Walking Towards Success

Nine Lessons From Walking 2,642 Miles Across the Country

The Truth About Goal-Setting, Grit, and Making It Happen

By Ranger Kielak
Founder, Within Range Coaching
Host, The Never Peak Project Podcast



Walking Towards Success

Nine Lessons From Walking 2,642 Miles Across the Country

The Untold Truth About Goal-Setting, Grit, and Making It Happen

By Ranger Kielak
Founder, Within Range Coaching
Host, The Never Peak Project Podcast

Copyright © 2025 Andrew Kielak

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other noncommercial uses permitted by copyright law.

Published by Within Range Life Coaching LLC [Half Moon Bay, CA]
www.withinrangecoaching.com

Table of Contents



Beware of the Sabotaging Voice	**6**
Finding Your Why	**10**
Just a Frog in a Pond **Breaking Down Big Goals**	**16**
Identifying Values Choosing **the Right Road for You**	**20**
The DA Cycle **Part 1: Declarations**	28
Do It Over and Over and Over Again	**34**
The DA Cycle **Part 2: Accountability**	**38**
I've Reached the Top! ... Now What?	**42**
On Beginnings and Ends **The Never Peak Mentality**	**48**

Hi, I'm Ranger Kielak.

Hi, I'm Ranger, and in March 2024, I set out on a journey that would test my endurance, challenge my mindset, and change my perspective on what's possible. I walked from the Atlantic shores of Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, to the Pacific coastline of Los Angeles, California—a nearly 3,000-mile trek across ten states, completed entirely on foot.

But this journey wasn't just about seeing if I could do it. It was about something bigger—highlighting the incredible people making a real impact in their communities. Along the way, I met and collaborated with countless individuals and organizations dedicated to making a difference.

Through the generosity of others, and the Wander Project, I was able to raise over $8,500 for causes close to my heart, including Future Farmers of America, Bigger Than the Trail, and The Hospice Promise Foundation.



More than anything, this journey taught me two invaluable truths:

- There are good people out there—a lot of them. I was constantly reminded of the kindness and generosity of strangers who helped me along the way.
- Success is never a solo endeavor. While I walked alone most days, I never truly did this journey by myself. The support, encouragement, and guidance of others made it possible.

The lessons I learned from this experience extend far beyond walking across America. They apply to any big goal—whether you're launching a new venture, expanding your business, or creating a movement that makes a difference.

This book is a distillation of those lessons. It weaves together personal stories from my walk with practical strategies for setting goals, overcoming obstacles, and maintaining momentum—so that you can make your biggest dreams a reality.

You don't have to do it alone. Like my journey, success is built one step at a time, with the right mindset, the right people, and the willingness to keep going even when the road gets tough.

So let's get started. Your journey is waiting.

Ad montem,

Ranger Kielak

Ranger Kielak
Founder, Within Range Coaching
Walked Across America, 2024

Chapter One: Beware of the Sabotaging Voice

"This is how humans are: We question all our beliefs, except for the ones that we really believe in, and those we never think to question."
— Orson Scott Card

In 2019, I was sitting in my fraternity room on the second floor when I came across a post by Mike Posner. He was a singer who, by most accounts, had already had his moment in the spotlight.

He even admitted it himself in one of his songs:

"*I'm just a singer*
Who already blew his shot
I get along with old-timers 'cause my name's a reminder
Of a pop song people forgot."

Yet, instead of fading into obscurity, he was doing something extraordinary—**he was walking across America.**

I was captivated. Inspired.

How cool!

How neat!

How incredible!

I wished I could do something like that.

And then, almost as quickly as the inspiration arrived, the other voice spoke up—the one that had always been there but never announced itself. The one that sounded like me, but somehow also wasn't me.

"You can't do something like that."

"You're too fat."

"You're too broke."

"You're too weak."

"You're just a normal dude. You're not an athlete. You're not famous. That's not for people like you."

The spark that had ignited inside me fizzled out just as fast.

So, I put the dream away.

For almost three years.



The path was there, but I didn't think I could walk down it.

For years, I kept telling myself that a walk across America was nothing more than a passing thought—a fantasy that wasn't meant for someone like me.

But that wasn't the only dream that I let slip through my fingers.

I watched others live out their own wild dreams, and I convinced myself I was just a spectator, not a player.

Then, something changed.

I came across Andrew Kivett, a guy who had started and completed his own walk across the U.S. Then I found Mark Dudek, another guy who had done the same.
And here's what hit me like a ton of bricks:
They were just normal dudes.

They weren't superhuman. They weren't elite athletes. They weren't millionaires with unlimited resources. They were just like me—but the difference was, they had decided to take the first step.

And suddenly, the stories I had been telling myself for years—the ones about being "too" this and "too" that—started to unravel.
Were they true?

Or were they just stories?

The mind is tricky. It tells us things that feel like truth, but in reality, are just well-rehearsed narratives. And the worst part? We never think to question the ones we truly believe in.

The Sabotaging Voice had been running the show.

At some point, we all hear that voice—the one that whispers doubts, magnifies fears, and tries to convince us that success is out of reach.

The Sabotaging Voice is not a bully, not an enemy—it's actually a part of you that is trying to protect you. It's your lizard brain—the primal part of your mind that is wired for survival, not success.

- It sees risk and tells you to stay put.
- It sees uncertainty and tells you to play it safe.
- It sees failure as a possibility and convinces you never to try.

It's not you. It's just a part of you—a part that wants to keep you from getting hurt.

But here's the thing:

You can acknowledge it without letting it control you.

The moment I recognized that my doubts weren't me, but rather just a voice trying to keep me from stepping into the unknown, I took back control.



There were two paths. I could listen to the voice and stay the same, or I could learn to take action despite it, and do what I truly wanted.

Choosing to Challenge the Voice

It wasn't an instant transformation. The doubts didn't just disappear overnight.

But I started questioning them.

- "What if I'm not actually 'too' anything?"
- "What if all of these thoughts are just stories?"
- "What if the only thing separating me from those who have done incredible things… is that they took action?"

And that's when I made the decision.
I was going to do it.

I didn't have a full plan yet. I didn't have all the answers. But I had one step, and that was enough to get started.

The Lesson: Your Sabotaging Voice is Not the Truth

As you work towards your own big goal, your Sabotaging Voice will show up. It will try to convince you that you're not capable. It will remind you of past failures. It will find every possible excuse to keep you in your comfort zone.

And in those moments, remember this:
The Sabotaging Voice is not reality. It is noise.

You don't have to fight it. You don't have to suppress it. You just have to recognize it for what it is.

And then…

Take action anyway.



This photo was taken during an interview with a news station in Fort Smith, Arkansas



The life you want is in your hands.

Activity: Recognizing & Rewriting Your Sabotaging Voice

Step 1: Start Noticing When Your Sabotaging Voice Speaks Up
Keep a journal or notes app handy and write down whenever you hear the voice.

- What does it say?
- When does it show up?
- What triggers it?

Step 2: Identify Its Goal
Ask yourself: "What is this voice trying to protect me from?"

- Is it fear of failure?
- Fear of embarrassment?
- Fear of stepping into the unknown?

Step 3: Rewrite the Story
For every negative thought, write a new, truthful statement to replace it.

Example:
Sabotaging Voice: "You don't have the money to start this business."
Reframe: "Plenty of people have started businesses without a ton of money. I can take small steps, get creative, and find a way."

Sabotaging Voice: "Who are you to think you can do this?"
Reframe: "Who am I not to? The only difference between me and those who have done it before... is that they decided to take action."

Bonus: Personify Your Sabotaging Voice
Give it a name and a description. Maybe it's "Larry the Overprotective Dad" or "Carl the Couch Potato."

- What does it look like?
- How does it sound?
- How does it try to keep you "safe"?

**By naming it and giving it an identity separate from yourself,
you take away its power.**

Chapter Two: Finding Your Why
The Mission That Drives You

"He who has a why to live can bear almost any how."
— Friedrich Nietzsche

The Question That Changed Everything

Before I took my first step across America, I called Mark Dudek, a guy who had already done it. I wanted the practical details—what shoes to wear, how to handle the weather, where to sleep. And Mark gave me those answers.

But before we hung up, he gave me one last piece of advice.

"Oh, and one more thing—make sure you have an answer when people ask you 'Why?' That's the most common question you'll get. Make sure you can answer it before you start."

At first, I thought my answer was simple:
"Because I want to."

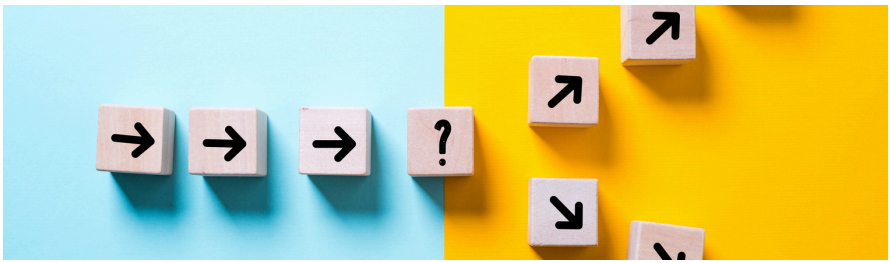
That should be enough, right?

But then I imagined the worst moments of the journey—blazing heat, pouring rain, exhaustion, loneliness. I imagined something breaking, an injury setting me back, a day where quitting seemed like the best option.

Would "because I want to" really be enough to push me forward when everything in me wanted to stop?

I didn't think so.

And so, I sat with the question: Why am I really doing this?



The Easy Answer Isn't Enough

The thing about big dreams is that when the excitement fades, the resistance creeps in. The doubts start whispering. And when things get hard, your brain will try to convince you that quitting is the right choice.

That's why your why matters.

Without a deep mission and vision, you're building a dream on sand—it will wash away at the first sign of struggle.

But when you build on purpose, you create something solid. Something that can stand against the wind, the storms, and the setbacks.

So, I started asking myself:

- What am I walking for?
- What message do I want to carry?
- How do I want to impact the world with this journey?

At first, I didn't know. But then I thought about what inspired me to do this in the first place.

I had seen stories of people making a difference, and I wanted to shine a light on them. I wanted to prove that kindness and generosity still exist. I wanted to show that the world is filled with good people, and I wanted to meet them.

Slowly, my why took shape.



Defining My Mission and Vision

After weeks of reflection, I crafted a mission statement that became my North Star.

Mission Statement
My mission for The Walk is to highlight, learn from, and work with people in the USA who are making a real difference in their communities.

Tagline
"There Are Good People Out There."

Vision for Life
To create the largest ripple I can, so that others feel inspired to take action toward their dreams.

Purpose
To serve humanity.

This wasn't just a statement—it was a pillar that held me up when the road got rough.

When I was tired.

When I was soaked from a storm.

When my gear broke, and I was miles away from the nearest town.

When the loneliness crept in.

I reminded myself:

"You're doing this for something bigger than yourself."

And so, I kept walking.

Your Why is the Foundation of Your Success

I've noticed that when people chase big goals, they obsess over the tactics—the strategies, the step-by-step plans, the best methods to "succeed."

And while those things are important, they aren't the foundation.

Your why is.

Without it, your motivation will fade. You'll look for excuses to quit. You'll lose sight of the bigger picture.

But when you have a why that is bigger than you, something powerful happens:

- You push through resistance.
- You find energy on the hardest days.
- You make decisions with clarity.
- You stay the course, even when doubt creeps in.

Your why is the difference between **giving up** and **getting up**.





Having a clear mission and vision for my Walk Across America allowed me to make the most out of the experience.

I met amazing people doing incredible things in every single state I walked through.

Above- My meeting with Austin Coats from Hope's Bridge Inc., a sober living house in Arkansas.

Right- My goodbye selfie with Ranger Rhys, a New Mexico Radio Host.

CHAPTER TWO

Crafting Your Own Mission & Vision

Now, it's your turn.

Just like I had to uncover why I wanted to walk across America, you need to define why you're pursuing your big goal.

Because without a why, the how won't matter.

Mission Statement
Your mission is the core of what you're doing. It answers the question:
"What am I here to do?"

A great mission statement is specific, clear, and bigger than just personal success.

For example:
✅ "To empower single mothers to build successful online businesses."
✅ "To create programs that help at-risk youth discover their potential."
✅ "To teach people how to develop the mindset to overcome their biggest fears."

Vision Statement
Your vision is the long-term impact you want to have. It answers the question:
"What kind of change do I want to create?"

A great vision statement is a dream scenario, it is the outcome that is achieved when your mission has been reached, and other with similar missions have achieved theirs.

For example:
✅ "To create a world where every person has the confidence to chase their dreams."
✅ "To make sure no entrepreneur feels alone in their journey."
✅ "To transform the way people view struggle and resilience."

When you combine mission, vision, and action, you create an unstoppable foundation for success.

By having a clear mission statement I was better able to tell and share my story across the country, in a variety of formats. I was asked to be on live television, radio, podcasts, newspapers, and more.

Everyone wants to be a part of something. Give others something to be part of.



Activity: Defining Your Why

Take time to reflect and write out your own mission, vision, and action items using the prompts below.

Step 1: Define Your Mission
"What am I here to do?"
→ Write your mission statement in one sentence.

Step 2: Clarify Your Vision
"What kind of impact do I want to make?"
→ Describe the long-term change you want to see in the world because of your work.

Step 3: Determine your next step
"What can I do to start moving towards this purpose?"
→ Write out a few key tasks that would help you make your mission and vision a reality.

Pro Tip: Your mission and vision statement should be one sentence, use language simple enough for a 12-year-old to understand, and you should be able to recite it under extreme pressure.



Final Thoughts: The Power of Knowing Your Why

Once you have your why, everything changes.

- Your motivation shifts from external to internal.
- Obstacles become stepping stones instead of roadblocks.
- You stop questioning whether you're capable and start focusing on what you can create.

My mission, vision, and purpose carried me across America.

What will yours carry you through?

Now, it's time to take action.

Write down your mission, vision, and action items, and commit to carrying them with you—on the good days and the bad.

Because when the road gets tough, your why will be the thing that keeps you walking forward.

Chapter Three: Just a Frog in a Pond Breaking Down Big Goals

"You don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step."
— Martin Luther King Jr.

Overwhelmed by the Big Picture

When I first committed to walking across America, I was excited. Inspired. Motivated.

And then… I was overwhelmed.

How was I supposed to plan for every single challenge I'd face along the way?

How would I know I was making the right decisions at any given moment?

Did I need to have every step mapped out before I even started?

The more I thought about it, the more impossible it felt. My brain kept asking:
"How do you prepare for something this big?"

For months, this question paralyzed me.

Until one day, while talking to a coworker, I half-joked:

"I don't know, I guess I'm just a frog in a pond, huh?"

And in that moment, something clicked.



The Frog's Strategy

When I got home, I grabbed a sheet of paper and drew an imperfect circle—a pond.

On one side, I placed a green dot: Myrtle Beach, SC—my starting point.

On the other side, I placed another dot: Los Angeles, CA—my destination.

Then I asked myself:
"How would a frog get across a pond?"

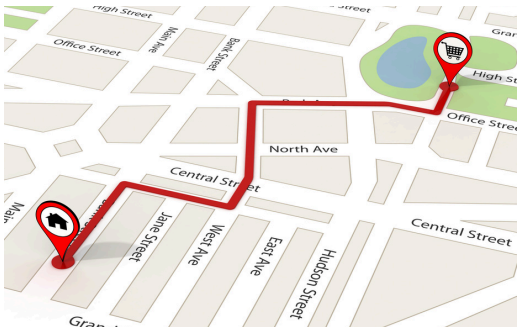
Well, it wouldn't just jump straight across—that would be impossible.

Instead, it would leap from lily pad to lily pad.

So I started drawing lily pads—small circles scattered across the pond. Each one represented a city or town where I knew I had friends or family who could support me along the way:

- Little Rock, AR
- Tulsa, OK
- Amarillo, TX
- Prescott, AZ
- Joshua Tree, CA

With those in place, my route started to take shape.



The Reality of the Swim

After mapping out my lily pads, I noticed something important:
Some jumps were short—only 20 miles apart.

But others were massive—hundreds of miles between stops.

What would a frog do if the next lily pad was too far away?

She'd swim.

So I asked myself: What does "swimming" look like for me?

It meant finding ways to bridge the gaps:

- Finding host families.
- Planning campsites.
- Carrying extra food and water for the longer stretches.

Suddenly, the impossible felt possible.

I didn't need to have every day of the walk perfectly planned.

I just needed to know where my next lily pad was.



How to Break Big Goals Into Small, Achievable Steps

This experience taught me a valuable lesson:
Big goals are overwhelming. Small steps make them achievable.
When you stare at the entire journey at once, your brain shuts down. It sees a mountain of uncertainty and starts listing all the reasons why it won't work.

But when you zoom in and focus on just the next step, the path becomes clear.

The Frog's Strategy for Achieving Big Goals

Step 1: Identify Your "Lily Pads"
- These are the key milestones along your journey.
- They could be small wins, major checkpoints, or supportive people along the way.
- Ask: What are the major stepping stones between where I am now and where I want to be?

S**tep 2: Plan for the "Swim"**
- If there's a big gap between lily pads, figure out how to bridge the distance.
- Ask: What resources, skills, or help do I need to get through the hard parts?

Step 3: Take the First Leap
- Don't wait until you have everything figured out—just focus on what's next.
- Ask: What's the first small action I can take today?

Step 4: Adjust as Needed
- No journey goes perfectly as planned.
- When things change, find new lily pads and new ways to swim.
- Ask: How can I adapt and keep moving forward?

Step 5: Celebrate Each Jump
- Recognize small wins and milestones.
- Each step forward builds momentum and confidence.
- Ask: How will I track and celebrate progress along the way?



Activity: Mapping Your Own "Pond"

Take a moment to break your big goal into smaller, manageable steps.

Step 1: Define Your Destination
→ What is your big goal? Write it down.

Step 2: Identify Your "Lily Pads"
→ What are the key milestones or checkpoints that will help you get there?
(Examples: "Launch website," "Sign my first client," "Reach 10,000 followers," etc.)

Step 3: Plan for the "Swims"
→ Where are the biggest gaps in your plan?
→ What support, skills, or resources will help you cross them?

Step 4: Take the First Leap
→ What is one small action you can take this week to get started?

Final Thoughts: The Power of Small Steps

No one jumps across the entire pond in one leap.

The only way to reach the other side is to start moving—one lily pad at a time.

When I looked at my walk across America as one massive journey, I felt paralyzed. But when I broke it down into small, manageable steps, I saw the path forward.

It's the same with your goal.

You don't need to know every single step before you begin.

You just need to know the next one.

Now, take the first leap.



Chapter Four: Identifying Values Choosing the Right Road for You

"If you don't know where you're going, any road will get you there."
— Lewis Carroll

The Road Less Traveled?

It was a blistering-hot Texas afternoon, and I was on the phone with one of my best friends, recounting the latest conversations I'd had with people along my journey.

"You should've taken more scenic roads!" someone had told me.

"Walk on hiking trails instead!" another suggested.

"I would've gone further north," yet another person had said.

It seemed like everyone had an opinion on what my route should have been.

And honestly? They weren't wrong. Any of those routes could have worked. But something about all of the feedback left me feeling… unsettled.

I told my friend, "The hard part is that they're not wrong, you know? Any of those routes would still get me to where I wanted to go. So why do I feel like I might be missing out on something?"

He thought for a second and then said something that changed my perspective:

"Well, man, it sounds like if you had listened to them, you'd be going the right direction, but on the wrong road to get there."

Boom.

That sentence changed everything.

It was clear I was going the right direction, but only I could decide if I was on the right road. No one else could decide that.

Only I could.



CHAPTER FOUR

How to Follow the Right Road

Building Your Personal Brand

We spend so much of our lives listening to other people's opinions about what we should do.

- The career we should pursue.
- The goals we should chase.
- The way we should define success.

And often, these suggestions aren't wrong—they might even lead to a "successful" outcome.

But here's the thing:
If that road doesn't align with your values, you might reach your destination and still feel lost.

That's why identifying your personal values is essential when pursuing a big goal.

If you don't take time to understand what truly matters to you, you might end up somewhere that looks like success on the outside—but feels empty on the inside.



Julie and I the first day of The Walk



Tom and Normandy. Tom hosted me in the Atlanta, GA area.

By identifying and solidifying my values before The Walk, I was able to determine the right people to connect with along the journey.

Values Are Your Internal Compass

Your values are the deep-rooted principles that guide your decisions, actions, and emotions.

They are the things that matter most—the non-negotiables that help you determine if you're on the right track.

When your goals align with your values, you feel energized and fulfilled.

When your goals conflict with your values, you feel disconnected and unmotivated—even if you're outwardly "successful."

What Happens When You Don't Follow Your Values?

Imagine working hard for years to build a business, only to realize it's consuming your life and keeping you away from your family—the very people you value most.

Or imagine climbing the corporate ladder, only to wake up one day and realize you've sacrificed your creativity, your freedom, and your passion just to chase a paycheck. The wrong road still gets you somewhere.

But if it's not aligned with your values, you'll feel like you've been walking in the wrong direction the whole time.



The Certified Pies team and I in Little Rock, AR. Samantha, Harlem & Kreg



Ti King, Ranger, and Brittany Rush in Little Rock, AR.

CHAPTER FOUR

Choosing Your Own Path

Here's what I learned on that hot Texas day:

There's no single "right" way to reach your goal.

But there is a right way for you.

And the only way to know that? You have to identify your values.

Three Questions to Identify Your Core Values

1. W**hat truly matters to me, beyond external success?**
    - Think about the moments in life when you've felt the most fulfilled.
    - What was present in those moments? (Freedom? Connection? Growth? Impact?)

2. **When have I felt the most frustrated or disconnected?**
    - Often, frustration comes when your values are being violated.
    - Look back at times when you've felt drained—what was missing?

3. **If I had to build my life around just three core values, what would they be?**
    - Freedom? Family? Creativity? Adventure? Security? Contribution?
    - The words you choose will act as guideposts for decision-making.

Once you know your values, you can filter every decision through them.

Does this path align with what matters most to me?

Does this choice bring me closer to the life I truly want?

If the answer is yes, it's the right road—no matter what anyone else says.



CHAPTER FOUR

Ground Your Goals in Your Values

If your goals don't align with your values, you'll always feel like you're missing something—even when you "succeed."

But when you build a life around your true values, success will feel meaningful, fulfilling, and deeply satisfying.

Don't just follow the road others say is "right."

Find your road—the one that leads not just to achievement, but to alignment.



Activity: The Value Wheel

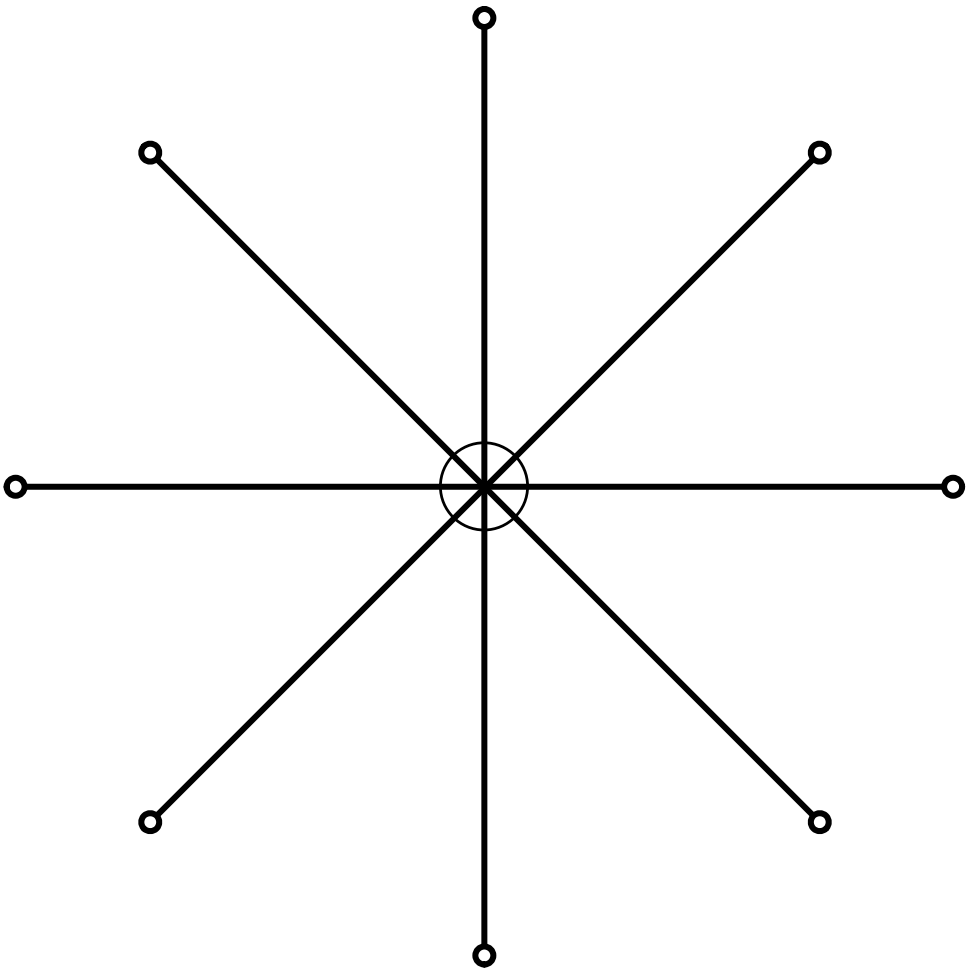
Step 1: Identify Your Core Values
- Write down 6-8 values that are most important to you.
- (Examples: Freedom, Growth, Family, Health, Adventure, Security, Creativity, Impact.)

Step 2: Assess Your Satisfaction Level
- Imagine each value as a spoke on a wheel.
- Rate your satisfaction level in each area from 0 (not satisfied) to 10 (fully satisfied).
- Place a dot on the spoke that represents where you feel you currently stand.

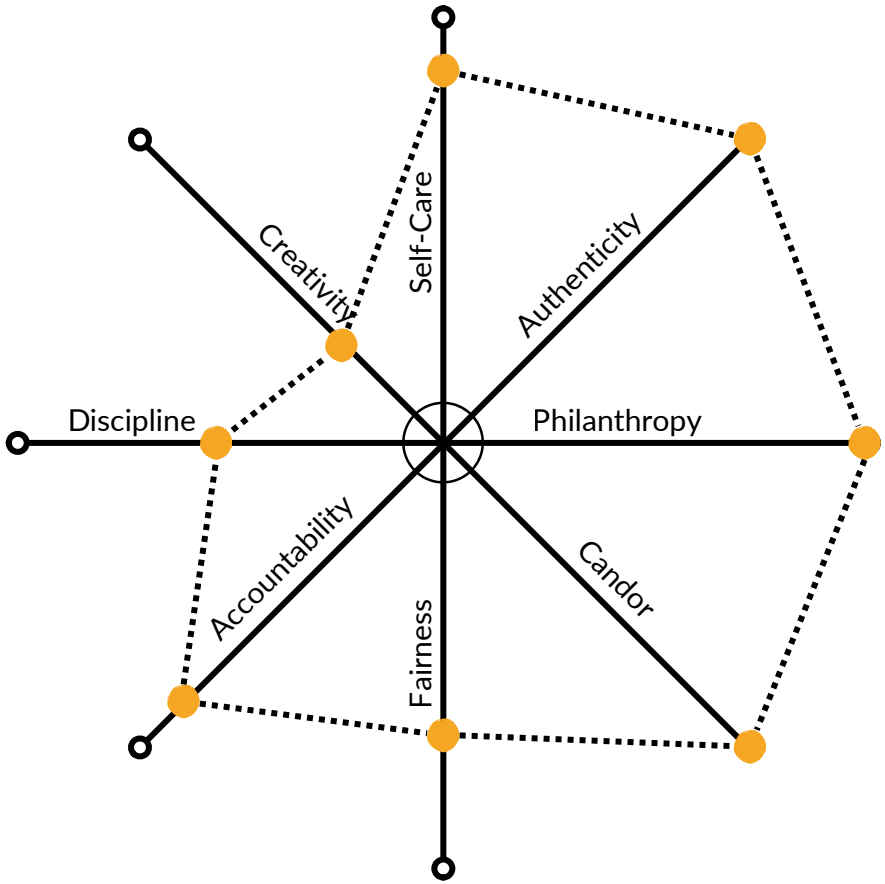
Step 3: Connect the Dots
- Draw lines between your dots to create a shape.
- If your values are well-balanced, the wheel will look smooth.
- If there are gaps, your wheel will be uneven—indicating areas that need attention.

Step 4: Take Action
- Choose one low-scoring value to focus on this week.
- Create a small action step to improve your satisfaction in that area.
- (Example: If "Health" is low, commit to 15 minutes of exercise each day.)
- Next week, pick another value and repeat.

Value Wheel



Value Wheel



In this example, it can be seen that the right side has been receiving most of the attention. Therefore, the person who created this would be inclined to spend some time honoring their creativity, fairness, discipline, and accountability side, while being curious about what is working for the self-care, authenticity, philanthropy, and candor.

Credit to Cami McLaren Coaching for materials.

CHAPTER FOUR

Final Thoughts: The Right Direction, The Wrong Road

Success isn't just about getting there.

It's about making sure you're on the right road to begin with.

That conversation with my friend reminded me that there are many ways to cross the country. There were hiking trails, scenic highways, backroads, and direct paths.

But the only one that mattered was the one that felt right to me.

And the same is true for you.

So, before you take your next big step—make sure you're walking on the road that aligns with who you truly are.



Chapter Five: The DA Cycle Part 1: Declarations

"Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back… The moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves too."
— William Hutchison Murray

Wanting vs. Declaring

For years, the idea of walking across America sat in the back of my mind—just another wild dream.

I had learned it was possible back in 2018. I watched others do it in 2020 and 2021. I admired their journeys. I imagined what it would feel like to take on such an adventure.

But that's all it was—a thought, a want, a possibility.

I was working toward my "want" of walking across the country about as much as I was working toward my "want" of traveling into space.

And I've never built a rocket.

The difference between a dream and reality isn't luck, talent, or even resources.

It's declaration.



From "Wanting" to Declaring

When real commitment happened

Everything changed in July 2022.

I was on a coaching call, and my coach asked me a simple question:

"Do you actually want to walk across the country?"

That was it. That was the question.

And by the end of that tear-filled, 62-minute call, I had my answer.

Yes. I want to do this. And I am going to do this.

As soon as the call ended, I texted my then-girlfriend:

"I'm going to walk across America."

She didn't laugh. She didn't question it.

She simply replied:

"Ok. What's the first step?"

That moment changed everything.

Because it was the first time I declared it out loud.

Not "I hope I can someday."
Not "That would be cool."
Not "Maybe when the timing is right."

But "I am going to do this."

The Power of Declarations

This is where the DA Cycle begins.

DA stands for:

1. **Declarations** – Stating your commitment out loud.
2. **Accountability** – Holding yourself responsible for seeing it through.

Declarations are more than just words.

They are powerful agreements you make with yourself.

A goal can feel distant. It can sit on a list for years.

But a declaration is immediate. It is a commitment to action.

When you declare something, you create urgency, responsibility, and momentum.

You shift from hoping to deciding.

THE MOST IMPORTANT STEP IS TO DECIDE TO TAKE THE FIRST ONE



Writing Your Own Declaration

When I finally declared that I was going to walk across America, the DA Cycle kicked in.

Because once you declare something...

You have to take action.

You don't need to have every step figured out yet. You just need to commit.

Use This Format to Write Your Own Declaration:

📍 "By X/X/X (Date), I will have _____ (goal). I will know I have it when _____. Having this outcome will give me _____."

Example:
"By 8/31/24, I will complete my walk across America. I will know I have it when I have made it to the Pacific Ocean in Los Angeles, CA. Having this outcome will give me a great story, the knowledge that I can do anything I set my mind to, and a network of entrepreneurs and nonprofit leaders across the country."

The power of a declaration isn't just in writing it down—it's in saying it out loud and committing to it.

Declarations Create Momentum

A declaration is the moment when a dream stops being an idea and starts becoming a reality.

Once you declare something, you become accountable to it.

You start thinking differently.

You start seeing opportunities where you once saw obstacles.

You start moving forward.

But declarations are only the first step in the cycle.

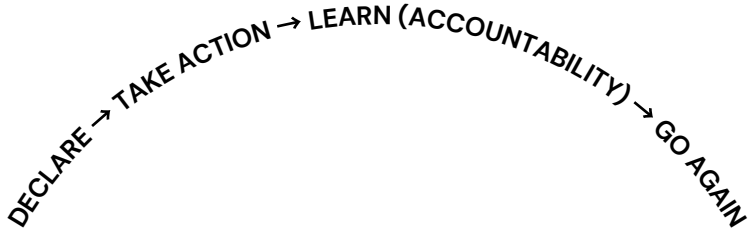
Once you declare something, you must take action.

Then you must learn from the process.

And then... you declare again.



The DA Cycle: Growth in Motion



Every great achievement follows this pattern.

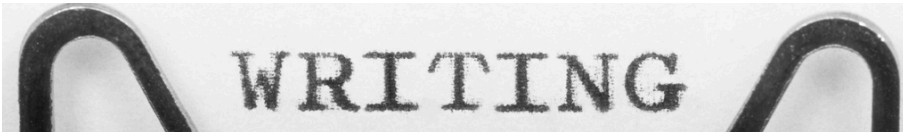
Declare what you want.

Take the first step.

Reflect and adjust.

Then do it again.

This is how progress is made—not through perfection, but through constant movement.



Activity: Declare Your Goal

Step 1: Write Your Declaration
Use the format:
"By X/X/X (Date), I will have _____. I will know I have it when _____.
Having this outcome will give me _____."

Step 2: Say It Out Loud
- Speak your declaration to yourself.
- Share it with someone you trust.
- (Bonus) Post it somewhere visible as a daily reminder.

Step 3: Take Immediate Action
What is one small step you can take today to move toward your goal?

Final Thoughts: The Power of Saying "I Will"

For years, I wanted to walk across America.

But the moment I declared it, my entire world shifted.

If you have a dream sitting in your mind, waiting for "the right time"...
That time is now.

Declare it.

Commit to it.

And then take the first step.



An end of day selfie taken in Mississippi.

Chapter Six: Do It Over and Over and Over Again

"Take one step. Then do that 5 million times."
— Andrew Kivett

The Simple Secret to Big Success

When I was preparing for my walk across America, I connected with Andrew Kivett, a fellow adventurer who had already walked a similar path.

During our conversation, he gave me a piece of advice so simple, yet so profound, that it stuck with me for the entire journey:
"Take one step. Then do that 5 million times."

It was scrawled in the fold of the front cover of his book—a personal message in a signed copy he sent me before I embarked on my journey.

It wasn't just a tip. It was a mantra.

Because no matter how big a challenge may seem...

It's never about one giant leap.

It's always about millions of tiny steps.



The Myth of the Big Leap

It's all about the small steps

We tend to believe that success happens in one big moment.

- A single breakthrough idea that launches a business.
- A single speech or video that goes viral.
- A single moment of inspiration that changes everything.

But that's not reality.

The truth is that every big success is built on thousands—sometimes millions—of small, consistent actions.

I didn't walk across America in one day.

I did it by taking step after step after step. And when you apply this same principle to your goals, something amazing happens:

You stop worrying about the entire mountain, and you just focus on the next step.

The Compound Effect of Small Steps

Andrew's advice was simple but deeply powerful:

"Take one step. Then do that 5 million times."

At first, a single step might not seem like much.

But when repeated over time, those steps become unstoppable momentum.

This concept applies to everything in life:

✅ Want to build a successful business? Make one sales call. Then do that 1,000 times.
✅ Want to write a book? Write one paragraph. Then do that 10,000 times.
✅ Want to master a skill? Practice for 10 minutes. Then do that every day for a year.

It's not about going fast.

It's about going forward.

YOU CAN'T REACH THE SUMMIT WITHOUT TAKING EACH STEP ALONG THE WAY.





The Myth of the Big Leap

The Power of Repetition

Most people quit too soon because they don't see instant results.

They send one email and get no response.

They make one post and no one likes it.

They work out for a week and don't see a difference.

So they stop.

But those who keep going, who repeat small actions over and over?
They win.

Why?

Because success isn't about what you do once.

It's about what you do repeatedly.

The secret is simple: Stay in motion. Keep taking the next step.



Why Consistency is the Key to Success

If I had started my walk across America thinking about every single mile ahead of me, I probably would have quit before I even started.

Instead, I just focused on one step at a time.

And before I knew it, one step became 100… then 1,000… then 1,000,000.

Your journey will be the same.

Small, consistent actions lead to massive results.

The difference between success and failure is often just who keeps going the longest.

Activity:
Your Small Step Commitment

Step 1: Identify the Smallest Action Toward Your Goal
- What is one small step you can take today?
- Make it something so easy you can't fail (Example: "Write for 5 minutes," "Make 1 call," "Do 10 pushups").

Step 2: Repeat It Daily
- Commit to doing this action every day for the next 7 days.
- Track your progress.

Step 3: Scale It Up
- Once you've been consistent for a week, ask:
- "Can I increase this slightly?"
- If yes, scale it up! If not, just keep going.



The Key to Achieving Anything

Walking across America wasn't about taking one big step.

It was about taking 5 million small ones.

Your goal—no matter how big—can be achieved the same way.

One action.

Repeated.

Over and over and over again.

Now, take your first step. Then do that a million times.

Chapter Seven: The DA Cycle Part 2: Accountability

**"When we are no longer able to change a situation,
we are challenged to change ourselves."
— Viktor Frankl**

What went wrong?

This was the question I asked myself on some of the toughest days of my walk.

I asked it when:

- I walked 20 miles with extreme knee pain through the rolling hills of South Carolina.
- The tires on my cart exploded, leaving me stranded 12 miles from civilization in Georgia.
- A thunderstorm in Oklahoma soaked me and all my gear at 11 p.m.
- I started feeling symptoms of heat illness in the 110+ degree California desert, with 5 miles still to go.

Each of these moments could have been seen as failures—failures to plan, to prepare, or to anticipate problems.

But instead of beating myself up, I made a different choice.

I asked, "What is the universe trying to teach me right now?"



The Temptation to Blame

When things go wrong, it's easy to fall into one of two traps:

1. **Blaming external circumstances –** "The weather ruined my day."
2. **Blaming ourselves harshly –** "I'm so stupid for letting this happen."

Neither of these responses helps.

Blaming external circumstances makes us powerless.

Blaming ourselves harshly makes us discouraged.

What actually helps is accountability—the ability to honestly assess a situation, take ownership, and apply what we've learned.

Turning Setbacks Into Lessons

Instead of viewing challenges as failures, I started looking at them as feedback.

Every setback taught me something:

- Knee pain? → Switch my shoes and get better inserts.
- Cart tires exploding? → Buy a better cart with durable tires.
- Thunderstorm soaking my gear? → Always have a backup, keep electronics in dry bags, and put the tarp over the tent.
- Heat exhaustion in the desert? → Carry more water, rest every chance I get, and always have an umbrella.

Each mistake was a lesson in disguise.

Each obstacle was a chance to improve.

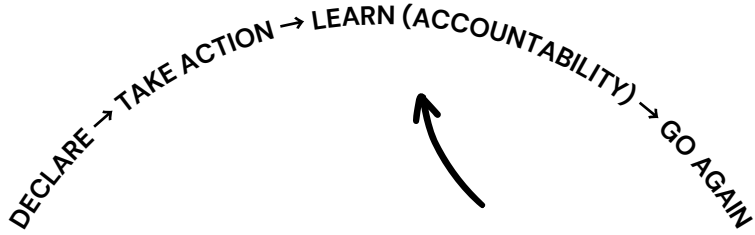
This is the heart of accountability:

- Owning your experiences.
- Learning from them.
- Adjusting so you don't repeat the same mistakes.



The Power of Accountability

This is the third step of the Declaration-Accountability Cycle:



Every action gives you data.

When things go right, you learn what works.

When things go wrong, you learn what needs to change.

But the only way to grow from experience is to own your results.

Accountability vs. Judgment

Accountability is not about blaming yourself.

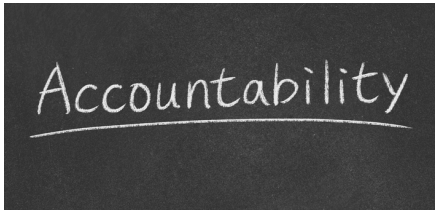
It's about evaluating your actions and asking:

1. What are my results today?
2. What worked and what didn't?
3. What did I learn?
4. What will I do differently going forward?

By focusing on actions rather than personal identity, you shift from self-judgment to self-improvement.

Instead of "I failed," you start thinking "That strategy didn't work. Let's try another one."

ACCOUNTABILITY LEADS TO SUSTAINED PROGRESS





Reflecting on Your Own Accountability

Step 1: Identify a Recent Challenge
- Think of a time when something didn't go as planned.
- Write it down.

Step 2: Ask the Four Accountability Questions
1. What were my results? (What happened?)
2. What worked and what didn't? (What went well? What needs improvement?)
3. What did I learn? (What insight can I take from this experience?)
4. What will I do differently next time? (How can I adjust my approach?)

Step 3: Apply the Lesson
- Identify one concrete action you can take based on what you learned.
- Implement it immediately.

Growth Through Accountability

Accountability is not about perfection.

It's about continuous learning and improvement.

Every setback teaches you something.

Every mistake is a step forward—if you learn from it.

So the next time something doesn't go as planned, don't ask "Why did this happen to me?"

Ask: "What is this trying to teach me?"

Then take what you've learned and go again.



SOMETIMES, WHAT YOU START THE JOURNEY WITH WON'T BE WHAT YOU END IT WITH.

I HAD TO REPLACE MY STROLLER A COUPLE HUNDRED MILES IN, AND THAT'S OK.

LEARN FROM YOUR MISTAKES AND KEEP GOING.

Chapter Eight: I've Reached the Top! ... Now What?

"Success is not the key to happiness. Happiness is the key to success. If you love what you are doing, you will be successful."
— Albert Schweitzer

The End of the Journey

A week before I finished my walk across America, I visited a friend in Ojai, California.

We met at her daughter's restaurant and bar, and as we sat outside talking about my adventure, a man named Nigel approached us.

He introduced himself as a fellow adventurer, someone who understood what it meant to chase big, audacious goals.

Naturally, he was curious about my story.

So I told him about the highs and the lows.

The people I had met.

The lessons I had learned.

And after listening intently, he hit me with a question I never expected:

"Are you an actor?"



The Post-Success Void

I laughed. "An actor?"

"Yeah," he said. "Like on stage, performing."

I shook my head. "No, I'm not. Why do you ask?"

That's when he explained something that stuck with me:

Actors, after the final performance of a show—when the curtains fall and the lights go out—often experience something called 'Post-Show Depression.'

It's a loss of purpose, a feeling of not knowing what to do next.

They've spent months, sometimes years, working toward this one moment—the grand finale.

Then suddenly, it's over.

The goal has been reached.

The peak has been climbed.

The final step has been taken.

And now... what?

He looked at me knowingly.

"Have you thought about that? About what happens after you finish?"



CHAPTER EIGHT

The Question That Brings Closure

The truth is, I had thought about it.

Other walkers before me had warned me about it.

The post-walk emptiness. The feeling of floating without direction.

"I'm concerned about it," I admitted. "But not overly so. Does that make sense?"

"Yeah, it does," Nigel said.

"Do you have any tips for avoiding it?" I asked.

He paused for a moment before responding.

"Well... no, I don't. I've never actually experienced it."

That caught me off guard.

"Why not?" I asked, trying to understand.

His answer was simple.

"Because I have so much going on. Everything I do bleeds into the next. What I typically do after something ends is to sit and ponder the question... 'Was it worth it?' "



Feeling Complete with Your Success

That conversation with Nigel changed my perspective.

I realized that reaching a goal isn't just about getting there.

It's about closing it out in a way that feels complete.

If you don't take time to reflect, acknowledge, and process the journey, you risk feeling lost after achieving what once seemed impossible.

So many people chase big goals—building businesses, completing degrees, running marathons—only to feel empty afterward because they didn't take the time to fully process what they accomplished.

Nigel's approach made sense.

Before moving on, ask yourself:

"Was it worth it?"

- Was the effort, time, and energy put into the goal meaningful?
- Did it align with your values?
- What did you gain from it—beyond just the achievement itself?

This single question helps provide closure, so you can move on to your next adventure with purpose rather than feeling lost.



The Importance of Closing One Chapter Before Starting the Next

Reaching a goal is not just about hitting a milestone.

It's about:
✔️ Acknowledging the journey.
✔️ Recognizing the impact.
✔️ Giving yourself time to feel complete before rushing into the next thing.

Many people burn out or feel lost not because they lack goals, but because they never stop to reflect on what they've already accomplished.

They keep chasing the next mountain without ever appreciating the ones they've already climbed.

True fulfillment comes not just from achieving, but from processing and integrating what you've learned along the way.



Reflecting on Your Own Peaks

Step 1: Think of a Time You Reached a Big Goal
Write down a major accomplishment in your life—something that took time, effort, and commitment to achieve.

Step 2: Reflect on These Questions

1. What did it feel like to reach that peak?
2. Why was it important to you?
3. What did it take for you to get there?
4. What did you learn about yourself in the process?
5. How can you apply what you learned to future goals?

Step 3: Ask the Big Question
Before moving on to the next big thing, ask yourself:

"Was it worth it?"

Sit with that question. Be honest with yourself.

If the answer is yes, you've closed the chapter.

If the answer is no, reflect on why—what could have been done differently? What adjustments will you make next time?

Moving Forward with Purpose

Reaching a peak is incredible.

But true growth comes from what you do after you've climbed it.

Take time to reflect. Close the chapter fully.

And when you're ready—start planning the next peak.

Part Nine: On Beginnings and Ends
The Never Peak Mentality

"Beginnings always hide themselves in ends."
— Mike Posner, Move On

The last day

August 31st, 2024 started much like the 174 days before it — with a jolt from my alarm clock before dawn and the usual battle to get myself out of bed. But this time, something was different. I wasn't in another state. I wasn't thousands of miles from the Pacific Ocean. I was in a bed. In a hotel room. Next to Julie. And just 12 miles from the finish line.

After 174 days of walking, covering 2,630 miles across nine states, I was one last stretch away from completing my walk across America. Within an hour, I was back at the exact spot I'd stopped two days earlier. One of my closest friends, Trevor, joined me for about nine of those final miles. At the "2.25 miles remaining" mark, he peeled off to run ahead and meet me at the finish line.

Once he left, I slipped on my headphones and turned on Mike Posner's album *Keep Going*. I planned to walk the final steps of my journey to the full album. I thought I could get through it without crying. I was wrong — by the end of the first song.

In "Come Home," Mike reflects on his life — the highs, the lows, the meaning behind the mission. One lyric hit me:

"As I tip-toe in and out of zip codes
All on a mission of love, that's what I live for
I got big dreams, ma, I got big goals
You see my old ones now because I lived those."

In just a few thousand steps, I was about to live one of my own goals. Something I'd dreamed about for years was moments away from becoming reality.



As I saw the Pacific Ocean come into view, I realized:
This wasn't the end. Just the end of this chapter.
The mission wasn't over — only this leg of it.

Waiting for me at the beach were my friends, my family, random beach-goers… and the culmination of everything the last five and a half months of my life had led to.

Kieran, one of my fraternity brothers, recorded the moment. As I stood at the edge of the ocean, I grabbed the sign from my cart that had read:

"Ranger's Walk Across America."
I drew on it, so it now read:
"Ranger~~'s~~ Walk*ed* Across America."

Then I looked into the camera and shouted:
"PEOPLE HAVE ASKED ME WHAT I WOULD DO IF I DIDN'T FINISH."
And with the biggest smile of my life, I added:
"I GUESS WE'LL NEVER KNOW!"
Then I sprinted full-speed into the Pacific Ocean.

As I sprinted to the water, I could see the past 5.5 months flash through my eyes.

I thought of Michael and Dianne, my first hosts at the Global Nest Exotic Bird Sanctuary in South Carolina. Of Andrew Kivett, Mark Dudek, and Kenny Mintz who paved the way for me. And I thought of the hundreds of people who stopped to check on me in storms, extreme heat, dangerous roads and more.

As I ran, tripping over the sand, I passed my friends and family. I had salty water running down my face before I hit the ocean.

When I hit the cold, Los Angeles water, I felt weightless. The pain in my legs. The sunburn on my neck. All of it was gone. The only thing I could feel was relief.

It wasn't a relief that I was "finally done." It was a relief that I had set out to do something. Committed to it. And saw it through.

It was a relief that I wasn't the same person I was 6 years ago. The guy that dropped out of Animal Science because of his grades, and lost sight of being a veterinarian. That drank himself silly on the weekends. That didn't think he could follow his dreams anymore.

That Ranger was gone.

The Ranger that was here, right now, was the man that was no longer dreaming of walking across America.

He wasn't the guy making excuses as to why he isn't walking across America.

He wasn't even the guy who IS walking across America.

Because in that moment, once I stood up from the cold, salty Pacific Ocean, and looked out to see everyone I cared about on the beach.

I knew.

I was officially the guy...



I walked across America.

After celebrating with friends and family, a reporter at the beach asked me, "What's next? How do you top this?"

I looked at them, smiled, and said:

"There's more mountains to climb. This is just another mountain in the range of my life. The mission never stops, there's more work to do. The only three things left to do:

Never settle. Never quit. Never peak.

The End is Just the Beginning

These words echoed in my mind hundreds of times during my walk.

- When I took my first step in South Carolina.
- When I found my cat in Oklahoma.
- When I stood in awe of New Mexico's landscapes.
- When I crossed each state line and saw a new "Welcome to ____!" sign.
- When I finally reached the Pacific Ocean in California, realizing I had walked across an entire continent.

Every milestone felt like an end—but it was also a new beginning.
Because that's how life works.

Each peak we reach isn't the final one—it's just part of a greater mountain range.

The Illusion of "One Big Goal"

We often obsess over a single goal:
- "If I can just make six figures, I'll be set."
- "If I can just get in great shape, I'll finally be happy."
- "If I can just finish this big project, I'll feel complete."

But here's the truth:

There's no single peak.

Because as soon as you reach one, another one appears on the horizon.

That's not failure. That's growth.

The problem isn't that we always want more—the problem is that we think one achievement should be enough.

When you accept that life is a mountain range, not just a single peak, you stop feeling lost when one goal is completed.

Instead, you start asking:

"What's the next mountain I want to climb?"



The Never Peak Mentality

The phrase Never Peak isn't about never being satisfied.

It's about understanding that:

✔️ There's always another level of growth.
✔️ The best is yet to come—no matter what you've already achieved.
✔️ Each ending is also a beginning.

This mindset removes the fear of "What now?" after success.

Because you know that success is just a stepping stone to something greater.



Expanding Your Vision

Think beyond just one goal.

What other mountains do you want to climb in your life?

Here's a reality check:

Success in one area doesn't automatically mean success in others.

You might crush it in business, but neglect your health.

You might have financial stability, but struggle with relationships.

You might be mentally strong, but spiritually lost.

Balance matters.

Instead of thinking about just one peak, think about the entire mountain range.

Setting Goals Across Every Area of Life

Look at these areas:

📍 Health – How do you want to feel in your body?

📍 Mental Health – How do you take care of your mind?

📍 Physical Health – What fitness or wellness goals do you have?

📍 Spiritual Health – How do you stay grounded?

📍 Wealth – What financial freedom looks like for you.

📍 Personal Finance – Managing money wisely.

📍 Business/Career – Growth, impact, and fulfillment in your work.

📍 Relationships – How you show up for your spouse, family, friends, and children.

📍 Philanthropy- How do you want to help others?

📍 Everything Else – Hobbies, adventures, giving back.

Mapping Out Your Mountain Range

Step 1: Write Down Goals in Each Category
For each area listed above, ask:
→ What's one meaningful goal I want to achieve?
→ What's one action step I can take to start moving toward it?

Step 2: Choose Your Next Peak
Pick one area to focus on first.
You don't need to climb all the mountains at once—just start with one.

Step 3: Commit to the Never Peak Mindset
No matter what you achieve, remember:
✔️ There's always another level.
✔️ Growth never stops—unless you stop pushing yourself.
✔️ Every end is a new beginning.

The Journey Continues...

If there's one thing I've learned from walking across America, it's this:

There are good people out there.
If you don't believe me, go look in a mirror.

This book is not the end of your journey—it's just the beginning. Whatever peak you're chasing, whatever dream you're working toward, remember that you don't have to do it alone.

Want help getting there? Let's talk.

I offer free coaching consultations to help ambitious individuals like you break down big goals, overcome obstacles, and take action with confidence. Whether it's your business, personal growth, or a wild dream you've been sitting on for too long, I'd love to help.

📞 Book a free discovery call with the QR code on the next page.

Listen to the Never Peak Project Podcast
For more stories, insights, and conversations with people who are chasing audacious goals, check out my podcast.
🎙️ Listen to the podcast on all major podcast platforms.

Final Thought
You have mountains to climb. You have dreams to chase. And you have everything you need inside of you to make them happen.

Go take that first step.

And when you reach the top—find the next peak.

Ad Montem,

- RANGER KIELAK



To book a free 15-minute discovery call

To listen to the latest episode of The Never Peak Project Podcast

To get added to the mailing list for updates on The Journal and The Book (based on The Walk)

NOTES

NOTES

Your biggest obstacle isn't the mountain ahead. It's the voice in your head.

For years, Ranger Kielak told himself he couldn't walk across America. He was too broke, too weak, too "normal." It was an impossible dream, crushed by the sabotaging voice we all have inside.

But then he took the first step.

And that single step, repeated over five million times, became a 2,642-mile journey from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Along the way, he discovered that the principles required to cross a continent are the same ones required to launch a business, master a skill, or achieve any audacious goal.

Walking Towards Success isn't just a travelogue; it's a practical roadmap for anyone who feels stuck. It's for the entrepreneur paralyzed by risk, the creative who doubts their own vision, and anyone who has a big dream but no idea where to start.

This book is your proof that the impossible is just a series of small, manageable steps.

Inside, you will learn:

- **How to silence the "Sabotaging Voice" that kills your dreams before they even start.**
- **The "Frog in a Pond" method to break down any monumental goal into simple, achievable "lily pads."**
- **The D.A. Cycle (Declaration & Accountability) to create unstoppable momentum and turn ideas into action.**
- **How to find your "Why"—the only fuel that will carry you through when motivation runs out.**



Ranger Kielak is the founder of Within Range Life Coaching LLC. He helps entrepreneurs achieve their biggest goals with the same principles he used to walk 2,642 miles across America.

Ready to take your first step?
Scan the code to book a free discovery call.