

## Climbing Behaviours

When I am not working hard to keep people safe in their workplace I spend as much time as possible out amongst the crags and mountains. In summer this means rock climbing and in winter it is either ice climbing on frozen waterfalls or ski mountaineering on the glaciers of the European Alps. Some people consider this to be something of a contradiction, yet I would strongly disagree and indeed I have recognised that there are many parallels with the situations I find in the world of work. When climbing I have an objective, a desired outcome – usually reaching the top of a crag face, waterfall or mountain. One outcome that I certainly do not want is for me or anyone around me to get hurt in the process. There are many hazards that could cause serious harm and a significant part of my thoughts must go towards preventing these from being realised. To add to the problems the nature of the hazards can change very rapidly e.g. the weather, tiredness, strength, the stability of the rock, ice or snow, the height above the last protection point, the security of the belay. All of these factors need to be considered and addressed along with some of the more static factors such as my ability, who I am climbing with, the route selection. Central to staying safe is the appropriate choice of behaviours, which are dependent on risk perception, attitudes, beliefs and values – how much the achievement of my goal means to me. Peer pressure can be another significant factor, which is one reason why the choice of partner is so relevant. It is good to be pushed, but within limits. Looking out for each other and making decisions based on everyone’s capabilities comes naturally in a strong team and is essential to success as well as to survival. We all lose concentration from time to time and knowing that your partner is looking out for you can provide reassurance.

Remaining safe is not about staying at home, wrapped in cotton wool and never pushing yourself. It is about recognising the hazards and controlling the risks. To help in this is the simple technique of reassessing the situation as it changes and asking yourself the question “what could go wrong, how could I get hurt?” This is particularly relevant whilst I am climbing, but particularly during the most dangerous part of the day’s activity – driving to and from the crag!



Deep snow, steep slopes



The author committed on delicate ground



The ever-changing conditions in winter require additional consideration