

A Climb To The Top

by Lion Goodman

My friend Michael, an expert rock climber, told me he wanted to take me up a famous rock wall in Yosemite Valley called Cathedral Peak. “Sure!” I replied. After all, he had taken me rock climbing once, 4 years before, and I had had a good time climbing up sheer cliffs that looked impossible. I was ready for a new adventure!

We arrived in Tuolumne Meadows at 5:30 a.m. to get started “before the crowds arrived.” I was certain that we would be arriving even before the roosters crowed, but was surprised to see scores of people already packed up and starting up the various hiking trails that begin on the Valley floor. I carried a pack that Michael had put together. We were doing a day hike, so the pack only weighed about 25 pounds. No problem! He pointed to a distant white peak, saying “That’s where we’re headed.” No problem! It looked like a short hike. We started up the hill, and continued – uphill – for two and a half hours.

I’m not in great physical shape, so by the end of the two and a half hours, I was pretty tired. The scenery was stunning, however, so my attitude was positive. We stopped, finally, and leaned against a sheer granite cliff. “That’s where we’re headed,” Michael said, lightly. I looked up, and up, and further up, and saw a white wall that was 2000 feet tall. “You’ve got to be kidding,” I said, hoping he would tell me that he was joking. When he began unpacking ropes and carabineers, I knew he was serious. I put on my climbing shoes, which squeezed my feet like a vice, and adjusted my pack, my harness, and my attitude. “I believe in Michael,” I thought to myself, “and he believes in my ability to get up this thing. So I must be capable!”

Michael climbed first, and my job was to let out the rope as he scampered up what looked like a vertical wall with nothing to hold onto. He moved fast, like a flesh-colored Spiderman. After the rope was almost out, he secured himself and yelled down “Okay, climb!” I braced myself, grabbed small knobs of granite, and found tiny cracks that would hold my feet. Step by step, handhold by handhold, I made my way straight up the wall.

I looked down, and noticed that I was holding on to very small rock buttons, suspended about 20 feet off the ground. I then looked up, and realized that I had 1,980 feet to go. My legs began to shake. Fear rose like mercury in a hot thermometer. I yelled up to Michael what was foremost in my mind: “Michael! This is WAY BEYOND MY CAPABILITIES!”

Michael had taken the Avatar Course with me, so he knew something about beliefs. Calmly, he yelled down to me, “That belief is not going to assist you in getting up here!”

Damn! He was right! That limiting belief would never get me up this wall. Anything could stop me. In fact, everything would stop me. So using Avatar tools, I discredited that belief. I then created a new belief: “This is within my capabilities.” I felt better instantly. Suddenly, I could see more handholds and footholds. I was comfortable making each vertical move. Everything seemed to be normal. Hey, I can do this!

I will not suggest that the rest of the climb was easy. We continued to climb up that vertical wall for more than five hours. Michael had to instruct me, cajole me, and sometimes push me to press beyond my limits. But after all those exhausting hours of hiking and climbing, I was sitting on top of a narrow knob of granite 2000 feet in height, looking around at absolutely gorgeous 360-degree views of Yosemite Valley. I was astounded by the fact that I had made it to the top, because there were many times that day that I thought I couldn't make another move. But one thing was certain: this was within my capabilities. And sitting on top of the world, I realized just how powerful beliefs can be.

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