

Self-Control

“Shoelaces”

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Races are a lot of fun. My calves are on fire, my lungs are imploding, my feet are blistering, my mind is screaming to give up. People are passing, the sun the pelting, more people are passing. I'm sweating like a madman (maybe even crying a little). The finish seems oceans away and every second feels more drawn out than the last, and just when I think it's never going to end, just when the sky is expanding a little too much... there's the finish line. The random strangers are cheering, and I'm running, it's the final hundred, and I feel like I'm flying and dying at the same time. And then I'm there. It's such a good, fuzzy feeling (or maybe that's just me about to pass out).

That feeling, though, is not the result of that one race. It takes a lot to get to that finish line, and it's so much more than one race. It's all the endless days and endless miles that lead up to it. The hardest part of it all is not the fire, nor implosions, nor blisters on race day. The hardest part is tying my shoes.

When I tie my shoes, I'm making the conscious decision that I'm going to run in the first place. When I tie my shoes, I'm resisting the impulse to watch all the Monty Python movies in one day. When I tie my shoes, I accept that running doesn't get any easier (and I will be pitifully slow and horribly out of shape until the end of time) but it's okay because when I tie my shoes, half the battle is already won.

So whatever goals you have, whatever big endeavor you want to pursue, it's not about how fast you can get to the finish line, but about resolving to put your time and effort into that one thing every day and not giving up on it. It's about choosing to stick to it and being patient with it. But above all, it's about tying your shoes.