

TAKING THE JUMP

I'm usually the "wimp" of the group. The "baby" or the "scared one." Let's just say that is going to change today – I hope. I'm proving everyone wrong... by skydiving. Not alone, of course! My friend Sammy is coming with me. Let's just hope that by the end of the day, it's not just her falling out of a plane, 3,000 feet up in the sky.

It all started last Tuesday. My friends and I were talking about going to Cedar Point together over spring break. Let's just say I backed out quick.

"I don't do roller coasters. Sorry guys." I said, hands up in surrender.

"C'mon Andy!" my friend Alissa said, "It'll be fun. Unless you're too scared." She rolled her eyes. Let's just say Alissa is the one friend who's not quite my friend. I got so mad I walked out of Sammy's room before anyone could say a word.

The next day Sammy ran up to me, jumping excitedly – per usual. But this time seemed different. She seemed extra excited.

"I have the *perfect* idea and you can't say no!" Before I could respond she kept talking. "We're going to go skydiving! It's time for you to take a risk. I always feel bad leaving you out when you don't feel comfortable doing something. Well, that changes now! On Saturday, you, me – and our moms of course – are going skydiving. It's time for you to face your fears and take the jump!" Now, at first, I was unsure. I mean, skydiving?! But after a day of Sammy constantly asking me, I gave in – but only for Sammy. I'd do anything to make her happy.

"Fine. But this better be worth it." I said, my heart pounding.

So, here we are. Right now, I'm getting my harness and helmet on. Sammy keeps giving me the thumbs up sign, a big smile on her face. I'm not so sure though. I keep regretting saying yes, but I don't want people to think of me as the wimp anymore. It's time for me to have some courage.

"Okay!" our director said happily. "You guys are ready to hop on the plane. Step in and follow instructions. Have a safe flight." I froze. This was actually happening. My mom kept giving me a reassuring smile, but she loved these things, so she couldn't talk. As the plane took off, I started getting more and more worried. There's no way I'd be able to do this. I felt like I was going to puke. I could feel my mind telling me to back out, but my heart told me I needed to face my fear. It would be good for me. At that moment, I wanted to listen to my brain. But I knew I had to get over my fears and take the jump.

"Okay," our instructor said. "I'll be diving with you guys, but I'll run over the instructions now." She made sure our parachutes were secure, and that was that. We were off. Even at 16 years of age, I felt like a little kid scared of the monster under my bed. But I was ready. Okay, not really, but I tried to be. Sammy grabbed my hand, squeezed it, and smiled.

"Three... two... one... jump!" Sammy leaped out of the plane, and since she had hold of my hand, I fell right along with her. Let's just say the first 30 seconds of free-falling out of a plane are terrifying. But once I stopped screaming and opened my eyes, it was amazing.

"See?" Sammy said, still holding me. "It's beautiful. The second I turned 16 I wanted to skydive. Now you know why." She was right. Looking down at the ocean and beaches was enough to distract me from the feeling of falling.

"Thank you, Sammy. I mean it." I spoke. We hugged as best as we could with our instructors on our backs and enjoyed the journey down.

The rest of the day was amazing. I'll never forget my experience. And it got me over my fear! My friends and I all went to Cedar Point over spring break and rode so many roller coasters. And the best part is, I didn't feel like the baby anymore. I felt invincible. Like I could do anything. It's all thanks to Sammy. I realized how much I valued my friendship with her, and I knew that now, I could do anything I set my mind to.