



LIFE EXPERIENCES CAN LEAVE US WITH LESSONS TO BE SHARED. IN THIS SERIES, WE HEAR WORDS OF WISDOM FROM MEMBERS OF OUR OWN COMMUNITY.

Majka Burhardt '94

Majka is an author, professional climber, filmmaker, and entrepreneur. She has spent two decades exploring the world — usually by hand and foot — and collecting stories of challenge, humanity, and the fine line between extreme and acceptable risk that inspire and challenge audiences around the world. In this issue of *Today at Breck*, Majka shares a few words of wisdom for the Breck community.

Pursue your passion alongside your intellect. When I graduated from Breck, I was both passionate and conflicted. I didn't understand how my dual passions of being outdoors as a professional climber could meld with my interest of making an impact in the greater international world. What was clear to me was that they came together by being incredibly persistent and rigorously pursuing both passions in my life. I was able to jumpstart my career as a professional climber and leverage that experience to explore the world and create deeper conversations.

Be forthright in your humanity. Being a young woman in the climbing community was remarkable in the late '90s. But that also left me feeling alone and isolated. I chose to deal with that adversity by putting a lot of pressure on myself to show up and deliver at the highest level — by making sure I was the strongest, most prepared member of our community. While it served me well at the time, I also look back and say that it would have been equally helpful to show up and be honest with where I was on that given day.



Avoid isolation. When you are creating your own career, you have no roadmap. You do not report to a corporate office that is helping nurture and support you through raises, feedback, and assessments. Early in my career I faced this feeling of being alone. I have learned to support myself with professional development and colleagues in the community so that I am not in a space of isolation.

Ground yourself in the space that you are in. When I get off the plane in Ethiopia, the smell washes over me and I know that I am in my Ethiopian home. Each time I get to Mozambique and see Mount Namuli, the place I had been working on for nine years, right in front of my eyes, I feel the wind knocked out of me. Grounding yourself in the space you are in matters because it is how you know you are at your true north.

Give things 200%. Ironically I now have twins.

Bring yourself forward authentically. I am honored to have been so intimately allowed into people's lives everyday. I know people from all sorts of cultural backgrounds who speak different languages and dialects, and I have realized that diversity is both awe inspiring and daunting. By treating everyone as an individual and listening to their stories, we can bring their voices forward.

Be complex in this world. Complexity is what gives the world richness. There is a lot of pressure to streamline and simplify in a way that feels very narrowing. By bringing your personal complexity forward, life is going to continue to be fun and engaging.

Learn more about Majka at her website www.majkaburhardt.com.



Anne Skidmore