



## Brinksmanship

In Bend, we often get to do some spring skiing. Mt. Bachelor is usually open until Memorial Day weekend. So, recently, I was able to get a couple of days in on the mountain. Beautiful weather. The snow can be the kind that if you had some flavoring, you could make a snow cone or get some shaved ice out of it.

Having said that, one of the days I was able to ski with a real pro. Now, I think I'm a pretty good skier, and one of the reasons I love skiing is that, even at my advanced age, I can still learn and hopefully get better. Plus, I "preach" it all the time that part of maturity and leadership is to remain humble and teachable. Remember, as Adam Grant says,

***The only way to know for sure  
that I'm learning something  
is when I find out I'm wrong.***

Back to skiing. This friend and I did more talking than skiing. We get into some deep life and philosophical conversations when we spend time together. It doesn't take much to start that engine. He brought a topic up related to my friend's instruction on my skiing that day. I think there is much more philosophy than skiing contained in this... He mentioned the "Godfather of Punk Rock," Iggy Pop. Now I'm not much into punk rock. My friend is. He shared Iggy's term, "brinksmanship," a concept that his therapist taught him in the 1970's. Someone asked Iggy Pop if he was surprised to still be alive (how rude a query is that?!). To that question, Pop gave a wholehearted **NO**.

*No, people all assume they're gonna live forever, so nah. It's brinksmanship. My psychiatrist told me in the '70s, 'You have amazing brinksmanship.*

***You go to a certain place  
and you know when to pull back.'***

*I always have (known when to pull back). I'm a conservative guy in my daily life.*

So, once again, let's return to Mt. Bachelor. My friend's instructions were as follows:

- Find the "brink."
- Pull back from the brink to 80%.
- Practice brinksmanship.

To put it in skiing terms, *Feel the edge... find the edge... Now, back off a bit.*

Every once in a while, he said, you go past the brink. That's OK if you can adjust wisely and appropriately. When skiing, you know when you've gone past the brink.

***You find yourself out of control  
and that's the danger zone.***

When you are able to know, define, and hold to your "brink" you can fully enjoy the experience of skiing. Now, admittedly, I have crossed the line, the brink, a few times. AND, on several occasions, I've had to pay the price. The day after skiing with this friend, I watched as several people didn't practice proper brinksmanship. Another friend collided with an "un-brinked" snowboarder. Another unbrinked skier went tumbling...

Now, let's get philosophical for a moment. Is there a time to NOT practice brinksmanship in life? I think there is. In relationship.

***When we practice (or receive) what we normally call unconditional love, brinksmanship doesn't exist.***

Love that knows no limits isn't practicing brinksmanship. Love that is inexhaustible doesn't practice brinksmanship. (Parenthetical note: I'm NOT talking about putting up with abusive behavior in an abusive relationship...Boundaries are important! Please don't hear me saying otherwise.)

***Have you been the recipient of inexhaustible, relentless love that knows no bounds?***

I have. And, I'm glad I have. I'm grateful to be the recipient of that kind of love.

***That kind of love is sometimes reckless.***

I don't want to ski in a reckless manner, but I do want to love and relate (at times) with reckless abandon.

I'm thankful for my friend's instruction on the mountain and in life via Iggy Pop. I'm also thankful that life and love don't always have limits.