



## HEAD GAME



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# WHEN THERE'S NO TIME TO PANIC

**I**f you're a pilot and use social media, you've likely seen the video No Time to Die by acro pilot Kevin Philipp, which went viral in early August. If you haven't seen it, the video shows Kevin mis-time a brake input during a manoeuvre, an error that sends him into the wing. What follows is a series of heart-stopping events throughout the roughly minute-long video. We breathlessly watch him burn through over 300m (1,000ft) as he tosses two reserves over the first 40 seconds. Spoiler alert: the second reserve opens, and Kevin lands fairly uneventfully.

I talked to Kevin to discuss how the whole thing went down from his perspective. I hoped to get a glimpse into his mental state throughout the event and learn what it takes to fight to the end. After experiencing an incident that would likely leave most of us questioning our life choices, I found Kevin incredibly calm in his retelling.

A successful XC pilot of 10 years and an acro pilot of eight, he is no stranger to the variable nature of paragliding. He credits the years of training that allowed him to keep a level head throughout. "I was performing a Twisty Misty, which is technical but not one of the very hardest manoeuvres," Kevin said. "It's a manoeuvre I know by heart and feel quite comfortable with." Unfortunately, fate doesn't always care about our comfort. "During the move, I got stuck with my hand somehow, and it was just enough to launch me forward toward the wing." That, combined with the wind and strong thermals blowing the wing toward him, led to Kevin falling into the lines.

"I'd never touched my wing before, but 99% of the time, it goes well for pilots," he said. "I was optimistic that it would come out, that the glider would catch some air and reopen some." That's why he waited for a beat before throwing the first reserve.

Having tossed the laundry a few times in the past, Kevin knows how well they work. This experience and trust in his gear are likely part of why he could maintain a clear head in such a situation. When the first didn't open, he grabbed the second. "I would say I had no time to panic. I just needed to function and did what I needed to," he said.

"I did get a little more nervous when the second rescue didn't open right away, but I kept fighting it," he added. "I know what

fear is, so to not be scared in this moment was actually really surprising to me."

About five years ago, Kevin had a paragliding crash that laid him up for a couple of years; initially, it wasn't clear that he would even walk again, much less fly. "There was this huge mental process to go through," he said. "There was a lot of pain and mental trauma due to losing hope and confidence." Coming back from that accident, he found he had to work through a lot of fear when he started flying again. However, he credits the work he did back then with why he doesn't have any lingering mental trauma from his current near-miss.

In fact, he went out and got right back on the proverbial horse. "For sure, the first two or three runs after, I was a bit nervous," he said. "But straight away, I did the manoeuvre that I failed, and everything felt right and fine." He even flew the same glider – after a thorough inspection, of course.

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So what advice can Kevin offer us non-acro savants who may end up in a pickle? "Try to stay calm," he said. "To almost every problem in flying, there is a solution." He also highly recommends getting clued into potential issues that can arise while flying and learning their fixes, namely through SIV. "I think the most important thing is that you're aware of what can happen," he explained.

"And if it happens, then at least know what you can do, and you can function." But he recognises that even though what we have to do might not necessarily be technically hard, it can be challenging to stay cool mentally. "The thing is, you shouldn't give up. Like never. Until it's done," he said. "You should always try to fix the problem."

For this incident, in particular, Kevin took it one step at a time and stayed focused. When the second reserve didn't open, he noticed that it was tangled and in easy reach, so he grabbed it, shook it loose and ripped the package open before tossing again. "I was actually quite surprised that I was that low when the second rescue opened," he said. He was less concerned about his height above the deck and more about getting the reserve to open. For those wondering, Kevin came away from the incident completely okay, sustaining only a minor superficial scratch to his arm. 📸

Watch the video at [bit.ly/kevinphilipp](https://bit.ly/kevinphilipp)