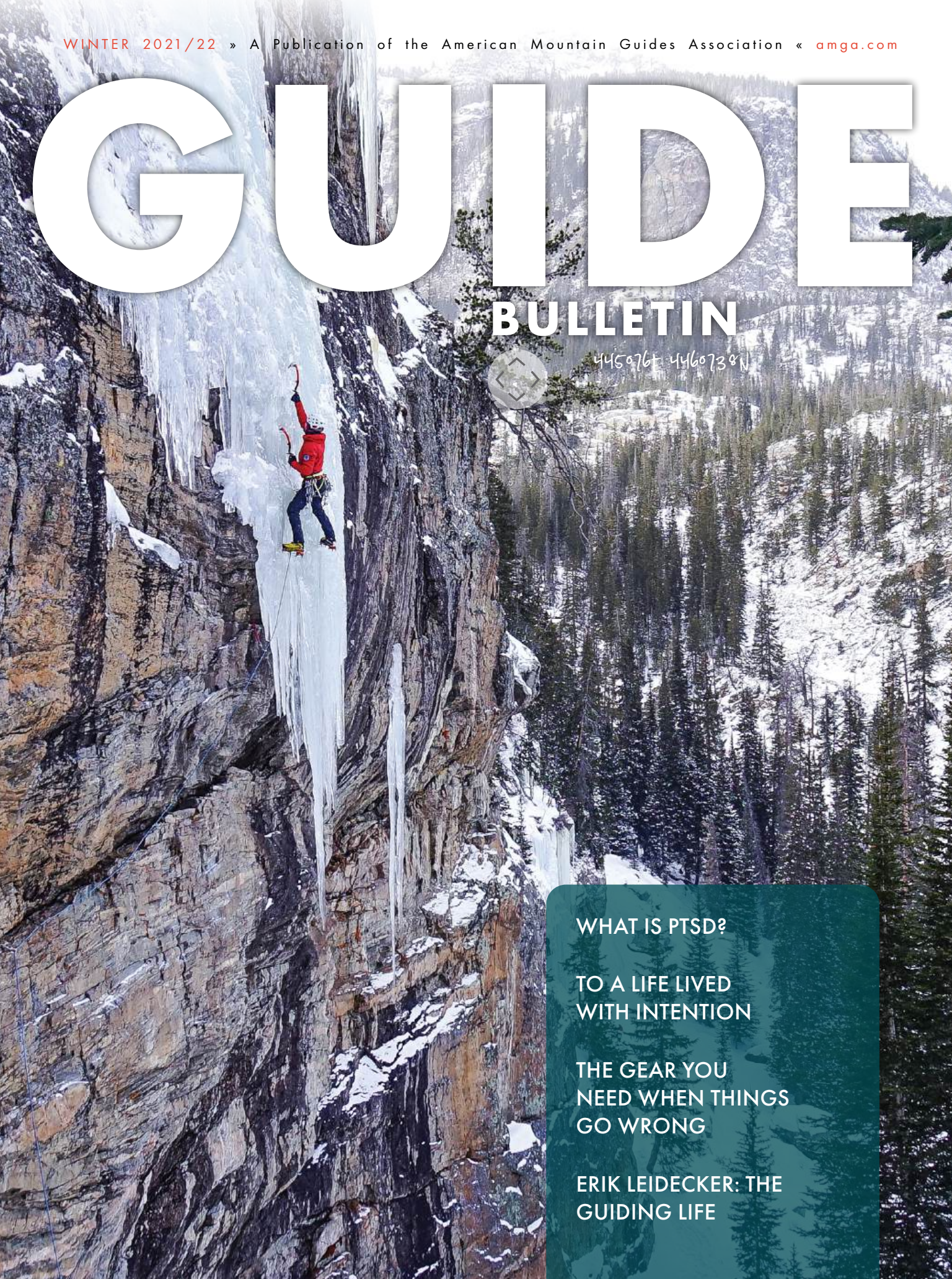
WINTER 2021/22 » A Publication of the American Mountain Guides Association « amga.com

GUIDE BULLETIN

445976E 4460738N



WHAT IS PTSD?

TO A LIFE LIVED WITH INTENTION

THE GEAR YOU NEED WHEN THINGS GO WRONG

ERIK LEIDECKER: THE GUIDING LIFE

Black Diamond Athlete Parkin Costain
Photo by Bob Plumb

BUILT FOR THE BACKCOUNTRY

At Black Diamond, backcountry safety continues to drive our innovations in equipment. This winter, our snow safety tools feature the latest advancements in technology, from our fast and accurate Recon BT avalanche beacon to our industry standard Quickdraw Carbon Probe 300 and Evac 7 shovel.

SHOP SNOW SAFETY AT BLACKDIAMONDEQUIPMENT.COM

Black Diamond®

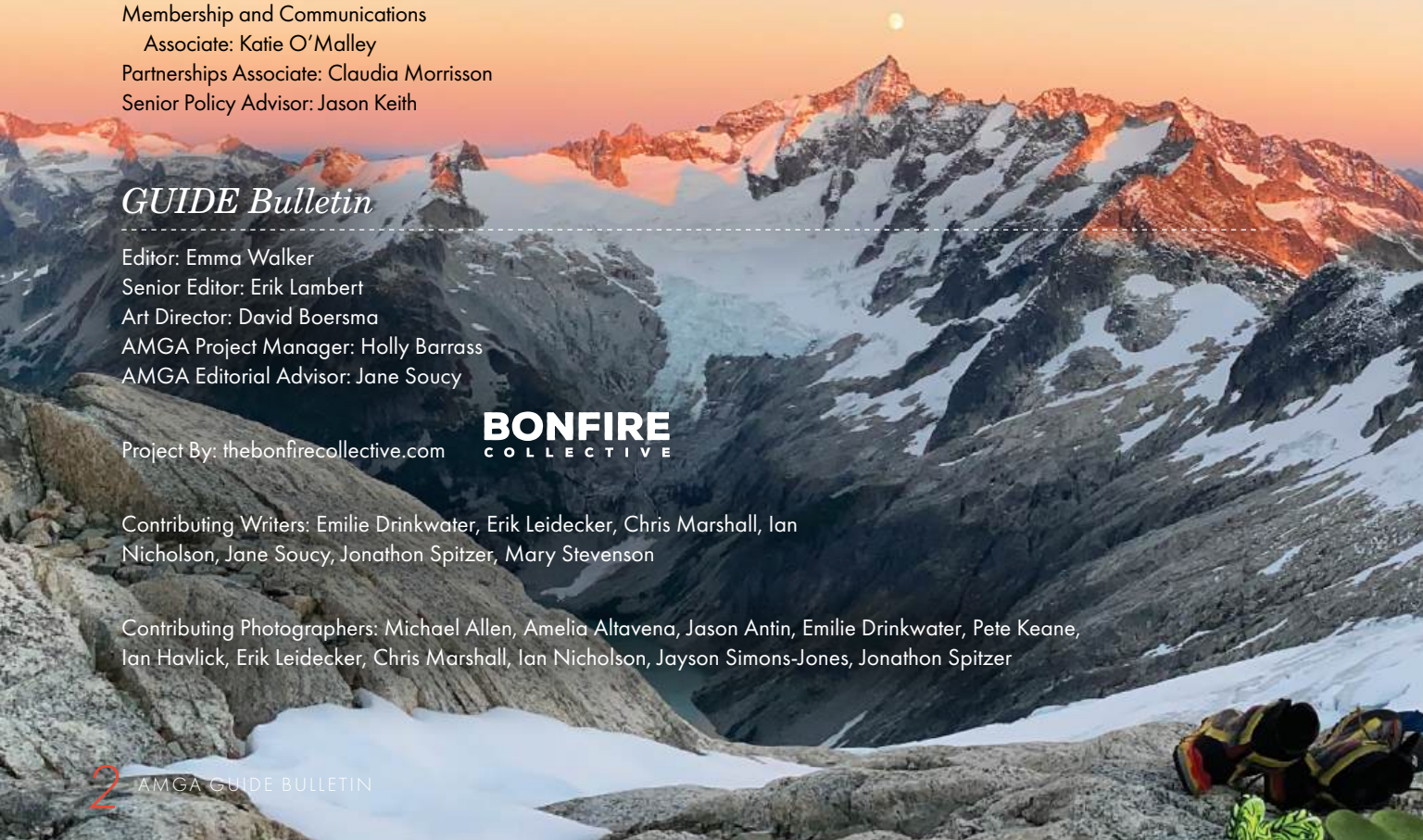
GUIDE BULLETIN

U.S. Member of IFMGA

On the cover: Guides' Day Off: Mike Soucy (American Mountain Guide/IFMGA Guide) on Mixed Emotions (WI5-, M4) in Rocky Mountain National Park. PHOTO BY JAYSON SIMONS-JONES (AMERICAN MOUNTAIN GUIDE/IFMGA GUIDE)

This page: Students on a Rock Guide Course in Smith Rock, Oregon. PHOTO BY PETE KEANE (AMERICAN MOUNTAIN GUIDE/IFMGA GUIDE)

GUIDE BULLETIN



GUIDE Bulletin

Editor: Emma Walker
Senior Editor: Erik Lambert
Art Director: David Boersma
AMGA Project Manager: Holly Barrass
AMGA Editorial Advisor: Jane Soucy

Project By: thebonfirecollective.com BONFIRE COLLECTIVE

Contributing Writers: Emilie Drinkwater, Erik Leidecker, Chris Marshall, Ian Nicholson, Jane Soucy, Jonathon Spitzer, Mary Stevenson

Contributing Photographers: Michael Allen, Amelia Altavena, Jason Antin, Emilie Drinkwater, Pete Keane, Ian Havlick, Erik Leidecker, Chris Marshall, Ian Nicholson, Jayson Simons-Jones, Jonathon Spitzer

MUCH OF THIS ISSUE OF THE *GUIDE BULLETIN* WAS WRITTEN PRE-pandemic. Since then, we've all experienced some level of trauma and loss. For some, it was a disruption and the emergence of a new normal; for others, the losses were much more personal and substantial.

Throughout this difficult period, I've been impressed with how much our community has come together. From rallying to support each other and the AMGA in the stressful early weeks of the pandemic, to stepping up and supporting the Black Lives Matter movement, AMGA members have made an impact.

That's true of our leadership team, as well. Our own president, Angela Hawse, was recently elected to the IFMGA's board of directors. She's the first North American and only the second woman in the organization's 56-year history to do so. I'm continually humbled by our members' contributions to the greater guiding community.

While the pandemic continues, we have collectively continued to manage. One ray of hope is the increased interest in America's outdoors and anecdotal reports of increased demand for guiding. This is great for our industry and key to building support for America's public lands.

We will learn to better support our members dealing with trauma through the Resilience, Integration, Support, Education (RISE) project. I hope we can also move into the complex implementation of Scope of Practice with a mind toward effective, compassionate communication. The AMGA remains a small community, and we are stronger together when we focus on strengthening our profession.

As we move into the implementation of Scope of Practice, I want to stress the value of teamwork. Our association is embarking on a bold experiment to strengthen and professionalize our industry. We face many challenges, but the more we can work cooperatively together, the more effective we will be. I'm excited by the next stage in AMGA's evolution.

Sincerely,

Alex Kosseff, AMGA Executive Director

PHOTO BY IAN HAVLICK (AMERICAN MOUNTAIN GUIDE/IFMGA GUIDE)

Empowering those who empower others

Monserrat Alvarez Matehuala
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Manager
Outdoor Research Ambassador

OUTDOOR RESEARCH

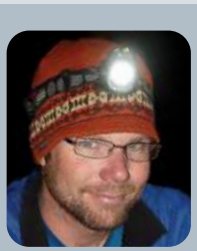
AMGA instructors, apprentice guides, and guides are eligible for the Outdoor Research Pro Program. Apply or renew today at vip.outdoorresearch.com

Jane Soucy — **FEATURE** — Longmont, Colorado

Jane is the Operations Director at AMGA and has been with the organization since 2014. With over 15 years of experience in the outdoor industry, she formerly worked in collegiate outdoor programming, as the Expedition Manager at Colorado Mountain School, and as a field instructor for NOLS and Outward Bound. Outside of the office, you can expect to find Jane skiing or riding bikes, striving to re-create amazing baked goods, sometimes rock climbing, and always enjoying time with her husband, Mike, dog, Sky, and kitty, Conrad.

Mary Stevenson — **GUEST: ASK ALAN** — Lafayette, Colorado

Mary is a master's-level Licensed Professional and Addictions Counselor, and avid climber. She specializes in the treatment of PTSD, Substance Use Disorders, and Mood Disorders. She is formally trained in using EMDR and DBT to support her clients toward wellness. Mary has been climbing for about 19 years. She understands the obsessive nature of the sport and the compulsion to climb despite injury, tragedy, and day-to-day stress.



Ian Nicholson — **EQUIPPED** — Seattle, Washington

Ian is an American Mountain Guide/IFMGA Guide who works on the AMGA Instructor Team in all three disciplines. He is also a part of the American Institute for Avalanche Research and Education's (AIARE) national instructor team. Ian has worked as a Professional Observer at the Northwest Avalanche Center and is a regular contributor to and a senior editor for OutdoorGearLab.com, specializing in backcountry-oriented gear. He authored the guidebook *SuperTopo: Washington Pass Climbing*.

Erik Leidecker — **THE GUIDING LIFE** — Hailey, Idaho

Erik grew up in Ketchum, Idaho, and started working for Sawtooth Mountain Guides (SMG) in 1993. He purchased half of SMG from Kirk Bachman in 2003. Erik is an American Mountain Guide/IFMGA Guide and an instructor and examiner for the AMGA Instructor Team. A member of the Eddie Bauer/First Ascent Ski Guide Team, Erik lives in Hailey, Idaho, with his wife, Gretchen, and daughters, Sascha and Svea.

OUR FAVORITE ROUTES TO GUIDE

IFMGA Mountain Guides do play favorites—here are their highlights

What makes the perfect route to guide? Ask ten guides, and you'll probably get ten different answers. But there are a few common themes: aesthetic lines, sweeping views, and movement that keeps clients smiling. We asked four IFMGA guides what stands out from all the rest. Here's what they told us.

Chris Marshall | North Ridge Forbidden Peak, North Cascades, Washington | 5.6, Grade III, Snow to 50 degrees, Glacier Travel

Often overshadowed by the timeless classic West Ridge, the North Ridge takes climbers out of the hustle and bustle of Boston Basin and deposits them on the remote north side of the mountain. This route is remote, aesthetic, and committing.

The North Ridge embodies alpine climbing in the North Cascades, and demands a well-rounded skill set—from steep snow climbing, to complex glacier travel, to alpine rock climbing—all while you're climbing with an overnight pack.

There are multiple cruxes on this route: getting up and over Sharkfin Col, navigating the heavily crevassed Boston Glacier, climbing a 70-degree consolidated dirt gully, and navigating the moat between the Forbidden Glacier and the northwest snow face.

The overall crux is moving through vast amounts of technical terrain with an overnight pack while conserving energy for a safe descent. Climbers are rewarded with two days of technical challenges and a breathtaking bivy; these factors keep me psyched to share this gem with others.

PHOTO: JONATHON SPITZER

PHOTO: CHRIS MARSHALL

PHOTO: CHRIS MARSHALL

PHOTO: EMILIE DRINKWATER

PHOTO: ERIK LEIDECKER

Emilie Drinkwater | Repentance, Cathedral Ledge, North Conway, New Hampshire | Ice II–III, WI5 M4–5

For the first guest I guided on this route, I'd say it was the climb of a lifetime, and I think he'd agree. Repentance was the culmination of nearly ten years of preparation for this guest—more mental than physical—and it was a route just barely within reach. The experience was sublime, rewarding, challenging, and probably pretty scary at times. Type II fun—but certainly nothing to repent for!

The crux of this route depends on conditions; some might say the chockstone top-out is the crux, and some might say it's the often-thin, hard-to-protect pillar at the start of the second pitch. My vote is for the second-pitch pillar, which always seems to be in anemic conditions when I'm there to climb it. Then again, I always feel like I'm going to fall off the final chockstone move… Regardless of the actual crux, I know several strong climbers who have unexpectedly fallen (and been injured) on the P2 ice chimney.

PHOTO: EMILIE DRINKWATER

This route continually challenges me as a guide. Modern equipment and the advent of ice climbing as a core sport may make a route like Repentance seem easier now than when it was first climbed in 1973. That said, unless you're really lucky with conditions, this is still a hard route, and it's worth approaching with trepidation. Repentance requires a little bit of everything, from delicate footwork, to brute strength, to solid ice and rock gear placements. As a guide, this all needs to be accomplished while moving quickly and confidently, whether you want to or not!

What I love about this route is that I don't get to do it again and again. It's a "special occasion" route for which the conditions, guest, and my own mental and physical fitness must align for what is usually a small three- to seven-day window during which I'm in the Northeast in winter. From an aesthetic perspective, Repentance is a spectacular ribbon of ice on steep, clean granite… And if there's any mountain feature that draws me in, it's a narrow line of ice surrounded by rock!

Erik Leidecker | The Super Slabs, Sawtooth Mountains, Idaho | Various Routes Grade II, 5.7–5.10, 600′

I first "guided" on the Super Slabs in the summer of 1993 as an intern at Sawtooth Mountain Guides (SMG). Climbing the route was part of a two-day introductory program we called "Rockcraft," the name of which was borrowed from the Royal Robbins series of instructional books published in 1973. The route I was on that day was called Bacon and Legs, an old school, run-out, insecure 5.9 protected by quarter-inch button heads.

"Guided" is in quotes above because what I did that day and for several years thereafter was not guiding the way I think about it today. I was putting the rope up, but I hadn't done the route before, so I didn't know the way. Also, I completely lacked any formal training, and even many of the recreational techniques I was bringing to my "guiding" were suspect! As I look back on 26 years of working on the Super Slabs (and likely around 500 laps!), I'm able to track my growth (and sometimes regression) as a mountain guide.

There are three routes on the Slabs that we guide regularly, and the cruxes on all of them are friction problems. All of the climbs have run-out sections of easy fifth class, but fortunately the cruxes are protected with good, close-by gear (either bolts or medium cams)—fortunately the buttonheads are long gone!

On some days in the heat of August, the challenge of the Super Slabs is just managing to grind out another day of work during the busy summer season. But how our company currently operates on the Slabs is nothing like how we operated there 25 years ago. We are constantly debriefing techniques and strategies (caterpillar or not?) and experimenting with different belay stations when we discover trees once thought to be solid smashed and scattered across the rock. In part because of our willingness to adapt and change, the Slabs continue to challenge us, which is why most of us at Sawtooth Mountain Guides never tire of guiding here.

A trip to the Eiger takes months of planning and preparation and a little bit of luck. But when it all works out, it is magical.

PHOTO: JONATHON SPITZER

The Slabs are a core operational venue for us. SMG guides here with more regularity than at any other operational objective, so this alone keeps us coming back. But probably the biggest draw is the setting. The Slabs are situated low in Redfish Canyon, a glacially sculpted mountain valley, and are surrounded by bigger peaks such as Mount Heyburn, the Grand Mogul, and the Elephant's Perch. The weather is often mild, and at Grade II the routes rarely take more than three hours to climb, which makes it wholly possible to enjoy the moderate climbing and the setting without the time pressures associated with a longer, harder route.

Although I definitely remember my first day on "the Slabs" and the group I was with, I don't remember their names or the experience they had. I'd like to think I tricked them into thinking they got their money's worth, but I know some of my clients in my early years of guiding were surely aware of my inexperience and lack of credentials.

I estimate I've pulled nearly a half a million feet of rope through various devices on the Slabs, and understandably many of the faces have blurred over time, but two guests I guided more recently stand out in my memory. This was an older couple from England who had spent their lives as outdoor educators and made yearly climbing vacations to the States. Between them, they had 100 years of climbing experience.

Now in their 70s, they weren't moving quickly, and when I belayed them on the first pitch I wondered if we would make it to the top. But they moved steadily, precisely, and smoothly, whether the climbing was 5.4 or 5.7. It was a gorgeous, windless day in September with the crowds of summer long gone. We laughed and joked at the belays and continued slowly—but effortlessly—to the top. It was such a poignant reminder to relax about speed and efficiency and enjoy the wonders of climbing and the environment we work in.

Jonathon Spitzer | Mittellegi Ridge, Eiger, Switzerland | 5b + A0 - Snow/Ice up to 50 degrees

The Mittellegi is most commonly climbed over two days, with a night at the famous Mittellegi Hutte. The hut is perched at 3355m on the narrow east ridge of the Eiger with surreal exposure, looking down over 6,000 feet into Grindelwald.

I will never forget the first time I guided the Eiger. It was with three climbers and two fellow guides (Eric Larson and Thor Husted). We spent the first part of the week training in Chamonix. During the first part of the trip, we were constantly challenged with poor weather and difficult climbing conditions. This made it even more rewarding when the weather stabilized and allowed us to climb the Eiger.

Over two days on the Eiger, all three climbers were blown away by the level of exposure and beauty of the mountain. A highlight was getting off the Jungfraujoch train in the middle of the Eiger and walking down a dark, narrow tunnel until reaching a small door that gains access to a short rappel/lower to start the climb.


PHOTO: JONATHON SPITZER

This climb has multiple cruxes and challenges. But the main challenge of the Eiger isn't necessarily the route itself, but all the moving parts to make this highly sought-after ascent come together. Shuffling plans, adjusting hut reservations, preparing clients, and then finally making an ascent are what makes the Eiger my favorite peak to climb.

Another challenge for guiding the Eiger is the weather and conditions. The Eiger is located in the Bernese Oberland, which is known for unstable weather in the summer. Convective storms and cold fronts often leave this technical alpine rock ridge blanketed with fresh snow. Since the climb is two days (and ideally the route should be dry), we are searching for a three- or four-day high-pressure window with little to no afternoon storms. It can be challenging to align.

The stunning scenery, exposure, and technical guiding difficulties make this route fun and rewarding. The most rewarding part is that to get here, climbers must train and work toward the goal of climbing the Eiger for years. It's very rewarding to know that you are a part of somebody's goal, and that they've chosen to spend their vacation time with you in order to reach that goal as a team.

The history of the Eiger is another major draw to this mountain. Famous books and films like *The White Spider* and Clint Eastwood's classic *The Eiger Sanction* have made the mountain rather alluring. The Mittellegi hut, which is perched on the knife-edge of the Eiger at 3355m, is a very memorable and picturesque mountain hut. A trip to the Eiger takes months of planning, preparation, and a little bit of luck. But when it all works out, it is magical. «

Chris Marshall — Sun Valley, Idaho, and Bend, Oregon

Chris is an American Mountain Guide/IFMGA Guide and member of the AMGA Instructor Team. He has been working professionally since 2006 in ski, alpine, and rock environments, and has an MA in experiential education. In addition to skiing and climbing, you can find Chris mentoring aspiring guides, teaching avalanche education, geeking out in the snow, and attempting to not crash his mountain bike.

Emilie Drinkwater — Salt Lake City, Utah

Originally from the Northeast, Emilie is an American Mountain Guide/IFMGA Guide. She honed both her technical skills and cold-weather-suffering skills in the rugged mountains of New England and Upstate New York. Those skills have proven invaluable in mountain ranges around the world from Asia to Alaska, but really, she may be most happy in the sunny, snowy Wasatch Mountains of Utah.

Erik Leidecker — Hailey, Idaho

Erik is an American Mountain Guide/IFMGA Guide, as well as a member of the AMGA Instructor Team. He grew up in Ketchum, Idaho, and attended Dartmouth College, where he was an English/Writing major and a member of the varsity alpine ski team. He has jointly owned and run Sawtooth Mountain Guides since 1993. Erik lives in Hailey, Idaho, with his wife, Gretchen, and daughters, Sascha and Svea.

Jonathon Spitzer — Seattle, Washington

Jonathon Spitzer grew up hiking, climbing, and skiing in the Pacific Northwest. He holds a bachelor's degree in Outdoor Recreation and Business from Western State University in Colorado, and obtained his AMGA/IFMGA certification in 2009. Jonathon is the director of field operations for Alpine Ascents International, as well as a member of the AMGA Instructor Team. He spends his spare time with his wife, Rachel, and son, Ari.

SKI GUIDE PANT

Hardwearing Most Rugged GORE-TEX PRO with large pockets and removable knee pads. Designed for work.

ARC'TERYX
PROFESSIONAL

To A Life Lived with Intention

By Jane Soucy

I have been working on this article for a long time.

I began writing it in January 2020. At that time, the 10th anniversary of the avalanche that took my friend, adventure companion, and life partner, Kellen Sams, loomed near. It seemed fitting to attempt putting words to paper about Kellen's life and his remarkable impact on those who loved him. It felt meaningful to share my experience working through the aftermath of his unexpected death in order to help others who are—or have, or will—experience the grief, stress, guilt, anger, fatigue, depression, anxiety, and all the additional valid and real symptoms and feelings that impact us as humans after a trauma.

Then the global pandemic hit and everything turned upside down. The AMGA went into crisis-response mode. We shut down program operations. We pressed pause on the *GUIDE Bulletin* and focused on mission-critical operations. We cut finances to make it through what looked to be a bleak, uncertain future for the organization. I found myself without the energy to finish this piece.

Now, as I re-engage with this article, two years have passed since I began writing and the backcountry community endured one of the deadliest avalanche seasons in US history—my heart breaks for all the people who are on their journey with grief and trauma recovery from the 2020–21 season's 37 fatalities.

An unexpected death in the mountains causes ripple effects that reach far and wide. One person's life touches many others, and the experience of losing someone to a trauma in the mountains causes immense grief and injury to those involved. I hope that, in some small way, this story can help remind our community that we are not alone. Grief is a monster that rears its head in all sorts of ways, some of them odd and unexpected; some of them beautiful, some less attractive—but none of them necessarily wrong or right.

Photo from Jane Soucy Collection

KELLEN SAMS AT THE TOP OF MONARCH PASS, CO CIRCA 2010

At the Lost Wonder Hut.

Photo from Jane Soucy Collection

Life, Changed

On February 11, 2010, I received a phone call that would change the trajectory of my life. I was sitting by the fireplace at my parents' house on a snowy New Hampshire evening, thousands of miles away from my partner, Kellen, and our life in Colorado, when my friend and roommate, Dan Ives, called.

That's odd, I thought to myself. Dan, Kellen, and a group of other friends were on a hut trip in the San Juans. They weren't scheduled to be back in cell range until the following day.

"Hey, Dan," I answered. "What's up?"

"Jane, I'm so sorry," he replied. "There was an avalanche, and Kellen didn't make it."

"What are you talking about? Is this a joke?" I stuttered. "Why would you say something like that?"

"Jane, it's not a joke. I'm so sorry. I'm just so, so sorry."

After this, the conversation blurred. I remember only that I stood up, handed the phone to my mom, and left the room.

I spent much of that night sitting on the bathroom countertop, crying as hard as I've ever cried, knees tucked in with elbows around them, rocking back and forth with my back against the wall. Over my right shoulder I caught glimpses of my reflection and wondered if all this could be true.

"You can do this," I told myself in the mirror. "You are strong. You got this."

Looking back, if I could give my 25-year-old self some advice, it would have been, "You do *not* have this. And that's 100 percent OK.

***

I was in New Hampshire to spend time with my grandmother, who was living in a retirement home down the street from my parents' house. Her health had declined. She and I were close, and it was important to me to see her before she passed away.

When the time came for her to go, it was just the two of us in the room. Her breaths became shallower and farther apart; I held her hand and said, "It's OK; you can go." Her final gasp of air came and went, and her body was still.

***

While her physical body remained, her being was gone. It's hard to describe the feeling of life leaving a body, but the room's energy changes and it simply feels different—the stillness that remains is incredibly heavy.

I stayed in New Hampshire to attend the funeral. Just under two weeks later, on a Thursday, Kellen died. I was supposed to be home in Colorado already, but a major Nor'easter had shut down the airports and canceled flights for multiple days.

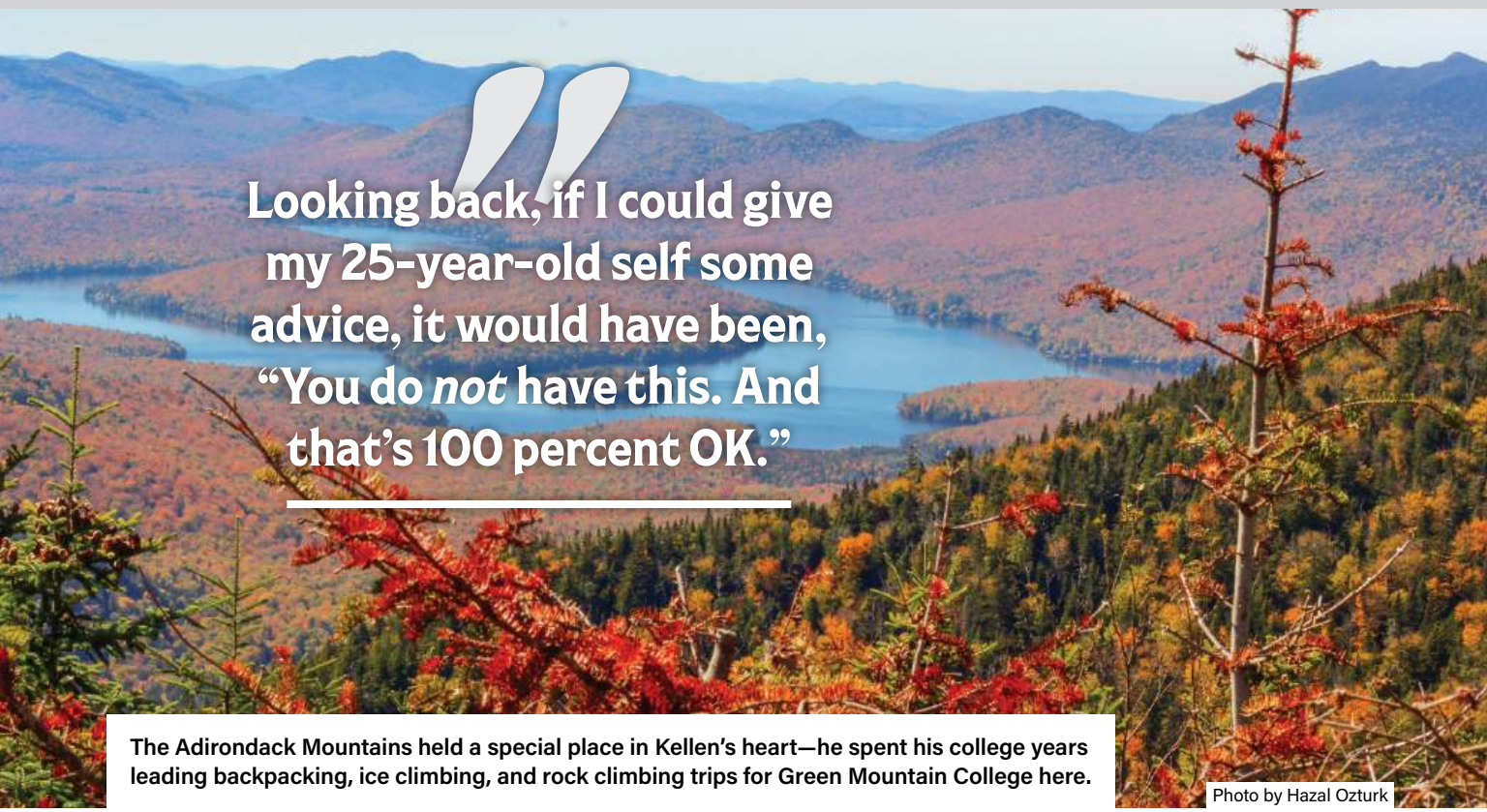
Go, Go, Go

The morning after Kellen's death, my only concern was closing the 2,207 miles between myself and Kellen's body at a funeral home in Montrose, Colorado.

Because of the storm and subsequent flight cancellations, it was impossible to get a flight. As my brother, Carl, and I discussed driving across the country to get there, I checked one last time. A single ticket popped up on a flight set to leave in three hours. I bought the ticket and threw a bag together.

FROM KELLEN'S FRIENDS

I MET KELLEN IN COLLEGE, on a long van ride to the Adirondacks. I found out over the course of that year that Kellen was kind of a local legend in our small school and circle of outdoor enthusiasts. He was a talented climber, skier, and young professional, way more motivated than most of us, who were too busy enjoying the more traditional social aspects of college. (To be clear, he was still a grade-A goofball and could throw down with the best of them at a costume party, but he could rally and send hard the following day, too.) On the first hut trip I ever went on, Kellen was mentoring me, and I was in charge of food. The last morning, I got up with Kellen to make breakfast. On the menu was cream cheese–stuffed French toast with fresh raspberries and bacon... and I had unfortunately forgotten all of that in the fridge back at base. I thought Kellen was going to strangle me. (He was awake not to help me cook it, but to make sure I didn't burn it.) I improvised a light continental breakfast sold as, "So folks could eat quick and get a morning lap in before we left." Kellen, still brewing over the lack of bacon, gave me an impressed look and said, "I don't know how you just pulled that off, but nice job." I never let that happen again. Kellen didn't die doing what he loved; he lived doing what he loved, and those of us left behind can only try to do the same. *—Casey Graham (Certified Rock and Ski Guide, Assistant Alpine Guide)*



Looking back, if I could give my 25-year-old self some advice, it would have been, "You do *not* have this. And that's 100 percent OK."

The Adirondack Mountains held a special place in Kellen's heart—he spent his college years leading backpacking, ice climbing, and rock climbing trips for Green Mountain College here.

Photo by Hazal Ozturk

FROM KELLEN'S FRIENDS

WE WERE BOTH IN OUR MID-20s and trying to figure out the right answers. Before we moved in together, it seemed that he knew exactly what he was doing. Shortly into our cohabitation, I made a mistake that cost me my job and was scrambling to honor the lease we just signed. Kellen shared his own mistakes and helped me get back on the job market and regain that confidence. Once that was taken care of, he continued to help me build my professional aspirations in the outdoors. I remember the time he downloaded the entire Daft Punk collection and then played it nonstop. There's only so many times you can hear "Around the World" before you snap... "Kellen It" was a fun piece of advice to stay positive shortly after his death. I'm not sure who started that saying, but it was an easy way to smile. *—Dan Ives (Apprentice Alpine Guide)*

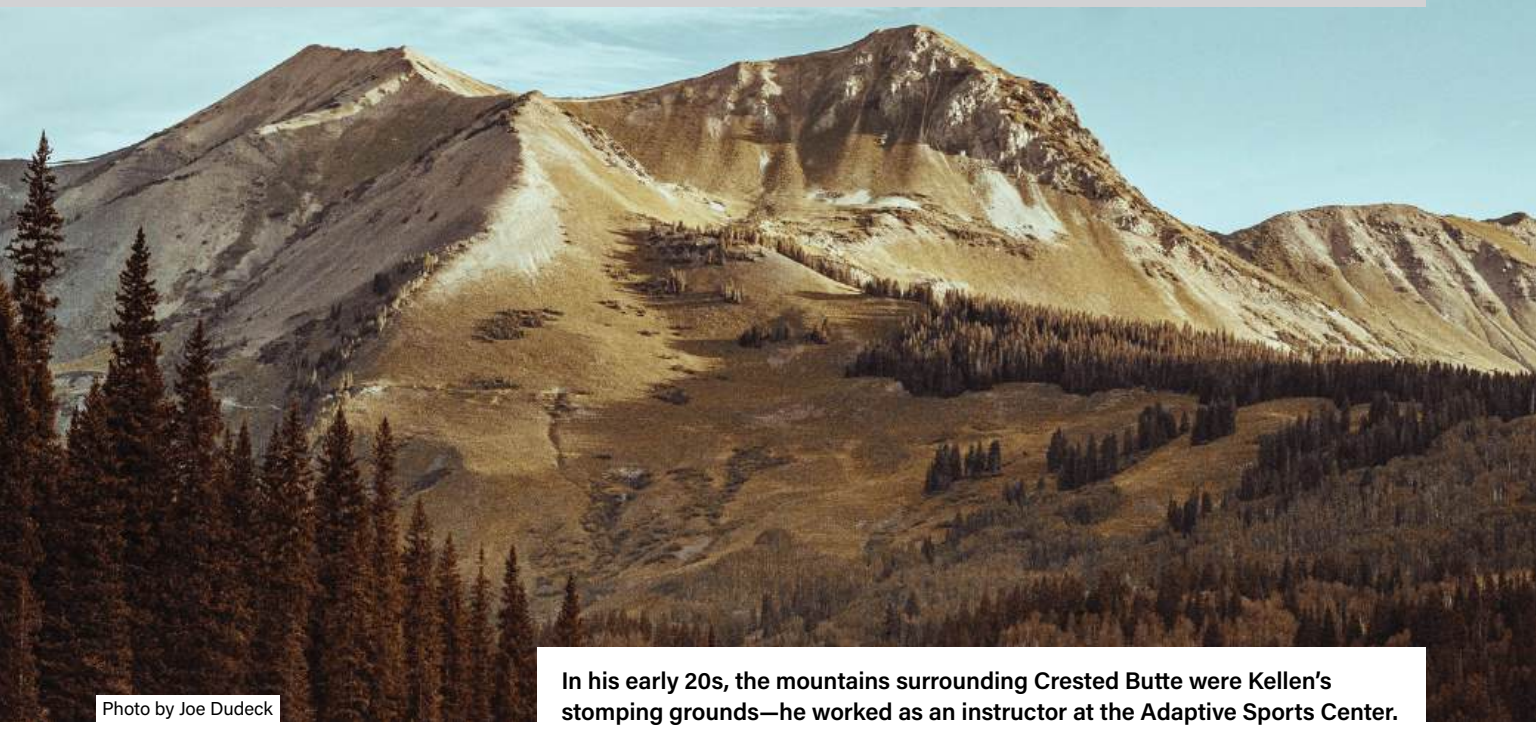


Photo by Joe Dudeck

In his early 20s, the mountains surrounding Crested Butte were Kellen's stomping grounds—he worked as an instructor at the Adaptive Sports Center.

By the time I made it through the first flight and landed at LaGuardia for a tight layover, I was a sleep-deprived, sobbing mess, dodging New Yorkers trying to make it to the gate in time. I was the last passenger to board the plane.

I landed in Denver on the Friday of Valentine's Day weekend. As I ascended the escalator to the greeting area, I saw happy people holding flowers and chocolates, embracing their sweethearts as they arrived for romantic getaways. Walking past the happy couples, I held back tears that felt at odds with the happy tears being shared around me.

Walking into the house I shared with Kellen and Dan was surreal. It was full of people when I arrived, and I felt so awkward as I noticed that none of them knew what to say to me. There was a collective feeling that our lives and our little community were changed. When I finally went to sleep, the bed felt huge.

The next day, my friends Mick and Morgan drove me to Montrose to see Kellen and his parents. Kellen's mom, Christine, held my hand and led me to the door of the room containing his body. I didn't know yet what an important person Christine would become in my life, but this was the start of our shared journey through grief. She would continue to hold my hand through the darkest of the times to come.

Walking into that room is one of the hardest things I have ever done in my life.

It looked like Kellen—but it didn't. He had suffered obvious trauma. I could see a large dent in his forehead and specks of dried blood in his ears. I touched his cold chest and kissed him on the forehead. I stood with him; I sat with him.

I thought of my grandmother. It occurred to me, for the second time in less than two weeks, that our bodies are vessels, meant to house our beings. Without a life inside, a body is just a container. The room was full of the heavy stillness that hangs in the air when breath ceases to exist in a body. It felt empty and quiet: his body, the room, my heart.

No New Normal

The following days and weeks were busy with memorial services to plan and attend. With friends and family members in town, the days went by quickly. I lived in a state of survival-blur. Sometimes it still felt like Kellen was just gone for a few weeks, instructing another Outward Bound course.

At first I was rarely alone; eventually, folks went back to their homes and lives. But for me, for Kellen's parents, and our close friends, "back to normal" didn't exist. Any semblance of normal I once had was obliterated.

I wasn't ready to face going through Kellen's belongings, but I couldn't be surrounded by them either. I needed to get out of our house, so I packed up my car and headed to the desert. I was between work seasons, and all I wanted was to feel the desert sunshine on my skin and go rock climbing. In retrospect, I was avoiding my grief.


MOUNTAIN
HARD
WEAR
Mountain Hardwear
proudly supports AMGA
affinity programming
Photo: Irene Yee

MENTAL-HEALTH FIRST-AID CHECKLIST

By Mary Stevenson

Immediately after experiencing a stressful event or accident in the field, get yourself and your party to safety. Once you're out of direct danger, try the following things:

- **Breathe deeply.** Inhale to a count of five and exhale to a count of eight. Exhaling very slowly helps regulate our nervous system and calm down.
- **Remind yourself that you are safe, and that the event is over.** Say it aloud: "I am safe now." Reassure your party that they are also safe.
  Meet your basic needs. Stay warm, put on dry clothing, drink water, and meet basic first-aid needs.
- **Orient yourself to the time and place.** Use your five senses to ground yourself to the safe environment. Identify five things you can see, four things you can touch, three things you can hear, two things you can smell, and one thing you can taste.
- **Acknowledge that you've been through something traumatic.** Labeling your experience as overwhelming or scary can help validate the emotions you are feeling and give understanding to your reactions.
- **If appropriate, move your body.** Crisis events cue our bodies to take action and mobilize. It is natural to feel restless and energized after experiencing something overwhelming. If you are unhurt and cleared by a medical professional, try one of the following: Push against a wall, shake your arms, jump up and down, or tighten your muscles and relax them.
- **Avoid alcohol and other substances.** The prefrontal cortex in the brain will naturally work to integrate the experience and help build understanding around the event. Substance use can impact how these memories and emotions are processed.
- **Request a debriefing meeting.** Meet with those involved and, if needed, with professional support. Worth noting: Some individuals find that narrating the traumatic event is helpful, while other people find this overwhelming.
- **Reach out for support.** After the event, it is normal to feel sadness, overwhelm, fear, and other challenging emotions. Find at least one person you can talk with—a friend, coworker, fellow guide, primary-care doctor, therapist, clergy, or support group. The Climbing Grief Fund (americanalpineclub.org/grief-directory) has a directory of therapists and resources. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is 1-800-273-TALK.

I spent the next few weeks living my life in desert simplicity: I woke up and felt the sun on my skin, enjoyed my morning cup of coffee, and challenged myself on hard climbs. I had an amazing crew of friends cycling in and out to climb with me. I journaled. I took time alone. I laughed with my friends and took comfort in the camaraderie. I would hike into a canyon and sit by myself, listening to the sounds of the desert and watching ravens circle above.

I'd wonder what happens when you die. Was it possible that one of the birds up high in the sky was Kellen, watching over me? During this time I worried that I didn't call home enough, that Kellen's parents would think I was avoiding them, that folks were getting irritated at me for dropping off the grid. I was anxious that I needed to get back to work and re-engage with my life. But people grieve in different ways and on different timelines. I just wasn't ready to really feel it yet, even though it loomed in the background of everything I did.

Eventually, I put Kellen's things in storage and fully moved out of our apartment. I leaned on new ways of coping. I got involved in an unhealthy relationship, ignoring the red flags my friends pointed out. I loved hiking with a heavy pack on because I could feel my body working. I loved sinking my hands and feet into cracks, using my body to reach a goal. I thrived in moving, in seeing new places. I went to Las Vegas, Moab, and Yosemite. I got stronger. Anyone I've climbed with would describe me as a pretty nervous climber, but not then. New mantras—*The worst possible thing has already happened* and *Kellen is with me*—steadied me. I climbed more confidently and harder than I ever had. I was hell-bent on making the most of my time on this earth, and I wasn't going to listen to anyone who didn't know what I was feeling or wanted to tell me to be doing something else seemingly more appropriate.

Slowly, the grief I was holding at bay started to creep in. I went back to work. But now, being in the field was hard in a way it hadn't been before. I felt like I was having my own Outward Bound experience. I didn't have the energy to help others walk through their own journeys like I had before. This life of avoidance, of jumping from one climbing destination to another, was not working anymore. I was tired—the actual absence of Kellen in my life started to sink in.

In the Thick of It

I spent the next year and a half at home in New Hampshire, where I got a part-time job at the local EMS and put in 30 or so hours a week. There were some awkward conversations. My coworkers wanted to know what had brought me back to New England, and what was the story with that ring I was wearing on a chain around my neck? I got used to people being slightly uncomfortable around me when I shared my recent life events. It felt good to say it out loud; it was, after all, my truth. And honestly, it *was* uncomfortable. Unexpected traumatic death is not always a comfortable thing to discuss.

I got into a groove. I went to work. I went to therapy twice a week. I spent more time with my family. I made friends at work, and they helped me have a little fun. We went climbing together; they introduced me to mountain biking.

FROM KELLEN'S FRIENDS

I LOST ONE OF MY BEST FRIENDS, a co-worker, and an outdoor partner. [Kellen] influenced me and still does in many ways. Losing a friend in front of you is something that still impacts me. After this accident, I focused on making better decisions in the backcountry. I also began to focus professionally on avalanche education. The accident also made me focus on what is important to me, the relationships that I have with friends and families. I still miss him so much. Losing Kellen has taught me to value the time I have with people and to live in the moment. *—Dave Bumgardner (Certified Ski Guide)*

Crested Butte, CO. Photo by Ellie Brown via Unsplash

But ultimately, Kellen's absence was feeling more real, and I was becoming more depressed. The unrelenting fatigue and sadness were debilitating. I had no appetite and lost close to twenty pounds.

At work, they played videos of big-mountain skiing on screens throughout the store. These videos often feature skier-triggered avalanches, and I would panic upon seeing them. My anxiety level was at a 10.

I dreaded the "Firsts." How would I get through my first birthday, Kellen's first birthday, Thanksgiving, Christmas, the anniversary of his death?

As you can guess, the "firsts" were all really hard. I didn't try to pretend that they weren't—I didn't have the energy; I let myself be ragefully sad. I was open and vulnerable with those closest to me, including my therapist. I allowed myself to truly feel the feelings.

I had it in my mind that getting through the first year would set me up to be back on my way to my previous life. But the second year was even worse than the first: Everything still felt terrible. I still had a long way to go.

I wanted a manual to follow. I wanted someone to tell me what steps to take and what boxes to check in order to get through this. As I learned more about grief, loss, and trauma, I came to learn that it is very personal; recovery doesn't unfold in the same way for everyone. It is hard. And it takes a long time. A year is nothing.

People told me to give it time—that one day I would find happiness again, even love. This felt impossible. I missed my partner so profoundly. I'd go to the grocery store and see folks out just living their lives. I wondered how everyone could just go about their daily activities in normalcy. I was gutted. I was mad. I was jealous of those people, out and about in the world, who got to go home to their partners. To me, everyday things felt like wading through fog. Doing a load of laundry was a huge success in my everyday life, especially if I also managed to put it away.

Some people would say, "At least he died doing what he loved." I found this statement to be particularly unhelpful. I remember wanting to reply, "You're right, Kellen did love to ski, but I'm fairly certain he didn't love being swept violently into a tree—what do you think?" I would ponder what was going through his mind in his final moments. Did he know he was going to die? Could he breathe? Other questions frequented my brainspace. If I had been there, would it have been different? Would he have been skiing with me instead and not in avalanche terrain at all? Would I have been killed instead? Or with him?

Still, there were sources of strength. My part-time job was one. Sessions with my wonderful therapist helped more than I can explain, even if most days I didn't want to go. There was Kellen's mom, who I could call years later, still deeply in the throes of our shared loss, and know that she would *get* it. She felt it as deeply as I did and more. When I talked about the sorrow, the sadness, the exhaustion, she was right there with me.

And of course, there was my own family. I can't find the words to thank them enough for supporting me through this, and I know it was not easy for them to see me in such a dark place. I experienced serious depression, with a side of anxiety and PTSD. Skiing was out of the question. There was a lot of worry about what to do with my life. Intense and deep sadness. Guilt. Anger. Frustration. And so many questions.

There came a point in my grief journey that was a turning point for me. I'd been doing all the "right" things: yoga, meditation, therapy, prioritizing sleep. But the grief, fatigue, and epic sadness continued to wear me down and prevented me from having much joy in my life at all. At a certain point, I needed to talk to my doctor about medication. I had reservations about this, but wise people reminded me that if I was anemic, I would have no qualms taking iron, and it didn't have to be a lifelong commitment. I was depressed and needed help.

I credit this decision with saving my life. Not in the sense that I was suicidal (although perhaps I was not that far off), but that it allowed me to take steps toward getting my life back, finding joy, and finding myself again.

Photo from Jane Soucy Collection

FROM KELLEN'S FRIENDS

[KELLEN'S DEATH] DIDN'T AFFECT MY SKIING—in fact, I think it made me want to ski more—but it did affect how seriously I took teaching students snow and avalanche safety. It made me want to really nail that information, to teach it really well. It's been a driving force in me pushing into ski guiding and avalanche education. Even now, it seems like every year when Kellen's birthday comes around, I'm teaching an avalanche course... And that's something I think is super cool. *—Bruce Saxman (Apprentice Alpine and Ski Guide)*

My life did not instantly become better once I figured out a medication with my doctor; it still took a lot of time and work. But for me, this step allowed me to slowly start making forward progress that would last because my brain was balancing out. As I felt a little better, my confidence grew and so did my energy.

Slowly my zest for life came back, piece by piece and positive experience by positive experience. I was able to move back to Colorado and start a new job as the Expedition Manager at Colorado Mountain School—I'm thankful to the folks there who took a chance on hiring me. I thrived in learning a new position, and was properly introduced to the world of professional mountain guiding at this time.

Letting Go

After he died, Kellen's parents shared his ashes with me. For the longest time, I held onto them, unwilling to let him go. I would take them out of the small container they were in, double-wrapped in clear plastic bags. I'd stare at the bags, holding the weight of what used to be a living, breathing,150-pound person. Rolling small bits of bones between my fingers, I would stare at this small pile of ashes, desperately wishing that what had happened to him hadn't. It took me a long time to let all of his ashes go. If I spread them, it would feel final—but it also felt wrong to hold on to these. I thought a lot about where I would bring my pieces of Kellen, and ultimately decided that one spot wouldn't do. He was an adventurer, an exploratory spirit, after all.

I left part of Kellen in a desert canyon. I brought him to the sand dunes outside Alamosa, Colorado, where I'd worked and spent a lot of time. I took a drive and hiked to the top of the tallest dune I could see. It was a stormy day, and the moody skies, swirling wind, and blasting sand matched my internal state. I bawled into the wind as the sand swirled and mixed with Kellen's ashes, exfoliating my soul and letting go of some layer of internal strife. It was a cathartic release as I shouted into the storm.

Finally, after I'd moved back to Colorado full-time, I left part of Kellen on an alpine rock climb that we had tried to do together but never completed. We made a promise that no matter what happened in our lives or our relationship, we would come back and climb this route together. This experience was completely different from my sand-dunes rage-fest. My friend Katy and I left the bivy in the morning, saying, "We can't forget to bring Kellen up the route with us!" We had a phenomenal time climbing the route. We had perfect weather, and there were no other parties on the climb. At the summit, I released Kellen's ashes into the Colorado sunshine, a huge smile on my face. We finally had gotten to the top together, though it looked vastly different from our original intentions.

About Kellen

Kellen loved adventuring in the outdoors. Both of his parents instilled a love of nature and exploration that followed him through life. His dad taught him to ski, and they would enjoy going on many trips together. He started on cross-country skis, and the first time his dad took him skiing at a resort, Kellen said, "Why haven't we done this before? I'm never skiing uphill again!" He thrived in the outdoors and spent his summers at camp in New Hampshire.

We met in college. Kellen was a couple years ahead of me. He was someone folks admired. He was kind, empathetic, even-tempered, sensitive, and a little goofy, and technically very proficient at rock climbing and skiing. He shared his knowledge with others and worked in our outdoor program. He liked sad music. He loved the singer Iron and Wine, and we would listen to beautiful, melancholy songs together. He was a voracious reader; he would write me letters when we got in fights and leave sweet notes for me under my door just because.

Kellen and I dated off and on for six years. We'd most recently found our way back to each other after living in different Colorado ski towns and realizing that what we really wanted was to be together. He was beginning his professional career working in military recreation. He was a talented climber and loved run out slab climbing. He skied better and more gracefully backwards than I ski forwards. He was a Certified SPI, was enrolled in a Rock Guide Course, and was excited about continuing his professional guide training. While he didn't get to do this, I'm confident that Kellen would have gone on to go through all three disciplines of AMGA training. Most importantly, Kellen was an exceptional friend and partner.

THE NEXT LEVEL OF GORE-TEX PRO GARMENTS

GUARANTEED TO KEEP YOU DRY
GORE-TEX PRODUCTS

Three durably waterproof technologies —tested to the absolute limits. The GORE-TEX PRO technologies feature next-level performance with an improved environmental footprint.

GORE-TEX PRO STRETCH TECHNOLOGY
Offers stretch material in combination with ruggedness

GORE-TEX PRO MOST RUGGED TECHNOLOGY
Increased strength and scratch resistance, with durable waterproofness, and solution dyed textiles

GORE-TEX PRO MOST BREATHABLE TECHNOLOGY
Even lighter than before, with textiles as low as 30 Denier, and solution dyed textiles

TESTED BY THE AMERICAN MOUNTAIN GUIDES ASSOCIATION ▶ Check out the video @ gtxi.is/amga

This is gear for going further than you've ever been before. GORE-TEX PRO garments are for outdoor professionals and serious outdoor visionaries who need the most rugged and durable protection available. They are designed to be extremely breathable and come with the ultimate GUARANTEED TO KEEP YOU DRY™ promise for waterproof protection in a totally windproof product. So you can master even most extreme situations.

> When I find myself spinning out, I remind myself that I fully trust that he is making the best decisions he can based on the information he has.

One phrase that was continually brought up when talking about Kellen after he passed away was "with intention." He operated with care and concern for those around him. His work allowed him the opportunity to teach and lead others. He took the time to craft thorough lesson plans; he was invested in the group's outcomes and in creating a positive learning environment. He dialed in his training for climbing and skiing and studied how to improve; he took the time to listen to people and he was there for his friends. Kellen was rarely the loudest person in the room, but folks listened to what he had to say because he was thoughtful and intentional with his words.

Kellen wasn't a perfect person—he could be grumpy and moody for one thing—but Kellen really was better than the rest of us. I know folks always speak highly of the dead, but it's really true in this case—he was a very special person who made many lives better because he was a part of them. I've considered getting "with intention" tattooed on the inside of my wrist many times, but for now, I just use it as a reminder or mantra when I need to focus or when I'm pondering a big life decision. It's a reminder to check in with myself about why I'm doing something. It is synonymous with the question "What would Kellen do?"

The Next Chapter

It's been a long time since Kellen died, but I still break down and cry every once in a while, this past year more than others. I'm not in love with Kellen anymore, but I miss him and his friendship. I think he'd be proud of me and of our friends. I know that he and my husband, Mike, would get along, because both are 1) really good skiers and 2) crotchety New Englanders at heart.

Of course, Mike plays an important role in this story. When I was in the depths of my grief, falling in love with another human again—in a real, lasting way—was not something I really thought possible. It felt strange to think of myself as a young widow, but essentially I was, and this came with many fears, insecurities, vulnerabilities, and unknowns. Others had been scared of my past, but Mike wasn't threatened by it at all.

The first time I went skiing was, honestly, semi-horrible. I went to the local ski hill, Pats Peak, where I grew up skiing on Tuesday-afternoon half-days (thank you, New Hampshire public schools!). Pats is a super-small, family-oriented hill, but to me, it felt like skiing the North Face of Longs Peak. Physically, I was very safe but it was really hard to just ski down the hill. The first time I skied in the backcountry, I nearly turned around. I couldn't see how skiing could ever be fun again. Panic easily ensued. I felt 1000 percent gripped from start to finish, whether or not I was in avalanche terrain.

I slowly got to a place where skiing was fun. Mike and I skied a lot of low-angle terrain (we still do). He was patient and understanding. The first winter we were dating, I found a new therapist in my new hometown and did more work to move through my residual grief and anxiety.

I worried about Mike a lot. People would ask me, "You know what he does for a living, right?" If he was back later than expected from a day of work and I hadn't heard from him, it was easy to let my mind spin to the worst possible outcome. It was difficult to be open and in a new relationship with someone who climbed and skied for a living and not be constantly worried about the what-ifs.

With time, this got better. The more times Mike (or I) went skiing and came back home, the more confidence I had that my world wouldn't be turned upside down again.

That being said, I have no illusions that the activities we pursue in the mountains, whether you're a guide or a recreationalist like myself, don't have real risks. I know that even the most talented individuals make errors. We've seen it. We've lived through it. Too many times. Sometimes I wonder if I would actually survive losing Mike to the mountains. When I find myself spinning out, I remind myself that I fully trust that he is making the best decisions he can based on the information he has. This doesn't absolve the potential outcome, particularly with skiing, but it helps me feel confident in our trust of one another and that we have actively chosen a life that includes climbing and skiing.

This doesn't mean I don't still have intense emotional reactions or anxiety around avalanches, but I've also come to anticipate or expect them. This happens when there is an avalanche fatality in Colorado, or on the biggest scale, when I lose a friend to an avalanche or someone I know is deeply impacted by an avalanche incident. One of the most precious friendships I've made is with Jonna Gaukel, whose husband, Rick, was killed in the Sheep Creek Avalanche in 2013. Talking with her about her experience with unexpected loss was like looking in a mirror at times. The way she spoke about her grief was so relatable and brought me right back to being in the thick of it. I think finding our friendship was helpful to both of us in different ways.

Sometimes my anxiety pops up unexpectedly and I have to work through it. Last spring in late March, Mike and I were skiing on the west side of RMNP. It was one of the first low-danger days of a very scary season. We entered avalanche terrain, and in the middle of a slope I suddenly was overcome with fear and memories of Kellen, thinking

For resources and support, please check out the AMGA Rise Project

about his accident and what it must have been like for him. I imagined the entire slope moving. What would it look and feel like to have the entire mountain coming down on me? My anxiety was palpable.

These flare-ups of fear, I think, are generally healthy for keeping me tuned in to terrain. Still, I know they are primarily rooted in trauma, as they can happen in any terrain. When it does happen, I try to honor and acknowledge the feelings and physical reactions I'm experiencing while taking a breath and refocusing on what is actually happening—what the reality is of the snowpack beneath me, the angle of the slope, the rational risk. Sometimes the risk is real and sometimes it is perceived. Depending on the situation, I can either put the reaction aside to revisit later and focus on the task at hand (it's often a sign I need to do a little follow-up work with myself) or I can allow my mind to wander a bit and explore the feeling right then.

Skiing is an incredible sport that I now have a very complicated relationship with. It has been the impetus of incredible hurt and sadness in my life and also the most joyful activity I do. It's something I share with friends and one of my favorite things to do with my husband. I expect I'll have this messy, complicated relationship with skiing for the rest of my life, but after a really fun run, I'll often think of Kellen and wonder if he is hooting and hollering alongside me chasing powder turns. I like to think so.

***

Talking about a ski trip or a successful summit is easy, but the reality is that many of us, whether you're a guide or connected to guiding like me, will experience losing friends to the mountains. We aren't alone in our grief, trauma, and recovery. Let's be sure to lean on each other, to talk not only about the hand cracks and powder turns but about the hard things, the sad things, and the dark things too. «

More than a decade later, Kellen continues to have a positive impact on his community through scholarships in his name at Vermont Adaptive and at the Crested Butte Adaptive Sports Center. Scan one of the QR codes below to learn more or make a contribution in his name.

WHAT IS PTSD?

A primer on the often-misunderstood aftermath of traumatic events

By Mary Stevenson

Editor's note: *Our Ask Alan department is an opportunity to learn about medical issues facing guides directly from physician/guide Alan Oram. For this issue, in which we're tackling issues of mental health, Alan asked us to bring in an expert—so we asked Mary Stevenson (Licensed Mental Health Counselor and avid climber).*

MANY CLIMBERS HAVE WITNESSED A NEAR-accident or cringed at risky behaviors at the crag. Sometimes these scary events aren't even related to a climber's technique, but to Mother Nature—like rockfall and fast-moving storms. As a therapist, I frequently meet with people who have been in a close call or witnessed a tragedy. They often report "I've lost my edge" or find themselves avoiding lead climbing or crowded areas. Some have even lost interest in climbing entirely. While climbers are notorious for analyzing what caused an accident, we rarely talk about the lingering effect these stressful events and accidents have on a climber's mental health. In this article, we'll explore two mental-health issues that climbers might experience: PTSD and complicated grief.

WHO CAN GET PTSD?

PTSD was once thought of as something only military veterans experienced. Today, Mental Health Practitioners recognize that PTSD occurs across a variety of populations—including guides and first responders.

A key tenet of PTSD is exposure to trauma. Generally, "trauma" refers to responding to or witnessing a shocking or dangerous event. During this event, your safety or the safety of those around you is compromised, and you may feel intense

PARTICIPANTS ON THE A16 AAGC 20 PRACTICE THEIR SKILLS IN THE CASCADES.
ANDREW COUNCELL (AMERICAN MOUNTAIN GUIDE/IFMGA MOUNTAIN GUIDE)

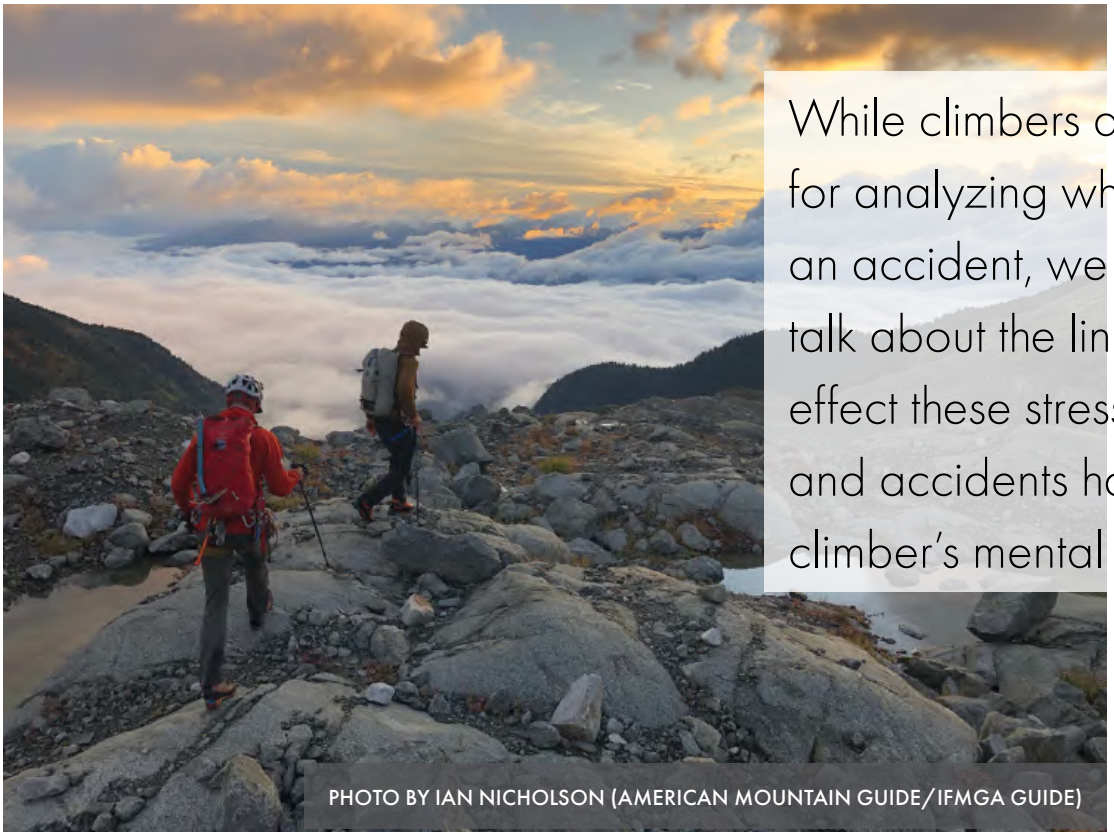


PHOTO BY IAN NICHOLSON (AMERICAN MOUNTAIN GUIDE/IFMGA GUIDE)

While climbers are notorious for analyzing what caused an accident, we rarely talk about the lingering effect these stressful events and accidents have on a climber's mental health.

fear or helplessness. Defining what qualifies as a trauma can be difficult. The experience is somewhat subjective—being bitten by an aggressive crag dog, experiencing a groundfall, or participating in an avalanche rescue could all be traumatic events, depending on the individual and their response.

Not everyone who experiences a traumatic event develops PTSD. But experiencing trauma is considered the primary risk factor for developing other mental-health and substance-use disorders, including depressive episodes, anxiety disorders, alcohol abuse, other substance-abuse issues, and even suicidal thoughts. There is also a strong correlation between the exposure to trauma and other physical health issues like diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease.

WHAT IS PTSD?

The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) suggests that about 3.6 percent of adults in the United States met criteria for PTSD between the years 2001 and 2003. According to the National Center for PTSD, about 7 to 8 percent of adults will meet criteria for PTSD during their lifetime. These statistics are for the general American population. When we factor in the level of risk inherent in guiding, it is reasonable to assume that the rates of PTSD for guides could be higher. This is an area that needs continued study and data collection.

PTSD is a culmination of symptoms that impact a person's functioning and last more than a month after exposure to a traumatic event. These symptoms tend to fall into four categories, according to the *DSM-5* (the diagnostic manual for mental disorders):

1. Intrusive thoughts and memories about the event(s). This might include flashbacks to the event, nightmares or distressing dreams, and thinking about the event without wanting to.
2. Avoidance of reminders of the event(s). This means avoiding people, places, and things related to the event or resisting thinking or talking about the event.
3. Negative thoughts and emotions. Often includes thoughts like "It's my fault" or "The world is unsafe" that impact enjoyment in activities or engagement with others. Persistent low mood with prolonged feelings of fear, horror, guilt, and/or shame.
4. Arousal and reactivity. Feeling on guard or being easily startled, having problems with concentration or sleep, engaging in risky, self-destructive behaviors, irritability, or outbursts of anger.

It's worth noting that some individuals develop symptoms like those mentioned above without directly experiencing the traumatic event. Repeatedly hearing about traumatic events and dealing with the aftermath of these events can also produce symptoms of PTSD. (This is frequently known as vicarious trauma.)

WHAT MAKES GRIEF AND LOSS DIFFERENT FROM PTSD?

Someone who has experienced a significant loss—like the death of a friend or loved one, the loss of physical ability, or the loss of a meaningful activity—might experience grief. Grief is characterized as deep sadness and longing for something that is no longer available. I've heard grief described as "wanting to express love to something that is missing."

Many guides know someone who has passed away, sometimes while participating in the sports we love. After this loss, it is common to feel a variety of strong emotions like sadness, anger, disbelief, and even numbness. Occasionally, these emotions might feel primal and consuming. The culmination of these emotions can be understood as grief. Grieving is a process—and it can shift unexpectedly.

It's possible to experience grief and have PTSD. For example, if someone fell while climbing and was severely injured, they might experience grief around the loss of physical ability. They might also experience PTSD when thinking about the fall, and develop symptoms that keep them from returning to climbing once they've healed.

While grief is often thought of as a "normal" response to loss, it can become more complicated. This can occur when a person has experienced numerous losses or is unable to process their grief. Lots of things can prevent people from processing grief: a busy work schedule, being in a leadership role, needing to take care of others, or lack of awareness of ways to process grief.

This can lead to prolonged or complicated grief. Often this manifests as irritability, recklessness, isolation, and/or self-medicating through drugs/alcohol. These symptoms might impact a person's ability to work, prevent them from enjoying their hobbies, and/or impact their relationships.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU SUSPECT YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW HAS PTSD OR COMPLEX GRIEF

If you or another guide has experienced or responded to a traumatic event or lost a friend or family member, please consider seeking professional help. You can start with your primary-care physician. Let them know you've experienced a traumatic event or significant loss, and ask for referrals to a licensed mental-health provider. You can also contact your insurance company and ask for a list of mental-health providers in your area.

When you meet with a therapist, you'll learn about the techniques and methods commonly used to help people heal from PTSD and process grief. This might include therapies like Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT), Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), Exposure Therapy, and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT).

JASON ANTIN (CERTIFIED ROCK GUIDE)

If you or another guide has experienced or responded to a traumatic event or lost a friend or family member, please consider seeking professional help.

After an initial assessment, your therapist will be able to give a general estimated length of time/number of sessions needed to help reduce your symptoms. Frequently, people see a significant improvement in their mood and a decrease in their symptoms within six to twelve sessions.

If therapy isn't your thing—or if you're unable to engage in it right now—there are other meaningful things you can do to help reduce the impact of traumatic experiences. Simply acknowledging that you've been through something traumatic and overwhelming can help with self-validation and build understanding for your reactions. Remind yourself that the traumatic event is over and that you're safe now; this can help improve your mood and sleep. Debriefing with other members of your community can be helpful for some; however, some people find this difficult. Go with your gut, and if talking about the event is overwhelming, it's always OK to stop. If talking about the accident or event causes distress, it's worth talking to a mental-health professional.

Finally, increasing your self-care can be a simple way to improve your wellness. Self-care can include getting adequate rest, having balanced meals, practicing relaxation techniques, exercising, and treating any physical health issues. Generally, it is advised to avoid alcohol and drugs as these can impact how the strong emotions and memories are processed.

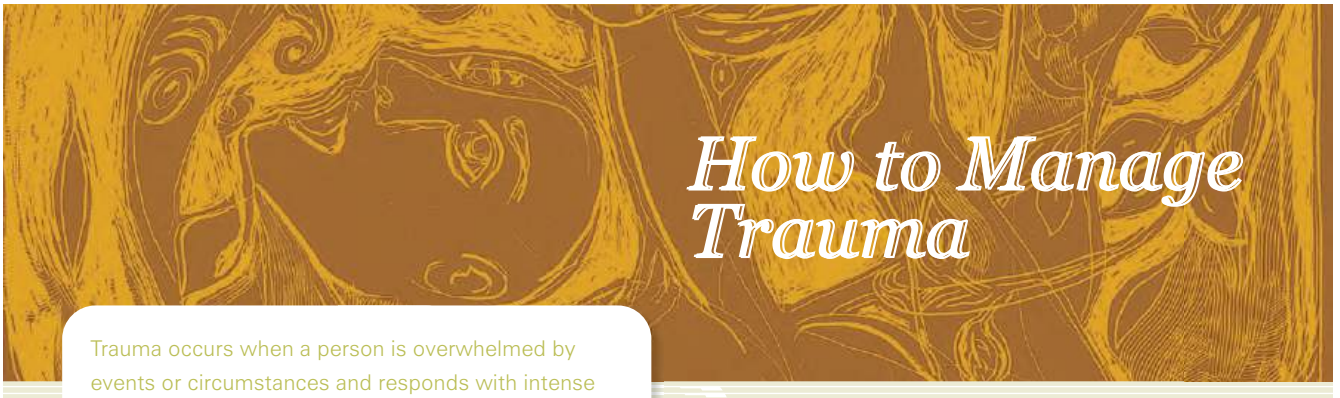
The climbing world is starting to talk more about PTSD and Complicated Grief. These conversations are helpful in normalizing the emotions surrounding a traumatic event. Sometimes, talking about our experience is all that is needed to help process and start healing. Other times, the conversations help link us to resources for more support. Most importantly, these conversations remind us that we are not alone in our emotions but that we are anchored in an amazing community. «

RESOURCES:

We've included some resources below, and we encourage you to consult them if you need additional support to navigate the aftermath of a traumatic event or significant loss:

- The Climbing Grief Fund (**americanalpineclub.org/grieffund**) has numerous resources to support climbers in processing their grief. This includes a provider directory where you can choose to work with therapists who are also climbers. Talking with a therapist who understands the nuances of climbing can be incredibly helpful as you process the dialectical balance of risk and joy unique to climbing.
- The National Council for Behavioral Health (**thenationalcouncil.org**) has information to help you find the right provider.
- If you are in a crisis, know that help is available. Please call 1-800-662-HELP or 1-800-273-TALK. Both lines offer free, confidential support and referral information. Both are available 24/7/365.

For resources and support, please check out the AMGA Rise Project



How to Manage Trauma

Trauma occurs when a person is overwhelmed by events or circumstances and responds with intense fear, horror, and helplessness. Extreme stress overwhelms the person's capacity to cope. There is a direct correlation between trauma and physical health conditions such as diabetes, COPD, heart disease, cancer, and high blood pressure.

TRAUMA CAN STEM FROM

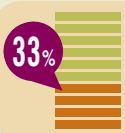
HOW COMMON IS TRAUMA?

70% of adults in the U.S. have experienced some type of traumatic event at least once in their lives. That's **223.4 million people.**

In public behavioral health, **over 90%** of clients have experienced trauma.

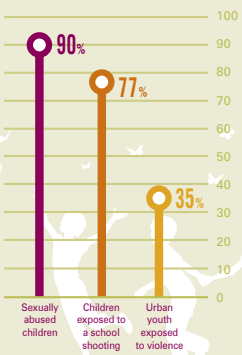
Trauma is a risk factor in nearly all behavioral health and substance use disorders.

In the United States, a woman is **beaten every 15 seconds,** a forcible rape occurs every 6 minutes.



More than **33% of youths** exposed to community violence will experience Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, a very severe reaction to traumatic events.

Nearly all children who witness a parental homicide or sexual assault will develop Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Similarly, 90% of sexually abused children, 77% of children exposed to a school shooting, and 35% of urban youth exposed to community violence develop Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.



Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a mental health condition that's triggered by a terrifying event. Symptoms may include flashbacks, nightmares and severe anxiety, as well as uncontrollable thoughts about the event.

People can and do recover from trauma

SYMPTOMS OF TRAUMA CHECKLIST

- Headaches, backaches, stomachaches, etc.
- Sudden sweating and/or heart palpitations
- Changes in sleep patterns, appetite, interest in sex
- Constipation or diarrhea
- Easily startled by noises or unexpected touch
- More susceptible to colds and illnesses
- Increased use of alcohol or drugs and/or overeating
- Fear, depression, anxiety
- Outbursts of anger or rage
- Emotional swings
- Nightmares and flashbacks — re-experiencing the trauma
- Tendency to isolate oneself or feelings of detachment
- Difficulty trusting and/or feelings of betrayal
- Self-blame, survivor guilt, or shame
- Diminished interest in everyday activities

HELPFUL COPING STRATEGIES

- Acknowledge that you have been through traumatic events
- Connect with others, especially those who may have shared the stressful event or experienced other trauma
- Exercise — try jogging, aerobics, bicycling, or walking
- Relax — try yoga, stretching, massage, meditation, deep muscle relaxation, etc.
- Take up music, art, or other diversions
- Maintain balanced diet and sleep cycle
- Avoid over-using stimulants like caffeine, sugar, or nicotine
- Commit to something personally meaningful and important every day
- Write about your experience for yourself or to share with others

ASK YOUR HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONAL ABOUT TREATMENTS

TRADITIONAL TREATMENTS	ALTERNATIVE TREATMENTS
Cognitive Behavioral Therapy	Energy Processing
Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) Therapy	Hypnotherapy
Talk Therapy	Neuro-Linguistic Programming
Exposure Therapy	Massage Therapy
Group Therapy	Pet or Equine Therapy
	Trauma and Recovery Peer Support Groups
	Wellness Recovery Action Planning (WRAP)

HOW TO TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR

- Make your doctor aware that you have experienced trauma, past or recent
- Help them understand what is helpful to you during office visits, i.e., asking permission to do a procedure, staying as clothed as possible, explaining procedures thoroughly, or having a supporter stay in the room with you
- Ask for referrals to therapy and behavioral health support

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

For more information, interviews, and research on trauma check out the National Council's magazine edition on the topic

www.TheNationalCouncil.org

EQUIPPED: EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION DEVICES

By Ian Nicholson

Photos by Michael Allen

IAN NICHOLSON (AMERICAN MOUNTAIN GUIDE/IFMGA GUIDE)

BELOW THE JAGGED SKYLINE OF THE Matterhorn, I could see a pair waving their arms, yelling, "*Guida! Guida!*" I skied down to them, thinking they might need directions. One of them pointed to a hole in the glacier and said, "*Mi son, mi fils est tombe dans crevasse.*" You don't need to speak much French to figure out that the hole we were looking at was where his son had trapdoored, unroped, into the black abyss of a crevasse.

Whether it's your own party or one you cross via happenstance, most guides spend enough time in the mountains to be around an emergency situation serious enough to require outside help. This is where our skills and technology start to intersect. We often need to start simultaneously dealing with the situation from a technical standpoint by implementing complex rope systems, taking over a beacon search, or starting to administer first aid—all while calling for help and initiating a rescue.

Expectations around emergency communication have changed significantly over the last decade. For many years, if things went sideways in the field, we had few quick or reliable options: Should you or another member of the team literally run out to the trailhead? Is it reasonable to hike the injured person out? What was your checkout time, and how many days past due will you be before someone comes to look for you?

Ten years ago, these were all an integral part of many guide services' emergency-response plans. Now, it's an industry expectation that you'll be able to communicate in the event of an emergency.

TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION IS BECOMING THE STANDARD

One-way communication means you can press a "help" or "SOS" button to alert a local call center, who will subsequently alert authorities. In some cases, there's the option of a few preset messages. The disadvantage of these models, at least according to a number of representatives of the National Park Service, is that at least 75 percent of distress calls from satellite devices are false alarms. This means rescue entities may "wait and watch," looking at your movement, speed, and direction to determine if there's really an emergency before launching into rescue mode.

If you only own a one-way communication device, an alternative technique to avoid the watch-and-wait possibility is to press the SOS button and let it send for 15 to 20 minutes, then turn it off, turn it back on, and press the SOS again. The call center and authorities will be able to see that you're actively pressing SOS, conveying that it isn't a mistake.

Reliable two-way communication is becoming the new standard. If you have a device with two-way communication, you should use this function in addition to the SOS. Text information about your situation—what happened, what you need, and your location—to someone who can reach out to local authorities.

BRING YOUR CELL PHONE

A cell phone is an often-overlooked tool. Bring it with you while in the field, even in areas with no known cell coverage. Any cell phone manufactured in the last decade recognizes that when someone dials 911, it's an emergency. Under normal circumstances, cell phones need a minimum connection quality in order for the phone to make a connection (this is why you might see bars but not be able to make a call). But when you dial 911, your phone ignores these connection quality requirements and will attempt to make a connection no matter what. Another reason to attempt a 911 call, even in unlikely circumstances, is a law crafted by the FCC that states that all carriers must transmit a 911 call, even if another service provider typically provides your coverage.

BAGUS HERNAWAN (VIA UNSPLASH)

So what else is out there?

SATELLITE PHONES

Commonly referred to as "sat" phones, these are some of the most effective emergency tools. If you've used sat phones, you know your call might well drop—but generally, after a brief wait, you'll be able to connect again.

THE PROS: The bottom line is that a sat phone provides the most reliable real-time two-way voice communication. This lets you actually talk with medical personnel without waiting for a message to come back. They also allow calls to anyone with a phone number, giving you the option to talk on the phone to a doctor, loved one, operations manager, or sheriff's department.

THE CONS: Sat phones are by far the bulkiest, most expensive emergency-communication devices. Most cost between $600 and $1,200, but what makes them truly expensive are their plans. This means sat phones are most practical for larger guide services, where the cost can be diluted, or for companies operating in remote regions.

Models to note: The three most common satellite phones among guides are the Globalstar GSP-1700, Inmarsat Isatphone 2, and Iridium 9555, all of which can be rented.

EMERGENCY CO

GARMIN INREACH MINI

This is quickly becoming a favorite among guides for its two-way text communication, compact size, and minuscule weight. It's currently the smallest two-way satellite communication device on the market. It's easy and cheap to keep in contact with office staff and receive weather forecasts. In 2017, my wife and I even bought our house together communicating entirely via InReach Mini while I was on an extended trip in the Picket Range of the North Cascades.

THE PROS: Garmin offers a host of different plans. You can manually type texts into the device with two scroll buttons, but it's more designed to be operated via bluetooth and a smartphone. The InReach Mini interacts with your phone via the Earthmate app, which makes it easy to navigate settings and send up to 160 characters to phone numbers and email addresses. The InReach does have an emergency SOS button, though I recommend texting instead for the aforementioned reasons.

THE CONS: The downside of the InReach Mini is a lack of "real-time" communication compared to a cell phone, radio, or sat phone. This means even basic communication takes longer and is broken into 160-character messages. In a real emergency, the wait time feels like eternity.

VHF/UHF RADIO

We tell our guests that the beacon you know how to use is the most effective beacon. Same rule applies here. For most guides, something like a Wouxon KG-UVD3, which retails for around $100, is enough to meet their needs.

THE PROS: This is one of the most cost-effective tools currently on the market, as there is no subscription fee after the initial purchase. In most national parks and many national forests in North America, radios are an effective, reliable tool to communicate directly with potential rescuers.

THE CONS: The downside to radio communication is that it rarely works 24 hours a day. You might be able to reach a ranger or dispatcher at 1 p.m. when the whole park is tuned in, but in most areas, no one's listening in the middle of the night. For this reason, a radio is generally a secondary form of communication.

MMUNICATION

SPOT X
The SPOT X looks like an older Blackberry cell phone, but it's quickly gaining popularity in the backcountry world.

THE PROS: Unlike the older SPOT X, the current model allows users to type messages directly onto the device's keypad, as well as create messages via bluetooth and a Smartphone. This makes the SPOT X more versatile and user-friendly than the InReach Mini. The device and plans are also less expensive. (Currently, SPOT offers fewer plans than Garmin.)

THE CONS: One of two main downsides of the SPOT X is its size. It's roughly three times the size of the InReach Mini—closer to a larger-sized Smartphone. The other potential downfall is its level of worldwide coverage. SPOT uses the Globalstar satellite network, which works well in North America, Europe, and parts of South America, but is less effective in most other parts of the world. The SPOT X suffers the same downfalls as the InReach: delayed communication.

BACK ON THE MATTERHORN

Guides plan for scenarios like performing a leader rescue, assisting a client who's passed out on an alpine rock ridge, rigging for crevasse rescue with Denali-sized packs, and switching beacons into search mode after an avalanche.

I've dealt with all of these situations. One thing they have in common: Usually, I needed to make a call. Maybe to ask for medical advice, or maybe for a helicopter. Those skills are typically only the start of the rescue—which is why carrying the appropriate technology to facilitate your rescue is as important as the technical components.

Back below the shadow of the Matterhorn, I peered over the edge of the crevasse.

"Max!" I yelled. I didn't hear anything back. As the dad started to cry, I folded my 40m rope in half and prepared to descend. I felt exceptionally grateful for all the time I'd spent practicing rescue systems: a literal symphony of technical systems in a grand opera house.

This man had fallen, unroped, over 65 feet into the crevasse. The 40-meter rope I was carrying in my backpack barely reached him. I started hauling with a 6:1, and the man began to emerge from the bowels of the glacier. It quickly became apparent that he was going to need a lot more help than I would be able to give. As he neared the surface, a helicopter flew low over the glacier. The rescuers jumped out of the helicopter, shook my hand, and did a brisk patient assessment in Swiss-German, of which I didn't understand a word. Then, they were off.

I felt a rush as I realized how lucky this situation had been. Luck favors the prepared. There's no perfect emergency-communication device for every situation or location—but having a communication device that matches the types of trips you do is essential. «

WELCOME NEW AMGA STAFF!

Mary Lynch – Guide Program Associate

As the Guide Program Associate, Mary is the primary contact for program logistics and can answer application and enrollment questions. Mary loves to ski and climb, has a passion for DEI work, and believes in the value of shared recreation through guiding. If you're taking a program this upcoming season, you'll interact with Mary soon!

MARY LYNCH

Claudia Morrisson – Partnership and Fundraising Associate

Claudia supports communication with AMGA's corporate partners and donors. She is dedicated to continuing the AMGA's success through fundraising efforts and further developing relationships with partners. Claudia enjoys casually consuming coffee while carefully crafting waffles. Find her outside hiking, trail running, or acroyoga-ing.

CLAUDIA MORRISSON

Katie O'Malley – Membership and Communications Associate

Katie is a key member of a team working to craft the member experience through exceptional customer service. Katie is exploring Boulder after recently moving from Flagstaff, Arizona. In her free time, she enjoys rock climbing, mountain biking, and hiking.

KATIE O'MALLEY

AMGA SCOPE OF PRACTICE IMPLEMENTATION UPDATES

Over the last year, a few updates and changes have been made to Scope of Practice (SOP), including an extended deadline: July 1, 2022. The SOP document has seen some edits and additions, approved at the September Board of Directors meeting. Stay tuned for more updates on SOP implementation. Those unfamiliar with SOP can learn more below.

What is Scope of Practice?

Scope of Practice (SOP) is a set of standards designed to clearly delineate the terrain on which AMGA guides and instructors are trained and certified to work. This was passed by the Board of Directors in 2017.

Why SOP?

SOP establishes a professional standard for the guiding profession. Part of being a professional association is establishing as a standard the expectation that members have been appropriately trained or certified for the terrain they work in.

Timeline

2017–2022

For most members, SOP is an educational resource designed to help people understand what they are qualified for when they complete a course or exam

2018

All SPI providers are required to follow SOP

2020 – 2022
AMGA staff are working to overhaul the AMGA Accreditation process so Accredited Business can be prepared and supported for this change

July 1, 2022
SOP becomes mandatory for all AMGA members and Accredited Businesses. AMGA members will only be able to work within the SOP described by their training or certification

How will SOP be managed?
The AMGA believes that members will want to follow SOP, so education around terrain and appropriate training will be a critical component of management. There will be a formal process through the AMGA's professional compliance committee for reviewing violations. There may be consequences, which could range from cautionary letters to membership suspension. When members notice problems, we hope they feel empowered to talk to their peers and work as a community to uphold the SOP framework.

What is new in the Board of Directors–revised SOP document for 2021?
- Addition of the Multi-Pitch Instructor Scope
- Addition of the Glacier Guide Scope. More details on this new program will be announced in spring 2022 for a pilot course and exam to run in summer of 2022.
- Updated Avalanche Education training references
- Updated SOP deadline to July 1, 2022.

FOREST SERVICE ANNOUNCES NEW REGULATIONS TO SPEED PERMITTING

In 2019–2020, the U.S. Forest Service underwent a rulemaking process to revise and update its National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations. The AMGA worked with the Forest Service to identify regulatory changes that would increase efficiency in the permitting process and ensure that important environmental protections remain intact.

The new regulations were published in the Federal Register on November 19, 2020, and are now in effect. We are pleased to report the revised regulations include a new "categorical exclusion" (or "CE") for the issuance of

PHOTO BY KEVIN SHON (SPI)

recreational outfitting and guiding permits. A categorical exclusion is a form of NEPA compliance that a federal agency can use to quickly consider environmental impacts without completing a full environmental analysis.

The new outfitting and guiding CE will enable permits for low-impact, human-powered recreation activities to be issued quickly and efficiently, without the multi-year delays of the past. The creation of the new CE is a landmark policy change that will have positive benefits for guides for years to come.

–Matt Wade

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION UPDATE

Funding has been secured to offer more affinity programs, including a revitalized Women's SPI Course and several new BIPOC-specific programs. Affinity programs create a positive learning environment for folks who share common identities and can offer guidance and support for each other. Programs in 2021 included:

- LGBTQIA2S+ SPI Course in collaboration with Nikki Smith and Mountain Hardwear (also including funding for five assessments for SPI candidates)
- Ascent Alpine Skills Course with support from Eddie Bauer
- First-ever BIPOC SPI Courses in Washington and North Carolina with support from Black Diamond and Climbers of Color (PNW location)
- Women's SPI Course in collaboration with Brown Girls Climb, Flash Foxy, and Arc'teryx
- Two sections of the Women's Rock Guide Course with support from The North Face

In mid-2021, the AMGA hired Monserrat Alvarez as its first-ever Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Manager. With more staff capacity and expertise, the AMGA has the ability to improve a number of DEI initiatives. In addition to expanded affinity programs, the AMGA launched the new BIPOC Scholarship Fund, advised by a committee of guides and instructors of color, and distributed ten scholarships during the first cycle. A second cycle will be awarded in November. The AMGA DEI Department also looked inward at internal AMGA structures, and DEI training was provided for the entire AMGA national-office staff. Stay tuned for more updates as the DEI Department continues to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives within the AMGA.

To learn more about why affinity programs are important, read Lila Leatherman's article: amga.com/affinity-courses/

To learn more (including how to apply) about the BIPOC Scholarship Fund and see past recipients: amga.com/members/bipoc-scholarship-fund/

–Monserrat Alvarez

CLIMBING INSTRUCTOR PROGRAM UPDATE

AMGA will be updating a few Climbing Instructor Program policies in 2022 to create clear, consistent procedures for commonly asked questions. Please be aware that these updates went into effect on January 1, 2022, and will impact current and future Single Pitch and Climbing Wall Instructors:

12-month SPI and CWI Certification re-entry period: SPIs and CWIs will have 12 months from the date of certification expiration to pursue an exam for recertification. If they do not pass an exam for recertification within the twelve-month re-entry period, they will be required to retake the entire SPI Course or CWI Program.

Two-year SPI Course sunset time: The SPI Course will have a two-year sunset time. After two years, if the SPI Course graduate has not passed an SPI Exam, they will need to retake the SPI Course prior to pursuing the SPI Exam.

Program make-up guidelines: Make-up options will be available for students/candidates who receive an "incomplete" final mark on any SPI or CWI Program because of factors limiting attendance, including but not limited to weather or an emergency.

For more information, visit:
SPI Page amga.com/single-pitch-instructor/
CWI Page amga.com/climbing-wall-instructor/

–Andrew Megas-Russell

PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

The COVID-19 pandemic has challenged us all, but during this crisis, our partnerships have strengthened. The outdoor industry showed genuine concern for losing guides and instructors from the profession due to uncertainty and economic challenge. Rest assured, we are not alone, and together we embark on the next chapter.

Return to Programming. Liberty Mountain contributed wag bags and MSR donated Dromedary bags, which were critical to the health and hygiene of the AMGA's COVID-19

Affinity programs create a positive learning environment for folks who share common identities and can offer guidance and support for each other.

KAREN HILTON

field operations. Outdoor Research supplied masks for all program participants.

Core Partnerships. Our core partnerships remain robust and growing. The North Face supported the AMGA's Covid Industry response and broadcasted the resources to their vast network of community partners. Arc'teryx, Black Diamond, and Mountain Hardwear are each new partners in our affinity programs. Petzl continues to welcome us back to their facility for the next in-person annual meeting. Many of our core partners have been with us for over two decades. Their continuous support throughout the years has strengthened the AMGA as an organization and backs the advancement of mountaincraft in America.

New Partnerships. A new partnership with the VF Foundation bolstered AMGA's Industry Covid response, including supporting our webinar series and Industry Response website build, which helped us all get back to work during an incredibly difficult time. Support from the VF foundation also contributed to the success of the advocacy program, Annual Meeting, and the new eLearning platform.

Please welcome our newest corporate partners: AKU, Black Crows, Caltopo, DB, First Ascent Coffee, Gaia GPS, Gnarly Nutrition, Mountain Equipment, Mountain Sense, Norrøna, Origin, PATH, and Rocky Talkie.

Supporting Our Partners. Partnership is an act of collaborative advancement of mutual interests. As individual members of the AMGA, we can support our partners by continuing to be dedicated to our craft and professionalism. As guides and instructors, we are influencers to our guests and students. Speak about the products critical to your daily profession. Share the stories of our partners' impact. Together, our future is bright.

– Jake Gaventa

Correction: In the most recent issue of the *GUIDE Bulletin*, we ran a news item titled "WMS Updates Altitude Illness Recommendations" which stated that "Dexamethasone is the recommended substitute for those allergic to acetazolamide." In fact, this is incorrect. Dexamethasone is not a substitute for Diamox to treat symptoms of Acute Mountain Sickness. The mechanisms and effects of these medications are different, and one cannot be safely substituted for the other. The editors of the *GUIDE Bulletin* regret the error and have enlisted an expert to review future news items related to medicine. «

PHOTO COURTESY OF MATT PARK

MASON ***STANSFIELD***

"Mason didn't necessarily follow all the 'rules,' but he did get guiding," says Mike Poborsky. "He was simply a very nice, kind man." Mason Stansfield was killed in a crevasse fall in Denali National Park in May 2021. Friends and coworkers have countless memories to share. Here are just a few.

Mason didn't show up to his pre-Rock Guide Exam meeting. It turned out he'd mixed up the dates. When he showed up, it was "in a Hawaiian shirt with his trademark mustache," Dale Remsberg remembers. "Embarrassed but unphased, he carried on and passed the exam with his casual but ever-professional style."

"Mason had the 'rock on' sign tattooed on his upper tricep," remembers Bill Allen. "Between trips, he had the 'shaka' sign tattooed on his other arm. His reasoning: 'I'm hardcore and I'm totally chill!'"

Matt Park met Mason when both were assistant guides on their first Denali trip. After a team meeting in Anchorage, they saw that Mason's favorite movie, The Big Lebowski, was playing that night—at 11pm. The team had an early start for Talkeetna the next day. "This may be the only known account of Mason letting responsibility get in the way of an adventure," he says.

"Mason made every human he interacted with feel important," remembers friend Kristin Arnold. "He took the time to listen, the time to rouse, the time to care, and always provided much-needed comedic relief with a cheeky grin.

"With the help of friends and family, he renovated a small, dry cabin on the north side of the Sneffels Range. He installed the coolest (sketchiest) swing. The only way to access it was to climb up the base of humongous aspens and jump on. Hopefully you were situated correctly, or you were immediately moving at mach speed, suspended 30 feet above the ground, holding on for dear life. Mason was a good one!"

At the time of his death Mason was a Certified Rock Guide, Certified SPI and Apprentice Alpine Guide. He is survived by his partner, Tessa, and his parents and sister. The guiding community and his countless friends miss him deeply. «

CONGRATULATIONS, NEWLY CERTIFIED GUIDES!

2019

IFMGA Grads
Tim "Kel" Rossiter (141)
Tod Bloxham (142)
Ryan Huetter (143)
Sam Hennessey (144)
Ian Havlick (145)
Dave Stimson (146)
Zachary Novak (147)

American Mountain Guide
Victor McNeil

Ski Guide
Jessica Baker
Alex Banas
Tod Bloxham
Christopher Brown
David Bumgardner
Andrew Eisenstark
Casey Graham
Sam Hennessey
Ryan Huetter
John Mletschnig
Tim "Kel" Rossiter
Philip "Britt" Ruegger
David Stimson
Mia Tucholke
Michael Wachs
Ben Zavora

Splitboard Guide
Jason Champion

Alpine Guide
Clifford Agocs
Jared Drapala
Ron Funderburke
Ian Havlick
Micah Lewkowitz
Max Lurie
Victor McNeil
Zachary Novak
Matthew Shove
David Stimson

Rock Guide
Qing Xin Cheang
Christian Chilcott
Ben Coryell
Tim Dobbins
Wesley Fowler
Elliot Gaddy
Thomas Gilmore
Kai Girard
Anthony Guagliano
Fischer Hazen
Sheldon Kerr
Surachet "Add" Kongsingh
Nicholas Malik
Jeffrey Mascaro
Victor McNeil
Nik Mirhashemi
John Mletschnig
Simon Moore
Jordan Mynatt
Andrew Plagens
Jesse Ramos
Matthew Sellick
Crest Simeon
Grant Simmons
Jarad Stiles
Stephen Williams
Heidi Wirtz
Szu-ting "Ting Ting" Yi

Rock Instructor
Marie Brophy
Bruce Hodgkins
Michelle Leber

2020

American Mountain Guide/ IFMGA Guide
Nate Disser (148)
Sheldon Kerr (149)
Tim Dobbins (150)
Zebulon Blais (151)
William "Billy" Haas (152)
Jeff Dobronyi (153)

Rock Guide
Tyler Allen
Sam Boyce
Alana Chapko
Aaron Diamond
Mark Jameson
Matthew Koenig
Erik Moore
Everett Phillips
Jake Ramsey
Azissa Singh
Adam Snyder
Mason Stansfield
Ryan Tilley
Benjamin Wu

Alpine Guide
Joshua Cole
Tim Dobbins
Jeff Dobronyi
Will Gordon
Sheldon Kerr
Benjamin Markhart
Aaron Richards

Ski Guide
Nate Disser

Ice Instructor
Majka Burhardt

2021

American Mountain Guide/ IFMGA Guide
Victor McNeil (154)
Benjamin Markart (155)
Dustin Dearborn (156)
Sebastian Grau (157)
Zachary Lovell (158)
Karsten Delap (159)
Josh Kling (160)
Pete Lardy (161)
Aaron Richards (162)
Andrew Hansen (163)
Norie Kizaki (164)
Mia Tucholke (165)
Eddie Schoen (166)
Matthew Hartman (167)
Matt Scrivner (168)
Tim Cohn (169)
Josh Cole (170)
Adam Fabrikant (171)

Rock Guide
Jason Antin
Jesse Ballew
Katie Beringer
Daniel Birdwell
TJ Brumme
Josh Cole
Aaron Dahill
Scott Eden
Adam Fabrikant
Joel Fluty
Kevin Heinrich
James Klaers
John Lemnotis
Christopher Martin
Stefanie Mathar
Kevin McGarity
Evan Miller
Adam Mitchell
Keith Moon
James Overman-McGilligan
Michael Pond
Jonathan Preuss
Dylan Reed
Dominic Rickicki
Brandon Seymore
Eric Shaw
Jake Skeen
Stephanie Williams
Megan Yingling
Jesse Yon

Alpine Guide
Kristin Arnold
Kurt Blair
Connor Chilcott
John Collis
Michael Coyle
Kai Girard
Anthony Guagliano
Joseph Hobby
Norie Kizaki
Gary Newmeyer
Carlos Romero
Jacob Schmitz
Eddie Schoen
Matt Scrivner
Mia Tucholke
Stephen Williams

Ski Guide
Dustin Dearborn
Karsten Delap
Jake Gaventa
Sebastian Grau
Eric Gullickson
Andrew Hansen
Matthew Hartman
Norie Kizaki
Josh Kling
Pete Lardy
Zachary Lovell
Forrest Madsen
Benjamin Markart
Christopher Martin
Victor McNeil
Yoshiko Miyazaki
Daniel Peck
Aaron Richards
Eddie Schoen
Matthew Scrivner
Steven Van Sickle
Barbara Wanner

Splitboard Guide
Jere Burre
Tim Mincey

Multi-Pitch Instructor
Andrew Charbonneau
Kevin Hoffman
Brad Moskowitz
Ron Paproski
Sean Podrecca
Ryan Shipp
Michael Tita

Rock Instructor
Sean Lynn

MASSIF $100,000 +

THE NORTH FACE

SUMMIT $35,000 +

PETZL

Black Diamond

Eddie Bauer EST. 1920

ARC'TERYX

OR OUTDOOR RESEARCH

CIRQUE $15,000 +

STERLING

MOUNTAIN HARD WEAR

GUARANTEED TO KEEP YOU DRY GORE-TEX

MAMMUT SWISS 1862

SPIRE $10,000 +

patagonia

YETI

CLIFF $6,000 +

FISCHER

LibertyMountain PRO DEAL

DYNAFIT

SALEWA

CRAG $4,000 +

outdoor prolink

origin

GAIA GPS

BUTTRESS $2,000 +

CalTopo
COROS
Db
Deuter
G3
Gnarly Nutrition
Keen
Lowa
Marmot
Mountain Equipment
MSR
Norrøna
Ortovox
PATH
Rocky Talkie
SCARPA
Black Crows

CAIRN $1,000 +

AeroPress
BCA
Big Agnes
First Ascent Coffee
mountainFLO W eco-wax
Outdoorly
La Sportiva
Mountain Sense
Pomoca
AKU
Forty Below
Metolius
Wild Country

MEDIA PARTNERS

Alpinist

verde

Climbing

Outside

AMGA NON-PROFIT PARTNERS

Brown Girls Climb
Climbers of Color
Flash Foxy
Access Fund

AMGA FOUNDATION PARNERS

VF Foundation
First Ascent Charitable Foundation

PETZL®

ALPEN ADAPT

Adapt your crampons to any
challenge the mountains have to offer.

SWITCH FRONT SECTIONS

for flat glacier
or technical ice

SWITCH BINDINGS

for approach shoes
or mountaineering boots

SWITCH HEEL SECTIONS

for tough and durable
or fast and light

AMELIA ALTAVENA / SKETCHFERVOR.COM

ALL THINGS IN MODERATION, EXTREMELY

By Erik Leidecker

IF I HAD A MOTTO, IT WOULD BE: "moderate extremism." This is a phrase borrowed from Edward Abbey's *Desert Solitaire*. In it, he writes, "Balance, that's the secret. Moderate extremism. The best of both worlds. Unlike Thoreau who insisted on one world at a time I am attempting to make the best of two."

At this point in the book, Abbey has wrapped up his season as a ranger at Arches National Park and is anticipating his next gig as a social worker in New Jersey. "After twenty-six weeks of sunlight and stars, wind and sky and golden sand, I want to hear once more the crackle of clam shells on the floor of the bar in the Clam Broth House in Hoboken," he wrote.

I've read this book at least a dozen times, most recently about a month ago, which is why it's on my mind again. My focus on this thing called moderate extremism was guided by my high school English teacher, Bob Brock. For me, Brock was like Robin Williams' character in *Dead Poets Society*: He informed my beliefs and interests, and he convinced me that moderate extremism was my jam.

When I was in high school, I aspired to a high level of achievement and proficiency in a variety of disciplines. I was applying to swanky colleges; I aspired to make the US Ski Team. But Brock convinced me that moderate extremism meant being really good at a couple of things instead of being really, really good at one thing. So I went off to college and quit ski racing—and for a few years, I wasn't *really* any good at anything.

During college, I started guiding. (For a while, I wasn't really any good at this either.) Eventually, I learned about certified, capital-letter Mountain Guides—and this was something that made sense. Here, it wasn't enough to just be a good climber or a good skier. To be a Mountain Guide meant you had to be really good at both. I could get behind this!

Other aspects of this career track made sense to me as well. Mountain Guiding has strong roots in the alpine countries in Europe. Many practitioners grew up skiing and climbing in mountain towns like Chamonix and Zermatt. I was lucky enough to grow up in Sun Valley, Idaho, where I started skiing at two and climbing at ten. The awesome blend of the activities and their ties to the seasons inspire and require an elegant balance in living.

Over the years, this notion of moderate extremism has inspired my guiding in different ways. I've always enjoyed a fun mix of guiding disciplines and venues. There's a place for slogging up the GT or DC. Moderate extremism just means this should be balanced with a trip to Red Rock for a 1:1 up Epinephrine, or a few days of ski touring at Roger's Pass. In more recent years, as a member of the AMGA Instructor Team, I'm trying to find the right balance of guiding and instructing.

During a presentation at the 2012 IFMGA Annual Assembly in Boulder, IFMGA President Hermann Biner said (I'm paraphrasing here): "There are two kinds of guides in the world—those who have one client and many mountains and those who have one mountain and many clients." For me, the perfect balance lies somewhere in the middle. And for most of my guiding career—and much of my life, really—I've been guided by Abbey's words to always find the right balance of clients and mountains. «

Eddie Bauer alpine climbing guides Carla Perez (ASEGUIM) and Esteban "Topo" Mena (IFMGA/ASEGUIM)
Cayambe, Ecuador

Tested & approved by guides.

FIRSTASCENT®

EverTherm® Downdraft Jacket

No quilting. No cold spots. This is down.

Revolutionary Thindown® fabric replaces individual down clusters with a continuous sheet of 85% down/15% polyester. Streamlined. Free of quilting or baffles. Soft. Plus all of down's famous ultralight warmth.

STORMREPEL® SUPER DWR | STRETCH | BREATHABLE | COMFORT TO -10°

PHOTOS: Avery Stolte

Eddie Bauer®
LIVE YOUR ADVENTURE®

Empowering More Inclusive Communities in Vertical Spaces.

The North Face and the AMGA share a 24-year partnership. In February 2018, we helped kick-off the AMGA Access Advocacy program and then launched the first Women's Rock Guide Course in 2019. We also supported a COVID-19 response, promoting a responsible return to the outdoors due to the 2020 global pandemic. Our partnership is fueled by a love of the mountains and driven by a desire to support current and future guides and members.

Athlete: Brooke Warren
2020 Women's Rock Guide Course Participant.

THE NORTH FACE