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# *Thoughts on climbing*

## **ETHICS AND VISIONS IN MOUNTAIN SPORTS**

What's so special at climbing and what makes this sport so attractive?



## Climbing as a real philosophy of life

Everyone has the need to explore his limits. Climbing offers a variety of ways, if you want to learn more about yourself, how to value your forces correctly and how to act in border zones correctly. Setting priorities and finding decisions quickly is a skill which characterizes a good climber. In complex climbing movements you have to focus constantly on new problems and bring a right solution in a very short time, otherwise you can't climb a route successfully.

In alpine regions the challenge can be increased significantly: for example, how does my body react on exhaustion, hunger or thirst? In the winter some tough skills come in addition: while ice climbing, for example, you learn how to freeze. It needs a lot of motivation to deal with the inconveniences such as wet conditions and the wintery cold. Today we don't face all of those challenges in our civilization.

**“Reaching the summit often involves a disappointment. In the joy and relief mingles a feeling of emptiness and sadness. The sadness of a dream that is lost right now.”**

**– Emil Zsigmondy, Austria –**

Rock climbing also offers the opportunity to express yourselves creatively in your movement. Not even one route can be compared with another. This incredible diversity requires a creative adaptation to already known patterns of movement. In addition there are personal experience, skill and knowledge, weather, climbing partner, and last but not least the right equipment. To manage all these factors can be a huge challenge!

## Different aspects

For me climbing consist of the sporting aspect (the movement on the rock), the social aspects such as friendship and companionship and the proper exposure of nature. Depending on with who I am on tour, it will be a sportive tour to the border zone, another time the social aspect stands in front. Or a training is coming up, then I focus on the knowledge transfer. Through climbing I have personally learned in the first place to assume responsibility in critical situations for myself and my climbing partner. After I started leading tours and teaching others how to climb, the responsibility of the group came in addition. This task offers complex requirements in many ways. For me it is a lot of fun, because it gives me the satisfactory possibility to give my joy of climbing and mountaineering to others.

**“The beauty of the world is their versatility.”**

Because climbers are sometimes very strong individuals, it quickly comes to interesting conversations. Those people bring sometimes the greatest changes, because they pursue their own ideas and fight for them.

Another important aspect is the journey. Would I go as a classic tourist abroad, my life would be reduced to the most scenic consumption. To me this is not intensive enough. While climbing I get easily in contact with locals, because I have a mission and I can easily share this with others. The experience is much more intense.



## The individual style of climbing

As a human being I try to be as good as possible – doing the right thing and trying to avoid the wrong one. This is not always easy in everyday life. In the climbing environment it is much easier for me to focus on my inner, personal values. The beauty of rock climbing for me is the ability to adapt myself to the nature, and the natural rock.

**„In the end, climbing is what I love, my own expression of joy. Everthing else is just noise.“**  
– Steph Davis, USA –

Climbing a rock with a minimum of equipment also means a greater personal commitment. Leave the rock like you came across – this includes also bolts and pitons. The problem arises for example, when climbers don't respect the rock and over equip routes with bolts. Excessive drilling of routes will change the possibilities of experience of all subsequent climbers. Therefore the climber changes the rock and the nature, rather than adjusts to the rock – a very questionable process in general. In my opinion, it pays off to reflect your own action on the rock and to think about humbleness agains the nature.

**“In the course of time, you understand that there are no borders. All boundaries exist only in your head. There is always a choice – and the decision determines our live.”**  
– Valery Babanov, Russia –

It is like in everyday life even when climbing a question of style, how to do something. To compete in self-imposed demands and trying to transfer the positive aspects of climbing into other areas of life is my self-defined task.

## Climbing without risk

There are many risks in mountaineering. And as in real life you also have to learn how to assess risks properly in rock climbing. Otherwise you can die in the mountains as well as on the road. For climbing you need a clear open mind about the risks. Playing down the risks is stupid. I personally don't like todays comprehensive mentality, because it robs me of my own responsibility. I think it is more important to face hazards and their risks in the right way.

**“It all depends on how rich you want to enhance your living experience. To make it rich, you have to put the element of risk.”**  
– Chongo Chuck, USA –

Wherever you fit in on this scale: personal freedom always has its price – either way. Be aware of this fact and get prepared to pay. At the end, everything is reduced to the proper context to real life. Out of this knowledge grows a great satisfying self-esteem and inner peace. Above all I have learned from it to respond calmly in difficult situations.

**“Adventures happen if things go wrong.”**  
– Yvon Chouinard, USA –

### The fear under control

There are surely situations in which I’m afraid! But the question is: how do I deal with it? Will I be nervous and shaky, then the action gets out of control. On the other hand, if I climb highly concentrated, I won’t get nervous out of a fear, because I know what I can and where my limits are. I have the fear under control, but it is very important as a curb, so that I don’t lose respect. Fear is actually a good feeling and it helps to recognize the fact when I’ve overestimated myself and have to stop.

**“The best life insurance is to interpret its fears correctly and to act accordingly. Then you are subjectively safe on tour.”**  
– Thomas Huber, Germany –

If I want it extreme, then I start a project in which I can’t predict the outcome of a hundred percent. If I already would know the outcome before, then it would be too boring. Exactly this uncertainty is the spice of alpinism. Not knowing how the output is. At this point you risk your life and you must prove themselves in the situation.

### About the sense of climbing courses and guided tours

Since my sixth year of life I’m going in the mountains. Later when I started climbing, there was no opportunity for a climbing courses. We tried a lot, learned (partly by accident, sometimes with good luck) and improved our techniques. This led some day to the goal.

But today I just can say: climbing courses make perfect sense! Because one can’t learn from many – sometimes hidden – mistakes when it comes to the deadly crash. I keep seeing beginners, who are introduced by good friends (which are climbing for a certain time) in this sport. A good (and cheap) idea at first glance. However, you should ask yourself seriously, which know-how in terms of security and experience your friend has. For a beginner this can be difficult to assess (apart from obvious errors). And exactly at this point the meaning of a climbing course makes sense



to me. The safety aspect must be a priority and is absolutely important! Therefore I would advise any interested person to a climbing course today. Good courses offer the opportunity to eliminate errors in advance – this way you actually learn in the fast lane.

**“I am convinced that a successful mountain event depends on the program, the group climate and personal mental state of each participant. So I always try to adjust my courses and guided tours on these three perspectives.”**  
– Michael Rinn –