

Armando Morales

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Prof. Satrom

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## **The Odyssey of Philippe Petit**

Can you imagine doing something illegal, where the slightest mistake could cost you your life? On August 7, 1974, Philippe Petit, a French wire walker, did exactly that when he walked on a wire between the Twin Towers in New York City. This event was portrayed by the movie "Man on Wire," directed by James Marsh and released in 2008. This was Petit's longtime dream, and in order to achieve it, he had to overcome three major obstacles: physical preparation, mental preparation, and logistical preparation.

One of the challenges was physical preparation. Due to the high altitude of the towers, a slight mistake or distraction could mean the end of his life. For this reason, he set up a training camp in France where he and his team practiced and simulated the situation. For example, he walked on a wire while his friends shook it to simulate the wind at great heights, and he did a lot of physical exercise. In addition, he walked on a wire between the towers of Notre Dame Cathedral, and the Sydney Bridge in Australia, neither of which were as tall as the Twin Towers, but it was excellent practice. As a result, he was well prepared, physically, when he walked between the Twin Towers.

Another obstacle was mental preparation. For this he relied emotionally on Annie, his girlfriend at the time, who always encouraged him, even when he thought it was impossible. Jean-Louis, his childhood friend, also played an important role by pointing out all of the risks and consequences that Petit had not thought of at the time because he was too excited. At one

point, Petit even rented a helicopter, so he could fly over the Twin Towers to trick his mind into believing it was not too high. He also watched cops and robbers movies, so that he could compare what he was about to do with other people's illegal actions.

A third problem was logistical preparation. It took him six years to plan every move from the beginning to the end. He had to convince some people who he didn't even know to join him, so he could assemble a team for each tower. He also made a plan to avoid security, and to sneak all of the equipment to the top of the towers. In order to do this, he needed inside sources, so Petit convinced Barry Greenhouse, who worked on the highest occupied floor, to help. He also spied on the activity in the buildings for a long time, so that he could have a clear idea of the right time to arrive with his team. Additionally, he made a plan to get the wire across the two towers. In order to do this, they used a bow and arrow and attached to it a fishing line, a rope, and finally, the wire.

Even though it took him six years to plan, and even though it was illegal and life threatening, on August 7, 1974, Petit walked back and forth on the wire for 45 minutes between the Twin Towers. Petit must be very driven and passionate about what he does in order for him to overcome all of these complex obstacles to achieve his dream. Today, at almost sixty years old, Petit still a purist, who believes that the performing art he does should be done his way. Perhaps the most important lesson we can learn from this great movie is that we must be willing to take risks and be tenacious in order to achieve our dreams and goals.