

Book Review

Review of Appetite for Risk-What it is, Who has it and How I survived, by Robert R. Abbott

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Abstract. Appetite for Risk is an autobiographical memoir of the author's life experiences. He vividly explains near-death experiences while maintaining humor, regaling about his escapades. It is thought-provoking to consider if human risky behavior is genetically predetermined.

Keywords: Appetite, risk, genetic, environmental, physician

In "Appetite for Risk: What it is, Who has it, and How I survived," the author, Bud as he is known, chronicles his memoirs and takes readers through a breathtaking narrative as someone with thirst for adventure and a career as a marine biologist. The autobiographical account explores human inclination towards risk taking which drives herculean endeavors like scaling Mt. Everest to landing on the moon.

His storytelling is captivating and vivid, to where the reader is transported to the author's world to experience his stories. His description of escaping from machete-wielding pirates in Nigeria by shouting a few sentences picked up in a local dialect or navigating through fifty-five countries across five continents is thought-provoking and exhilarating. His ability to share his vulnerabilities, while also being able to recount the dangers in a humorous manner aimed at himself, makes the book an absorbing read.

Vivid descriptions of surviving a failed main parachute and failed reserve parachute jump in Cal-

ifornia, swimming with great white sharks, escaping political turmoil, and exploring uncharted caves are few nail-biting accounts that challenge one's understanding of a serial risk taker. Bud's statement that "Serial risk takers are the Life Force's exploratory Fringe to attain success" could be paraphrased "No Guts, No Glory." He is, however, also extremely candid about the not-so-wise choices made and the lessons learnt.

Bud wonders about genetic and environmental influences that predispose one to seek danger while others take the cautious approach. He introspects on his travels through various geographical locations, geopolitical situations, poor choices (e.g., calling out a wanted criminal) and ultimate journey culminating as a mystic! He equates his behavior to his ancestors' risk-taking behavior and pontificates that this probably shaped his DNA, thus increasing his tendency for adventure. He labels this "Appetite for Risk" aptly.

He recommends parents to treat children to diverse, challenging experiences to help them adapt to the global changes in socioeconomic and environmental culture, highlighting the value of travel/life expe-

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riences in addition to education. His validation of leadership training and learning foreign languages underscores the importance of humankind's need for adaptive survival skill sets to navigate, survive, and enhance the world we live in.

Being a physician, I draw parallels in a physician's journey. As a physician, one needs to be resilient in recovering from setbacks like learning that medicine is not all about helping patients, but navigating the health care system in each social, political setting that one is part of. A physician spends years learning about the human body, its afflictions, and measures to cure and help patients. One needs to be adaptable, incorporating the latest innovative technologies into practice.

Physicians think and act quickly, as delay can mean the difference between life and death. Life-long curiosity persuades one to keep up to date with

all the latest research, treatments, and technology. The integration of artificial intelligence, electronic health records, and telemedicine requires physicians to be comfortable with various digital tools. This competence enhances their ability to provide accurate diagnoses, personalized treatments, and efficient patient care.

Bud lived with indigenous tribes in Nigeria and the Pacific Islands, and he highlights the value of empathy and communication. Similarly, physicians build trust with their patients, understand their background, and communicate in an empathic manner. Holding oneself to sound judgement and ethics while navigating risks and benefits of treatment being recommended is an example of critical thinking.

Bud's description of his journey is incredible. As one comes to the end of the book, it leaves a sense of regret that reading the book is done.