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How to…. Run a Marathon Every Day

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Those Eyes
Gabriella Fora

Anywhere I go I can't seem to get away from those eyes. Those eyes that read me like a scanner, and are quick to judge every move I make and everything I say. Those eyes that travel in packs, but always target an innocent individual. Eyes that analyze and criticize on instinct. Eyes that are cunning, quick, and hungry. Hungry for their next victim. Hungry to cut them down for that ounce of satisfaction. But even they know the feeling is only temporary; so they repeat their cultish practice and continue to exchange other's pain for their pride. If you're not careful those eyes can tear you down, and make you question the truth behind your own eyes. But one day the sheer glaze will disappear from their eyes, and the invisible boundary they have created will crumble. They will learn to see others the way they were meant to be seen. And they'll realize that their eyes are no different than mine.

How to.... Run a Marathon Every Day
Mary Ellen Hoeffner

I awaken this morning, opening my sleepy eyes and begin to peer around my room only to find everything just as I had left it the night before. My gym bag lying open on the floor with black Nike basketball shoes, an orange and black practice jersey, ankle braces, and a water bottle spilling out onto my carpet. On the chair in the corner of my room lay all the clothes from the day before in a heap waiting to be put away. Scattered upon the glass top of the desk my Calculus books and calculator rest awaiting another day of use at school.

Once I see everything is in its proper place, I roll over and stare out the window at the morning sun shining down through the cold, crisp winter air. I should be happy. It is my senior year, my chance to shine. The year when all my hard work over the past four years is finally going to pay off, but no, I wake up this morning depressed and exhausted. I say to myself, “Here goes another day of having to run yet another marathon.”

One would think that after running a marathon every day for the past thirty seven months I would finally be used to it; unfortunately, not. Each new day comes bringing with it another race. This morning my body is tired; I am shot both physically and mentally. I have no more energy to run, but I muster up any ounce of strength I can find and drag myself out of bed. Down the hall to the shower I attempt to do some of that positive self-talk crap that I keep on hearing people say should help me cope. This morning that sure doesn't seem to help any.

I stand in the shower allowing the steaming hot water to pour over me with the hope of it washing away this feeling of emptiness, the feeling like I have nothing else to give or offer. While scrubbing the shampoo into my long blond hair my head starts to spin, my eyes become a haze slowly going completely black. I reach my hands out to steady myself against the shower wall attempting to remain upright and not collapse here in the shower. My breathing is labored and my heart beats against my chest with torrential force as I try and...
regain my bearings. After a few minutes the dizziness passes, my eyes become clear, and I quickly finish showering in hopes of avoiding another episode. I survived the first five miles of the race.

After getting ready for school I continue my routine by sitting down with my brothers and sister for our usual bowl of cereal. Before I begin eating I pull from the shelf three prescription bottles. I opened each bottle one at a time laying out one, two, three, four, five, six, and seven pills on the placemat. Seven pills it would take to get me through the race today. Swallowing down the first three of the day was the first checkpoint in my run. With each pill sliding down my throat a sense of anger surges through me. "Mother day of dependency on meds," I say to myself. "Is this what my life has come to? A life that is completely dependent on medications to get through a day. How pathetic." I struggle to get past this feeling, attempting to replace these feelings with something positive, but today it seems so hard to do.

I make my way to school and enter the locker-room only to be greeted by all of the hyped up girls giggling and laughing about the latest drama and gossip. I have no energy to expend on these high strung conversations and exchanges, so I quietly make my way down the hall to class and wait for the bell to ring. The rest of the day passes at a dreadfully slow pace. I watch the clock longing for the final bell to ring. The last class of the day is Calculus no less, and my eyes feel suddenly very heavy. I listen to the lesson as long as possible before I fall asleep on my desk. I awake to find my teacher standing over my shoulder tapping me on the back. I sit up quickly and apologize for falling asleep, although I wasn't really sorry. I didn't have much of a choice, my body just decided to give up on me. The final bell rang at last. I had made it through the first 10 miles of the race.

Now it was time for basketball practice. I love basketball. It is one of my greatest passions, but unfortunately my body doesn't allow me to excel at this sport. I get dressed and pop another two pills to help make it through practice. Every practice starts out with running a mile. This should be relatively easy for an avid basketball player, but no, not for me. My body refuses to build up any measure of endurance. It seems as though no matter how hard I push, how much I train, how much I run, my endurance doesn't get any stronger. All of the other girls run with ease while I struggle to even complete this daunting task. It is in moments like these that I feel so inferior. As captain of the team I should be at the front of the pack leading my team around each lap, not at the tail end struggling to even keep up.

Once the mile is complete, I help lead the team through our usual stretching. I sit down and count out the time as we stretch and loosen up our muscles. The coach blows the whistle and calls us all over. I hop up only to sit right back down again to avoid passing out. The all too common symptoms set in; my eyes have gone black while my head spins in circles and my heart pounds within my chest. I slowly stand up after a minute and make my way over to the rest of the team. Mile fifteen complete.

After careful instruction we proceed into our next drills followed by five sets of guts up and down the court. At each line we are to bend down and touch it with our hand. As I make my way up to the first line I bend down, and feel all of the indicators screaming at me that I am soon to pass out. I run over to the bleachers and collapse upon them with my hands above my head and my feet resting on the wooden surface. I close my eyes and let the feeling pass. I eventually regain my composure and jump back in practice. Mile twenty finished, barely.

On my way home from practice, I can hardly wait to eat the dinner my mom has prepared. I walk in the door and immediately sit and scarf down every bit of salad, chicken, and rice that cover my plate. Eating was one way that I could provide myself with a boost of energy. I take the next set of pills and quickly whip out my homework as fast as possible. All I want to do is crawl into bed, give my body a chance to recharge for the race tomorrow. Mile twenty-six, done.

The reason for my daily running of a marathon is definitely not something done by choice. My freshman year of high school I was diagnosed with an illness called Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome. It is an illness which affects the functioning of my blood vessels. In a normal person, their blood vessels constrict to send the blood up into the heart. In my body, my blood vessels do not con-
strict on their own causing there to be a lack of blood in my heart. This causes my heart to race uncontrollably, which in turn causes me to get dizzy, light headed, and sometimes pass out. With each accelerated heartbeat extreme fatigue consumes my body. The doctors explained to me when I was first diagnosed that my heart works at the pace of a normal person who runs a marathon every single day of their life. So, this is why every day is a marathon.

The tips I have learned throughout my four and a half years of having this condition are many, but can be summarized in seven points. One, don't hold your hands above your head for too long. Two, take your pills even when you don't want to. Three, take a nap. Four, don't stand up too quickly. Five, don't touch the line when running guts. Six, get your feet above your head and lay down when you feel like passing out. Seven, on the toughest of days find someone sturdy to lean upon. Seven tips to go along with seven pills. This is the key to knowing how to run marathons successfully.

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**Missing**

*Emma Sleeman*

One beat-up teddy bear is all that remains of the little girl I lost. Two button eyes watched her disappear—no one else knows where she went. Three torn threads show the love he once received, revoked. Four matted paws remind me of the child who carried him everywhere. Three moth-eaten holes reveal the years spent in my dusty closet. Two floppy ears heard me close the door and walk away. One beat-up teddy bear tells the story of when I surrendered my childhood.