

Failure Is an Option

I have tons of time to do what I want and most notably is the opportunity to be active and outside. For example, there was the nearly 800 mile thru-hike of The Arizona Trail, which took 53 days and the 1,500 mile bike ride from Texas to Arizona, that lasted 33 days.

The more I go, the more I want to push myself. What can I take? How much? How far? That's where the 24 hour challenge was born. To see how many miles/steps I could backpack in a single day.

I chose a section of The Arizona Trail north of Flagstaff and at midnight, started hiking. It was the day before a full moon and perfect outside. It was like hiking at dusk instead of the middle of the night and I was able to go long stretches without the headlamp.

My pack was loaded: food, water, stove, fuel, tent, sleeping bag, iPad, extra battery, etc. I'm definitely not an ultralight hiker, but it didn't matter because I felt good and by 3:00 was already at 8 miles and at 6:00, had 15.4. This meant I was on pace for at least 60 miles, right? Wrong.

Over 27 miles and 55,000 steps by noon and the half way point was quite good. However, I was slowing down and at 14:00, called it. I won't bore you with the reasons/excuses why I quit. The point is I gave up and what's funny is I really thought I'd make it to the next midnight. It wasn't even close. *Failure.*

I tried this 24 hour experience one more time several months later and did last a bit longer, but still didn't go the entire day. *Another failure.* In fact, there was also a recent period I wanted to average 20,000 steps a day for 12 months, but fell short of that. *Three failures.*

Realistically, I shouldn't beat myself up. You learn a lot from falling short. I mean, there are lessons. Right? Like, I wasn't afraid to get out here and you only regret the stuff you don't do. Plus, like much of my life, was living in the moment.

Yet, that first 24 hour disappointment, I went nearly 32 miles and the second letdown, took over 73,000 steps with all my gear. I'd guess a lot of trail enthusiasts would be thrilled with days like that.

Now, do you know how many steps are needed to average 20,000 every day for a year? 7,300,000. I may have fell short, but averaged 19,520 and therefore had well over 7,000,000 steps during those 12 months. I'm old, poor, and homeless, but still walked, hiked, or backpacked more than 3,500 miles over those 365 days.

It feels good finishing what I set out to do like those 800 and 1,500 mile trips and I'll get some more victories before it's all done. I'll no doubt have quite a few failures, as well. Yet, perhaps the most important aspect is just being grateful for the opportunity to be pushing and fighting and going and trying and succeeding *and* failing.

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