



Extreme: Why some people thrive at the limits

Emma Barrett, Paul Martin

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Why do some people risk their lives regularly by placing themselves in extreme and challenging situations? For some, such as astronauts, the extreme environments are part of the job. For others, they involve the thrill and competition of extreme sports, or the achievement of goals such as being the first to reach the South Pole or climb Everest. Whether for sport or employment, all these people have made the personal choice to put themselves in environments in which there is significant risk. What drives such people? And what skills and personality traits enable the best to succeed? What abilities are shared by the successful mountaineer, astronaut, caver, or long-distance solo sailor? And are there lessons the rest of us can learn from them?

The psychology of those who have to cope with extreme conditions has been a matter of much research. It is important, for example to those planning manned space programmes or the makeup of teams who will spend months in an isolated or hostile environment such as Antarctica, to understand the psychological pressures involved, and to recognize those best equipped to handle them. In *Extreme*, Emma Barrett and Paul Martin explore the challenges that people in extreme environments face, including pain, physical hardship, loneliness, and friction between individuals, and the approaches taken to overcome them. Using many fascinating examples and personal accounts, they argue that we can all benefit from the insights gained.

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