

## THE ART OF TENSION & RELEASE



I'm afraid of sharks.

Sometimes, when I'm in the ocean, I imagine that I can see myself from under the water – my legs dangling over the surfboard. I am the shark. And I'm coming for me.

But this isn't from my own imagination. It's from Stephen Spielberg.

And almost 50 years later, *Jaws* still haunts me – and many others – on a visceral level. And despite the fact that they kill the shark, the story ends, and the credits roll, the experience doesn't leave us. It lives on forever.

Why?

Because this film masters an intricate part of storytelling: **The art of tension and release.**

Think about it: The scariest moments of the movie were less about the shark, and more about the tension leading up to its reveal; hearing it swim in the water, catching a glimpse of its fin, feeling it approach with those famous notes: Dun dun... dun dun...dun dun...

It's like a rollercoaster edging slowly to the top. The moment right before the curtains open. A final play to make or break a tied game.

And ultimately, the anticipation built from these tensions leads to a far more satisfying release: The ride's drop feels more exhilarating, the performance sounds more melodious, and the game feels more lively.

So, why does this matter?

Because the art of tension and release isn't exclusive to shark stories.

It's a vital part of creating all kinds of experiences – whether they evoke fear, excitement, joy, or even a sense of zen.

Like using [a meditation app to get attendees into the mindset of a calm ride](#) in a vehicle before testing it out in real-time. Or recreating the eeriness of a horror movie through 4D sensory triggers to thrust the audience back into the movie. Or a walk through Central Park with every touchpoint teasing the final destination of trying out the SPF products for the first time (And yes, we created all of these experiences!)

The takeaway?

Experiences aren't just participating in activities or moving from destination to destination.

Experiences are the journey of tension and release, resulting in impactful moments that will stay with you for years to come.

And while I don't plan on joining the Universal Studios Tour to live out *Jaws* in real life, I know someone, somewhere, is waiting in line right now to experience it all over again.