The idiom is used to describe a state of utter fear. Riding an extremely tall roller-coaster could render one “魂不附體” (*hun2 bu2 fu4 ti3*). A student who opens his report card and finds that he has failed in every single subject would feel the same.

A related English expression is “to jump out of one’s skin,” meaning “someone is suddenly surprised or very much frightened by something” (非常吃驚; 大吃一驚).

Fear is believed to cause many physiological damage too, hence the expression “嚇破膽” (*he4 po4 dan3*) - “so scared that the gall bladder burst.”

**Terms containing the character “附” (*fu4*) include:**

附近 (*fu4 jin4*) – proximity; nearby; vicinity
附和 (*fu4 he4*) – to repeat what others say; to parrot
附件 (*fu4 jian4*) – an annex; an enclosure
附加 (*fu4 jia1*) – to add; to attach