



A Special Report from  
Sarah Wilson,  
your Adventure Coach

# The Power of Critical Moments

When everything changes in a moment

That's an incredibly powerful moment

**Do you recognise it?**

## Just another day...or was it?

The sun was shining, the sky was blue. The crisp mountain air should have filled me with life and vitality. But instead my throat was dry, my arms ached, my body was shaking and my mind was wracked with dread.

It was 10:43am on 4 January and I was half way down a 70 degree sheet of ice. My climbing buddy was a full rope-length below me, with no protection in the soft snow.

And me, I was standing on one leg. Why?

While kicking the front points of my crampons into the steep 'armour-plate' ice, my left crampon pinged off and was hanging limply on a cord from my now shaking ankle.

I was standing on the front 2 crampon points of my right leg. My ice axes were desperately trying to get a hold on the hard ice which had a soft layer beneath. The two ice-axes above my head were hanging on by a few millimetres and my arms were beginning to ache from holding on. Below, well to be honest, I really did not want to look. Except that when I glanced down I could see the yawning abyss of snow and rock below me. If I fell then death would be certain.



Sarah ice climbing

And as if that was not bad enough, there was more... my climbing buddy and close friend was attached to the rope. If I fell, then she would go too. It was not just my life that was on the line. So was hers.

Clearly, it was a critical moment.

Only half an hour before things had been very different. We had started before dawn and had great climbing conditions to the summit. For me it was a 10,000 foot peak in New Zealand's Southern Alps that I had dreamed of. We had climbed un-ropeed much of the time and I had felt excited and invigorated by the crisp air and incredible views below. My crampons and ice axes had bitten firmly into the ice and given me a sense of confidence and control while climbing the steep gully to the top.

On the summit we were awed by the spectacular view and it felt amazing to be on top. And we were conscious that the climb is not over until the descent is complete. And so we had started down. We decided on a different route down as we thought it would be easier. Until we hit the hard steep ice.

Life is a bit like that. You are happily moving along and then suddenly and very swiftly everything changes. In a moment, your very life is demanded of you. So what happened? Well clearly I am still here to tell the tale. And only just.

In that critical moment I knew that the decisions I made and the actions I took would be life or death for me and for my close climbing buddy. What I did in that moment saved my life and hers.

These are moments where you really pay attention....

## They are critical moments

You know the kinds of moments I am talking about. You can think of times when you or your loved ones have had to make decisions in the moment where the consequences are life changing.

Critical moments do not always come in the form of the obvious terror of falling to our death. Sometimes critical moments are much harder to recognise, and we may only recognise them when we look back in time. The moment is not quite so distinct but it is critical none the less.

How do we recognise these critical moments and then harness their incredible power? This question is at the heart of this special report.

## Meanwhile, back on the mountain...

In that moment on the mountain 3 critical things happened:

- First of all, in a split second I realised I had to get control of my mind, or panic would overtake me; I took a deep breath... That breath was probably the most important thing I did – everything else followed.
- Secondly, I decided to slow everything down, and talk myself through it. One thing at a time. First get the best ice-axe holds, then kick a step so that my boot with no crampon could rest.... Just one thing at a

time. Some things I tried did not work – like putting in several different anchors – the reality was that the snow underneath the brittle shell of ice was soft so nothing was going to give me the security that my mind was screaming for. The key was not to get caught up in what was not working, instead I needed to focus on what I could do next.

- The third thing was humbling and wonderful. My climbing partner below called up words of encouragement. She knew that I longed for security so she shouted that she had “bomb-proof anchors”. In fact I knew that the anchors could not be relied upon, however, it didn’t matter. Her words were incredibly powerful. They gave me hope and reminded me I was not alone.

Step by agonising step I got the situation under control. After what seemed an eternity, but was probably more like 30 minutes, I got my crampon back on my boot and gingerly descended the steep ice. I was shaking all over and all the time talking to myself and focussing on the next step. When I got to the bottom and reached my climbing partner the relief was incredible. The sheer joy at being alive was overwhelming.

I had come ‘up close and personal’ with the power of “critical moments”. My journey had begun.

I was intrigued and gripped by the force of my critical moments. Why is it that all of life hinging on one moment could have such a dramatic effect? Not just in the moment but for years to come?

*“Could we change our attitude,  
We should not only see differently,  
But life itself would come to be different.”*

*- Katherine Mansfield*

## Adventure as a metaphor

What are the adventures you love? Times with friends, laughter, sunsets, slogging through ankle deep mud or the simple adventure of walking the dog? Whatever those adventures are they can be a powerful source of learning. We get to see insights about the rest of our lives – our work, relationships, all of it. Adventure is a metaphor for learning about our whole lives.

Adventures have a knack for creating critical moments. In a moment we make decisions where everything hangs in the balance. Now that is one compressed learning curve!

How can I be so sure that adventure lessons provide a microcosm for life and critical moments? Well, I did some research...

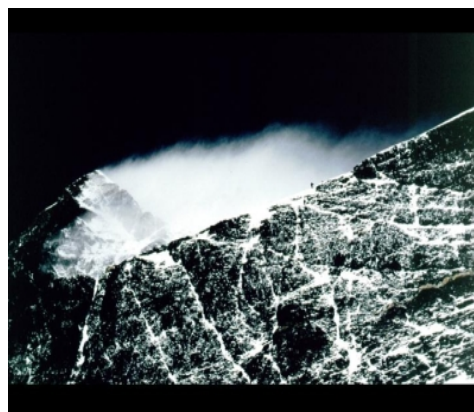
## Learning from Adventure Heroes

I found myself drawn to seek out inspirational adventurers from different walks of life. I interviewed people I called Adventure Heroes<sup>1</sup> and studied them closely. I also drew on my own experiences with adventure and the rest of my life.

Amazingly a picture began to emerge. It was like getting a glimpse of a beautiful mountain through a brief clearing in the clouds. Through very different experiences and people I noticed some of the same themes emerging.

There were also some crucial mistakes that could be avoided. Walking in the footsteps of others was incredibly useful.

But rather than give you an academic explanation. How about you experience what I am on about for yourself?



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<sup>1</sup> To find out more about the Adventure Heroes Series go to [www.adventureheroes.com](http://www.adventureheroes.com). The Series was a finalist for the National Geographic “TOGA” awards.

## OK, take a deep breath...

Take a moment and look over your life so far. Can you identify a critical moment? (take your time with this, breathe deeply and close your eyes if this helps. Remember it as if it were yesterday..)

For many people a moment quickly comes to mind. It might have been something unexpected or dramatic. A death, a birth, a decision made. We recall all the details of the moment and the emotions of that time. Our pulse quickens and intense joy or pain comes up as we recall the moment and the consequences that hung in the balance.

With the power of hind-sight we see that there was a moment in time when things changed. Sometimes dramatically. And in some instances the change is much more gradual and subtle. When we look closely we can see a moment, a critical moment, that was the initial trigger for all that followed.

If you can't think of anything then pick up a newspaper – Man rescues drowning child... Or phone a friend and ask them. You might be amazed at the response.

OK, now step back a moment and recognise the power of that moment. The implications, as well as the deep feelings it provokes. Powerful isn't it? It can open up your heart.

These moments are clearly transformative.

How good are you at recognising a critical moment when it comes past? Sure, some are like a slap in the face whilst others are more subtle. They glide by and it might be someone else that sees it. Sharp or subtle these moments are equally powerful.

What if we had the power and vision to recognise more of these moments, even as they were happening?

If we could tune in to critical moments and harness their power would this transform our lives?

My experience is that it is the difference between night and day.

Want to know more?



## “Is this a critical moment?”

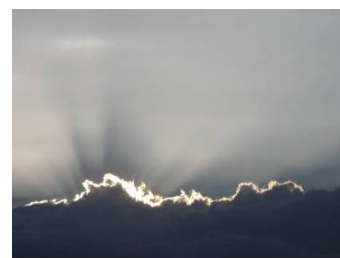
All adventures hinge on one critical moment. The moment of **conscious choice**.

The moment of stopping and choosing .... And taking decisive action.

Is this a critical moment right now?

It is for me and it could be for you. It is such a simple question that it was tempting for me not to write this report. It felt like I should have a more complicated recipe.

The truth of the situation is that the question IS simple. It skilfully cuts through the noise, the busyness, the complications of life and says THIS is the moment. Take it or leave it.



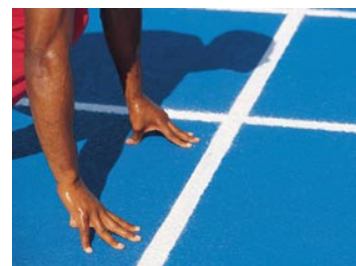
## Time for Action

That's enough of the theory. Its time to really put this to the test.

Embark upon a new adventure, starting NOW.

### Step One:

**Stop and take a deep breath.** Slow down the mental chaos of whatever is around you and simply notice yourself taking a good deep breath.



### Step Two:

**Decide** in this moment. You will know if “critical moments” are knocking on the door. If there is no spark then this may not be for you. And if your heart is beating faster then answer the call. Decide right now to dive into what's next.

### Step Three:

**Commit** to the journey ahead. One of the ways you can do this is to **get in** for what's next.

## Step Four:

**Talk to others** about their critical moments. I have found that talking to friends about critical moments creates some incredible conversations. **Give your friends this report to read.**

## What's next?

There is a lot more. This report is just a taste of what is to come.

I have just put the finishing touches on an **e-book** (a book that you can download from my website and print off) which will go even further than is possible in this short report. The e-book will enable you to embark on a journey:

- First of all we will pack for the journey and map it out,
- You will walk in the footsteps of heroes,
- You will find out the key mistakes you must avoid,
- And we will take a good close look to reveal the inner workings – why does it work, what is involved, how can we apply it?

Right NOW go and take a look at what is on offer at <http://www.adventurecoaching.co.nz/critical-moments-harness.html>

My hunch is that this moment, NOW, is a critical moment for you as you take your next steps.

Wishing you great adventures and a life that makes a difference

Sarah Wilson  
Adventure Coach



p.s. For a short time the Critical Moments e-book comes with a whole series of extra bonuses for free. Take a look at <http://www.adventurecoaching.co.nz/critical-moments-harness.html>