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Opinion Article

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Living Dangerously[©]

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Abstract

Danger is not obvious. Modern life is dangerous. This article looks at a man whom many would not dare to follow. Then we find a man who is unusual to most of us but may have the answer.

Keywords: Danger; Stress; Relationships; Concentration; Education; Ambition; Materialism; Cancer.

Defying Danger

I was recently entertained watching a lumberjack fell a tall silver birch tree in three hours using only a handsaw and chainsaw. The temperature was zero with ice on the ground Figure 1. He has all the safety gear: helmet, ropes, earmuffs, gloves and strap around the tree. Importantly, his boots have spikes to dig into the trunk of

the tree. He does not use a ladder. This is the tree, the tall one, twice the height of the house Figure 2. The assistant collects the lopped branches to be fed into the shredder when the tree is completely felled and not before. The lumberjack's concentration is not to be broken Figure 3.



Figure 1:





Figure 2:



Figure 3 :



Figure 4:



Figure 5 :

The lumberjack climbs the tree digging his spikes into the trunk, inching the strap around the trunk to hold him. Only when moving the strap up or down is he unstable. Concentration has to be 100%. Smaller branches are lopped off with a hand saw that cut on the pull stroke. His left hand holds onto the tree. There is a secondary stem to this tree, and he straddled across to it as he swings the rope

across a higher branch Figure 4,5.

The next photo shows how the ropes fed through carabiners are holding the lumberjack. He moves only one limb at a time, never two, like a rock climber. The chainsaw hangs ready from his belt and is used with one hand. Here he is halfway up and shouted down that the branches were covered in ice Figure 6.



Figure 6 :

With everything covered in ice, himself, his tools and the branches, the chance of a slip increased. The ropes would prevent him falling to the ground but if he slipped whilst the chainsaw was cutting the consequences can be imagined. An arm cuts easier than the branch of a tree Figure 7.

He is not taking any chances, not even on the ground, and the heavier branch is lowered on a rope controlled by the assistant Figure 8. He is now as high as he will climb and cuts off the top of the tree Figure 9.



Figure 7:



Figure 8:



Figure 9:

The heavy section is lowered to the ground. He descends by cutting short sections one by one and inching down step by step. He has now been working for over an hour Figure 10. Safely down, the

felled trunk is cut into smaller pieces, and everything is fed through the shredder into the truck to be carried away. There is nothing left to show that a tall tree stood here Figure 11.



Figure 10 :



Figure 11 :

I congratulated the lumberjack and remarked on his skill and fitness. He had done this work for more than twenty years and never had a day off from ill health or injury. I said he compares well to other men of his age. His best friend from childhood had gone into coding (software programming) and now had back problems and arthritis. Two operations had not helped. Was the lumberjack in real danger up that tree? Probably not. A safety record of twenty years is proof enough. More than being safe, he was protecting his health for the long term.

Let's start the analysis by thinking about the programmer friend. Sitting at a desk hour after hour, as I am doing typing this article, is damaging. Apart from finger movements, my body is doing nothing.

That's bad because my body prefers to be on the go all day. When idle, food sits in the stomach without the help of muscle movements to push it through the flexible tubes. The lungs are sending no more oxygen to the brain than they would during sleep. Blood is flowing at the minimum rate. Without oxygenated blood, there is no healing. The programmer had been living dangerously and still is. Going to work by car, sitting down all day, demanding performance from the brain and spending the evening sedentary is the almost the worst one can do. Worse would be a meal in the evening washed down with alcohol. Add in smoking and longevity can be forgotten.

There was a study of rubbish collectors many years ago. I think it was in Glasgow. A comparison was made between the health of

the truck drivers and the men who scuttled around in the street getting the bins and lifting them into the back of the truck. The drivers by far had more illness and heart attacks. The bins were smelly and maybe contained germs, but the outdoor life and continuous movement protected the men. The idle driver was living dangerously. What about those who lack the get up and go to exercise? Generally, this is because they have lost the means of running around. The shift into adulthood became an escape to laziness with the belief that they were saving their bodies.

What about the exuberant? Testosterone is a driver. Handled well it prolongs youth. Overdone, it leads to recklessness. I confess, there is nothing more exciting than cycling fast downhill. By skill and some luck, I am still alive. Human bodies are entirely dependent on control from the mind. Is war about excitement? Not at all. It is all controlled, tedious and can be frightening. Anyone bored who thinks they can help in a fight must think again. If they want to kill people, there is a well-paid profession they can get into. Who do you think kills most people legally?

What's the answer to being healthy? Maybe I have it. Very likely I am older than you, dear reader, so I can preach from personal experience. Exercise is essential. Do it to enjoy it. For me, cycling is enjoying the countryside. For you it may be competition in a gym. Whatever it is, use your body. No need to punish yourself. Just keep everything flowing and get out of breath at least once a day. The advice that five minutes a week is sufficient is nonsense. Do two hours a day and if your commute to work can be on a bicycle, you get the exercise without losing time [1] [2]. No alcohol ever. No smoking. No narcotics. I am also not trusting coffee although I love the flavour. Never add salt or sugar to food. I do not use a smartphone and switch the modem off at night [3].

The lesson is simple. Anything that impairs the immune system is causing illness. Keep the immune system working and everything works. Vitamin D from sunlight, not from pills, is essential and free. Dark skins take longer to absorb the vitamins than light skins. It does not have to be bright sunlight. Outdoors on a hazy day is just as good and a few patches of exposed skin will absorb the vitamins. Similarly, fresh vegetables and fruit, as was eaten by our ancestors for the tens of thousands of years in which we have evolved, is what our body needs. We are carnivores and meat are part of our diet. Fresh air outdoors is always better than stale air indoors. What was the lumberjack doing that helped him more than anything else? His mind was fully occupied for more than an hour up that tree. During that time, everything else on his mind was extinguished. It had to be. Any distraction could be disaster. Excluding stress is the best medicine.

The most unhelpful advice is to be told to relax or stop worrying. How can one do that? I can't. I can escape on the bicycle for a few

hours during which time I may cool down and sort the ideas out in my head. Someone else may immerse in music. I like that. Turn the volume up. Big electrostatic speakers shaking the house. Difficult to concentrate on anything other than the sound that is vibrating the body. All excitement. Being old doesn't stop me having childish fun. Find your way to unwind. It will be what you liked when you were twelve years old. Growing up is only the external view. We are all kids at heart [4].

My observations of cancer patients are that almost all have had stress which prevented the immune system working, mutant cells formed and ten or more years later the tumors have grown and can kill. If they had avoided stress, they could have sailed on smoothly [5]. Such ideal circumstances are near to impossible in a polluted world where families are split up and scattered across the globe. We are all strangers. Migration is about getting away from, not desiring to go to. Improve conditions in failed countries and the people will stay. No one wants to end up in a strange place. Sometimes we have no choice and then survival is the dominant force. Humans can make tremendous efforts and they are all to achieve peace, something remotely remembered from early childhood when sustenance was suckling a warm breast. We are basically simple creatures but capable of enormous stupidity that wrecks the lives of those around and beyond us. If you are stressed, what is the cause? Whatever it is, if you cannot stop it, get away from it. The cancer cases caused by stress are often in the family; mother-daughter, mother-son, often divorce. These are relationships that cannot be avoided or take time to untangle [6].

Money is sometime mentioned but it can be that the money problem is caused by the relationship problem. Borrowing is more dangerous than felling a tree. If you take a loan, use it to buy an appreciating asset. This keeps your solvent. Borrow to consume and the risk of losing an income could lead to disaster. Knowing what an asset is important. Stories from the crypto coin collapse have not yet come my way but billions have been lost and someone is suffering. Was all that investment unwanted money? These become medical problems.

Can stress be detected in its early stages? Yes, by the subtle process described in my Sapiens Shield plan [7]. Early-stage chronic disease can be detected. This provides the clue to a person in a dysfunctional family. Friendly contact allows pleas for help. Victims will not be humiliated. Do not try to be superior. Doctors get cancer same as everyone else [8].

What I am telling you is all around you, to be seen everywhere. Ask people questions. Smile and they will smile back. We are all strangers and don't want to be. Here is an interesting man I met on my travels. He may have the answer: This is Sam Figure 12. This is where he lives Figure 13,14.



Figure 12 :



Figure 13 :



Figure 14 :

He has eleven horses, a caravan, a dog and a bicycle. He would make a wonderful study for a PhD but not if I have anything to do with it. Here is a real person who may have everything we all want but we do not know how to get it. I met him whilst cycling along. He asked me the time, so I told him and asked if he had a watch. "I don't 'cos I can't tell the time. Can't read and write. Never learned."

Of course, an academic would love to study a European who has slipped through the system and survived. In so doing, Sam's life would be demolished. Whilst he now has something he is proud of, his horses and genuine gypsy caravan, making him the subject of a study would convince him that he does not belong and is peculiar. His mother never spent one night in a building, and I think Sam has been the same. He was born in a caravan. Even though he is some miles away from others of his family, he belongs. There is a code of behaviour with a great knowledge of horses and their value. There is trading. He is not seen by local villagers as strange or a threat. They know and accept him, and he is happy with that. Over time he has accepted me, and I am careful to ask only friendly questions despite bursting to be more searching but aware that a provocation would break the trust. This is anthropology. Illiteracy has protected Sam from the stress I see everywhere. If we could all be as insulated. The pile of scrap wood alongside his caravan is fuel for a year. He is doing someone a favour burning it. A simple life is to be envied.

Sam has a vocabulary connected to horses that I ought to record but I don't for fear of making the conversation intrusive. It makes me question the benefit of writing. All the knowledge he needs is in his memory. Not knowing the time is not a problem. By asking me a question, he was really saying, "You are the unusual fellow I have

seen on a bicycle before, and I am curious to know where you are from and where you are going." Such is the fun of strangers meeting. As far as I can tell, Sam has no health issues. The last time I met him, he had been to the dentist. He can use urban facilities when he needs them. I even found where he goes for a haircut. Compare yourself to Sam and ask whether you are better off than him. If you are reading this, education is important to you. Where will it get you? Is it better than eleven horses? There is no way of measuring Figure 15.

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Conflict of interest

None.

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