

Chapter 3 - I am Successful

Seeing the tracks ahead, the faint whiteness of the finishline, butterflies in her stomach, she was about to pass or fail in another 100m sprint.

This time, she wasn't just up against the best in her own class, but two of the fastest sprinters in the entire school. Nerves were shaking her inner core as she tried to think about how this was her chance ... to win. Just before the race took off, a heavy rain shower started and the wind picked up - this was shaping up to be a very unusual race. Across the starting line, there were groans from the other five participants but one girl felt every drop of rain and every gust of wind and said to herself: "this is perfect!"

"Marks, Set, GO!"

And they were off!

A slow start, the rain blurring her vision, the wind trying to push her back, she sees two are ahead of her. By now, a crowd has gathered to watch this crazy race that was put together to determine who represented the school in the county relay team. Her breath was failing and muscles tiring as she fought with the wind - could she live with 3rd place? She had to push harder; she had to believe 1st place was still within grasp.

A boost of determination and a switch occurred - instead of fighting the pain of the wind, rain and fatigue, she would allow it to fuel her.

Instead of seeing the circumstances revealing weakness and allowing it to hold her back, she started to see it as a chance to find a new type of strength.

Against the best sprinters in the school, that cold, rainy and dull day, she finished 1st!

I have no idea what was happening in the others' minds, but I was so determined to win that race that I couldn't let anything stop me. The other girls used the weather to excuse their poorer performance - and I remember downplaying my success because "I only won because they were off their game". My form teacher was there and he said it was inspiring because he could see my struggle and my pain - and through it, came victory!

Looking back, I realise, that was my biggest and boldest success. While they allowed circumstances to affect their performance and then use that to rationalise why a girl in the year below beat them, I won. It slowed me, but it did not stop me; It made me question my ability, but it did not overcome my determination.

It was nowhere near my fastest time, or my best sprinting technique, yet, I won.

Life will throw us all sorts of crap. Things will happen that often knock us off course or make us feel we just won't win this time. Many people will crumble under all sorts of pressure - perhaps you lost your job, someone close to you died, you were diagnosed with a medical condition, or you are under the burden of many smaller stresses. Each day we are faced with so many challenges that try to sway us or nudge us away from who we truly are. Do you ever let pressure knock you out of patience with your loved ones? Do you ever let anger creep in because your dog misbehaved? Do you ever let fear of failing stop you from even getting started?

When life's wind and rain storms come in, it's hard to stay on course. I have had many a thing over the years that have had that power over me for a while. It's hard to understand the storms and many of us get caught up in asking "why is this happening?" or "now what?" or "here we go again" and then *sigh* *cry* *give up*.

The "why" often hides from us, which is frustrating and discouraging. But that shouldn't justify summing to the hidden. Because it is by pressing forward *through* not understanding "why" that you often discover it... The reason is to help you grow.

Will your storms deter you or fuel you?

Remember, it was nowhere near my fastest time, or my best sprinting technique, AND there was a storm ... yet, I won!

It's not the circumstance that determines success or failure, it's how you get through it :)

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything." (James 1:2-4 NIV)