

High-tech race to make adventure sports safe

By Steven Kotler and Jamie Wheal, *Outside*

*In their new book *Stealing Fire* (\$28; Harper Collins) Steven Kotler and Jamie Wheal investigate the many ways people are now seeking out the heightened awareness of flow states—those ecstatic zones of pure focus where humans achieve ultimate performance. Some use psychedelics, others meditate or dance, and daring athletes practice extremely dangerous adventure sports. In this exclusive excerpt, the authors recount the tragic death of BASE-jumper Dean Potter, question why he and others are willing to risk everything in the pursuit of elevated consciousness, and explain how innovative technologies enable us to reach the same state without the without the life-and-death stakes.*

The why was never in question. What happened? How it happened? Those answers remain unclear. But the why? For Dean Potter—it was never in doubt.

It was May 16, 2015, in Yosemite Valley, California, a nice spring evening, right on the edge of dusk. Potter, a record-breaking rock climber, slackline walker, and wingsuit flier, got ready for the evening's adventure. He was 3,500 feet above the valley floor, standing on the summit of Taft Point. Alongside his friend and fellow flier Graham Hunt—considered one of the best young pilots around—their goal was to leap off the edge, zip across the canyon below, and sail through a V-shaped notch in a neighboring ridge, above an ominously named cliff, Lost Brother.

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