



Adrenaline Rush

What's the issue?

Everyone has felt an adrenaline rush, planned or unplanned: racing heart, extra strength, intense concentration. However, many don't understand this hormonal response. People who thoughtlessly pursue it can engage in out-of-control, destructive behavior.

What's going on?

Your body normally produces adrenaline when danger threatens or in an emergency. Often called a "fight or flight" hormone, it jacks up the supply of oxygen and glucose to the brain and muscles.

Some people enjoy it. They think it gives them temporary superpowers and should be turned on and off at will. A visitor to an on-line discussion group, for example, considers it an asset during competition: "I get an adrenaline rush if there is a crowd watching me or if there is someone I am trying to impress watching."

However, others find it just adds even more stress. They believe it is harmful or even addictive. "I always thought of it as a liability, and not an asset," wrote one visitor.

What ends up in mishap reports is when people choose "exciting" recreational activities without planning or training. Or when they do crazy stuff behind the wheel or on motorcycles.

What's the solution?

The use of adrenaline-producing sports and situations in the media and as marketing tools

should be recognized for what it is: glorification and attention-getting, not risk management.

Base MWR facilities offer outings for such things as rock climbing, whitewater rafting, kayaking, and mountain biking, an organized and supervised way to start enjoying these activities.

Discussion items and open questions

1. Can adrenaline be abused? Is there a need for groups like Adrenaline Addicts Anonymous, whose members believe they use adrenaline as an addictive drug, and that it adds to the turmoil in their lives?
2. What is the attraction of "extreme" sports? Does the term "extreme" mean something (such as "a high level of inherent danger" or "the most likely outcome of a mismanaged accident or mistake is death"), or is it just marketing?
3. According to an article on the Adrenaline Addicts Anonymous website, getting used to producing "abnormal amounts of adrenaline" can lead to a situation where "the intensity of life becomes more vital than it's quality." Do you agree? Is that a problem?
4. What do you do when moderately risky activities no longer give you the same adrenaline buzz? Do you need to up the ante to get your fix?

Supervisors: Use this page to guide safety discussions with your personnel