

Transcending FEAR



Brian Germain

Transcending Fear

Transcending Fear, 3rd Edition
by Brian Germain
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ISBN: 0-9776277-0-5
LCCN: 2006901073

Back Cover Photo:

The author under parachute at 13,000' over the Great Barrier Reef in Australia. Brian landed safe and dry on a tiny sand bar 18 kilometers out to sea.

Front Cover Photo:

Jump-run, same jump.

Dedicated To

The General Direction of
Up



We all have our individual paths;
What we share is our direction of motion.

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Foreword

Dealing with fear is something we all have to do. The more awareness we pour into our experience, the more we will be able to be in control of it. By learning about the physical side of fear, we can counter the bodily effects that accompany the emotion. By learning to relax in our fear state by cultivating our calm state, we can direct our minds to return to a place of basic awareness and peace when we need it most.

The solution to fear is remembering how to relax. The problem is, many of us either have not developed this skill or have not practiced it in quite some time. We tend to solve our problems by going faster, not by cooling down. This method is a temporary solution to a permanent problem. Stress and fear are whittling away at our health and well-being each and every day of our lives. We must create space in our lives in order to return to the calm state as often as we can. We must do this work. Our very lives depend on it.

Ron Gorayeb
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Preface

The Story about the Cover

A few years ago I was hired by the Australian Parachute Federation to teach two courses, one on Advanced Parachute Aerodynamics and the other on the Psychology of Fear. After the conference, I was invited to make a jump onto a tiny sandbar in the Great Barrier Reef. I accepted the opportunity immediately, but unfortunately had to borrow a parachute from a friend, as I did not have one with me at the time. Eighteen of us put our gear together, including food, water, and a tiny inflatable water buoy in case we missed the island. Right...

The island, we were told, was not always there. It was swallowed up by the ocean during high tide, but no worries, they said, a boat was coming to pick us up. It was a dive boat that would bring us snorkeling gear so that we could see the reef after we landed on the island. If we landed on the island, that is. If we missed, we were most obviously screwed.

We took off from a small airport in Cairns, and headed east. The Australian coast line retreated into the distance, as we headed further out to sea. The land was a faint line on the horizon when our host and organizer, Crazy Charlie or something, pointed down to a tiny spec of white sand surrounded by miles and miles of emerald water. We were in fact, eleven miles from shore. This was what skydivers call “hero or zero”.

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The jump run was at 13,000 feet. It took everything I had to continue breathing normally. My body wanted to curl up into a little ball. My palms were sweaty. Over and over I took a deep breath, held it for a second, and then let it out slowly; relaxing all of my muscles and leaning back against the jumper behind me.

Then the call came out: “two minutes to exit!” I touched all my handles one last time, verifying that they were in the proper position and secure. I made sure the digital Elph camera that I had tied to my chest strap was not going to interfere with the operation of my parachute system, and that I would be able to easily take it out once I had deployed. The green light came on, and jumpers began exiting the plane. I took a deep breath, grinned, and exited into the blue-green heaven.

After opening my parachute, I pulled the camera out and tightened the strap around my wrist. I realized that if I simply took a picture of the reef from this altitude, it wouldn't be all that impressive. If, on the other hand, I just took the shot of me, none of the radiant colors below would be in the frame. Recognizing immediately what I needed to do, I grabbed hold of the rear riser strap on the left side of the parachute. Extending my right arm away from my body, I initiated an aggressive left turn that inverted me almost entirely and I clicked the shutter.

I took several shots like this. Ironically, and not beyond explanation, I actually was pushing the on-off button on the camera rather than the

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shutter. Somehow, magically, I managed to take one shot, and one shot only. This picture is on the back cover of the book.

I set myself up carefully, 90 degrees from the island, gradually awaiting the initiation altitude for my “hook turn” to final approach. At just under 600 feet I started a hard diving turn away from the island, 270 degrees around back to face the sand. I was traveling at over 60 miles per hour when I leveled off over the waves, which allowed me to drag my feet in the water on the way up the sandy beach. I ran out the landing, and cheered as the others followed, one by one, all landing safely on this miniature beach continent.

The boat didn't show up right away, giving us an hour to bask in the light of our achievement. We felt ship-wrecked, but with the promise of a rescue. I guess that is the best part of being marooned on a desert island anyway. When the boat finally did arrive, they brought the snorkeling gear, as promised. I put on my mask and fins and set out for the reef.

Whatever you have heard about this awesome spectacle pales in comparison to the actual experience of floating in the birthplace of life on our planet. The tremendous diversity of life is staggering, and if I did not need to keep my snorkel in my mouth, my jaw would have dropped. It was incredible.

In addition to the other skydivers, some fifty scuba-tourists were also in the water. Not one to take the road most traveled, I swam away from the others, out into the open water. I had hoped to see

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a sea turtle, since we had already spotted one from the island prior to our pick-up.

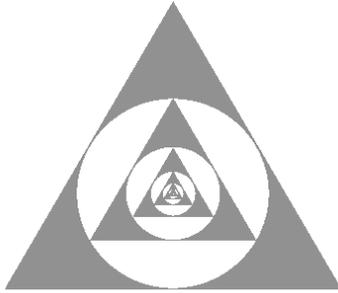
Then, in the distance, I saw a shape. It was an adult turtle, slowly swimming about five feet below the surface. I swam with an undulating motion, emulating the movements of other aquatic mammals, matching speed and heading with the turtle. I didn't want to alarm him; I just wanted to get a closer look at one of nature's most beautiful and ancient creatures.

At first he changed his heading slightly away from me. I understood his concern. I must have looked very strange to him, with my pink skin and a horn sticking out of my head. He didn't know if I was friend or foe. I swam beside him, gradually closing the distance between us. Eventually I was able to move into formation with him, and we made eye contact for several seconds. He must have realized that I was harmless, like billions of other inhabitants of the reef. He even let me reach out with my left hand and dock on his shell, swimming together in perfect unison.

None of this would have been possible if I had not dealt with my body's impulse to contract, nor my mind's repellant thinking. This is exactly why I wrote *Transcending Fear*. When we plan out our steps carefully and remain calm, our bravery is greatly rewarded. The steps to freedom are steep, but invariably worth the effort.

-Brian Germain

Introduction



Introduction

The modern world is "running scared." We are running so fast that we have completely forgotten how to be truly happy. This is because we have lost the essential survival skill called "self-soothing." Consequently we find ourselves living in a world full of fearful beings, rushing around and avoiding everything that scares us. Worst of all, we are avoiding one another.

We need to realize that it is the state of fear itself that is the cause of our unhappiness. How we relate to fear is a core determining factor in whether or not we are able to solve life's challenges. We blame our work schedule, the never-ending cycle of giving and receiving money, and all the other intense human dramas. In the end, the real problem is the fact that we keep running faster.

If we are to alter humanity's apparent collision course with destruction, we each need to learn how to slow down and calm down. Yes, it really is that simple, and there is no other choice.

As you may already know, I am a professional skydiver. When I first started jumping out of airplanes, falling through the sky was an

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absolutely terrifying experience. As I became more relaxed in the sky, however, I realized that there was a whole realm of possibilities that I was not able to see when I was filled with fear. It was when I finally surrendered to where I was actually going and worked with the air as it flowed over my body that I realized that I could fly.

The secret to surviving as a modern human lies in finding the way to fly, rather than fall. Fear is a feeling of being out of control, falling toward an unwanted destiny. When we work with what we have, who we are, and where we want to go, we can find our way to freedom. If we allow fear to be our master, there is only one place to go: straight down. Our lives become a fear-driven cycle of avoiding what we do not want, rather than finding a way to create what we do want.

Emotions are powerful. When we allow our emotions to run our lives, we find ourselves living out plots that we might have played out differently had there been no compelling momentum. It is through our ability to seize control over our personal experience that we take responsibility for the world around us. We must remember that we always play a part in the world, whether we know it or not. This power requires a deliberate choice to help things in a positive direction. The first step, of course, is believing that this is possible.