

I've always maintained that if you pay attention to life, it can teach you many wonderful things. Perhaps it teaches you about humility ... or love ... or suffering ... or karma.

Along those same lines, sport is, without a doubt, a metaphor for life ... and in sport, we have the opportunity to learn many lessons of life. Whether it's the preparation for an event, or the span of the event itself, we are presented with strong life lessons that can make us much stronger, more sensitive to the world around (and within) us, and much more at peace with ourselves.

In the task of preparing for an event, be it a 5K run or an Ironman triathlon, you are always pushing the edge of what you think is possible. It's a mental challenge - perhaps even far more so than the physical challenge that is presented to us. Within this mental challenge, we go places that perhaps we never thought we'd go, revise our beliefs of ourselves and our limits, and "push the envelope" (with all due respect to Chuck Yeager) of our existence.

The same is true of the event itself - only now, it's a microcosm of the process. Though there is a start - and a finish - it is the process of discovery that will indeed be never-ending. The event is but a mere bump in the road - a signpost, if you will, to demarcate a lesson learned or an epiphany experienced.

I've been to this mountain many times, in many ways, throughout the avenues of my life - but in many ways, it's not so much the events, but the moments of clarity contained within, that have captured my fascination.

For the most dedicated, motivated, and perhaps even compulsive, the task of goal setting drives many onwards. How often do we aspire to climb a higher mountain, or seek out a bigger project at work, or aim to "go bigger and better"? How often do we measure ourselves, our lives, our merit, by the achievement of our goals?

I've faced many challenges in my life, as we all have no doubt, and I am as goal-oriented as anyone. Be it my participation in life ... career ... love ... music ... you name it, I love the process of exploration, goal setting, and certainly "achievement". But in many ways, it's been

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my experiences with “failure” - or perhaps I should say “the inability to achieve my goal” - that has given me the greatest sense of reassuring glee. It’s not about “failure” as such - it’s about “letting go”.

Over the course of one day recently, I was re-awakened to the fact that I can indeed “let go” - that sometimes the end result of not achieving the goal can be overshadowed by the process of putting myself in a place to give it a go. It’s a very intriguing moment, that instant when you think “damn, I am doing everything I can in my power, given what I have to work with today, and it’s just not going to happen today, try as I might, even try beyond what I think is possible today”. Incredibly, the moment was followed by ... “but that’s ok, I have had the beauty of the experience, I am alive and healthy, and I will be alright when everything is said and done - and tomorrow is another day”.

It’s not at all about “giving up” - it really is about “letting go”.

It requires honesty with yourself - that by stepping back, you’re not simply avoiding the goal. Yes, the psychologists call that “fear of success” and “fear of failure” - two separate yet related entities. But this isn’t what I am talking about right now.

The split second thought of failure, of not being able to attain a goal that I had worked so hard to achieve - was immediately followed by a lifetime of realization, that knowing when to let go is in fact harder than simply pushing harder and being more obstinate and stubborn.

And therein lies the beauty - that within every goal - the inability to attain it, to see it through fully, may in fact be the most beautiful and fulfilling realization, a breath of fresh air, a moment of “being ok with me”. Twenty years ago, I might not have been good with it - twenty years later, I am wiser and understand the pieces of the puzzle a little better. Isn’t that what we call “growth”?

For that reason, Lubbock, Texas will always resonate deeply within me. On the plains of west Texas, I discovered me - again - and I remembered - that life is far bigger than any race I know.