

VENTURING MAGAZINE

On Belay!

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I stood on the platform of the rock climbing wall trying to ignore the fact that the whole structure seemed to be swaying in the wind. Two of three COPE instructors were up there with me as well. They unhooked my rope from the rock climbing wall and rehooked it onto the repelling side, which did not have a wall. It was completely open. One of the COPE instructors handed me a pair of gloves and demonstrated how to repel with your right hand by your hip to help guide and control your speed and you slowly lower your body until your head is below your feet. You have to be careful not to hit your head on the platform, but luckily everyone is required to wear a helmet in the COPE area. I felt slightly panicked when I realized what I needed to do to be safe on the ground again. Sure, I had climbed rock walls plenty of times, but I never repelled down without a wall before.



"On belay!"

"Belay is on," the belayer replied.

"Permission to repel!"

"Permission granted."

"Katrina repelling!"

"Repel away."

Wondering what I had gotten myself into, I tried not to look at the ground as I lowered my body until my feet were above my head, while my hand was holding firmly onto the rope below my hip. I let go of the platform and I just hung there for a moment swinging back and forth in the air. I felt slightly more relaxed now. I loosened my grip on the rope and that is when I understood why I was required to wear gloves while repelling. The rope would burn your hands. Even with the gloves, you could feel the heat. I tightened my grip on the rope to stop the burning sensation briefly. Being one of the highest elevations on camp, you had a beautiful view of the valley. When I was finally safe on the ground again, the belayer was impressed and told me I did a great job for my first time repelling. All I could do was grin. It was a completely liberating experience.

V-weekend was really great in general. It was my first venturing experience. My Venturing Crew, which was Crew 95 at the time, had a small Halloween party because it was Halloween weekend. We craved pumpkins and dressed up in Halloween costumes. During the campfire, my crew put on skits and sang songs with the other Venturers. It was a great opportunity for me to bond with my fellow Venturers, the meals were delicious, and I learned how to shoot a bow and arrow. By the end of the weekend, I knew that I was hooked on Venturing.

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