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[Home](#) > Progression

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I would have used the title anyway even if [Big Up Productions](#)^[3] didn't beat me to it. Progression is what I experienced last weekend and that in and of itself is success. I ended my climbing season last year at Red River Gorge by giving up on a 5.9+ (Plate Tectonics) and climbing lesser grades the rest of the day. Though I did have other successes in expanding my experience and practicing fundamentals of good climbing, I really wanted to end the year with the ability to conquer 5.9. I fell short.

The winter months I sluffed off physical training but did spend some considerable thought on the mental aspects. Did some pull-ups here and there, bouldered once, and hit the climbing gym 4-days before heading out to the Red again to kick-off my 2010 climbing season but all in all my physical training was not optimal.

It turned out though that it was my mental conditioning that made the difference. Right off the bat, I climbed a 5.10a (Dynabolt Gold). And then another (Lil T-Bone). Then I climbed a 5.9 slab that was a challenge (Dance of the Druids) that did not play to my natural strengths and made it to the chains. That was a boost to my confidence and reaping the dividends of my mental training reinforced my belief that I can continue to improve, to progress.

A large part of my mental training was Arno Ilgner's, [Espresso Lessons](#)^[4]. But that wasn't entirely it. I was also shaped by many contemplations I've had on the subject of [fear](#)^[5] and [belief](#)^[6] and inspired by individuals that have overcome their own challenges and achieved their desires. My life has continually gotten less

compartmentalized and the progression I have sought in my family life and professional life and spiritual life has carried over to my rock climbing life and vice versa. Rock climbing has made me a better person and being a better person has made me a better rock climber.

My 5.10 may not win me a segment on Big Up films but personally, it's the progression that matters.

Photo compliments of [Adam](#)^[7] & [Karina](#)^[8] Beck

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