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Comments: Access to climbing and in particular, safe climbing through the use of fixed anchors is crucial for the health and wellbeing of diverse peoples. Outdoor rock climbing increases mental, emotional, and physical being. I am a psychotherapist and I have seen rock climbing support people in overcoming difficult circumstances. I will speak about the specific benefits that access to climbing via fixed anchors can provide to mental health, especially in the LGBTQ+ population.

Mindfulness and Awareness

Climbing requires extreme focus and attention. The more difficult the movement, the more attunement and body awareness it requires. Many climbers with anxiety report that they get relief from their anxious thoughts while climbing because they need to focus so much. In some cases, not paying attention to a particular safety check can lead to serious injury or death. Fixed anchors are safety 'check-points' that folks can use to navigate, rest, and decide whether to continue or bail. Without the use of fixed anchors this process is much harder and can lead to serious injury or death if the climber is lost during the route or faces unforeseen weather conditions.

Self-Efficacy and Progression

Climbing is a progressive sport. There is always room to grow. It is open to all levels, and as climbers improve, it offers visible and physical proof that with practice and intention, one can get better with anything. Unlike some sports where competition is the emphasis, the only contender here is yourself. Climbing cultivates patience and you can take your time on a climb. Fixed anchors allow people to practice climbing with a progressive pace, and to do it in increments where they can build confidence over time. Navigating long routes without fixed anchors, using only trad anchors and requiring top-outs and walk-offs is an advanced skill. Removing fixed anchors deprives beginners of a learning opportunity and access to recreation.

Gender and Body Affirmation

Climbing is a popular sport and reprieve for transgender peoples. Climbing can address feelings of gender dysphoria. Building mind-body strength and confidence translates into having more positive attitudes towards the body and more feelings of aliveness within it. Nature doesn't judge or discriminate against gender identity or presentation. Nature is inherently healing and when a trans person can adventure into novel and diverse terrain, it is easy to feel awe and beauty. There is a sense of belonging and timeless connection to the earth. Fixed gear allows trans folks to access these quiet and judgement-free spaces more easily and with less barrier to entry.