Hitting the wall

Ascending to lofty heights is 'way cool' and very calculated

Witnessing the wall climbers painstaking ascents, a number of metaphors come to mind.—2Grabbing the devil by the tnill enpures the spirit and difficulty of wall climbing.
—"At a snail's pace" describes its condence.

The same apure describes its cadence.

But equate the climbers to Greek Mythology's Sisyphus - a content, everyday fellow who spent a lifetime pushing a single tock up the same hill - and you come close to revealing the spiritial aspect of wall climbing.

"It's not about a thrill," says West Bloomfield wall climber larry Mint, a frequent visitor to Pontine's Planet Rock climbing gym where the walls reach 55 feet.

"But it is fun," he savs. "It'a

ing gym where the walls reach 55 feet.

3 But it is fun," he says, "It's like anything that you succeed at, that you worked hard to get."

At least that's Mint2's interpretation. Other climbers, like the individual's approach to soaking up like in the face of the daily grind, have a different take.

On the wall

Teetering 45 feet above the ground with only your toes and fingers anchoring you to the flat, scratchy wall, your thighs and biceps shiver relentlessly. Looking up, you realize the large, romising, hand-hold that has the words "progress" and "relie" veritten all over it, reast solidly beyond your reach.

Frozen like a startled souirrel.

written all over it, rests solidly beyond your reach. Frozen like a startled squirrel on the bark of a tree, you are now questioning the anusement value of wall climbing. The danger factor briefly comes to mind. But, unfortunately, the thrill-seeker in you went to sleep sometime between learning to strap on all the requisite gear and the first time you fell from the wall. It was only a few comfortable inches down the rope and into the diaper-like safety of your harness. Not very seary.

Places to go, decisions to make

look around for choices. They seem few. But, ironically, are endless.

On the one hand, you could try to grab one of the many, smaller hand-holds that offer minimal leverage. Another option might be trying to wrangle into a better body position on the wall. You could also: give up and comedown, think for a few more microtomy of the control of the co

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Satisfaction: Veteran West Bloomfield climber Larry Mintz makes the final grab, reaching the top of Planet Rock's 55-foot, climbing wall in Pontiac.

a bar, everything is superficial. Nick says. 'In here, you have to reveal all your trust.'
But one of Planet Rock's oldest climbers, 59-year-old Jack Hall-well, of Waterford, swears by the intellectual element of climbing. 'It's nort of like playing chess-trying to problem-solve,' he says. 'That's why women do so well. They have less body strength

and tend to rely on eleverness."

Once a week climber, James Vreeland, 16, of Bloomfield Hills, who prefers real rocks to climbing gyms like Planet Rock, marvels at the activity's spiritual component. "Outside, it's almost a oneness. It's being one with the mountain," says the teenager.

Making decisions, taking steps and facing challenges, climbing, like a life course, reflects outlook.

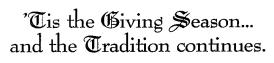
Like Sisyphus, we're all rolling

look.

Like Sisyphus, we're all rolling a rock up a hill in one way or another, so while we're still doing it, let's find our way to enjoy it.



Mintz watches his climbing partner's every move up the wall. always pre pared to anchor a sudden fall or slip.



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