

A LETTER FROM JOE

My goal of agreeing to do the story on Channel 10News was to bring hope to people who think that they cannot overcome obstacles in their lives. Although I think that the story was portrayed very well, there were some very important topics that were discussed during the interview but not covered on TV due to the length of the segment. What the story didn't cover was how tough it was just to get myself to the pool in the dead of winter when my entire body ached and my feet were almost fully numb. I was able to get through those workouts by thinking of how many people in this community are rooting for me to succeed. If my wife and my friend Mitch Turner were not there to subtly push me along, I wouldn't have been able to get through those tough times. I was asked during the interview if I thought that I would beat the cancer; my answer was that I am not fighting this battle alone. I have an entire community behind me, praying, cheering and helping me along. It will take a miracle, but miracles do happen so why not happen to me? I was asked how I was able to train and finish a triathlon. While I was training for my first triathlon, I was going through chemotherapy, aching all over and fighting a chronic cold. When I got back home after most rides I would sleep for hours and my back would ache severely. It's funny but in past road races, I was usually passing people the entire race. During the triathlon, I was getting passed the entire way by people who were older and started the race 30 minutes after me and it was a humbling experience. But, I finished what I started and I accomplished my goal of not finishing last (I finished second to last by the way).

The story didn't cover that I lived my entire life overweight. It wasn't until I graduated college at 175lbs (I'm 5'5") that I choose to change my life and become healthy. When I first started running I couldn't complete a mile without walking part of it. Through grit and determination I worked my way up to a 5k and ultimately to a half marathon. If you think that I enjoyed running at first, you are wrong. It hurt everywhere. But I kept putting one foot in front of the other and broke down my runs into little goals and I NEVER gave up. I was determined to change my life. If there is any lesson that I would like to pass on my children, it's to *never give up when things don't go your way*. I think the best way to measure a person's character is to observe them when things don't go their way.

I was also asked if my outlook on life has changed. My outlook on life hasn't changed. I am happy to be alive, happy that I can enjoy time with my family and friends and thankful for all of those times that I took myself out of my comfort zone and attempted something that I wasn't sure that I would succeed at. I do, however, look at other people's lives differently and I wish that everyone who reads this will really value their lives and realize how fortunate they are to be healthy. I know it sounds cliché, but please don't waste your lives wishing that you had done 'this' or tried 'that'. Consider yourselves, as I do, fortunate to be alive. Never give up on yourself because if you do you, it means that you have quit living. I want everyone who reads this to be inspired so that they can achieve what they never thought was possible. I want everyone who reads this to really, really think about what is important in life and do what makes YOU happy. Life is uncertain, I know firsthand. Please don't waste any time. Start trying to achieve your goals because you just never know when it will all be over.

I was also asked how do I get through every day. This is the most simple, straightforward answer; I put one foot in front of other and keep plugging along. The hardest part is taking that first step. I hope you all realize that's true in anything you want to accomplish. The final and most important topic that the story didn't cover was that there have been so many gracious people in this wonderful community who have helped us out. I'm sure that we have forgotten to thank many of you but please understand our situation. So I say now, to all the strangers who come up to me and give me hugs and tell me to keep fighting, to all of the businesses who have donated things to help my family out financially and to all of my friends who have unselfishly given up time in their own busy lives, we thank you.

Peace, Health and Happiness

Joe

PS. I saved every single card of encouragement that was sent. I keep them on a corkboard in our bedroom so I can wake to them every day. Please keep cards coming. They mean more than you will ever know.