

WE'RE ALL HUMAN

“On my most recent assessment I dropped my belay plate off the crag for the first time ever, from two pitches up, and subsequently ‘stress-built’ a belay so ugly that I cried...still passed somehow!”

MCI

“I got my boot so wedged in a crack when scrambling on my MCI assessment, I had to undo it with one hand, take my foot out, put the boot in my mouth and carry on to the next ledge where I could put it on again!”

MCI

““On my SPA Assessment on the second day we went to Holyhead Mountain. I'd never been there before and the cloud was right down and I had absolutely no idea where to go. With full confidence I headed in completely the wrong direction. The assessor kindly stopped me and said that this wasn't an ML assessment and that the crag was the other way.

"Which other way?" said I in a slight flap "it's a 360 degree white out and I've no idea where to go”

It's not your Winter ML either, follow me’

MCI

“I didn't get round to practicing nav on a 1:50 map before my summer ML assessment, and then the whole exped plus two nights of night nav were on a 1:50.

I passed but it was so stressful I came down with shingles and was off work on antibiotics for 3 weeks afterwards!

After that I prepared really thoroughly for every assessment”

WMCI

“On my scrambling day we stopped for lunch and the assessor enquired about the unusual method I'd tied off my coils. I explained, proud as punch, that with this method I could take them on and off without them tangling. I took them off to demonstrate and promptly created a massive birds nest that took 30 mins to unpick as my morale and hopes of passing got lower and lower. I did pass, and now tie off my coils with a more conventional method”

MCI

“I went for a wee on the last day of my winter ml training, and afterwards I realised I hadn't pulled my waterproof pants down properly. I then had to spend the next 7 hours with wee-soaked legs and trousers”

WINTER ML

ESTHER FOSTER

KNOWING WHEN YOU ARE READY FOR ASSESSMENT

psychological and practical tips for getting to assessment and passing first time



INTROS

QUICK INTROS

WHAT WE'LL COVER:

- WHAT ASSESSORS WANT
- FEARS AND WORRIES
- PRACTICAL TIPS
- OVERCOMING BARRIERS
- CONFLICTING FEELINGS



YOUR ASSESSORS AREN'T PERFECT EITHER...

“I REMEMBER PUTTING MY HARNESS ON AND THE ASSESSOR WAS LOOKING AT MY BELAY LOOP. I LOOKED DOWN TO FIND IT TWISTED.

FEELING PRETTY STUPID, I LOOKED UP AT MY ASSESSOR AND IN DOING SO REALISED THEIRS WAS TWISTED TOO. WE LOOKED AT EACH OTHER BRIEFLY, AND THEN SILENTLY TOOK OUR HARNESSES OFF AND PUT THEM BACK ON AGAIN. WE ALL MAKE MISTAKES.”

“I FORGOT MY CRAMPONS ON ASSESSMENT.....AND I WAS THE ONE ASSESSING!! MANAGED THE DAY BUT WITH LOTS OF ROPE WORK SHENANIGANS AND HELP FROM ANOTHER ASSESSOR. WE ARE HUMAN AND WE FEEL THE PRESSURE TOO!”

WHAT DOES YOUR ASSESSOR WANT TO SEE?

- You being you. They don't want everyone to be clones.
- You making your own decisions, and demonstrating what you would normally do.
- Nobody is perfect, they're not looking for perfection
- You being safe, experienced, adaptable and great with people in that terrain
- DLOGs:
 - Help you get the necessary experience and build a picture for the assessor.
 - A by-product (and a minimum) of you learning and gaining experience
- Assessors want you to pass!!!





“I WAS REALLY INTIMIDATED LOOKING AROUND THE ROOM ON THE FIRST DAY OF MY MIC COURSE AS I WAS THE ONLY WOMAN OF 10 OR 11 TRAINEES. AT THE END ONE OF THE OTHERS TOLD ME HE WAS EQUALLY INTIMIDATED AS HE WAS THE ONLY ONE WHO WASN'T A FULL-TIME INSTRUCTOR...IT'S ALL A MATTER OF PERSPECTIVE”

WMCI

Trying to banish our fears doesn't work

Grounding and planning for the 'what ifs'

FEARS GROW IN THE DARK



“FOR MY ML ASSESSMENT I WAS VERY SKINT AS I WAS ONLY A TRAINEE AT AN ACTIVITY CENTRE.

I REMEMBER FEELING EXHAUSTED FROM THE EXPEDITION IN NOVEMBER AS I HAD CAMPED THE DAYS BEFORE TOO.

WE WERE WALKING BACK DOWN AFTER THE EXPED AND THE ASSESSOR TOLD EVERYONE WE WERE GOING TO SIT IN THE CAFE AND HAVE BREAKFAST.

I REMEMBER INSTANTLY FEELING REALLY ANXIOUS AND VERY MUCH EMBARRASSED THAT I LITERALLY HAD ZERO MONEY IN MY ACCOUNT. WE GOT TO THE CAFE AND I JUST HUNG OUT OUTSIDE. THE ASSESSOR CAME AND FOUND ME, FIGURED OUT I HAD NO MONEY AND BOUGHT ME A BREAKFAST AND BREW.

IT TOTALLY BROKE THE IMAGE DOWN OF AN ASSESSOR JUST BEING A ROBOT TO ME. SHOWING THAT THEY HAVE EMPATHY AND HAVE BEEN EXACTLY WHERE I WAS AT THAT TIME.

TO THIS DAY I STILL ENJOY BUMPING INTO THAT ASSESSOR IN SNOWDONIA.”

MCI

FEARS GROW IN THE DARK

- Try to banish or bury your fears and worries.....and they'll just grow louder. Bring them out in to the light, and they'll shrink! Why?
- An example
- Over to you.....share a genuine fear or worry you have, or have had in the past, about assessments. Doesn't matter how stupid!
- Planning for the 'what ifs' is better than trying to ignore your worries. It gives you a heads up, a bit like route reading before you start a climb.
- Grounding yourself when it doesn't go to plan:
- When you get lost in the hills.....
- When you feel dizzy, travel sick, or disorientated.....
- It's the same when we get all confused, stressed out, or hit a curve ball on assessments...go back to the things that you know, that are definite

5 MINUTE PARTNER TASK

- Pick a 'what if this happens' scenario for your assessment. Choose yourself or pick one from the below list
- In pairs, quiz your partner on what they will do if this scenario happens on their assessment.
 - What are all their options?
 - What are the things they definitely know, or definitely can do?

Example scenarios

You doubt your gear placements because there is an assessor there watching?

You are asked to relocate and you're not sure where you are, and then you get yourself really stressed out?

You cry on your assessment?!

You concentrate so hard on map reading that you get a headache and then have to go out on night nav?

You tie a clove hitch rather than an Italian hitch by mistake?

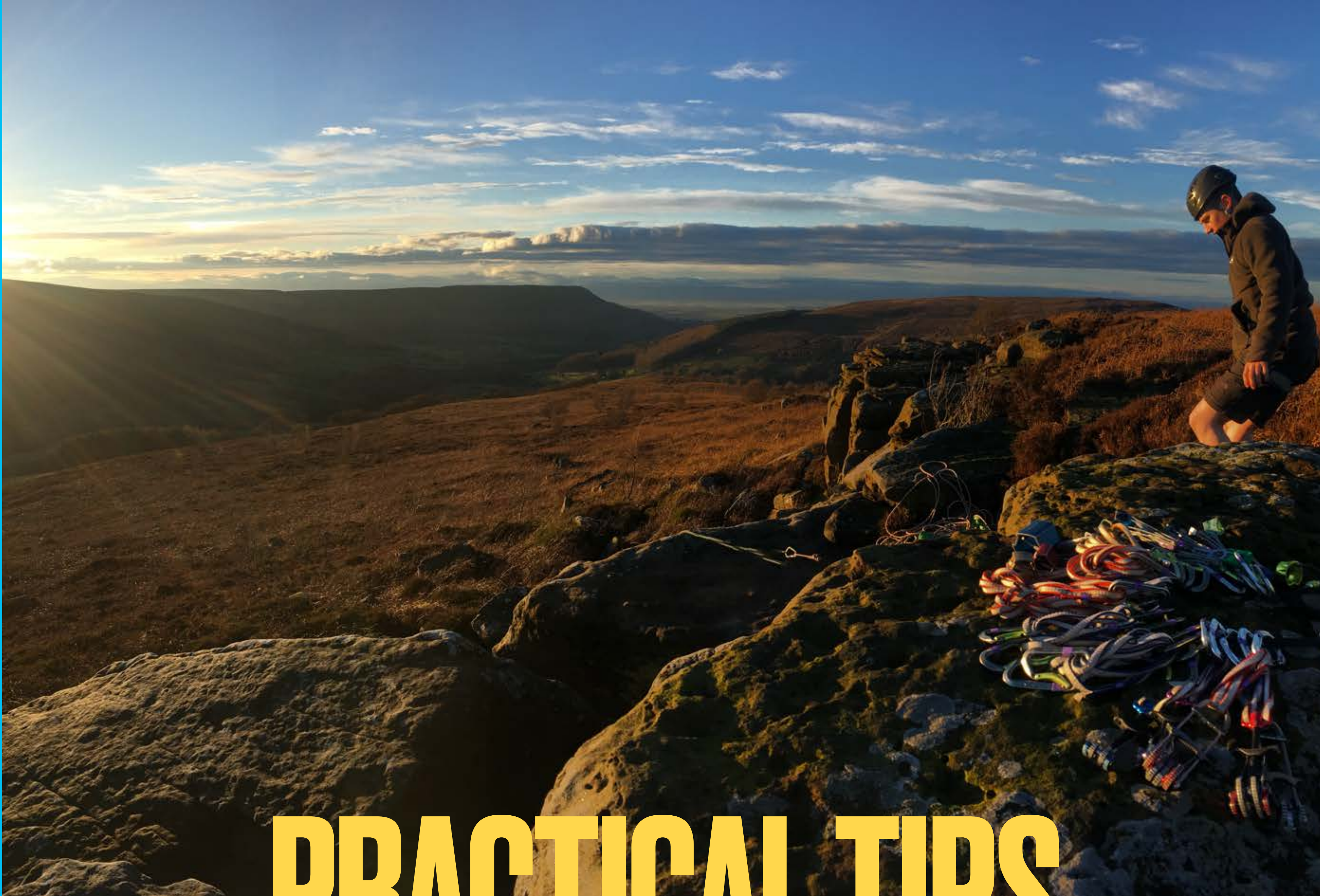
Half way through your assessment, you think you have deferred?

You get to the crag and realise you have forgotten your harness!

**“ON MY ML(S) ASSESSMENT WE WERE DOING SECURITY ON
STEEP GROUND ON THE BUACHAILLE.
WE STOPPED FOR LUNCH AND I PUT MY RUCKSACK DOWN,
AS I THOUGHT, SAFELY....”**

**“...I TURNED AWAY TO SAY SOMETHING TO SOMEONE ELSE,
AND TURNED BACK TO SEE MY RUCKSACK BOUNCING
MERRILY OFF DOWN THE HILL TOWARDS THE DISTANT PATH.
MORTIFIED.**

**THE ASSESSOR JUST SAID “WE’LL GET IT LATER” AND WE
CARRIED ON WITH THE REST OF THE ASSESSMENT. WE DID
GET IT BACK, AND I PASSED....”**



PRACTICAL TIPS

Top tips

Specific barriers



TOP TIPS

FOR THE CONSOLIDATION PERIOD

- Bubbles and the lone wolf
- You don't get faster or more efficient by rushing. Go slow to go fast.
- If you get stuck in your head....say things out loud
- Simulate assessment pressure
- Don't underestimate shadowing...
- Practise
 - On your own
 - With other training candidates
 - With more experienced/qualified folk
 - With novices (if relevant)
 - At a variety of locations and with a variety of groups
 - Practise slo-mo first





BARRIERS

LIVING FAR AWAY

- Dedicated chunks of time rather than ‘little and often’?
- Being creative about what’s on your doorstep?
- Online resources?

LACK OF SUPPORT NETWORKS

- How can you build your support network?

FEELING ‘DIFFERENT’ TO OTHERS

- Can this be your super-strength?
- What makes you feel proud and absolutely worthy of being there?
- How can your assessor support you?
- What strategies will help you specifically?

TIME OR FINANCIAL FACTORS

- Funding opportunities
- Mentoring opportunities
- Quality practise over quantity?
- Your employer - don’t ask don’t get!

FEELING WEAKER IN A SPECIFIC AREA

- Can you exploit your weaknesses?





PICK ONE BARRIER RELEVANT TO YOU
WHAT CAN YOU DO THAT WILL HELP?

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CONFLICTING FEELINGS

Confidence

Feelings aren't 'either/or'

Embrace the rollercoaster

Do you want to know for
definite anyway?





CONFIDENCE

Sometimes we are constantly chasing this elusive, magical feeling called confidence.

As if we either have it, or we don't. As if we constantly need more of it.

Sometimes we are constantly waiting to *feel* more confident or ready for an assessment.

Spoiler alert.....

Feelings come and go
You will never feel perfectly ready

Confidence is not something you either have or don't have, it's more of a spectrum, and is better built through actions rather than feelings

Key takeaways:

- See confidence as a decision as well as a feeling
- Sometimes you have to do the thing before you feel the thing
- Confidence is best built as a natural by-product of getting better at a skill





When you have an outdoor adventure, what different feelings or emotions do you experience, often all at the same time?!

It is possible, and entirely normal, to feel:

Scared and excited at the same time

Both confident and nervous

Like you do and don't want to do the thing

You can't be brave, without also being scared, right?

You can't start up a harder trad route, go out in to the hills, or turn up to an assessment, knowing with absolute certainty what the outcome will be?!

What conflicting emotions do you experience?

Can you embrace the rollercoaster?

Can you enjoy, or at least accept, the not knowing?!

ALL THE FEELINGS



OFTEN WE COMPARE HOW WE FEEL INSIDE, WITH HOW OTHERS LOOK

A QUOTE TO LIVE BY...

“DON'T COMPARE THE INSIDE OF YOU,
WITH THE OUTSIDE OF SOMEONE ELSE”





SH*T HAPPENS!

sometimes it's just one
of those days



“I WAS ON MY MCI ASSESSMENT, IT WAS DAY FOUR AND VERY WET. THE DAY WAS SCRAMBLING AND I WAS ALREADY VERY NERVOUS AS THIS, I FELT, WAS THE HARDEST DAY FOR ME, WITH SO MANY VARIABLES ETC. IT WAS MYSELF, THE COURSE DIRECTOR AND ANOTHER CANDIDATE. I WENT FIRST. TWO SHORT PITCHES UP THE FIRST SCRAMBLE I BUILT A SPIKE AND SLING BELAY IN A CORNER, BROUGHT THE OTHERS UP TO ME AND WAS ABOUT SET OFF AGAIN. I ASKED THE OTHERS IF THEY COULD SMELL THAT HORRIBLE SMELL?.....”

MCI ASSESSMENT CANDIDATE

“...I LOOKED DOWN AND SAW A HUMAN POO IN THE CORNER I HAD BEEN KNEELING IN. I HAD SMEARED IT FROM MY BOOTS UP TO MY HARNESS, INCLUDING CAMS ETC. THANKFULLY IT WASN'T ON THE ROPE AND THE CAMS WEREN'T MINE (!)

I WENT INTO MELTDOWN AND HEARD THE DREADED WORDS ‘I AM GOING TO TAKE OVER’ FROM THE COURSE DIRECTOR...”

MCI ASSESSMENT CANDIDATE

“...I WAS LOWERED OFF THE CRAG AND WENT STRAIGHT TO THE STREAM, WAIST DEEP AND WASHING HUMAN POO OFF MYSELF. THE REST OF THE DAY WAS NOT SUPER SLICK AND I STRUGGLED TO KEEP MY COMPOSURE. THE ASSESSOR COULD SEE THIS BUT ALSO COULD SEE WHAT I WAS TRYING TO DO AND THAT SAFETY WAS NEVER COMPROMISED. THEY TOOK THIS INTO ACCOUNT AND I THANKFULLY PASSED THE DAY AND MY ASSESSMENT.”

SUMMARY

SO, HOW DO YOU KNOW WHEN YOU ARE READY FOR ASSESSMENT?!

- **PUT THE SYLLABUS IN TO CONTEXT. E.G. CAN YOU DO XXXXXX AT XXXX LOCATION, IN XXXX CONDITIONS**
- **GET SPECIFIC FEEDBACK FROM EXPERIENCED OTHERS**
- **AIM TO BE GREAT, BUT NOT PERFECT**

WE ARE ALL DIFFERENT, AND....THE WORLD IS NOT A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD

ALL YOU CAN EVER AIM FOR IS TO TRY YOUR BEST, WITH THE OPPORTUNITIES YOU HAVE, AND BE PROUD OF THAT

A DEFERRAL IS NOT THE END OF THE WORLD

**TELL THE PERSON NEXT TO YOU WHAT HAS STOOD OUT TO YOU
OR MOST HELPED YOU FROM THIS WORKSHOP**