



## RELAX!!!!

In Dan BC's article, *Performing at your best*, he discusses the '5 C's' skydivers should master to increase the percent of time they perform at their best. The first of the 5 C's: "calm." In Jo Malone's 2001 article, *Mental and Physical Preparation*, Pete Allum says, "I need to feel relaxed and calm before a jump and have a clear image of what is going to happen." There is no question that being calm and relaxed is key to performing at your best, but the big question is, how do you do it? There are a variety of techniques for relaxing on and before a jump. Here are some suggestions that may help you out.

Nervousness definitely has both physical and psychological components. Here are some suggestions for addressing both.

Psychologically, anxiety often comes from the fear of messing up. With greater confidence, those fears can be minimized, and that allows you to be more relaxed. So do things that will make you feel more confident about the jump:

1. Prepare. When you feel prepared, you have confidence because you know what is going to happen and you know you can handle it. You can do this in a lot of ways long term, medium term and short term.
  - a. Long term (months to days before the jump): put in the practice, visualize, and read up. Keep notes and review them.
  - b. In the medium term: (40 minutes before loading up to loading) take the time to walk the dive. Talk about your role and other peoples' roles. Creep when possible, and mockup the exit. Gear up with enough time to mock up the exit while fully geared without rushing. Talk about your break-off and decide on landing direction before getting on the plane.
  - c. Short term (On the plane to altitude): continue to visualize. When you do, include everything at least as far back as the point the door opens. You might socialize on the way to altitude, but reserve time to get back into the headspace of the jump before jump-run. Do your gear checks with plenty of time.
2. Talk yourself up. Simply telling yourself positive things like "I can do this" or "this is easy" and avoiding saying things like "don't mess up" or "I hope we don't funnel" or "this is going to suck," can go a long way. Even if you don't *feel* calm and relaxed, committing to acting like you are can be an effective step to making it happen. Visualize yourself doing your performance perfectly and commit to believing it.
3. Be OK with making mistakes. This generally means convincing yourself of two things:
  - a. Your worth is not tied to whether or not you make mistakes. Your friends will not think any less of you if you make mistakes, and neither should you.
  - b. Making mistakes is a necessary part of learning. If you don't make mistakes, you are not pushing yourself hard enough. Embrace your mistakes as opportunities to improve.

Also, you can take specific actions to attack the physical components of anxiety directly:

1. Breath. Take deep, deliberate breaths and focus on those breaths. Smile too. Find someone to smile at who you know will smile back at you. The feedback will amplify your positive feelings. This can be really helpful on jump-run especially, in the door, and during the skydive too.
2. Scan your body for tenseness. Feel your muscles in your neck, in your back, your legs and arms. Feel where there is tightness and actively relax the muscles. Shake them out if that helps. This too can be helpful all the way up to the jump and even during the jump.
3. Work out. People who are in good physical shape – especially good cardiovascular shape - have a head-start in dealing with the stress of performance.

So, if you are looking to be a more relaxed skydiver, relax your mind through preparation, committing to telling yourself positive thoughts and acting how you want to feel. Accept that you will make mistakes, and be OK with it. Relax your body through breathing, increasing awareness of your body's tense areas, and working out. Make a plan to do all these things, down to the details of when you will do your final pin check, and execute on that plan. Do that, and you will



find yourself more relaxed. When you are more relaxed, you will be one step closer to performing at your best.

References:

*Performing at your Best – Dan BC, 2005*

*<http://www.skydivemag.com/pages/articles/aug05/performhigh.pdf>*

*Mental and Physical Preparation – Jo Malone, 2001*

*URL: <http://www.bpa.org.uk/skydive/pages/articles/jun01/sebastianxl.htm>*