

## Excuses

Oh, how my mindset has changed since January 2010. I surprise myself. LOL I have so many missions and things to discuss I get scatterbrained and can't keep track, but let's see if you can make a mess out of this jumbled maze.

I've learned so much. Though I have so much more to learn, I am so far from where I was. I don't know if Samantha realized she was teaching me all of these things, but she has taught me things which fuel me every day.

First lesson. In the Spring of 2010 when Samantha took me out on the road, we did 3.64 miles. My first thought was "I hope they remember I want to be cremated." I then replaced that thought with wanting to kill Samantha. Then the thoughts turned to "Hey, I can do this!" I don't know if she meant to teach me something else, but she did. That memorable day, the first leg of the walk/run was Rixey Road. Rixey Road has a big mostly unpaved hill. You go down to the railroad tracks. You come back up. That hill seemed mountainous that day. After conquering that mountain, I changed my focus to plotting Sam's murder. I was more than ready to turn left to go home. We turned right. Then we did Farmer Drive out to Rt 2. Farmer Drive is relatively flat. So each and every time I have gone out there to walk/run since that day, I do that hill first. I get the hardest part over first. What I learned about this is in reverse order, I'd probably avoid the hill like the plague, but doing it first, I have no desire to stop because compared to the hill, the rest is a breeze (I started to write "piece of cake" and changed my mind.). That is an important part of my program I don't know if Samantha even realizes she taught me. Oh, she probably does. She's a clandestine being.

Second, I learned to be flexible in prize-setting. For example, those of you who read my 5k story know my solid motivation was a law enforcement dispatcher job. So because in college (a ¼ of a century ago) I tried some drugs I shouldn't have and I am honest to a fault and revealed that on the applications, I can never be a law enforcement dispatcher. Sure, it's a shame and everybody who knows me knows I'm not "that type of person." Rules are rules, however. They have the rules for reasons. I was honored to be able to apply. After all, it did change my whole life. Since with the blink of an eye my prize was obliterated, I did sulk for a while and lose sight of my goals. You see, throughout life as I started diets, they quickly fizzled. I guess it's a good thing they weren't NASCAR races. This time, this motivation stuck. Well, when the motivation went out the window, I misplaced my confidence. I don't want to say I lost it because it just got sidetracked, not destroyed. After pulling up the bootstraps (or running shoelaces, as it were), what I learned was I can substitute other motivations that mean just as much and still maintain the confidence. I surprised myself on this one. I do have a new goal, a prize, in my head. I alone know what it is because it's for me, not somebody else, a goal I covet just like the dispatcher job. It will be achieved pretty far in the future, but I've got mini goals before I get there to motivate.

Third, more importantly, what I thought were reasons -- and good ones at that -- were nothing but excuses. I wish I could shout it to the world and make folks truly believe "You can't" does not exist. You absolutely CAN! I proved it & keep proving it. Even today.

Excuse # 1. *I can't go in a gym because I weigh 400 pounds. They'll make fun of me.* Lame excuse. Nobody has EVER made fun of me or shunned me or anything negative like that whatsoever in my gym. I have in other gyms felt that awkwardness but not for one second in Fredericksburg's American Family Fitness. I LOVE every minute in my gym. I weighed over 400 when I got serious this time, 500 top weight. I know someone else who weighed over 500 when he started at my gym. The staff and clients in my gym are fantastic; the equipment challenges me; there are many, many varied things I can do in there; I'm always learning; and I feel like a thousand bucks every time I walk in that place and a million when I come out. Every single time. There is no reason people can't go.

Everybody belongs there. They are not at all judgmental. They are very supportive & encouraging. I've seen people of all races, sizes, and ages in there working out. They'll find something you can do to work out at whatever level. You compete with yourself. You don't compete with the bodybuilders, though it is a plus to work out on the equipment situated with just the right view. ☺ Honestly, there is no excuse whatsoever for not walking in that door. I wish I could stand in the parking lot and hold the hands of those who were afraid and help them through that hard part. No excuses. Though certainly not my intent, it's really hard to talk about how excited I am about my fitness program without it turning into an ad for my gym.

Excuse #2. *I can't. I have arthritis or bad knees.* Lame excuse. I was diagnosed probably 20 years ago with arthritis in my knees. I've now been told I have "see-through bones," osteoporosis. That doesn't stop me. If you think it stops you, it's an excuse. Sure, there are some things you can't do with bad knees. I can't cycle, for instance, but next month I'm going to be a triathlete because the fabulous staff at my gym improvised with a bike-like machine. There is no "I can't." There might be "I have to do this one, instead of that one (for now)," but "I can't" is nonexistent. In addition to the other stuff I do, I have walked/run 10.29 pavement miles this week. No excuses.

Excuse #3. *I have an ingrown toenail.* And it's painful. And it's aggravating. I have two, but only one is painful (so far). Yesterday while shopping, I wanted to buy a letter opener and amputate my foot in the middle of Staples. Today's run/walk was planned before I realized what was wrong with my foot. It wasn't going to stop me. So I learned that it hurts less when I run, as opposed to walk. I decided to at least do my hill. Done. So coming back up the hill, I decided to at least equal my best distance to date (3.64 miles) so that I could say "If I can do it with an ingrown toenail, arthritis, osteoporosis, and all my weight (which today is 294), ANYBODY can do this." Done. I then decided to do BETTER THAN my best distance to date so I could say, "I beat my best time, even with an ingrown toenail, arthritis, osteoporosis, and all my weight. If I can, YOU can, too." So my ingrown toenails and I beat the pavement for 4.33 miles today. No excuses.

Excuse #4. I'm sure there are others. Bring them on. I will turn them into mincemeat. ☺

Fourth lesson. Enthusiasm and support. You know how after a funeral, sympathizers vanish and the grieving family suffers alone from that point? I figured that's what would happen after my 5k. I'm happy to report I was wrong. Those folks who were so supportive then still are. Even though I gained (to 328.5) over the holidays & in my self-pity phase after finding out the dispatcher job was unattainable, nobody in my support circle ever said, "Oh, what a shame." It was all positive. My support circle has been ultra excited as I've gotten back in my saddle – with a vengeance. Patrick is still as effervescent as ever and a more settled person now that he's met the wonderful Kaitlyn! Sam, of course, always was, always will be right there for me and even added another half to her support (Alex)! Monica keeps inviting me to races of distances I haven't yet conquered. Tim always likes my run postings and is always ready to answer questions I have for real runners. Brandi is just as jealous and also supportive as ever. She even had me in Wal-Mart trying on clothes! Imagine that! Donald is supportive, too, and tells Brandi she's enabling me if I ask her to help me with something. LOL One of my brothers constantly checks in with me to see how things are going. My brothers & I are all so busy. This brother & I hardly ever talked before, just when we needed to, simply because of time constraints. His checking in now is just awesome. And the list goes on. The point is, even though I stumbled, the enthusiasm and support has never wavered.

Fifth lesson. Mental changes. As I travel through my health program, my mental changes never cease to amaze me. I'm not talking about just the self-pride and happiness. I'm talking about how reaching each mini goal seems to balance me, for lack of a better word. For instance, currently I'm in the midst of relationship issues. Of course, it's all his fault. ☺ But I had been shooting some pretty damning daggers with my words. So then I did my 4.33 miles. I was on top of the world. My ecstasy

was not puncturable. My words completely changed. My whole attitude changed. I apologized for the mean things I had said and from that point only said positive things. Nothing he said riled me – even if that were the intent. And it has continued into tonight. Of course, watching Joyce Meyer at 6 AM on the topic of “how to forgive” probably iced the attitude. I can be snorting like a bull or feeling my blood pressure rise from whatever is going on in my life at the moment as I head out to run or walk in the gym, but when I reach one of my mini goals (which is generally as simple as to increase by just a smidgen that which I did the time before), I’m on cloud 9 and it’s all roses and daisies for the duration. I think this change surprises me the most – the fact that my new vice (fitness) – is a “feel good” vice in all respects; whereas, my last vice, food, was a temporary “feel good” that made my attitude unpleasant. Surprising though it may be, it’s the lesson for which I am most grateful.

Last but not least, the sixth lesson I learned is I MUST go to the bathroom very last thing before I walk out the door to walk/run. 😊

Thanks for sharing chapter 2 with me. If you still think you “can’t,” come back April 16 for chapter 3, “I’m a Triathlete!”