I strapped on the harness and wriggled my fingers into the gloves. I fought the urge to run away from this rock wall. “No, I cannot chicken out now I thought firmly. I was regretting having accepted the challenge. It was like riding that really high roller coaster again.

At the age of seven, I was tall enough for roller-coaster rides. My confident cousin dragged me to the highest roller-coaster ride available in the theme park. From afar, the roller-coaster looked like an earthworm. As I approached it, the whole thing grew bigger until, close up, it was enormous. The view from the top would have been stunning if I were not riding the roller-coaster. Instead, I was stunned by fear. Since then I have never liked being up high and have kept my feet firmly on the ground.

“You can do it,” I encouraged myself repeatedly.

One, two, three steps. I pushed myself up to reach the first hand-hold. Slowly I reached for the next stone, and the next. Soon my palms became moist and tiny droplets of sweat formed on my forehead. After what seemed like forever, I looked down. I was only a few metres off the ground! I wondered how long it would take for me to reach the top. As I climbed, my anxiety increased.

I got to a point where I was stuck. I hung on to two stones for dear life, while my were feet scrabbling for a resting place. Even though there was the harness, I had my “what if” moment. I struggled to feel for a toehold. Without thinking, I did the last thing a faint-hearted rock-climber should do — I looked down. I winced. The ground looked hundreds of meters down. I imagined I saw clouds beneath my feet.

“Help!” I shouted desperately.

“Don’t worry, boy. I’m here to help you,” a welcome voice rang in my ears.

I looked up. A trainer was a few metres above me. He had a harness strapped around him and had lowered himself down. He guided my feet to the holds I had to step on. Then he pointed to the rocks I was to grip hold of. Rock by rock, I climbed up. Finally I reached the top. The scenery, and my relief, was amazing.

“Thank you! Oh thank you! I could not have done it without you!” I told my saviour gratefully.

The trainer smiled and said, “This is what I enjoy doing.”

Together, we sat and watched the sunset.
This achievement gave me confidence in myself. I could not believe that I had overcome the fear that had haunted me for years. In life, we cannot control some things. However, fears can be controlled and overcome if we put in some effort.