torment in a way.

We remain happily married (no hiking boots to the head) and look back on that experience with humor. My passion for adventure has not waned. Her interest in joining me on any trail, anywhere, anytime, is in the category of “That’s his deal.”

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Five years later, a phone call from adventurer, Jeff Salz, reignited the curiosity with hiking to new, adventurous heights. He asked if I would be interested in joining an expedition to an unclimbed peak in the Himalayas.

About the same time, I was making the biggest gamble of my professional life and another wager in my personal world. Dear reader, when multiple “unbalanced forces” are miles past the boundaries of your normal comfort zone, things can get out of control quickly. It is like trying to outrun a multiple raging storms on the ocean, the results can be disastrous.

On the business side, I was compelled to inject new vitality into my professional speaking career. My Olympic story of “Ordinary to Extraordinary” was no longer the shiny new thing on the speaking circuit. Although I had been inducted into the speaker hall of fame in the USA, the industry is not dissimilar from the entertainment industry. You can write a hit single or appear in

a blockbuster movie but that event vanishes as quickly as it appears. I was obsessed. I had a winning streak and I was used to embracing risk.

The plans involved an aggressive speaking and book marketing initiative on the topic of SPEED. In the fall of 2006, I was joining Salz's expedition. At the same time, I opted for a hybrid publishing deal. I would underwrite the entire costs of publishing and distribution while betting on revenue from 70,000 books. Most business books publishers print no more than 7,500 books. It was a huge gamble, but 2007 had the markings and momentum of a banner year. We were on top of the world. The economy was strong. What could go wrong?

2006 and 2007 were also the two years we built our dream house. As timing would have it, constructing our 5,300 square foot home overlapped with the book launch. If you have ever built a new home, and you were married at the time, a cold, spine bending shudder is an entirely normal reaction to that memory. People sometimes ask, would you ever build a new house again? The answer is "Yes, but not with her." Michelle's answer is shorter. It is, "Never."

By the time Jeff Salz's Himalayan trek arrived I was as anxious as I could ever remember. Michelle did not believe in risking so much on the book. We were building a house. We had three kids in private school and the stress fractures in our marriage were beginning to wear on us. The mantra was, get past this and we will be fine. But the slide down had only begun.

### **Chapter Three**

Four Himalayan expeditions lead up the Heroes Climb. On each trek, the lessons are required experience for the next. Mountains, valleys, teamwork and connection to mother earth all played a role in the necessary education that needed to be absorbed.

#### **Expedition #1: The World's Finest Human**



On the auspicious date of September 11, 2006, four North Americans and four gentlemen from India stood atop the virgin summit, Chakri Peak. We climbed for peace. We climbed for the adventure. On the way down, I started to weep. The tears didn't stop. I couldn't understand why the emotion was so raw. Looking back, it had everything to do with the crushing weight that had assembled in my life.

The days prior to touching foot on the summit, the climb to base camp was incredibly taxing. It was the hardest physical feat any of us newbies had ever experienced. The cluster of launching a New York Times bestseller, building a house and the pressures at home became a vortex of negativity. My Olympian, Speaker Hall of Famer, human-doing persona (firmly attached my

ego) was crumbling. I didn't conquer a mountain, I survived it. In my personal and professional life, I was not thriving either. I was simply hanging on with the weight pulling at my precarious finger hold.

One special soul appeared on Day One of the trek. Jeff described each of the people we would be meeting. When he got to Mike he said, simply, "Buckley. The world's finest human." Indeed, Buckley turned out to be an extraordinary trekking buddy. His equanimity, compassion and selfless characteristics were patently ever present. The world was a better place when he was around. I cannot say I have ever met such extraordinarily grounded person.



As one does, when a shared experience is ripe with physical extremes, we carried on a friendship after our trek. But the friendship was cut short. Buckley, at the age of 52, on February 13, 2007, unexpectedly died in his sleep. His gracious and generous heart gave out.

Moments, like the passing of a good friend, snap your mortality back into gratitude. Even though there was the pressure the house and book, whilst getting through the valley every marriage experiences – the reminder at Buckley's memorial was pervasive. Be grateful. Life is rich with highs and lows, success and tragedy, happiness and sadness. But the pursuit never changes. We each look up to an everyday hero, like Mike Buckley and aspire to that elevated standard of humanity.



Climbing in the remote reaches of the planet was now anchored in my psyche. At the time, it seemed like a ‘once in a lifetime’ event. The residual effect from a lifetime experience has layer upon layer of impact. Couple that with the perfect storm of a massive investment in launching a New York Times bestseller, building a multimillion dollar house and the great recession and I believe that is how I kept my wits about me. When you can push past the pain in your body and lungs...when you can talk yourself into the next step, followed by another... when you can take in the beauty all around you while the chosen path punishes you...you know you have what it takes to endure any challenging environment.

2007, 2008 and 2009 were brutal on both of our businesses. When you and your spouse are in the same industry, directly tied to the health of an economy, these years leading up to the second climb put us both to the test. Buckley’s example of equanimity, compassion and selflessness remained a behavior beacon. The opposite mindset would be panic, fear and selfishness. In troubling times, there is ZERO upside to these energy sucking traits. We had to keep climbing, no matter how steep the incline seemed with our companies and the state of our relationship.

### **Expedition #2: What's at Stake?**



As 2009 approached, Jeff reached out again and made the invitation to repeat what he had accomplished a few years' prior; summit and name a virgin peak. In the Great Himalayan National Park there are hundreds of unnamed, unclimbed peaks. This remote part of the world has no life above a certain altitude. Where there is not life, there is no need to go there. Meanwhile, I was desperate for an escape. The call could not have come at a better time. We humans require a 'reset' now and then. Pausing is essential. Each "pause" has its own merit with recharging your being. There are six different kinds of pauses.

- **Daily** - pause for reflection, meditation and/or prayer twice per day
- **Weekly** - a day or two of rest
- **Monthly** - an extra day or two away from the grind
- **Annually** - planned holiday(s)
- **Epically** - reset your life with a stretch experience (the distance outside your comfort zone correlates to its epic-ness).

Despite the overwhelming weight, I remained dedicated to each form of pausing. My mental and physical health was at stake. Jeff's initial call rang the 'epic' bell.

A couple of months before our departure, Jeff called. "How would you like to lead this next expedition?"

“What do you mean?” I asked.

“I have weird blood clots and reduced arterial blood flow. Doc says I can’t fly. The Himalayan expedition needs a leader and I would like you to take the reins.”

“Sounds reasonable,” I said. “With one mountain expedition under my belt, clearly I am abundantly qualified.”

“You’ve got this Vince. Heck, it’s an adventure. And adventure is your thing.”



Our 2009 team of Westerners was small. Three women, two men and a couple of dozen local porters, cooks and guides. From the outset there were fissures in group harmony. Maybe my stress from home spilled out on the trail. It was not a bad dynamic. But it wasn’t great either. We all got on the trail and attempted to get along as best we could. We even did a funny Bollywood video to keep our spirits light.

The most difficult part of the trek was our summit day. We were to get up at four am and set out on the glacial slope. At six am we still had not departed. Crampons malfunctioned. Intense fatigue set in. By the time we reached the 17,200-foot Pin Parvatti Pass, the sun had softened the snow to an unsafe, unstable condition. Our plan to summit an unnamed, unclimbed peak was canceled. We were all disappointed. I felt like we failed. But, getting home alive was more important than risking an unclimbed peak.



A few days later, after the mountain part of the expedition, we snuck our way into the media box at a Dalai Lama speech. Uncannily he said, “Remember that sometimes not getting what you want is a wonderful stroke of luck.”

**Remember that sometimes not getting what you want is  
a wonderful stroke of luck.**

The idea of naming a mountain now had a ‘red tab’ in that file cabinet in my brain. One day, I might come back and try that again.

Let's play for a second.

Imagine a file cabinet inside your brain. What files have that “red tab” on them? What have you earmarked for a later date? What is waiting for you to reach inside and engage in what is left undone?

**We live life as if we have  
a lot of time.**

We live life like we have a lot of time. Yet the urgency is rarely, if ever there. An unfulfilled life is at stake. Pausing daily, weekly, monthly, annually all point to the epic things you are not choosing to embrace. Give your head a shake. Those files need a little reorganization. Heed the words of the Dalai Lama when he commented on what surprised him about humanity the most:

“Man. Because he sacrifices his health in order to make money. Then he sacrifices money to recuperate his health. And then he is so anxious about the future that he does not enjoy the present; the result being that he does not live in the present or the future; he lives as if he is never going to die, and then dies having never really lived.”

Do not misunderstand the definition of epic. Epic doesn't have to be a preconceived intent. It may be something on a Bucket List you have carefully constructed. Better yet, epic can be that special test that appears in front of your very existence. Better than a Bucket List is the “What Shows Up” List. A celebrated concept, The Bucket List, is easy to comprehend. Write all the things you wish to do in your life, and check them off.

Yet, this assumes *you* know what's best to do in your life. What if it were the other way around? What if life knows what's best for you?



There's a different way to approach the uncomfortably forced and ego-driven Bucket List. Allow opportunities to emerge. Let go of what you want to achieve in life and let in what shows up. Think BIG this way: Your What Shows Up List reveals itself when something *new*, *different*, *repeatedly ignored* or even *epic* appears.

### New

Something you've never tried but at least heard of it. Maybe it's racquetball, riding a cutting horse, skiing in the Olympics. Life is far too short to say, "No, I don't look good in pink rubber ski suit." Clearly, if safety is in question, then a qualified yes is in order. It always makes sense to minimize risk but never, ever make a decision based on fear. If it's new and you've been approached to try it, it's waiting to be added to your What Shows Up List.

### Different

When something different shows up say, "Sure, I'd love to do it." Let's say someone asks you to play Wiffle Ball Polo. If it's legal, moral and ethical, then why not? Say yes! What have you got to lose? Mark Twain had an answer to that. "Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you

didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover."

## **Repeatedly Ignored**

You know the answer to this one. You know it! Don't let a lack of motivation get in the way. Procrastinate later. Start now. Give it a go. Friend and author of *The War of Art*, Steven Pressfield says you must overcome Resistance. "We are not born with unlimited choices... Our job in this lifetime is not to shape ourselves into some ideal that we imagine we ought to be, but to find out who we already are and become it." Your What Shows Up List is ready and waiting to be made longer, even if that thing scares you, is uncomfortable or appears to be that loathed word, 'unrealistic.'

## **Epic**

Allow me to paraphrase Steven Pressfield. When something shows up and scares you, you know you are onto something. If it didn't scare, you it is not important to you. If it is important to you, then pay attention to it. Poke at it. Give it a metaphorical test-drive. Challenge yourself to fully experience it. Don't go to your grave never having truly lived. You create your own heroes journey when you elevate your consciousness through the exploration of what is epic to you. The second you decide to explore what is epic an email appears. An invitation for coffee surfaces.

Your cell phone dings with a new text.



It's Jeff Salz again. "Call me. It time for an adventure."

### **Expedition #3: Leaping Lepchans**

It would be insulting to your hosts if they found out you said, “Hello from the middle of nowhere.” But take a page out of The Love Guru and admit, ‘now here’ is a state of mind for you and me.

In 2012 it was back to another region of the Indian Himalayas for a different adventure; the Sikkim Valley and the Lepchan people. The snows have come early. Temperatures will drop well below freezing. After five days of steep, wet climbing we will spend a couple of days staying with the people of this isolated culture in India near the Tibetan/Nepalese borders.

Let’s explore the concept of “now here.”



A trip like this is a chance to reboot. It’s not much different from switching a computer off, then on, to allow the hardware to reconfigure and function better. Getting off the grid – checking out of society – being immersed in an unencumbered break is healthy for the mind and body. Climbing forces you to BE in the moment. When each step counts in the category of safe or life threatening, it forces you to pay close attention to the moment. We were the first Westerners with

a permit to explore this sacred valley in Sikkim's the far reaches of mountainous elevations.

There is no technology - only a good foothold. Being in the moment for extended periods of time can erase the worries of past and future.

Adventure is the jalapeno in your chili. The security of monotony can be addictive. By visiting a small society isolated from the trappings of the age of speed is a way to force variety into life. It was not easy to get to this part of India given responsibilities at home, work and the sheer distance travelled. Break your routine. Break it often.

By being here – now you release the obvious drag the past or the future can have on your psyche. Yet, being present, when forced on you by your environment, can be a true catharsis.



Lepchans are indigenous to this part of India's far eastern regions. The territory, called Sikkim borders on Bhutan, Nepal and Tibet. Anthropologists admit they do not quite know the origins of Lepchans. Facial features are unique. They do not look Indian, Chinese nor Nepalese. They have a steady, kind gaze. The area we trekked into had no police force. No significant infrastructure beyond some schools and a few roads. Their food comes from an agrarian lifestyle. They raise farm animals but also, sadly, harvest any and every wild animal that roams the valley. You will rarely see any wildlife. Even birds are an uncommon sight.

Our group was the first and last group to get a permit to climb in this part of the world. The one somber moment occurred when we climbed through a village decimated by an earthquake induced landslide. Most of the villagers were buried alive and the rest left the remaining houses. It was a true ghost town defined by tragedy and loss.

### **Soul Taps**

Another poignant moment happened on our rest-day. As I sat, far removed from basecamp, at 13,000 feet. One hundred meters away was our lead guide who honored my desire to drink in the solitude. Ankit made a point of sitting back and enjoyed his own form of meditation. This would be my second, regular meditation session of the day. I sat on a rock jutting above the snow pack and closed my eyes. Soon, I glided into a higher state of mindfulness. I have practiced transcendental meditation for close to forty years. It is my "pause" for a mental and physical health. Drawn from the 5,000 year-old yogic practices, a simple, repeated mantra allows the mind to settle and the body to reset.

Out of nowhere there was a commotion above. I looked up and hundreds of Snow Finches culminated into a vortex overhead. My first thought was, "We have been climbing for seven days, zero wildlife and now this?!" The birds flew in unison. An inverted whirlpool of tweeting, chirping Finches circling about thirty feet directly above me. It was a celestial occurrence that

lasted about fifteen seconds then ended in with an exhale. What did it mean? Was it a sign? Was it simply a coincidence of curious birds? Could it be a more gracefully poetic form of coincidence, called synchronicity?



The most delicious questions have no answer. The question of, “How will I serve with love?” is an example in my life. When I experience inexplicable moments I ask this question that has no single answer. The answer is never wrong or right. It is never conclusive. It is more a state of being.

With regards to those moments of coincidence or synchronicity (such as the Snow Finches during meditation in such a sacred spot) I prefer to draw from a concept called Soul Taps. There are moments in your life when you get a metaphorical tap on your shoulder. It’s when your soul conspires with life experience to communicate higher meaning. Sure, it would be nice to get a brochure, detailing all the value you are supposed to glean from this Soul Tap. But, like

parenting, there is no instruction manual and reference guide to know exactly what to do, and when. There is only an inner sense of what the next best move you can make.

**It's when your soul conspires  
with life experience to  
communicate higher meaning.**

Either you have been conscious of Soul Taps in your life or you are an adorable cynic and have pushed aside those synchronistic coincidences. To make “sense” of the bird visitation, I instantly remembered a somewhat similar sensation from forty-three years past.

### **That Was for You**

I recently graduated from high school. I had finished a summer job working on a ranch and was preparing for my first year of university. It was an unseasonably cool fall evening and the sky was filled with millions of crystal stars. I was inside and, as was my habit, I had gravitated to the fridge to see what there was to eat. Suddenly, my mom started knocking on the back window. “Vince, come outside quick. The Northern Lights!”

The Aurora Borealis is a phenomenon of ions in the atmosphere that react to sun flares. The undulating river of light appears to be thousands of slivers of light clashing and shimmying and putting on a different show each time they appear. The displays are never the same time, rarely in the same place, and consistently unexpected. They are nature’s nocturnal gift to anyone who happens to look up for the brief moment they appear. Growing up in Canada, I would often see the Northern Lights as a youth and imagine it was a reflection of the sun bouncing off the polar ice cap—the dancing lights a result of the floating ice where the polar bears lived.

Sherwood Park, in northern Canada, was an idyllic community. It was a private hamlet of just over thirty thousand people, yet it was close enough to enjoy all the conveniences of a larger city, Edmonton. On this particular night, there was zero humidity and any city lights that shone went directly into the heavens.

I dashed outside, not hesitating to grab a jacket since I had no idea when “the show” had begun nor when it would end. Cranking our heads back, we saw nature’s lightshow more vibrant than I had ever seen before. Despite the streetlamp fifty yards to the north, I could easily make out the bright band of illuminations rippling like a snake. It was as if an impressionistic painter lofted brush-strokes of elusive white, yellow and glow-in-the-dark green. It moved and shifted, shooting off strands from one horizon to the next.

Its magnitude grew and it seemed as though it was gearing up for something big. Then, in an instant everything changed. The colors of red, purple and magenta added to the existing lights and flashed into a spiral directly overhead. It was as if I were looking at a satellite picture of an instantly forming typhoon created by the dancing strands of the Northern Lights.

The strands themselves changed from a two-dimensional up-and-down to a three-dimensional in-and-out. Imagine millions of fine, permeating, undefined strands of angel hair bobbing in towards your coordinates and out into heavens. Like a sea of light beams floating on a swirling ocean. It was awe-inspiring!

**Imagine millions of fine, permeating, undefined strands of angel hair bobbing in towards your coordinates and out into the heavens.**

The vortex of light began to wind-up tight, directly overhead. Then, just as quickly as it appeared, it changed again. Now the swirl appeared to spin downward directly down on us. A

spiraling tunnel of light started to descend. My Star Trek infested imagination entertained the thought of being beamed up. I was frozen in place. I couldn't believe what I was seeing—what I was experiencing.

Then the tornado-like funnel stopped descending. It paused, and time seemed to grind to a halt. I held my breath. There was no sound.

A moment later the light danced all around, in all directions. The vortex of light dissipated into a cacophony of light across the whole sky. Like the ending to Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture, the heavens danced and the show was over with a dramatic flash. The experience left me vibrating. We just stood there trying to make sense of what had happened.

I hadn't noticed that my mom had stepped back and was staring at me. "That was for you..." Her voice trailed off. In the silence, a question with no specific answer began to echo in my soul, "How will you serve with love?"

**How will you serve with love?**

Snapping back from that memory I completed my meditation and found my way back to Ankit.

"Did you see those birds?"

"Yes. It was quite the spectacle," said Ankit in a quiet, deliberate way. Then he said four words that trailed off, "That was for you..."

A double soul tap. An energetic exclamation point on the message, to pay attention to the delicious question, "How will you serve with love?"

If you climb inside your question, the answer will be embedded in your next step. Climb.

### **Expedition #4: Three Degrees**

The messages we need to hear are typically not moments of our own doing. How open you are to internalizing the message has everything to do with where your heart is. My heart was aching at the time. Our son Max was challenging our parenting skills. We could see the path he was headed down during his early teens. We didn't know what to do to get him to decide on a new path.

Jeff called again. "I'm taking my son to another Himalayan experience. Max is turning 17, right? How would you like to take him? As a father, this might be what you are looking for."

I was sold. Selling a rebellious 16-year-old would take some finesse. At first Max said no. That was not how he wanted to spend his summer. But, a few weeks later, I suspect after a few friends said, "Dude. That's so cool. Climbing a mountain in the Himalayas. You'd be with all those Buddhists and shit. How could you not go?" (or a version of that conversation) Max came back and said, "Yes." Since we still faced the aftershocks from the great recession, Max was challenged with his own mountain, before the mountain. How would he pay for the trip? Max learned quickly that a goal to climb a mountain is always preceded with different kinds of mountains needing to be summited.

Together, we devised a plan to get sponsors in return for an autographed flag with their company logo. His emails to local businesses owners went like this:

Dear Mr. Jones,

Hello, my name is Max Poscente and the reason for this letter is to help take Jones and Co. to the top of the world.

On my 17th birthday, I will leave with my dad on a Himalayan expedition to reach India's sacred Shrikhand Mahadev peak. We have trained hard and plan on summiting this 17,195-foot summit on July 14th, 2014.

Expeditions of this size don't happen in isolation. It takes a team to accomplish a challenge like this. This is an invitation for Jones and Co, to join our team.

When we summit, the air will be thin but our hearts will be full when we proudly hold a Jones and Co flag. All of our climbing teammates who make it to the summit will sign your flag. When we return to Dallas, we will present you with a photograph of this moment and the actual flag that represented your great company.

In 2009, my dad did this for a local company. A framed picture, with the team holding the flag, is framed and prominently hanging at the EvolvHealth offices. I would like to do the same thing with Jones and Co:

ONE: Give you the signed flag.

TWO: Give you the 8"x10" summit photo and

THREE: Add this quote to your photo to motivate all those who walk your halls.

***"It's not the mountain we conquer, but ourselves."***

***(Sir Edmund Hillary)***

We would then encourage you to frame this as you see fit.

Mr. Jones, in a part-time job I have been able to earn half the money I need to go on this expedition but I need to raise the balance. I would like to ask Jones and Co. to make a contribution of \$350.

At the moment I am finishing out my school with final exams just around the corner. Just a few weeks later, our plane leaves for India. With my school work and our short timelines in mind, would you be able to join our team with the offer listed above?

Please contact me as soon as you can.

Thank you for your consideration.

*Max Poscente*



As you can imagine, not everyone said yes to the sponsorship idea right away. Max's second email had the subject line: Mom's advice on sales, 'Ask at least 3 times.'

Dear Mr. Jones

Hello again. Based on my Mom's advice, please consider this a friendly reminder. Since we leave on July 1st, would you consider having the Jones and Co flag taken to the top of Shrikhand Mahadev peak?

Your staff will get motivated with your flag, photo and Hillary quote "It's not the mountain we conquer, but ourselves," hanging on your office walls.

So, what do you say? Will you invest \$350 in motivating your staff to keep climbing?

Thank you!

*Max Poscente*

Imagine  
The  
**Jones & Co**  
Logo  
Here



His final email read:

Dear Mr. Jones

One last friendly reminder. July 1st is around the corner, have you thought about Jones and Co flag reaching the top of Shrikhand Mahadev peak?

I'm excited to motivate your staff with a flag, photo and Hillary quote "It's not the mountain we conquer, but ourselves," hanging on your office walls.

Will you invest \$350 in motivating your staff to keep climbing? If so, please reply. If not, I wish you the best.

Thank you!

*Max Poscente*

Max raised the money he needed and made some significant connections along the way.

We spent the trip getting to know each other better. It was a privilege to spend one on one time with a son who had become distant and combative.



When asked, Max described the experience as life changing. How this was “life changing” was not evident. But, at the time of writing, Max is off to college. He was selected to an exclusive music composition program at Seattle’s Cornish College of the Arts. Is he on a healthy, creative, productive path? Yes. So... what happened?



Think of you or a loved one as a ship in a port. Should the captain of this ship change your destination, just by three degrees on the compass, you will end up in a completely different

place. You had a small alteration on your path and you can end up thousands of miles away from the original destination.

**Adventure is always better in retrospect.**

On the trek, there were many challenging moments. One such moment Jeff Salz, said, “Adventure is always better in retrospect.” Right now you are faced with opportunities and new paths. Some of those would be an adventure. But, the middle of an adventure path is often uncomfortable. Yet, you must seek the discomfort. That is where the growth is. Being uncomfortable means you are stretching your comfort zone. It is in hindsight you will look back with a smile and a nod. “That was some cool shit dude.”

For our 2009 expedition, summit day was the longest day – ever. What the guides thought would be a seven to eight-hour day, ended up being a 12-hour day. At the summit we high fived and hugged. It was a challenging climb, and the downward trek was difficult too. Every step matters on rocks not placed in the ideal step pattern. Some are a stretch. Some rocks are on an angle. Some shales stones slide into oblivion. Three hours before we would reach camp, we all ran out of water. It was a parched mind game of getting closer to the end and not focusing on the intense thirst.

Looking back on the summit day, what sticks out most was Jeff Salz staying back at base camp while the rest of the team carried out the summit attempt. Jeff’s knees were torturing him. Although he never complained, he had the good sense to set any ego aside and be at peace with resting for the day. A good leader knows when to hold back. A great leader knows when the past does not define his future.

**A great leader knows when the past  
does not define his future.**

Jeff had been climbing mountains his whole life. Some were dangerous and lives were lost. Others were treks in pastoral settings. Jeff was happy for his son's experience. He was thrilled by the group attaining their goals. He waited in camp to give each person a congratulatory hug. In a corollary soul tap, Jeff was handing off the leadership reins to me.



Is it time for you to lead next? Can you embrace a three degree shift in your path?



## Chapter Four

### The Heroes Climb is Born



Nathan France kept saying, “Lemme know when you’re going back. I wanna go!”

Sometimes, all it takes is one person to have an idea take hold. Sometimes, it takes multiple whacks on the head to get the message. In this case, the idea to go return the Himalayas had plenty of stickiness. The other clue to go to these majestic mountains was the disappointment of not summiting and naming a virgin peak. Between Nathan and the scuttled 2009 summit attempt, I eventually sent out an email.

The first email went to the outfit in India who executed all our other expeditions. Ankit and Panki Sood, with Sunshine Himalayan Adventures loved the idea of a Poscente lead expedition. My second email went to Nathan. “I’m in! Sign me up.” Newton’s law about “Objects in motion tend to stay in motion” became the order of things. A few more emails went out and boom, we had a team ready to experience a chance to summit one, if not two unclimbed, unnamed peaks.



Nathan France, Bill Miller, Tyler France, Mark Lowery, Everett McKinley, James Gleason, Gail Melvin, Herb Carver & Vince Poscente

Then, an issue kept popping up. How to name a mountain, without that yucky inflated ego sensation?

**How to name a mountain without that  
yucky inflated ego sensation?**

The Heroes Climb was born. I framed it this way: Don't name the mountain about us, name it in honor of a person whose example is a standard for living more fully. Within a few hours of the idea, the website was up and running [www.HeroesClimb.com](http://www.HeroesClimb.com).

**#nameamountain**

The website read:

## **How to nominate your hero.**

Tell us about a hero who has climbed a metaphorical mountain in his or her life. That hero is someone you know personally. A person who had to overcome obstacles. Or, your hero made a difference in your life or the lives of others.

## **How to vote For your hero**

Go to #nameamountain on our Facebook page to vote for a hero (by clicking Like) and Share it with friends to get more Likes

## **The nomination with the most “Likes” wins.**

The contest was successful. Thousands of views were accomplished and the “likes” turned the message into a viral message. Before we left, David Maish, from Henderson, Kentucky was the leader. What I didn’t advertise, at the time, was we potentially had a shot at a second mountain. If we were fortunate to climb another unclimbed peak, we would name it after Hana France.

Following, are the two winning nominations for the Heroes Climb:



**David Maish's 2016 Nomination by**  
**David Conn**

"Heroes protect and inspire. David Maish has protected the human spirit and is an inspiration to live a balanced and passionate life. David Maish's inspiration has taught me and others to embrace everything life delivers, good or bad. And, to live with an passionate spirit to make the world better.

Such an easy choice for so many, but would your choice be as simple if...

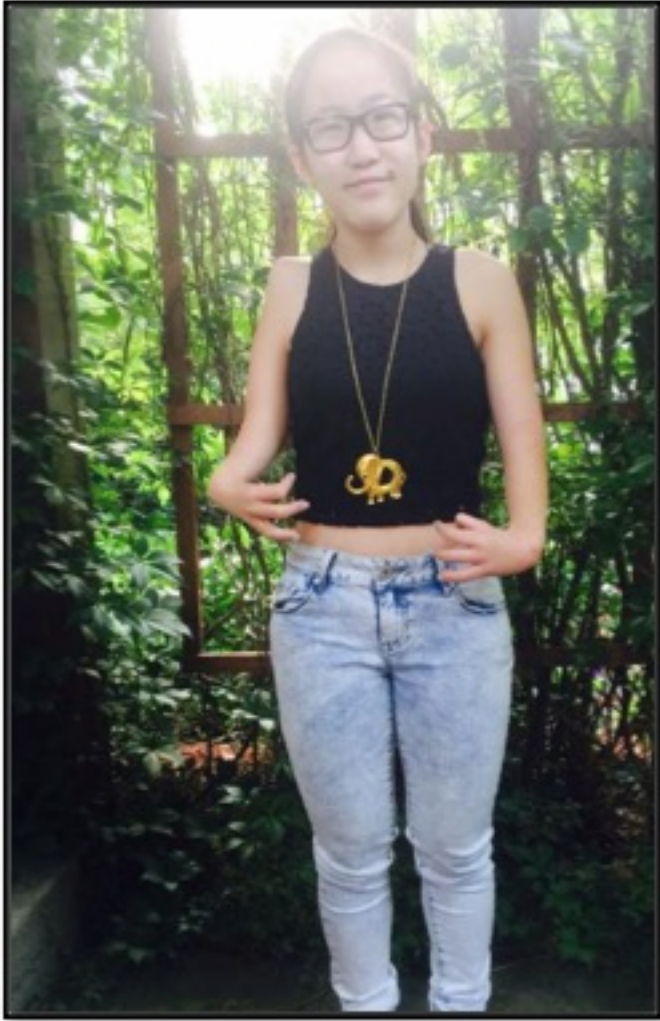
- a High School sports injury leaves you a quadriplegic
- your fiancé's life is taken by a drunk driver in a head on collision
- an archaic time where College graduates with disabilities are repeatedly denied job opportunities
- you're diagnosed with untreatable liver cancer and undergo invasive extraction surgery
- couple that with the day before you are admitted for surgery, your father is killed in a car accident.

A hero like David Maish chooses to:

- Let no obstacle discourage an unbendable spirit.

- Completes his college degree.
- Become a successful business owner.
- Grow a beautiful family with his wife and daughter.
- Defeat cancer.
- All the while, find each day a chance to share laughter, smile and inspiration.

To know David Maish is to know how to live a passionate and positive life. He is not only my hero, he is a hero to all who know, admire and love him."

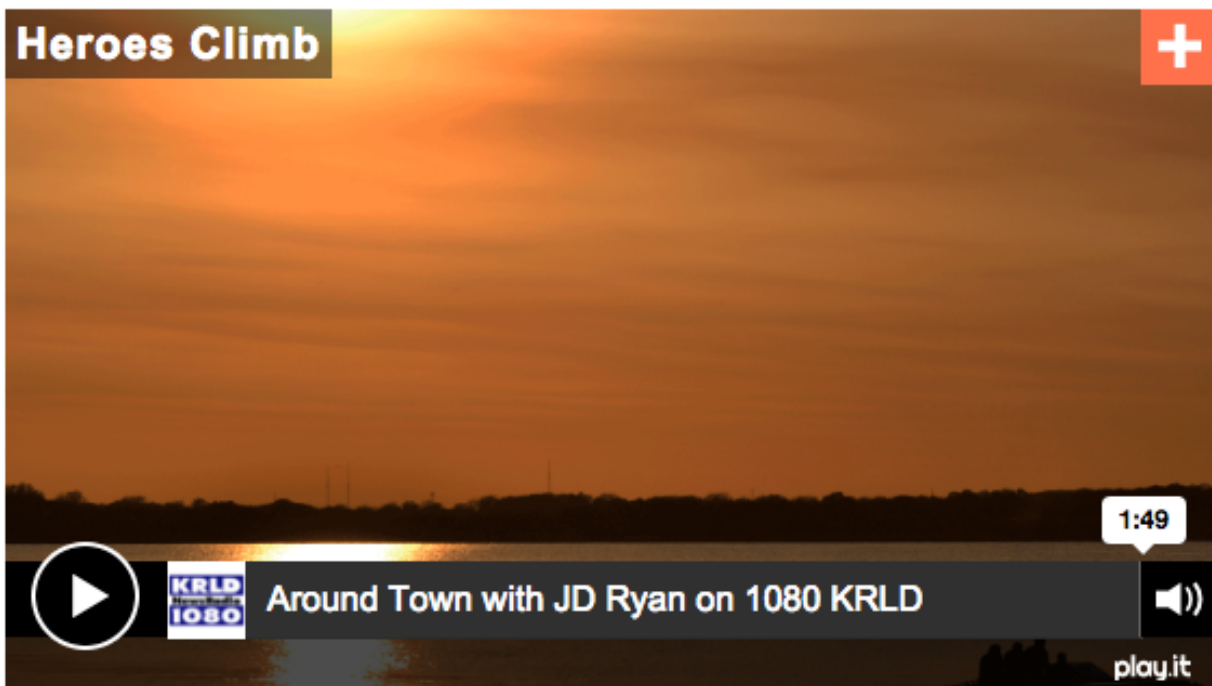


**Hana France's 2016 Nomination by**  
**Susan France**

\We adopted Hana from South Korea at age 3, she was withdrawn and frightened except she clung to me her adoptive mother. Hana looked like a child from a concentration camp incomplete arms and hands and nothing but thin bones. In the orphanage the kids had pulled out what hair she had. We found Hana to be partially deaf. She had a PDA repair and this helped her thrive physically but she was very small. Hana started school in special ed kids bullied her because of her appearance. In spite of all of this Hana thrived. By 9th grade we put her on an adaptive sports team. she became awesome and fierce; she

took on boys who were twice her size with ease. By 10th grade she stated she no longer wanted to be special ed. She was mainstreamed and excelled. She will graduate from Blaine HS with 4 years of academic excellence, 2 years on National Honors Society, 2 years' full time PSEO. she was awarded the Athena award for BHS which goes to 1 senior girl for sports excellence. She led her team to 2 state titles. Hana has volunteered greater than 200 hours in her community and has been in various other groups plus concert choir. I know this girl will not be stopped by anyone and she is our hero!

The response we got from the contest went beyond celebrating one or two people. It resonated with people in a more profound way. “I love that idea” was the consistent response. At one point, with only a few weeks of planning and execution, CBS Radio picked up on the idea and reported on it.



Slowly the significance, impact and influence of the Heroes Climb became more real. The chance to take the focus off what I was doing to why WE were climbing turned our attention to everyday heroes. These heroic people we were celebrating have the same qualities as our iconic heroes. They courageously, empathetically and humbly look past themselves. These everyday heroes and iconic heroes never give up. Everyday heroes elevate us through their example. We are indeed lifted up by the tide of their character.

**Classrooms facilitate knowledge.  
Nature teaches wisdom.**

Classrooms facilitates knowledge. Nature teaches wisdom. You can learn that water is H<sub>2</sub>O but a walk in the rain can lead you to a new level of wisdom. Nature's classroom is the ultimate teacher. Moreover, according to Marilee Bresciani Ludvig's [M.J.(Ed.)] and her research in neuroscience, "When one spends time outdoors, the neurology of the body shifts and responds in ways that appear to heighten and improve introspective abilities. Indeed, we understand from that, if you take at least a 20-60 minute walk in nature and then sit down to learn something new, you are significantly more likely to retain and recall that information in a meaningful way than if you had not invested that time in active movement in nature."



To facilitate learning is a powerful force in my life. Jeff Salz once said, "Nature is the lazy teacher's classroom." Taking nine others on an expedition into the most remote parts of the world may not seem lazy, but it ultimately uncovered the meaning of having less fear, the

elimination of ego, how to be more passionate for the needs of others, humbler along the path and the bottomless well of persistence.



These happen to be qualities of heroes. They fear-less, are think about ‘self’ less, put the word passion into compassion, have ego free humility and persevere past any challenge.

Is it time to take a trek on a heroes climb in your life?

## Chapter Five

### Everyday Hero Quality #1: Fear Less

Our culture romanticizes the ‘fearless’ nature of heroes. We tend to translate “fearless” as “without fear.” The following should set the record straight.

Complete elimination fear is not an accurate part of the human journey. Fears occupy a significant role in your climb. Moreover, conquering a specific fear makes you more fully alive than any other experience. There are moments, hopefully deliciously extended periods of non-fear. This is called bliss. Bliss is the absence of fear. Pure bliss is a baby’s job. But as a person grows, fears are acquired over the course of his or her life experiences.

Fear is a force of negativity. The force magnifies when you give it your power. The power of fear diminishes when you take away its power. The first Canadian to summit Mount Everest, Laurie Skreslet described fear this way, “When you run away from fear it gets bigger, but when you move toward it, it shrinks.” He does not say “eliminate fear.” Simply; minimize your fears.

**When you run away from fear it gets bigger, but  
when you move towards it, it shrinks.**

Fear is to be governed, danced with, diminished, redirected, subjugated; but not eliminated. Nelson Mandela put fear in the context of courage. “I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear.”

**Courage is not the absence of fear,  
but the triumph over it.**

Fear can temporarily keep you safe and secure. Fear can hold you back from flourishing and being free. Fear can control others. Fear can suffocate your potential. Fear can win you votes. Fear can divide cultures and destroy nations. Fear of loss can destroy hidden dreams. Fear of success can satisfy a low self-esteem. Regardless of what fear can do for or against you, I have just two words for you:

**Fear Less**

If you fear less you will:

- Be clearer on imaginary fears and qualified doubts.
- Experience more freedom and abundance.
- Allow others to grow in your presence.
- Liberate your outlook on life.
- Nurture loyalty from others.
- Bring societies together and strengthen entire countries.
- Evaporate limiting beliefs and unshackle your dreams.

### **The Invitation**

It is interesting dynamic when you contact a friend and offer an adventure of a lifetime. They either say:

- “No, not my thing” or “I’ve got another (more important) commitment.”
- “Yes, I’m up for an adventure.”

- Or, they will torture themselves with indecision.

What is it about indecision that makes it such a tortuous experience? Fear. Fear of what? Fear of most anything imaginary. What if I don't have what it takes? What if I fall off the side of the mountain? How will I get the time or the money to do this? What if I hold the team back?

Everyone who joined our 2016 expedition had an immediate response upon being invited. It was "yes." Did they have fears? Yes. Were there unknowns? Yes. Was there trust? Yes.

**Trust is a way to FEAR less.**

Trust is a way to FEAR less. Fear has no place in the scheme of your life's desires. Trust is not just an outbound notion. Trusting others or a system is admirable. But, if you cannot trust yourself, we have work to do.

We each had uncertainties when we arrived at the trailhead. Would this experience match my imagined outcomes? Yet, the only way to know, is to trust. Heroes trust in the maxim of provision. What they need will be revealed. At no time did any of our climbers want for anything. They needed shelter it was available. They needed warmth, their pack was at hand. They needed food, snacks appeared. They need safety, a fellow climber's hand was offered.

An invitation can spark fear but trust can blanket the flames. Be aware of your fears alongside your relationship with trust. Fear less, trust more.

**An invitation can spark fear but trust can  
blanket the flames.  
Fear less, trust more.**

### **At the Trailhead**

By the time we arrived at the trailhead we had lost two climbers – to circumstance.

Two months before our expedition, a longtime friend, Bill contracted acute asthma. His doctor's orders were "Do not to climb." So we crafted Plan B for Bill. As it happened, Plan B was an adventure in itself. Two days before our departure, Chris's mother-in-law passed away. His place was with family, not with us. Our friendship aside, Chris appropriately passed on the 2016 Expedition but vowed to climb the next year.

Organizing a trek is not for the faint of heart. The logistics of getting eight Westerners to the trailhead where forty-two porters, guides and cooks await was challenging. After staging in New Delhi, then the mountain town of Kullu, we were ready for our adventure.

If you could magically visit the minds of our trekkers, to most of them, this adventure would be a whole new experience. Being fearless was probably on the outside, but on the inside some fears may have existed. Again, trust was the tool for fearing less. Trust that I had arranged all the details necessary. Trust that our local guides knew the direction. Trust that their physical preparation was sufficient to get them through the next eleven days.

We hiked from the end of the road, where the trucks could not go any further. We headed into any fears we may have had.

All was well.

Until day two.



## **Chapter Six**

### **Everyday Hero Quality #2: Selfless**

The popular heroes' notion of "selfless" is a person who puts others above themselves. Like being fearless (without fear in mind), is it fathomable that anyone can be 100% selfless (without self in mind)? But, you say, a soldier who jumps on a live grenade to save others in the foxhole is being selfless. Yet, he knows what he is doing. He instinctively, and consciously, makes the ultimate sacrifice. A mother is selfless when protecting her children. But she knows what she is acting on.

Heroes are selfless. To be more heroic in your life, think of self - less. Act in the interests of us over yourself. By being selfish you leave out others as part of the grand design. By serving others more you turn short term selfishness into eventual self-service. It is not a direct line.

Serving others doesn't necessarily mean self-serving. But the rising tide analogy applies yet again. A rising tide (serving others) raises all boats (including your own). We saw that second quality of being selfless come into play repeatedly on the trek. By the end of day two, two of our teammates were faced with self - less decisions.

### **What's the Worst that Could Happen?**

Day two was a brutal experience, no matter what level of fitness each of us had. Because day one was cut short (in order to bring in additional porters for the extra equipment we had) we stopped four hours short of our original Day One Camp. Four hours of climbing is a day for some trekkers. Four hours tacked onto day two was not a welcome addition. Leading up the expedition, on the first, second, third and every other email I sent to the team, I would insert "Plans change." And, "Did I mention, plans change?" When you lead a team, you manage

expectations. Six expeditions later, I knew enough that whatever I had planned, it would change. Day two was a classic example.



From inception, the Heroes Climb expedition would entail a brutal day-two experience. Because we would be headed towards an area where the peaks have no name, that means they are remote. The *reason* they are remote is they are difficult to access. Difficult to access equals, a tough climb. Think of the entire trek like an insect climbing into a huge bowl with veritable peaks in it. It would have to get up and over the lip to get into the bowl. When the insect was done with the reason it went IN the bowl, it would have to climb back up a massive incline to get back out. This was approximately what we needed to do. We mapped out the lowest pass we could find (at 11,900 feet). The Kandi Galu Pass made you earn every step. If there were any trekking cobwebs in our joints, they would be blown out by the long, seven-hour day. But now, the day two would be an eleven-hour trekking beat-down.

Imagine you are placed on an eleven hour Stairmaster hopped up on crack. Too dramatic? How about thinning air and no single step resembles the other. Every time you place your foot, you are either going up and down, down and up or your foot is on some sort of angle. It was a challenge that eventually brought everyone to a breathless standstill. You collect yourself, and keep moving. With just twenty minutes to the pristine Jiwanala Valley Subli thatch our teammate, Herb from Louisiana, slipped and cut his hand. The cut was minor enough not to be



urgent but big enough to require a couple of stitches. That night, Herb had a decision to make. Go back two days back to the trailhead or keep climbing and risk infection. In the midst of Herb's decision making, he pulled out a device. The Spot™ Gen3 Satellite GPS Messenger Personal Tracker. As we discussed his options he did query if there was a third option. Would this GPS device alert an emergency helicopter? He had high altitude, medical emergency insurance. There was an SOS button on the device. What's the worst that could happen? Herb asked,

“Should I press it?”

Since the Indian government does not allow satellite phones and there was little desire to climb alllllll the way back out over the pass, I said, “What's the worst that could happen? Press the button.”

Herb pressed the button.

We looked up.

Nothing happened.

Actually, pressing that button did make a few things happen (even though we switched off the SOS feed an hour after pressing it). Nine days later, the rest of the team found out that little SOS button alerted:

- The Director of the Parks Department for all of India.
- The Director of the Great Himalayan National Park.
- India's Air Force.
- The US Embassy.
- And, the one that terrified me the most, Herb's wife.

When Herb did climb out, he was faced with a barrage of meetings with Indian officials. In the eighteen hours between SOS being pressed and our guides getting Herb to within cell phone range meant that a domino effect of uncertainty was set into motion. Comically, the Indian press got a hold of limited information and reported that two Australians and two experienced guides were lost in the Great Himalayan National Park. Meanwhile, us Canadians and Americans were blissfully climbing into the far reaches of the Himalayas.



Herb's decision to turn back meant the team could be less constrained by his injury. Herb knew this and it factored into his decision. Could he have kept climbing? Yes. But the balance of the decision making scales tipped to doing what was best - over all. "What's the worst that could

happen?” was no longer a comical line in the narrative of the team’s experience. In addition, Herb had a Plan B. Join Bill on his adventure along the Kullu Valley. This idea planted seeds in Everett’s mind too.



Everett was invited by Bill. Their friendship spanned two decades and it was a disappointment for both of them, they would not experience their long anticipated, India trip together. With Herb heading out, and Everett in the position to support him, plus join Bill on Plan B.



Everett opted to be satisfied with a four-day trek and enjoy the Kullu Valley as well. By the time we set out on day three of the trek, we were six climbers ready for what lay ahead. Were we fearless? No. At every step we took the necessary measures to fear less on our way to base camp.



As you set out on your day today, set aside the tongue-in-cheek saying, “What’s the worst that could happen.” Instead, map out your day to minimize risk, identify the rivers and other obstacles you all need to cross, be sure your team is ready to set out and move forward. You don’t need to do this alone. Serve others needs and yourself as well. By climbing together, you will shift from selfish to selfless.



## **Chapter Seven**

### **Everyday Hero Quality #3: ComPASSIONate**

*I love you not only for what you are, but for what I am when I am with you.*

*I love you not only for what you have made of yourself,  
but for what you are making of me.*

*I love you for the part of me that you bring out.*

**Elizabeth Barrett Browning**

Who do you love? And why?

Think for a few seconds about who you love, and why you love that person?

Love for another occurs when someone brings the best out in you. If you feel strong and attractive around someone else, the feeling of love rises to the fore. When someone diminishes you, love is subdued or muted. When you are compassionate you are expressing the best in yourself and the love of another. Mother Nature brings out compassion, passion and love. She is a powerful force of good. This fits perfectly with the Heroes Climb concept. Heroes are compassionate. They are passionate about serving others. Heroes believe in helping others as a natural extension of who they are. When a hero is compassionate he or she acts on feeling over reason. There does not have to be a goal to be compassionate. Compassion is simply a position of service. Compassion is the quintessential state from I to Us.

Love and compassion walk hand in hand on the trail. There is a lightness to traveling this way. Imagine the opposite, hate and meanness or worse... indifference. These antonyms to love and compassion are self-oriented. Hate, meanness and indifference surface all too often in traffic, social media or around gossip circles. Nothing pulls team apart quicker than this kind of self-centered negativity. The opposite qualities of love and compassion further uplift others. Even the

mere energy of love and compassion is infectious. As we hiked our connection grew. We were in this challenging environment together.

Each of our trek mates showed compassion to their teammates. So much so there are too many examples to list of them. James consistently offered up remedies and medical supplies from his ample reserves. If there was Advil or a Band-Aid needed, James was ready to help. Gail was the same. She had offered a naturopathic altitude supplement before the trek. Each of us appreciated her thoughtfulness before and during the trek. Each morning her ready smile was a welcome sight after sleeping on the ground all night. Mark always had a kind word and inquisitive mind when the group assembled. His patience and easy way made for plenty of bonding moments. Although we did not get a chance to hang much with Everett, Herb and Bill, their support before and after the trek was a comfort to us all. Nathan and Tyler impressed everyone with their boyish charm and wit. They made a point of ensuring the team would enter into camp together and they safeguarded we all summited as a team as stragglers, like yours truly, were included in the event.

### **Pace vs Push**

Two of our climbers were Type A personalities. They were a driven, all-in, father and son team. Nathan (40) and son Tyler (21) trained hard to be prepared for the expedition. In business, they were no different. They were exceptional examples of determination and vitality. As we were climbing on our way eight-hour hike towards base camp (12,386 feet) I kept noticing how their ‘crush mode’ persona was reflected on how they pushed as they ascended. Experience in the mountains had me pull them aside for their benefit, and the benefit of the team.



“Guys, let’s strategize,” I said when the three of us were hanging out in camp. With a nearby creek adding a soundtrack to our conversation, I laid out my thoughts as team leader. “You both are our strongest climbers. You have more than proved you belong here. But I have a couple of concerns. One, altitude sickness. I’ve seen it hit people and it has happened to me. It is a miserable existence that forces you off the mountain and back down to lower elevations. Two, as a team we need your strength. But you never know where that invisible altitude-sickness-tipping-point is. It’s like an invisible switch. If your body flips that switch, you have zero options other than leaving the team. The team is weaker by something that could have been avoided. I respect and admire your drive and determination but here, the mountain doesn’t care. I’ve been around you both when you are in ‘crush mode’ and I am not asking you to change your persona. I’m simply interested in you and the role you can play with our team over the next three days.”

Both Nathan and Tyler agreed and were not offended by my assessment. In fact, their respect for authority as we were together in the mountains was tremendously appreciated. They were intent on being compassionate teammates. They wanted the group to succeed. I continued to lay out what I was suggesting. “I have a three-day-plan for us. These three days will be exceptionally difficult for our team. The plan is pace ourselves. We will skip a typical rest day. In its place, we’ll have a short, three-hour climb to what we will call our Summit Camp. We will rest the

balance of the day. The next day we will attempt a summit of an unclimbed peak to our North East. The following day, we will attempt a second peak then climb all the way back to our original camp three. Over the next three days we will ramp up our output, test ourselves and the challenge the resiliency of our team. Can I count on you to dial your output back, and pace yourselves as part of this three-day-plan?”

Both Nathan and Tyler understood and agreed. It turned out to be a valuable conversation. The three day “ramp up our output” was a mild way to put it. Still, we had to pace, not just push.



As planned, climbing to Summit Camp was relatively easy. When we set up the tents, it started to pour again. In fact, so far, as it did almost every day of the trek, when we put our stuff in the newly set-up tents, it started to rain. We rarely walked in the rain. Mostly, it rained when it was convenient to our plans. Resting in a tent with the hypnotic sound of raindrops hitting the nylon fly floats you into a blissful nap.

Around the food tent, the six of us discussed our plans. Another strong climber on our team, Mark, indicated he was only interested in making one summit attempt. It is a wise move to opt out if your heart is not into it. Mark was keen on experiencing Peak Number One but indicated he was cool on the idea of pushing for a second peak. Both James and Gail said they would continue to communicate to me and the team as each day unfolded.



At 3:30 am on, July 3rd, 2016 we woke to the sound of light rain. The rain stopped soon after 4 am and we headed up the valley, at 5:30 am, between two towering peaks. By seven am we were rounding the grassy contour into a rocky scramble at higher elevations. Carefully we all stuck close together with our local support team of expert guides. Each step mattered. There was no rush. Within three hours we had reached the summit of a virgin peak. The commotion at the summit involved holding up all sorts of flags and the lighting of incense. Our guides pulled out a coconut (yes... a coconut) and broke it open for a puja ceremony. A puja is a Hindu ceremonial connection to the divine. How a coconut had made it all the way up to 15,016 feet was a bit of a mystery to the rest of us, but we rolled with honoring centuries old tradition. A dozens of photos later, and taking a video dedicating our climb to David Maish, we descended “Maish Mountain,” back to Summit Camp.



Our guides and porters all congratulated us. Everyone was relieved and ecstatic with our accomplishment. It was heart-warming to share the experience with our entire team. A few hours later, it started raining again. This time the rain did not stop. It vacillated from a downpour to light rain. The rain continued past dinner where we had our ‘plan for tomorrow’ conversation. We agreed that if it was still raining at 3:30 am the next morning, we would cancel the second summit attempt.

The rain continued as sleep took over the night.

### Second Summit

I'm not sure how it works, but the subconscious mind has a magical alarm clock. Simply planting the thought of waking up at a certain hour and blink blink, you're awake at that 'certain hour.' It was dark. It was raining. I rolled over and looked at the time, 3:30 am. Within seconds I gave a half thought about our plans to cancel and went back to sleep. The motivation to pack up, get in all the rain gear and venture outside the tent - was zero. We did one summit. It's raining. Goooooooood night.

At 4:00 am a porter came *knocking* at my tent. "Sir, coffee, tea?" Someone clearly didn't get the memo. By 4:30 am I was meeting with our lead guides and they felt a summit attempt was possible if it should stop raining. The gentle grade up the next route could allow for the weather to break. "Let's climb and see what we are up against." For the next twelve hours, it was a mind game. The enthusiasm for a summit attempt ended up like being a series of building blocks. I had to personally rally and I'm sure everyone else felt the same. Pulling the word "passion" from compassionate was a stretch. As in life, the passion for something may be minimal, but when a task or an opportunity presents itself, you have a choice to make. The way to make a choice is straightforward.



Step back, and look at the big picture. Look how far you have come. Project into the future and be sure you answer this one question. Did I explore my potential? Will I have regrets? At

moments like this I ask myself what heroes like David Maish and Hana France would do. Everyday heroes like them draw from their character to rise above uncertainty.

**Everyday heroes draw from their character  
and rise above uncertainty.**

I'm no hero but I know I can emulate their character. Today, I can look back at the second summit day and know that I did explore my potential. There were moments where it was uncomfortable. So much so that Gail and James were starting suffer from the effects from the wet and the cold. Reading warning signs is an important part of being a good teammate. Not wanting to slip into any form of hypothermia or slow the summit team down, they turned back to Summit Camp while a relentless, cold and damp wind would not subside.



As the rest of us, started to climb, over 60% of the rocky steps were less than secure. We took our time in a measured, paced, consistent manner. The time it took to make the last summit push happened faster than any of us anticipated. The feeling of exhilaration was palpable. At the very summit a number of huge rocks, the size of cars jutted up into the sky like five fingers attempting to fit through a small bracelet. Touching the tip of tallest rock created a surge of gratitude and joyful energy. It was not the macho feeling of conquering the mountain, but triumphing over adversity. It was not a feeling of accomplishment; it was a feeling of being on the other lighter side of uncertainty.



The summit attempt consumed so much of our focus we eventually started to assimilate our thoughts towards what lay ahead. First, get safely down the summit slope which was seemingly steeper, more unstable and wetter going down. We then needed to get our gear and rejoin our teammates for the exceptionally long walk, past Summit Camp and Base Camp, over an engorged, Class 3 river all the way to our original Camp Three. Back to back summit attempts had a price, and that price was an extra-long day. Again, not impossible, just difficult. Twelve hours getting up in the rain, we walked into camp where the sun broke through the clouds to welcome us to our home for the night.

As the sun dipped past the mountain tops, the temperature followed suit. With a 30-degree swing in temperature, from 70 to 40 degrees, the cold weather gear, was pulled out of the recesses of the backpacks and layered on quickly. In addition, the clear skies revealed a display of stars that made infinity seem comprehensible. A magical moment was shared when a few of us laid back on rocks and looked up to the heavens. The air was filled with compassion and gratitude. Shooting stars and meteors skipped across the stratosphere, seemingly in search of the moon on the other side of the planet.

Today was a full one. It brought out the best and the most fragile in each of us. It was a day to savor with love and compassion. If I could write a love note to mother nature, I might draw from

the Victorian poet, Elizabeth Barrett Browning. I love you not only for what you are, but for what I am when I am with you. I love you not only for what you have made of yourself, but for what you are making of me. I love you for the part of me that you bring out.

**A love-note to Mother Nature:  
I love you for the part of me  
that you bring out.**

Our closing thoughts assemble on tomorrow. We may have felt humbled by our trek so far, and the vastness above us, but humility would ultimately redefine itself the days ahead.

## **Chapter Eight**

### **Everyday Hero Quality #4: Humility**



Photo by Panki Sood, 2016

On the trail, over the course of eleven days, alongside professional guides, the necessity to know what is ahead progressively diminishes. Whether you know what awaits or not, it's still: "It is what it is." There is no turning back. There is no waiting for it to get better. It just is. Plus, there is a quirky aspect of the Indian culture. They consistently do not want to be impolite and refuse a request. In my experience of visiting India since 1983, you will rarely hear an Indian say, "I don't know" or "No." In the mountains, if you ask a question you will get an affirmative answer. The answer may be accurate. But there is a genuine chance the response is completely fabricated. This can lead to confusion that starts with your feeble reaction, "But you said..."

Criticize to your heart's desire, India is one of the oldest civilizations in the world. Indian culture is over 5,000 years old. They've been at this communication thing longer than Western 'civilization.' If you can't get a straight answer at times, maybe your reaction should be, "It is what it is." With over 42 porters, guides and cooks, your Western biases for knowing what exactly is going on is best held as a general impression. Today, July 5th, after back to back summit climbs we climb towards what was described as "up and down - to a valley where we will rest - for an extra day." To ask our hosts how many hours hiking is a complicated algorithm of; how fast they climb, how slow they think you are and how much is just an invented answer from a very polite Indian.



Let's talk about our Indian hosts, our porters, most of our guides and cooks.

The language barrier for most of them sustained a communication distance. But the example they set connected us instantly. They each had a pack that appeared to be twice the volume of their sinewy frame. They may have only weighed 125 pounds but their capacity to carry a load up defied reason. Hauling that load down a steep slope seemed to defy gravity. They too were, and are, everyday heroes. They never complained. They consistently smiled. They emanated a graceful spirituality that communicated a pure, modest

nature. Their astounding physical strength added another layer to their inspiring humility. Without question, you feel like you are with a higher form of humanity.



Humility is a consistent quality of an everyday hero. Being humble is a natural extension of who they are, not just how they show up. For us to emulate this elevated form of humankind we cannot just “do humble.” We must “be humble.” Being humble is not an act. There are people who can act humble. But get to know them, and they may reveal themselves as anything but. Some have been acting humble for so long that they themselves don’t even know it’s an act. Being humble is also about losing one’s agenda. Everyday heroes replace an agenda with empathy and authenticity.

Empathy is one of the first human personality traits that infants exhibit. Years ago, our one-year old toddler Max took his mother by the hand over to a crying baby to help the upset infant feel better. Empathy was instinctual. Empathy gets lost

when people have an agenda that overrides everything else. Authenticity is about showing who you truly are. Sales people, politicians, blind daters and anyone else with a vested interest in

‘closing the deal’ may hide their authenticity with fears of being rejected. But, by doing this, the deal is actually in jeopardy.

**We cannot “do humble.”  
We must “be humble.”  
Being humble is not an act.**

How does that work?

Think of someone you are closest to, most attracted to. Do you know about all his or her warts? Of course. So the people who are the most authentic are the most attractive. Yet, sales people, politicians, blind-daters and those other people with an agenda can get stymied and not know why. An agenda can be sniffed out in seconds. Being with someone who never complains (from I to Us), is always upbeat (they fear less), has no agenda (It is what it is.), are empathetic (they are think about self - less) and authentic (has no agenda in the way they show up) makes them an example of how to be, do and have the heroes experience in life.

The proverbial ‘wrench in the system’ is ego.

***“What the world needs is geniuses with humility. There are so few of us left.”***

**Oscar Levant**

Here, Levant pokes fun at people with ego unchecked. The puffed-up self-impression that grows with each embellished story and mirror that is passed. Ego is a powerful force of negativity. It can create short term gain but, simultaneously, obliterate our connections with others. A huge ego may be entertaining but it is repulsive at the same time. Keep your ego in check or you will

pay the price in some form or fashion. Over twenty years ago I learned one of many lessons about the hazards of and unchecked ego.

The setting was Thanksgiving, in San Antonio, with my new fiancés immediate and extended family. Michelle and I had announced our engagement. Uncle Dale and Aunt Mertie had organized a party to celebrate our intentions. A couple-dozen of Michelle's lineage were gathered around the champagne glasses.

"Who's the Canadian and what's his last name again?" were the two curiosities that prevailed in hushed circles. Knowing that the pressure was on to be accepted as Texas kin-folk I chose an appropriate time to raise my glass and make a toast.

I waxed poetically about how "wonderful it is to meet someone so special." I painted pictures of "true love and respect." I talked about how much "fun we had together and what a great team we made." Finally, I raised my glass and said, "To Missy."

"To Missy," they all chorused enthusiastically and lovingly.

A few minutes later, at the perfect time I might add, Michelle (or as her family calls her, Missy) raised her glass and *tinked* it for silence. I was sitting on a chair beside her and looked up at my betrothed. She looked around. She paused. As the room fell silent she went on to say these unforgettable words. "I would like to make a toast. A person can go through her whole life and not realize the importance of what she has. Loving support. Kindness. Understanding. Stability." (Wow I thought to myself. She's on a roll. Now they'll really get to know the real me.) She paused again and built on her momentum, "Most of all it's important to remember what keeps me grounded. The rock that holds me up and the hand that reaches out when I am down." (Michelle started to get choked up and I reached out my hand. How perfect?! The loving, supportive fiancé... major family points.) "You have no idea how important this moment is to

me and I guess I just want you to join me as I raise my glass...” (I puffed out inside but ensured that I didn’t let on with my face. I held a modest look of humble confidence with a dose of unflinching support.) “I just wanted to say,” said Missy raising her glass higher... “To my family.”

“To family!” was the reply to all the adoring relatives even louder than the last toast.

Spontaneously, I felt my face go completely numb. As if a Fairy Dentist had taken a wand and snuffed out any facial control.

“To blammly... ahhhh... fhlammy...” I blubbered underneath the cheers of an enthusiastic clan.

Ah, poetic justice. Just when my ego was all wrapped up in self-serving narcissism I reminded myself to keep that ego in check.

Our Indian hosts were shining examples of egoless, humble people intent on enjoying every moment. The magic of being around everyday heroes like them, days and nights on end, reminded us of the genius of being humble. Now, combine this authenticity as you nurture your empathy of others and you have found the genius of being humble.

**The genius of being humble.**

### **The Death March**

The team was exhausted. Our trekking lexicon included a three number sequence; X, Y, Z - as a quick way to say, Wake up at X am, Have Breakfast at Y am, Head out at Z am. For the entire trek so far, we 4, 5, 6'd it. Our mutual delight occurred when we agreed "5, 6, 7." But the morning of Day Eight of the climb we could not seem to move out of first gear. We didn't roll out of camp until 8 am and our miniscule day packs seemed like they were full of rocks. The legs were loaded lactic acid and there was definitely more UP than down.

Moreover, our guides were on a mission to beat the rains they knew would show up in the afternoon. What might have taken eight hours to trek comfortably, we powered through into the next Camp Seven in five and a half hours. It is difficult to look up when you are entirely focused on your next step. You often forget to pause and take in the beauty when *keeping-up* seems more important. We did take breaks but, there is weird phenomenon with resting. The more tired you are, the less you feel like continuing on after an extended pause. If the intermission is too short, you don't recover. If the break is too long, you feel like a bag of wet cement.



At one point, someone uttered, “This feels like a death march.” The grunts of from the others was less like laughter and more like a morbid amusement of how sarcastically close that was to reality.

**Don't forget to pause and  
take in the beauty.**

Every day, including this hard push to Camp Seven, the same heroic routine would unfold with our team of porters. We would leave camp and grind it uphill with our twenty-pound day packs. Within a couple of hours, a gaggle of porters, skipped along the trail with sixty plus pounds on their backs, and humility in their hearts, pass you in a silent procession of studliness. By the time we would arrive into camp, the tents would be set up, the cooks would have snacks ready and hot tea at the ready. Dear reader, there are a number of magical moments you will experience in your life. The first time (or any time) you remember your mother's embrace, walking across stage at graduation or holding your own child for the first time. But coming into camp and seeing tents set up may supersede them all. “Ahhhhh tents” you utter in a moment of pure blissful gratitude towards that higher form of humanity, your porters. Approaching Camp Seven and seeing those blue tents was dreamlike gratitude.

### **Rest Day**

Fatigue can be a subtle and deceptive burden when it becomes the norm. If all you feel is some degree of fatigue, you don't truly notice it until you find the time to rest. Then the inner wisdom of the body takes advantage of the respite. I can't remember when I have taken two naps in one day. What started as hiding from the rain or reading a book, both morphed into a deep plunge into rest.

**Fatigue can be a subtle and deceptive burden when it becomes the norm.**

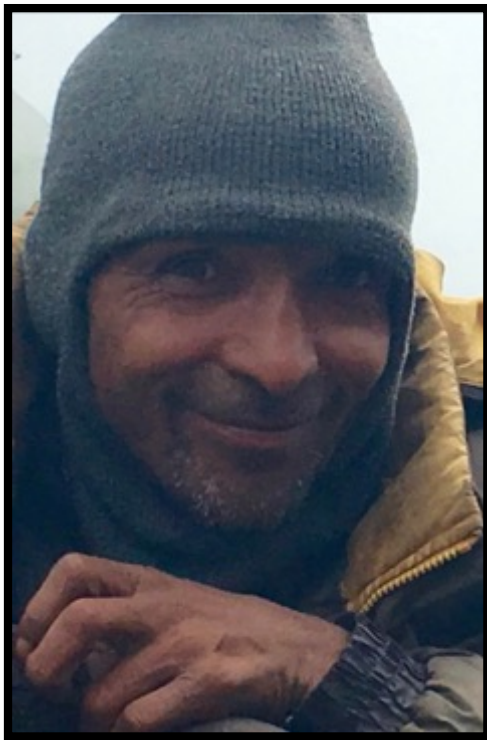
Our popular Western bias is misguided. We celebrate those who push hard, put in long hours, follow an inexhaustible passion for the mission they are on. Often, that is how stuff gets done, a relentless drive for task completion. The age-old metaphor of taking time to sharpen the axe applies to getting even more done, with even less negative consequences. Every single high performing athlete I know budgets time for rest. He or she will plot out the training times AND the rest days. If an athlete knows that rest is part of peak performance, why is this such an apologetic pursuit in the Western world. Look back at any political leader who can feel like he or she has the weight of the world loaded on. Yet, he takes a break to go golfing or escape to his ranch, or she takes time of any recreational sort and boooooom ... the hue and cry from the masses can be, “How dare they?!?”



We budgeted a rest day and we savored it. Some of our crew were tiring of the expedition experience. They were ready to reacquaint themselves with modern comforts, but embraced the need for a rest prior to tomorrow’s ascent over the 15,000-foot pass. Also, rest is not just about the body having a break. The mind needs time to settle too.

**Rest is not just about the  
body having a break.  
The mind needs time to  
settle too.**

At one point in the day, a few of us went up the valley and found some shepherds tending to 1,200 goats and sheep. Although this was a national park, the remoteness of it all was a virtual loophole for animals to graze on the lush, green slopes. We took the time to slow down. We interacted with people, who, at this very moment you're reading this, are in some valley, with the most basic of temporary rock shelters, tending to their flock. And, I guarantee, there is a smile on their faces.



The lesson for us on rest day? Take this as a serious part of our home grown routines. Ensure rest days are part of our everyday climb. The harder the climb, the more essential rest days are. Dan Sullivan, the “Strategic Coach” encourages all his entrepreneurial clients to make a rest day part of a three-part routine. Focus Days are dedicated to productive actions, directly tied to generating income. Free Days are specifically for rejuvenation and settling the mind. Buffer Days tie the Free and Focus days with preparation, learning, delegation and planning activities. If you are a pay-check kind of person, rest days still apply to you. If your employer insists on zero rest, you may be climbing the wrong mountain.



If you are working three jobs just to support your family, and you don't have time for rest, you may be working yourself to death. This puts you squarely in the "heroes" category. Your fearless, selfless, compassionate and humble approach is noble. But there is always a tipping point. A metaphorical cliff you may be approaching. And, you aren't much good to anyone dead. So understanding the idea of persistence is the final quality of everyday heroes.



## **Chapter Nine**

### **Everyday Hero Quality #5: Persistent**

On our second last morning of our expedition, we woke to clear skies for the first time in ten days. At 12,500 feet, with no overnight cloud cover to hold in any ground heat, the frosty dew blanketed our surroundings. At the same time the glacial water running by camp and the crisp air were infused with delight. Fresh, clean and full of life. It was a recipe for the best day ever. (But, as it turned out, not for all of us.)



What lay ahead was a 2,500-foot ascent that appeared to be straight up. Indeed, it was dramatically steep, but the only way over the 15,000-foot pass into the Pin Valley. Arrival at the pass was merely part of the arduous day. Getting down 4,500 vertical feet awaited the back side. Reaching the final day of the expedition combined with the intoxicating mountain air amped up the excitement to get after the climb before us. Remember the two strong climbers mentioned earlier? The excitement was not lost on them either. They were amped and excited to get going. I overheard them say, “let’s crush this.” As a leader, I bristle at any macho approach to a relationship with mountain hikes. Too much can go wrong when testosterone tries to arm-wrestle

mother nature. At the same time, I trusted all the trekkers to pace themselves. Ten days in, it seemed everyone had a handle on their capabilities. I took a deep breath. Besides my reservations, today had all the makings of a theme we coined; “best day ever.”

Persistence is the capstone quality of a hero. One can have all the courage, altruism, kindness and humility possible yet will fall short of any objective without the ability to persevere. Our two strongest climbers had ample perseverance, yet there is an elegance and pacing necessary for ideal persistence.

**The solution is not to combat the struggle  
but to intermingle with it.**

Thinking back to our successful summit of Hana Peak. On the way back down, we stopped at advance base camp for lunch before we continued for the long trek down. As was the norm for our team experience, we each discussed our experience. I admitted I struggled mentally and physically. I found that fighting the discomfort was not working for me. What worked was a “blending with the anxiety and the ache.” Instead of fighting it, a dance with the unenthusiastic thoughts. Thinking, “I don’t feel like doing this” is natural but the solution is not to combat the struggle but to intermingle with it. There is a vast difference between letting go of uneasiness and pain rather than pushing it aside. This day, had been a wonderful lesson in how to persist with power, not force.

**Persist with power, not force.**

Pacing yourself is an integral part of persistence. If you are that person working two or three jobs to simply survive you know exactly what this means. You may not have time to rest but you know the value of governing your output. Governing does not mean restricting. It means you

strike a that elegant balance necessary to deliver while blending with the discomfort. Much like there is no such thing as ‘elegant devastation,’ there is no such thing as outpacing the dynamisms of nature. Our youngest teammate Tyler, a twenty-one-year-old fitness instructor and social entrepreneur got a cold dose of this lesson about an hour into our ascent.

As was his nature, he was way out front, right behind our guides, until his body started to shut down. Tyler had classic symptoms of acute mountain sickness (AMS) also known as mild altitude sickness. Much like that hangover you can recall from your younger years (as you vowed to “never do that again”) the throbbing headache, severe nausea and debilitating fatigue make you want to curl up and hope it goes away. Quitting was not an option. Neither was holding onto ego.

Ego is a strange bedfellow with mountain climbing. Mention to someone you are going to climb a virgin peak plus name it and the reaction smacks of an ego trip rather than a hiking trip. I’ll admit, it’s shallowly confirming to be recognized for the exceptional nature of such an expedition but it was NOT the driving need. I can speak for most, if not all of our team that the Heroes Climb in the 2016 Himalayan expedition was a chance to experience something extraordinary. But, ego pestered our internal and external dialogues like an Australian Outback fly buzzing at your eyeballs. The internal ego dialogue was repeatedly annoying and required vigilant shooing away.



Tyler carried a significantly heavy day pack. On his muscular, six-foot frame, it was nothing for him. Yet, with AMS he was drawing from a physiological deficit, that would only get worse. He didn't want to give up his pack and appear weak. Three guides were nearby and I immediately insisted he hand over his day pack to one of them. Two other guides, held on to each of Tyler's arms and they headed up hill. They forced him to snack and drink water. Other teammates loaded him up with electrolytes and supplements. Regardless of the remedies, Tyler's mountain was not just the one under his feet. The intense headache, queasiness, and exhaustion combined with the mental lassitude required a, oppressive, overwhelming climb.

We never wish pain on anyone. Yet, when an extraordinary life lesson is the prize, the wish is not about the pain, but the growth. To a person, the best lessons in life come from profound discomfort. Watching Tyler persevere through the tremendous suffering was as if he was getting a PhD in pacing before our very eyes. After the trek, he admitted this day was his "favorite part

**When an extraordinary life lesson is the prize,  
the wish is not about the pain, but the growth.**

of the trek.” Not from the standpoint of being in agony, but from having what it took to persist through a massive challenge. From the moment Tyler gave up his pack, any attachment to ego, and the help of two impressive assistants, he fought through six hours of what was clearly a tortuous experience. It was impressive to witness!



Speaking of our impressive assistants, the next day revealed yet another reason why our guides and porters were truly a higher form of humanity but also fit squarely in the category of heroes.

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A twenty-minute walk before arriving into camp, Tyler’s dad slipped. Tiredness from the entire day, along with the cumulative

fatigue of the previous 10 days resulted in a split second misstep.

“Ass over tea kettle,” as Nathan described it, he banged his knee so hard he wasn’t sure what damage he had done to his left leg. That evening, I asked Nathan, on the scale of one to ten how much pain he felt. His response was telling, “For a normal person?” I clarified and asked what the number was for him. Ten being he would pass out from the pain and one being discomfort. “He said a six.” By the next morning, he still could not bend his leg or put any weight on it.



Nathan, aided by pain medication and assistance on either side of him, left camp forty-five minutes ahead of us. When we caught up to him in ten minutes it was clear they would not get off the mountain in daylight. Nathan made a noble effort, but something had to be done.



Fortunately, James decided to carry his own large pack which freed up the back of a porter. Our guides quickly seized the opportunity and rolled a high-end climbing rope into a sling-strand butterfly; nicknamed the Himalayan Stretcher. With two equal loops and a noose-like coil in the middle, the ropes hold the injured person snugly up and on the host in a piggyback fashion. In five-minute rotations, six guides, all no taller than five and a half feet tall, weighing no more than 135 pounds, carried a nearly six foot, 190-pound man for over two hours down the mountain. Nathan had to get off the mountain, and our team got him there. With

the rest of us going in the same direction, we could not keep up with their rapid descent. We were all astounded.

This was the first time we had seen any of them winded. Yet, when their turn was done, each guide regrouped, took a breath, grabbed the fifty-pound backpack that they were rotating between them and headed off, quickly disappearing beyond a ridge or switchback. We were each in awe of the physical feat we witnessed. There was no high fiving or chest bumping. It was a humble display of fearless power and compassion, selflessness and perseverance.

Nathan was immediately taken for x-rays and no breaks or torn ligaments were revealed. He had bad bruising but he would heal over the next few weeks. His ego was bruised too, but this can happen to the best of us. Nathan was the student in his own life lesson. Persistence is not only an individual undertaking; it is also a collective responsibility. We can get from point A to point B

alone. But together, the ascent evolves from I to Us. To be in proximity to the lessons both Tyler and Nathan endured was a gift none of us will forget. We watched the heroic quality of perseverance revealed as we collectively figured out how to get home with an extraordinary experience and safely.



As you persevere in your life, know that the way you persist can always be improved. Rising from a self-orientation of what you can do alone to what you can collectively do with those in your inner circle can take you higher than you ever thought possible. To complete a mission, like an expedition in the Himalayas, is no different than the accomplishments you seek (or are avoiding due to their magnitude). By engaging others in your pursuit you combine the power of their strength and expertise. You enlist their passion with your drive and you become a powerful band of brothers and sisters.

There is simply nothing you cannot accomplish as a leader, as a hero in the making, when you persevere from I to Us.



### **Conclusion**

*We can be heroes, for ever and ever. What do you say?*

**David Bowie**

### **How You Can Be a Hero to Others**

When you live as a hero lives, you elevate those around you. Playing small is back at camp now. You have started to climb that mountain in front of you and you already feel bigger and more courageous.

You are indeed meant for something bigger. We all are. As we are all capable of living the Heroes Climb in every waking moment of your life.

The wonderful thing about your own climb is there are plenty of heroes around you. They aren't found hiding behind a pseudonym on Twitter, gossiping in hushed tones, or banging out a hate-ridden message on social media.

True, everyday heroes among us have turned their sights from I to us. They are not consumed by their agenda. They are intoxicated by what they create and build. They are fulfilled by who they lock arms with and share in the experience. Everyday heroes get so deep into their climb, there is no other way than forward. The past is irrelevant and the future is a curiosity. They explore within themselves and beyond limiting beliefs. They look not at what they cannot do, and instead search for what dances in their imagination. By their very example, we can also be raised up to a new standard.

As with climbing, it is amazing what you see when you stop climbing and look around. To pause and take in the majesty of what surrounds you can take your breath away. Looking close up and

seeing beauty in the small things can be inspiring too. By taking the moment of what is up close and that which awaits, you instantly inhale the rewards you have earned.



When you continue to climb, the summit will suddenly appear. At the apex you can look in all directions. It's there you see other peaks waiting for more adventure. The moment you arrive at this pinnacle you embrace the fleeting nature of accomplishment. Your journey is never complete. There is always a higher mountain on the horizon. The higher you climb on those peaks, the more you realize, the most courageous journey was the one within. By surveying your beliefs, you cast off the weight of limitation and keep those innate qualities you have been carrying all along.

Dear reader, we ascend together. We stride in unison at times. We choose different paths at other moments. But we choose to reach a common goal of living with less fear, more compassion, less about ourselves and consistently live with more humility. When we each persist with this mission in mind, we are on the Heroes Climb.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Denise F. Roscente". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping initial "D" that loops over the first part of the name.

**Maish Mountain (15,016 feet) – Summited July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2016**



**Hana Peak (14,800 feet) – Summited July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2016**



*\*At the time of this first edition book, the official naming process for both these mountains is in due process. To date, these unclimbed mountains had no official name on government issued maps.*



Vince Poscente brings learning to life whether it is as a keynote speaker in an airconditioned ballroom or facilitating an experience in a remote nature destination. His Who's-Who client list ranges from FedEx to Microsoft and hundreds of other Fortune 500 clients. Vince has coached Harvard Business Review authors and key figures at the White House. His seven books have been covered worldwide, from Time Magazine to Sports Illustrated, from LeBron James to the Dallas Cowboys' coaching staff. His books have been translated in twelve languages.

With a background as a New York Times bestselling author and inductee into the Speaker Halls of Fame in Canada and USA (alongside the likes of Ronald Reagan, Og Mandino, Zig Ziglar and Jim Rohn), Vince Poscente has the distinction of going from recreational skier to the Olympic Winter Games in just four years (in the sport of Speed Skiing; 135 mph – 5 time national record holder).

### **Vince's Message for You**

"I spent the first half of my life going down hill. Now, I'm going up. Let's climb together!"

For more information about Vince Poscente Motivational Keynotes [www.VincePoscente.com](http://www.VincePoscente.com)

For more information about the Heroes Climb [www.HeroesClimb.com](http://www.HeroesClimb.com)

For more information about our Heroes Explore Experiences [www.HeroesExplore.com](http://www.HeroesExplore.com)

"You are already a hero. It is time for you to quit playing small and reveal that hero within you. Come, be big, so others can not only delight in your presence, but be elevated by your example."

Join us as we explore the characteristics of everyday heroes.

FEAR-LESS  
SELFLESS  
COMPASSIONATE  
HUMBLE  
PERSISTENT

HEROES▲CLIMB