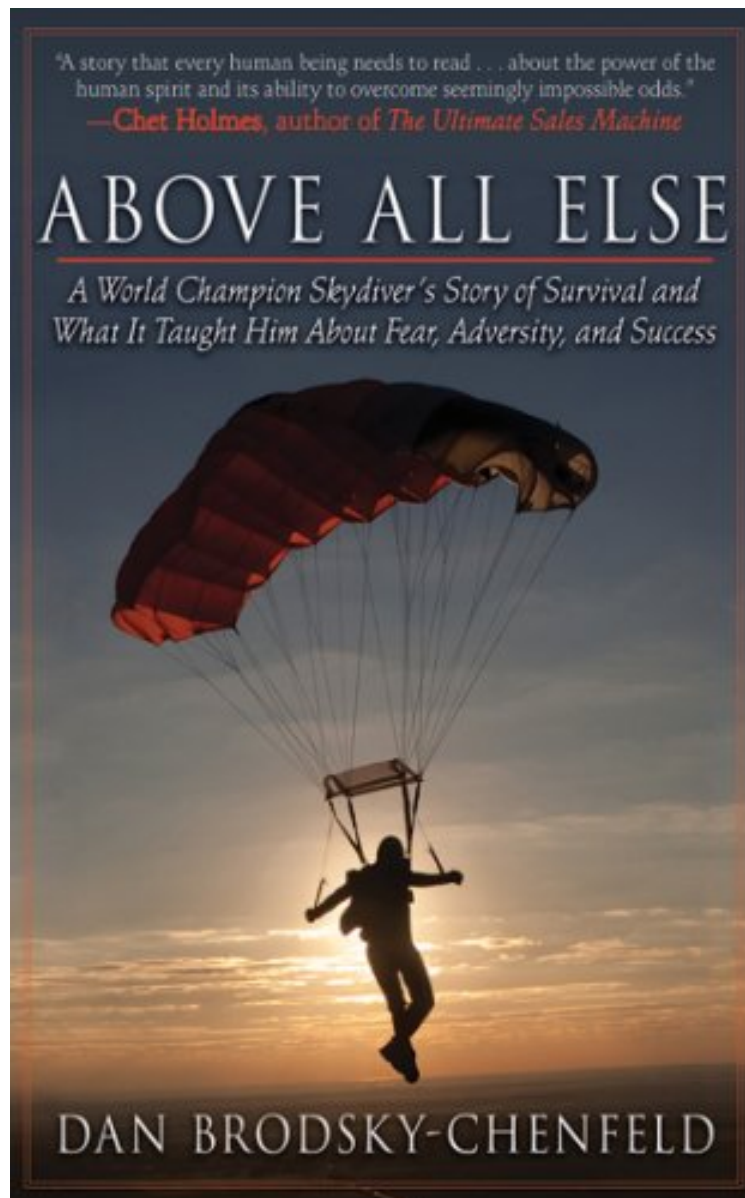


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Above All Else: A World Champion Skydiver's Story of Survival and What It Taught Him About Fear, Adversity, and Success

Dan Brodsky-Chenfeld

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Dan Brodsky-Chenfeld : Above All Else: A World Champion Skydiver's Story of Survival and What It Taught Him About Fear, Adversity, and Success before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Above All Else: A World Champion Skydiver's Story of Survival and What It Taught Him About Fear, Adversity, and Success:

21 of 21 people found the following review helpful. An Authoritative History of Modern Skydiving and an Inspiration for All By FRANK BATTALILEI bought this book because I'm an amateur skydiver and because Dan has a reputation as a world-class skydiving champion and coach. I expected an exciting story about skydiving and competing, and maybe some nuts and bolts advice on 4-way skydiving competition. Dan's book has all that and much more that I didn't expect. Dan's near death experience with his friend James Layne is gripping. I cannot stop thinking about it. His philosophy on competing, his spiritual approach to being the best that a person can possibly be at whatever a person chooses to do, and his real life experiences confronting fear and overcoming incredible obstacles, whether in acting or in skydiving or in anything else, are inspiring reading for anyone. As Dan says in his book: "The real meat of what it takes to win the world skydiving championships is the same as excelling in any other activity or endeavor." On top of all that, this book is an authoritative history of modern skydiving told by someone who was not just a first-hand witness to it, but was - and remains - one of the makers of that history. Highly recommended.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A competent biography with some useful info on winning. By CustomerThe main biographical story in this book (70%) is followed by a smaller (30%) section on playing to win. So you get two smaller books in one package. I felt the bio section was interesting, and the winning section was somewhat useful. The biography part was fairly routine as biographies go, telling the story of how the author grew up loving sky diving and how he devoted his life to it. The book makes it clear that skydiving was everything to him, #1 in life, above all else (including living conditions, relationships, people, and so on). This seemingly self-centered philosophy of life (me and my sport/issue/love/job above all else) is found in many top achievers in many disciplines in life. The author makes it clear that when any life decision was involved, the first (and often only) consideration was "what would be the best for my skydiving love/habit (and later..goals)?" It reminded me of a line from an old Vince Lombardi book, where Vince said something like "Once you truly get your priorities in order (in his case, coaching football was everything), all other decisions are easy." And so the author tells the story of his life, which for decades was focused on the goal of being a winning competitor in national and international skydiving competitions. After achieving that goal, he's still focused on competitive skydiving, but now as a leading coach. This part of the book is generally well written. The narrative story moved along well (I think I remember one slow spot), and the sentence structures, grammar, and spelling were all fine. The content (the topics, issues, thoughts, and events from the author's life) seemed appropriate too, although somewhat routine after a while (hop in the van, drive to a new jump zone, live in the van and jump and train until the next competition, then hop in the van, and repeat). However, I felt there were a few too many places that were really too heavy with "I this.. I that..", such as thinking that it was a valued achievement for the school teachers to have the author finally get himself together enough to pass his routine school exams. Perspectives like that do characterize the author, so I think the book does a good job of communicating the author's views in those areas. I thought the second part on winning made the book a better book. The author is clearly trying to explain his views on chasing dreams, making teams, and winning in both life (by chasing your dreams), and in competition by winning. First the bad news in this section--there were so many completely unsupported (and I felt unrealistic) claims in this section that I think it affected the integrity and believability of the section as a whole. Thus I found myself skipping over many of the "fluffy" (my opinion) claims and paragraphs in search of paragraphs and points that made more realistic sense. For example, instead of limiting himself to saying "X worked for me, and for 2 other teams that I know of," the author repeatedly goes beyond his direct experience and claims that "X will work for you, and for everybody, including salespeople." A second piece of bad news in this section, at least for me, was the author's constant repetition of the phrase "trust your instincts, trust your instincts, tyi, tyi,..." This point--which he clearly thinks is important--completely escaped me, given his rational advice on documenting your best performances, analyzing everything, asking all the questions, visualizing, practicing, debriefing, planning, and so on. Clearly he does NOT believe that trusting your instincts and raw talent are good enough to win competitions, so I think he creates confusion for the reader by saying on the one hand, "trust your instincts" so many times, yet simultaneously saying on the other hand, "document, analyze, visualize, etc." At the very least I think the phrase "trust your instincts" needs a far better explanation and contrast with the ideas of relaxing, remaining calm, etc. Now the good news in this section--there were more than a few sections that I highlighted because they made so much sense, and were sometimes fresh and original (at least to me). In particular, I think he does a good job of (1) contrasting the ideas of winning in life by chasing your dreams and by enjoying the journey of improving your own performance vs. winning a competition event, (2) building momentum one little decision at a time, (3) doing your best vs. being the best (at some moment in time at a competition). I thought the section on teams was not that informative or useful; it certainly echoed the author's experience with skydiving teams, but I had almost zero highlights in that section. I thought the best parts of this section were the ideas of having a disciplined communication plan and a debriefing plan (disciplined processes for improvement). I think the book would have been better if the author had provided more detail on the plane crash, because the crash was a large and pivotal part of the author's own story about overcoming obstacles (losing team members to death, breaking his body, his recovery) and continuing to live his life by chasing his dream. The author still works at Perris, so I can see why he included only one sentence to suggest the cause of the crash: "No problem. They simply called in an outside vendor to truck in fuel." But I think his omission of the full story weakens the book.

by leaving an important part of the story out. According to the LA Times and the NTSB, apparently the plane was overloaded by 1600 pounds (that's 8 people too many @ 200 lbs each) on a 9900 maximum load (16% overloaded), the center of gravity of the payload (the skydivers) was positioned too far forward of the center of lift of the wings (no positioning seatbelts were being used), making the plane unstable (nose heavy), and when the right engine quit (possibly due to bad fuel with too much water in it from an offsite vendor), the pilot feathered the left propeller (possibly to reduce asymmetric thrust), causing the plane to lose thrust from its only good engine, and to ultimately crash, killing 16 people. "Pilot error," said the NTSB, who also blamed Perris Aviation (who leased the plane) for not enough pilot training on the Twin Otter plane (although the pilot had apparently been flying successfully for many years). All in all I think this was a competent biography, with an extra section on the author's views on "Playing to win." I think the author's views must be respected because of his track record, but I found about 1/3 to 1/2 of what he said in the winning section to be unsupported/unrealistic (strong claims beyond his direct experience) or "un-actionable" (trust your instincts). For the Kindle price, the book is an interesting story (but it omits central plane crash details) with some useful, actionable information on playing to win in life and competition, written by a world caliber skydiving coach and champion. I would recommend this book to anyone who likes biographies and adventure stories. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Not just a story for skydivers.....everyone can be inspired! By DemoMama Inspiring story that left me feeling like I could do anything I set my mind to. Also purchased a copy for my teenage daughter who loved the story. Dan Brodsky-Chenfeld is a leader, motivator and someone we all hope to be like and learn from. A great read for any skydiver but also a story that touches people all over the world.

World famous competitive skydiver and coach Dan Brodsky-Chenfeld presents proven tools and techniques for success and explains how they can be used in everyday life. Dan survived a plane crash from which sixteen of the twenty-two people on board were killed. He was left critically injured and woke up from a six-week-long coma with a broken neck, broken skull, severe head trauma, a collapsed lung, and other serious internal injuries. Against all odds, Dan recovered and went on to become one of the greatest competitive skydiver in the world. With the love and support of friends and family, Dan was able not only to resurrect his life but return to skydiving to achieve greater heights than he could have ever imagined. His techniques and methods for excelling are applicable to all people, no matter their goals. Dan uses his experiences to teach the lessons he's learned as a competitor, coach, business owner, father, and husband to help others achieve their dreams, overcome obstacles, and reach their peak performance.