



LEGAL HIGHS

# Trying out the flying trapeze

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**I**n my relentless quest for your next legal high, I attempted a flight without mechanical support, solely using the flying trapeze. The theory runs that to succeed at this discipline you have to overcome a primal fear of falling - to literally dive into your fear is so liberating for spirit and soul that it can change brain chemistry and lift people from depression.

In our class of seven, I was about 50 years older than the youngest participant and 30 years too old for the handsome instructor. We trained for an hour on low bars, in more ways than one, the bar of flexibility never lower than the moment I attempted a full-tuck somersault and came face to face with my own bottom. But eventually I climbed a skinny ladder to a small platform 30ft above the ground and stood, shaking, while the eight-year-old student in the class flew from bar to bar like a tiny female Spider-Man. Every instinct I have known throughout my long life told me not to jump off into the void and instead to do the climbdown of shame back to the place where humans are meant to be. But I'd paid \$60 to learn to suppress those survival instincts and trust the topless man with the ripped stomach swinging towards me on a metal bar. So I launched.

I flew (terrifying), I flipped upside down and hooked my knees on to the bar (inelegant), I reached out my arms (without hope), I caught his hands (shock), I released my legs from the bar (incomprehensible fear), he held me (adorable), he released me (inevitable), I fell (goodbye), I plopped into the safety net (oh, hello), and clearly awakening my competitive instincts, I involuntarily screamed the words: “And I am the oldest person here!”



I had expected the high to be a turbo version of the stomach-gushing feeling that happens at the highest point on a garden swing. Or the phenomenon of my brain rethinking its chemistry as I looked imminent death squarely in the face and survived. But the real high was landing in the safety net in the complete knowledge that I would never, ever, ever - not ever - have to do it again.

The ecstasy of having ticked a ridiculous activity off my nonexistent bucket list was intoxicating. And the grace-note high was later checking out a photo of mid-flight-me. There was nothing elegant about it - I resembled a flailing bat - but as all excess skin gravitated to somewhere around my ears, I appeared to have the chiselled jawline of a teenager. Whoop.