

Running is a Gift

HABITS FOR A 1% BETTER LIFE

Running is a Gift

ART AND WORDS TO CELEBRATE EVERY STEP



A Note from the Author

I did not always see running as a gift. For most of my life it was simply something I did to stay active. I loved being part of a team more than I loved the sport itself. Soccer in winter and cricket in summer felt like home to me. I was not the most talented, but I was loyal, competitive, and part of something.

Belonging mattered more to me than winning.

When I was diagnosed with Spinocerebellar Ataxia, I thought I would take some medication, go through treatment, and return to my normal life. But there was no easy fix. My balance changed. My reactions slowed. Things that once felt automatic began to require effort. I tried to keep playing team sports, but eventually I could not hide it. I did not just lose the game. I lost the place where I felt I belonged.

Running returned to my life quietly. It did not ask me to be fast or perfect. It gave me space to move at my own pace without comparison.

It gave me structure when life felt uncertain and purpose when I struggled to recognise myself. That was when I began to understand that running was not just exercise.

I do not know how long my body will allow me to run. That fear is always there. But while I can, I want to use my ability to exercise and move for something more than myself. To raise awareness. To honour my Dad. To support others living with Ataxia. To remind myself that effort still matters, even when it looks different than it used to.

When my Dad passed away from pancreatic cancer, I began to think more deeply about the difference we make in the lives around us. Around this time I learned about Bailey Minchington, a runner who spoke openly about living with Bipolar Disorder. We did not know each other well, but his honesty stayed with me. After he passed, his father created the Bailey Minchington Running Scholarships and wrote about honouring Bailey through the gift of running. That sentence stayed with me. Running is a gift not because it is easy, but because not everyone gets to do it.

During that time I also realised how much quiet support really means. My Mum became my foundation. She helped hold my life together in ways I will always be grateful for. And my dog Angus helped me in a different way. He did not need words. He just stayed beside me when silence was all I could manage. That was when I understood how healing the quiet presence of another being can be. It is why supporting the Animal Welfare League matters to me. This book is for them. For my Mum. For Angus. For anyone or anything that helps someone keep going when life feels heavy.

Some days progress feels natural and effortless. Other days it feels heavy and frustrating. Both days matter. On the harder days I try to remind myself to be gentle. Showing up does not always look neat or confident. Sometimes it is messy. But doing something on those days is a quiet kind of courage.

The idea of showing up and trying to be just a little better each day is not something I created, but it keeps me grounded. Change rarely happens through perfection. It happens through one small action repeated with honesty and patience. Writing this book did not begin with a perfect plan. It began with one sentence. That first sentence gave me something more powerful than motivation. It gave me momentum.

This book is not about how to run faster or live perfectly. It is about learning to show up, especially when it is hard. It is about letting progress be imperfect, small, and real.

If you are here, I hope this reminds you that you do not need to be perfect to begin. You only need to begin.

Creating this book was not only about words. I wanted it to feel like art, something that could be held, seen, and felt. I spent as much time thinking about the photography, fonts, and layout as I did about the writing. Books like *The Verve - Photographs* by Chris Floyd, Radiohead's *This Is What You Get* museum catalogue, and Banksy's exhibitions inspired me to design something that feels tactile and intentional. My love of vinyl records, where the artwork matters as much as the music, shaped this too.

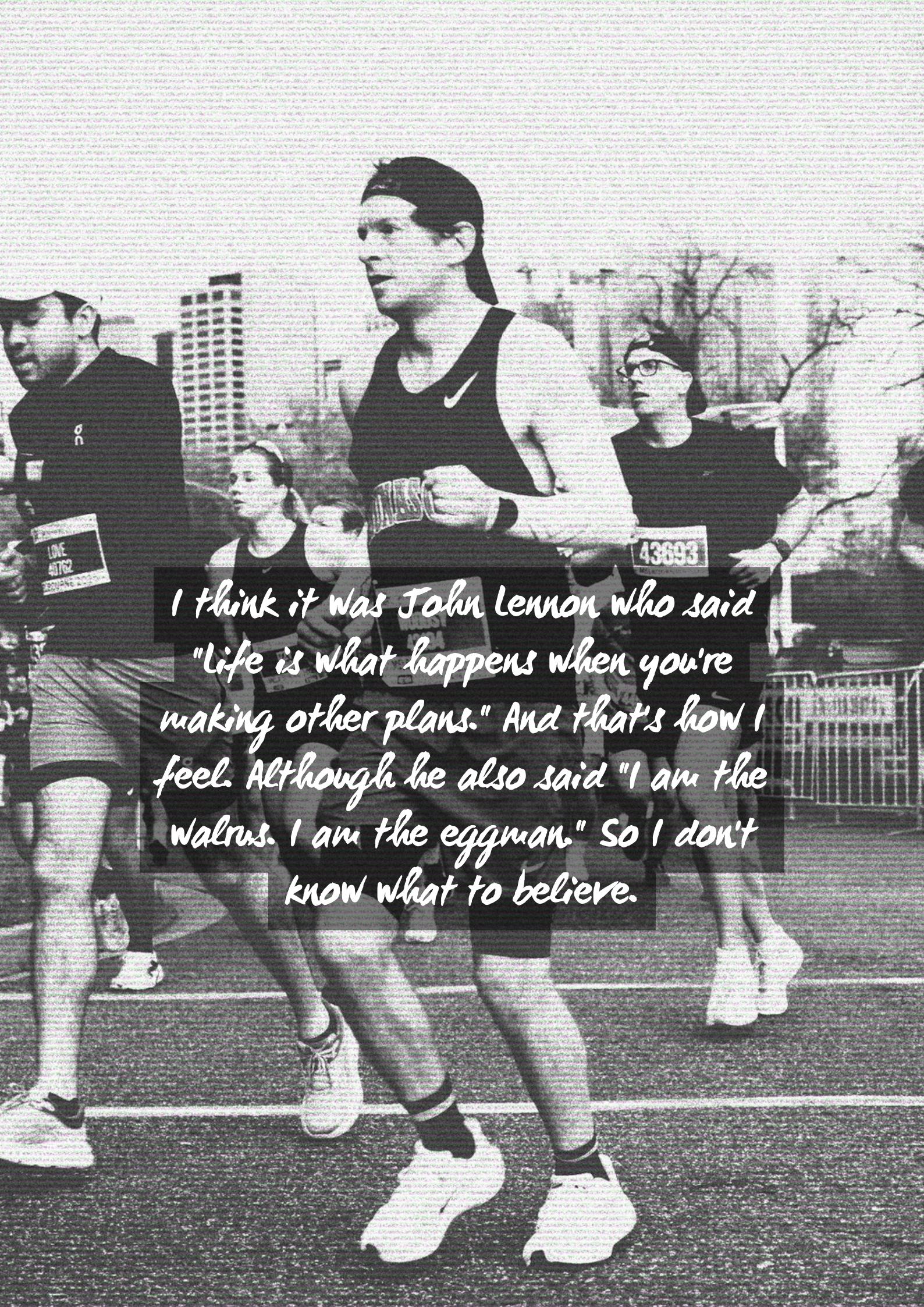
The playlist, recommended books, and recommended podcasts are small nods to recurring conversations I have on long runs with my mate Rob. They represent the joy of sharing ideas, of connecting through stories and sound. In a world that feels increasingly digital, I wanted to create something that celebrates the slower, analog side of life, something you can hold, mark, and return to.

This project is my way of honouring movement, art, and community, three things that remind me every day that running, like life, is a gift.

David Woods

for Dad, Mum and Angus

Thanks for believing in me



I think it was John Lennon who said "life is what happens when you're making other plans." And that's how I feel. Although he also said "I am the walrus. I am the eggman." So I don't know what to believe.

How to Use this Book

This book is designed to be simple, practical and personal. The chapters are short on purpose, so you can read one, pause, and sit with whatever comes up. There is no rush. This is not a race to the finish line. Let the words breathe and give yourself space to take them in.

At the end of each chapter, you will find a section titled “For You to Explore”. These prompts exist to encourage action, even small action.

They are not rules or assignments. They are gentle invitations to try something, reflect on something, or shift something in a way that feels meaningful to you. Space has been left intentionally so you can write directly on the page, jot down thoughts, or return later with fresh perspective. What matters most is engaging with the ideas rather than waiting for motivation to arrive. Action, even tiny action, is what builds momentum.

In Chapter 11 “Better” you will find a link to download Your One Percent Better Plan. This is a simple daily reflection sheet designed to help you track small wins and build consistency. You can scan the QR code to download a printable PDF or complete it digitally. It exists as a reminder that progress grows quietly through repeated and honest effort.

Throughout the book, you will also find quotes that offer humour, grounding, or inspiration. They are there to add lightness and remind you that growth does not always need to feel heavy or serious.

You can scan the QR code on the back cover to follow @runningisagift_ on Instagram for more reflections, training insights, and updates along the journey.

This book is not meant to be read once and set aside. Keep it close. Return to it whenever you need perspective, energy, or a reminder that progress does not need to be perfect. It simply needs to begin.

1. MOTION
2. PROGRESS
3. STRUCTURE
4. MINDSET
5. GRACE
6. PRESENCE
7. COMMUNITY
8. GRATITUDE
9. RESILIENCE
10. LEGACY
11. BETTER

*It's going to be a
Glorious Day*





MOTION

“Every step is a thank you.”

Motion is not only physical. It is mental, emotional and creative. Some days motion looks like designing, reading, writing or walking Angus. Other days it is as simple as stepping outside for a coffee or stretching between tasks. These small shifts, these quiet acts of movement, help me change the record when I feel stuck or caught in my head. They remind me that progress does not always come from intensity. Often it comes from gentle, consistent action.

There are also days when I crave the harder efforts. Running faster. Feeling that edge. Testing my limits. But those moments are only one part of the bigger picture. I try to follow the eighty twenty principle. Around eighty percent of my training is easy, conversational running, and the remaining twenty percent is where I push myself. That balance matters. It keeps me healthy, consistent and connected to why I move in the first place.

The longer I go without motion, the harder it is to start again. That is why I live by the mantra never miss twice. It is not about perfection. It is about avoiding inertia. Once you stop for too long, getting back into movement feels like starting from scratch. Motion, even when it is small, keeps momentum alive.

People often believe motivation comes first, but I have learned it is the other way around. Motion creates momentum and momentum builds motivation. If you wait to feel ready, you will wait forever. Setting up your environment – your clothes, your plan, your space – makes it easier to move before your mind talks you out of it.

Before I was diagnosed with Ataxia, I took motion for granted. I saw it as something automatic, something I could always rely on. Now I see it as a privilege. Every step, every stretch, every thought that shifts my focus is a quiet act of gratitude. Motion is no longer about speed or strength. It is about awareness. It is about staying connected to what keeps me moving, physically and emotionally.

Motion, in that way, has become more than an action. It has become a mindset.

For you to explore

Think about what motion means to you. Is it physical, creative or emotional?

Write down two small ways you can bring more motion into your days.

Set yourself up for success. What is one small change you can make to your environment tonight to make it easier to move tomorrow.

Reflect on a time when movement helped you shift perspective. How did you feel before, during and after? What can you take from that moment into the next time you feel stuck?

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PROGRESS

“1% Better Life”

Progress used to be something I chased. Faster times, longer distances, better results. I thought improvement meant seeing instant proof that I was moving forward. If I did not set a personal best, I felt like I had failed. But with time, I have realised that progress is almost never loud. It rarely announces itself. Most of the time it grows quietly underneath everything, in the effort, in the attempt, in the simple act of showing up.

Living with Ataxia has changed the way I understand improvement. Some days I feel strong and steady. Other days everything feels heavier than it should. The temptation is always to judge myself in those moments, but moments are unreliable. They only show a tiny part of the story. When I look back with clearer eyes, I can see the truth of my effort. I can see where I held on, where I tried, where I did something even when it felt pointless. These are the pieces that tell the real story of progress.

There are times when progress is measurable. But there are just as many times when progress has nothing to do with pace. Sometimes it is staying calm when my body struggles. Sometimes it is choosing not to compare myself with others. Reminding myself that I am running my own race helps me return to the long game, to the quiet work of improving who I am when things get hard.

I live by a simple idea which is never miss twice. Missing once happens. Missing twice becomes a pattern. That mindset helps me on days when energy is low or motivation is nowhere to be found. Even the smallest action such as stretching, walking Angus or doing a few minutes of movement gives me a sense of accomplishment I would not have felt if I had stayed still. The act of beginning is what shifts the direction of the day.

Writing this book has shown me the same thing. Some days ideas flow easily. Other days every sentence feels like climbing a hill. But coming back to the page, even for a few lines, changes how I see my own ability. Progress can be slow, imperfect or invisible in the moment, but it adds up in ways that only becomes clear later.

Progress is not about doing more. It is about returning. It is about adapting instead of forcing. It is about giving yourself the space to try again, even when yesterday felt like a step backwards. The long game is rarely glamorous, but it is where the real change happens. Quietly. Patiently. One day at a time.

For you to explore

Think about how you define progress. Is it tied to outcomes or to how you respond when things become difficult?

Write down one area of your life where you want progress to feel gentler and more sustainable.

Reflect on a moment when something did not go to plan. What did that experience teach you about patience, perspective or adaptability?

Choose one small action you can commit to today. Something achievable even on your hardest days. Let this be your version of never miss twice.

Wolf Alice – Moaning Lisa Smile Something for Kate – Pinstripe
Rage Against the Machine – Freedom Bon Iver – Holocene Elliott
Smith – Rose Parade Bruce Springsteen – Atlantic City Oasis –
Slide Away Iame Impala – Half Full Glass of Wine The Strokes –
Reptilia Sam Fender – Spit of You Bloc Party – Octopus Radiohead
– Kid A Phoenix – Trying to be Cool Cut Copy – Unforgettable
Season Mogwai – I'm Lionel Ritchie My Bloody Valentine – When
You Sleep The National – About Today Interpol – Untitled The War
on Drugs – Red Eyes Velvet Undergound – The Black Angel's Death
Song Bombay Bicycle Club – Always Like This Local Natives –
Airplanes Bob Dylan – Like a Rolling Stone Arcade Fire – Wake Up
Metronomy – the Bay Death Cab For Cutie – Cath. Blur – Sing
Catfish and the Bottlemen – 7 The Kooks – Naive MGMT – Electric
Feel The Verve – This is Music alt-J – Taro TV on the Radio – DLZ
Mumford and Sons – Dust Bowl Dance Vampire Weekend – Step
Modest Mouse – Trucker's Atlas Foals – Two Steps Twice Kings of
Leon – Taper Jean Girl Kasabian – Fire Flume – Say It The Shins –
Caring is Creepy Silversun Pickups – Lazy Eye Wilco – Spiders
(Kidsmoke) Sufjan Stevens – Chicago Spoon – You Got Yr. Cherry
Bomb Ash – A Life Less Ordinary The Black Keys – Everlasting Light
Coconut Records – West Coast Joy Division – Disorder The Killers –
When You Were Young John Mayer – Vultures Arctic Monkeys –
Mardy Bum My Morning Jacket – One Big Holiday M. Ward – Let's
Dance Pavement – Cut Your Hair Rogue Wave – Lake Michigan The
Decemberists – Odalisque Broken Social Scene – Cause=Time
Stars – Your Ex-Lover is Dead The Smiths – That Joke Isn't Funny
Anymore M83 – Outro Rufus Du Sol – Innerbloom Flight Facilities –
Clair de Lune Pinback – Good to Sea Kurt Vile – Pretty Pimpin
Underworld – Born Slippy Adrian Lux – Teenage Crime The
Chemical Brothers – Swoon A Perfect Circle – The Outsider Hockey
Dad – Homely Feeling D.D. Dumbo – Walrus The Libertines – Time
for Heroes Red Hot Chili Peppers – Venice Queen Pixies – Here
Comes Your Man Weezer – Getchoo Nada Surf – Weightless The
Stranglers – Golden Brown Major Lazer – Lean On Public Enemy –
Harder Than You Think Phil Collins – Sussudio Cassius – Toop Toop
the xx – Islands the Wombats – 1996 Polish Club – Clarity the
Rolling Stones – Gimme Shelter Luca Brasi – Let it Slip Primal
Scream – Movin' On Up Ocean Colour Scene – Hundred Mile City
the Stooges – I Wanna be Your Dog the Stone Roses – Fools Gold
Yo La Tengo – Autumn Sweater Badly Drawn Boy – Once Around the
Block Moby – Run On Ride – Vapour Trail Miles Kane – Come
Closer Grinspoon – Rock Show the Von Bondies – Cmon Cmon
Foster the People – Helena Beat Jimmy Eat World – Goodbye Sky
Harbor INXS – Need You Tonight Beastie Boys – Sabotage the
Roots – the Seed (2.0) Gorillaz – Clint Eastwood Led Zeppelin –
When the Levee Breaks the Rubens – Lay it Down Kendrick Lamar –
Money Trees Tool – Disposition BRMC – Rifles Explosions in the
Sky – Let Me Back In Fatboy Slim – Song for Shelter Radiohead –
Videotape Sigur Ros – Svefn-g-englar Incubus – Aqueous
Transmission Jamie XX – Loud Places the Streets – Weak Become
Heroes Kate Bush – Hounds of Love the Cure – Lullaby Pearl Jam –
Corduroy Third Eye Blind – Slow Motion Royal Blood – Out of the
Black Daft Punk – Face to Face Young Fathers – Boots
Kim Carnes – Bette Davis Eyes ... Trail of Dead – Relative Ways



Running is a Gift

Run with Heart. Give with Purpose.



STRUCTURE

“Discipline builds freedom.”

Structure is something I used to move through without noticing. It sat quietly in the background, but I never relied on it. Before my diagnosis I acted on instinct. I trusted my body and believed I could make things work in the moment. Most of the time that was true. But living with Ataxia changed how I moved through my days. Tasks that once felt automatic began to require intention. I learned that when I had to react quickly or make on the spot decisions, my energy dropped fast and my choices were not always the best. I would scroll mindlessly, avoid people or spend money without thinking. I realised I could not wait to feel in control. I had to create it.

My routines became the way I steadied myself. My wall calendar now tracks the small daily things that keep me grounded such as Run, Stretch, Pilates and UBX. I give myself a green tick when I follow through and a red cross when I do not. It is not about judgement; it is about honesty. When I see too many red crosses in a row, I know something in my days needs to change. I set my running clothes out the night before. I leave my alarm outside my bedroom so I have to get up to turn it off. My gym is close to work so I do not go home first and talk myself out of going. These small decisions make beginning easier and stopping harder.

I book Pilates and Personal Training sessions in advance because accountability means a lot to me. Showing up feels easier than cancelling, and I do not like letting people down. These choices might seem minor on their own, but together they reduce the friction that would otherwise stop me. They are the quiet actions that support the bigger effort.

Over time I have realised that structure does more than organise my day. It steadies my mind. It gives me clarity when my thoughts feel scattered and reduces the noise around every decision. Without it, I drift toward habits that drain me such as overthinking, avoiding people or spending energy in ways that do not serve me. Structure protects me from that. It keeps my world calmer and more predictable, which is not about being rigid, but about giving myself the best chance to move through the day with confidence. It frees up energy for the things that matter such as connection, creativity and simply feeling like myself again.

I have come to see that structure is not just a set of routines, it is a way of honouring the person I want to be. When my days have shape, I feel more aligned with my values such as showing up, doing what I say I will do and treating my body with respect. Living with Ataxia means I tire more easily and my decision making can slip when my energy drops.

Structure helps prevent that slide before it begins. It gives me a sense of groundedness and momentum. Without it, the day becomes harder before it even starts. With it, I move through the world with more ease, more intention and more belief that I can handle what comes. Structure, in that way, has become an act of self respect.

Structure does not erase fatigue or frustration. It does not prevent difficult days. But without it, life feels heavier and less predictable. With it, I have something steady to lean on. A plan. A routine. A sense of direction when things feel difficult. For me, structure is not about control. It is about support.

For you to explore

Notice how structure appears in your life, whether in routines, habits or the way you prepare for your day. What systems help you feel more at ease?

Design one small environmental cue that supports a good habit. Lay out clothes the night before, set an alarm across the room or tidy your space so it feels easier to start.

Reflect on a time when structure helped you stay grounded. What made the difference, and how can you repeat it more often?

A BUSINESSMAN SAW A FISHERMAN WITH A FEW PERFECT TUNA AND ASKED WHY HE DIDN'T STAY OUT LONGER TO CATCH MORE.

THE FISHERMAN SAID, "I HAVE ENOUGH. I SPEND THE REST OF MY TIME WITH MY FAMILY, RESTING, PLAYING MUSIC WITH FRIENDS. MY LIFE IS FULL."

THE BUSINESSMAN REPLIED, "IF YOU WORKED MORE, YOU COULD BUY A BIGGER BOAT, BUILD A FLEET, START A COMPANY, MAKE MILLIONS."

THE FISHERMAN ASKED, "HOW LONG WOULD THAT TAKE?" "FIFTEEN TO TWENTY YEARS," THE BUSINESSMAN SAID.

"AND THEN WHAT?"

"THEN YOU RETIRE, MOVE TO A QUIET VILLAGE, SLEEP IN, FISH A LITTLE, SPEND TIME WITH YOUR FAMILY, TAKE NAPS AND PLAY GUITAR WITH FRIENDS."



MINDSET

“Your thoughts run with you.”

My mindset is shaped by how I choose to look at things. When I face a challenge, I try to shift from “I can’t” to “How can I?” because sometimes the act of trying is more valuable than the result. Being curious rather than judgemental. I do not always get things right, but I have learned that no one does. If I never try, I never learn. I often think about the early days of bands I admire. Even the most successful artists started from nothing.

No one jumps from zero to one hundred. There is no shortcut.

That does not mean everything is always positive. I have days where things feel heavy or overwhelming. When that happens, I try to remind myself that nothing stays the same forever. This moment will pass. On difficult runs I do not try to overpower the discomfort, I break it down. To the next corner. To that tree. Sometimes the strongest mindset is not the one that pushes harder, but the one that simply refuses to give up.

Reflection helps me more than almost anything. Writing things down.

Talking things through. When I look back on moments in my life, especially the harder ones, I can see how much growth was happening, even when I did not recognise it at the time. Not every plan works. Not every effort feels good. But being willing to try, even when things are imperfect, is still movement. That effort is something.

I have also learned that mindset is not something you fix once and then keep forever. It needs regular attention. Some days it feels steady and clear, and other days it feels fragile. On those days, I try not to judge the fact that I am struggling. I notice it instead. I remind myself that a low moment does not erase all the work I have done before it. Mindset, for me, is less about controlling thoughts and more about noticing them without letting them run the show. That awareness alone often creates enough space to respond rather than react.

Habits and routines steady me when motivation is low. Still, it is easy to compare myself to others. I get inspired by elite runners and by people who seem to be improving faster than me. But I also have to remind myself that I am running my own race. Admiration can become pressure quickly, so I try to hold onto the idea that progress is personal.

Even though I cannot say I never worry, I do believe that how I think and how I choose to show up each day support my mental resilience. Living with Ataxia means uncertainty is always there somewhere in the background. Of course I sometimes fear what the future could look like. But right now things are okay. That is something I am genuinely grateful for.

For you to explore

When you catch yourself saying “I can’t”, pause and ask, “How can I?” Write down one example where you reframed a limitation into an opportunity.

Pick one small area of your life to practice curiosity instead of criticism. Try, observe and adjust. Notice what changes when you remove the pressure to be perfect.

Think of a moment when your mindset helped you get through something difficult. What thought, phrase or perspective supported you? Keep it somewhere visible.

Podcasts



STICK TO CRICKET



THE DIARY OF A CEO



THE REST IS
FOOTBALL



THE RUNNING
CHANNEL



SIMON SAYS



“Progress, not perfection.”

One of the hardest lessons running has taught me is that strength is not always about pushing harder. Sometimes it is knowing when to hold back. If I force my body when it is already tired or fragile, it can lead to injury or leave my emotions scattered.

The moment I choose to slow down or rest, my mind often goes straight to shame or negative self talk. It feels rational in that moment, like I have failed.

Yet it only makes it harder to get back up. I am learning that being kind to myself does not mean lowering my standards. It means allowing space for setbacks, because they are going to happen. What matters more is how I respond afterwards.

I do not plan rest perfectly. Most of the time it happens because my body or life demands it. But I am trying to see that stepping back does not mean I am weak or lazy. Sometimes it is the most sensible thing I can do. On those days, value does not come from performance. It comes from simple things like walking Angus, reading a book or listening to music. These things do not move me backwards. They help me stay connected to myself so that when I am ready to run again, I actually want to.

That is why I try to live by not missing twice. If I miss a day, fine. If I miss again and again, it becomes a habit of giving up on myself. Seeing red crosses on my wall calendar is not failure. It is a reminder that I want to earn that next green tick.

Grace is something I need most after the days that break me down. A bad run. A session I skip. A moment where my condition makes something feel impossible. In those moments, being harsh does not help. It is not always about trying harder. Sometimes it is about resting better, hydrating properly or simply allowing myself to breathe. And when I do that, something shifts. I stop spiralling and I start quietly rebuilding.

To reset, I keep things simple. Music in my ears. A book. Sitting outside. Silence. Exercise also helps, not to escape my thoughts but to get out of my head and back into my body. Movement changes my environment, and that alone can change how I see things.

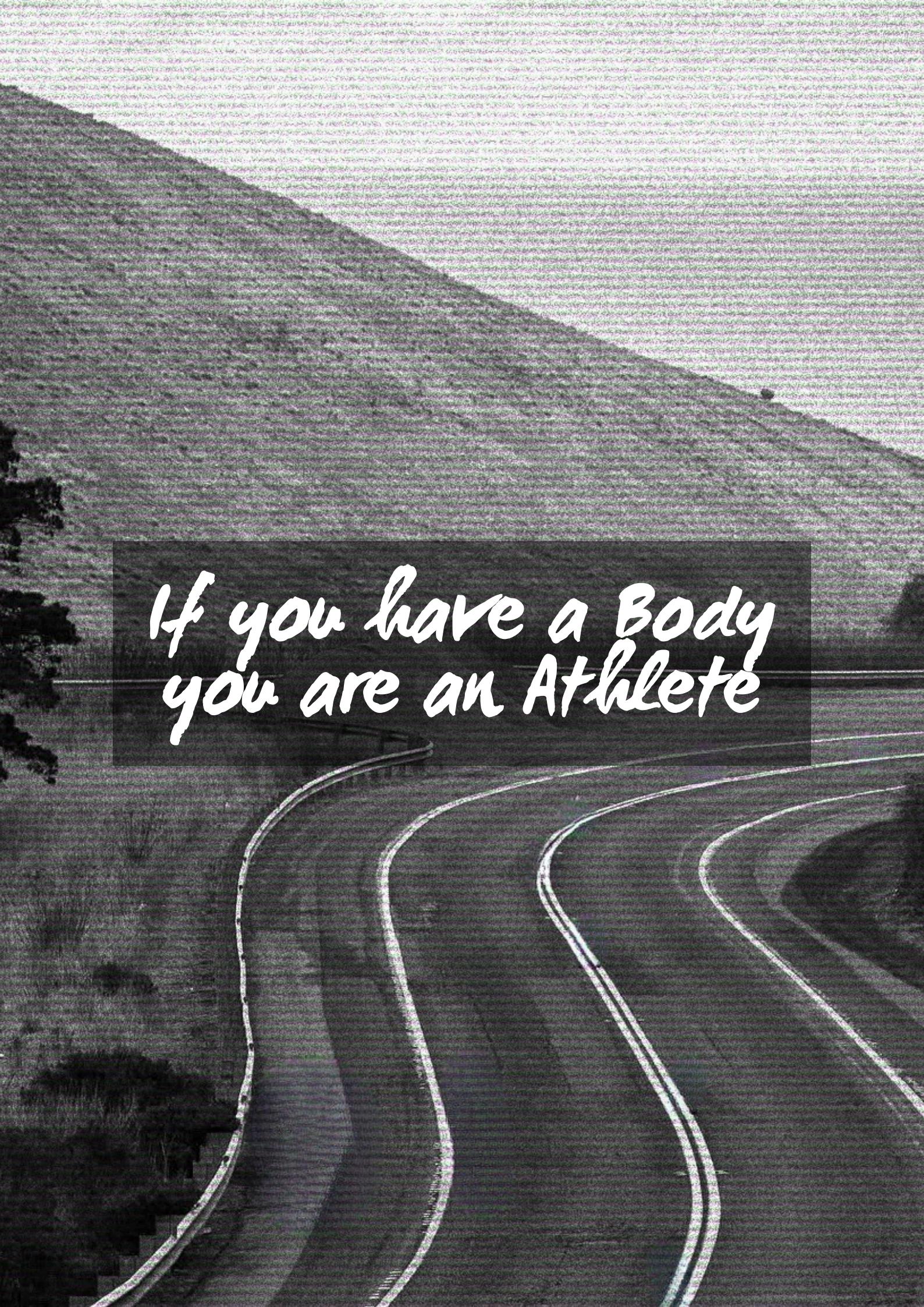
If I could say one thing to someone who feels overwhelmed or burnt out, it would be this. It is okay to slow down. Be kind to yourself. Change something small around you. A different space. A short walk. Fresh air. It does not have to be dramatic. Small shifts can save you. Small shifts can bring you back.

For you to explore

Think about a time you were hard on yourself for resting or not performing as expected. What would it look like to meet that moment with kindness instead?

Choose one gentle act of grace this week. Take a walk, read or rest without guilt. Notice how permission to pause changes your energy and mindset.

Recall a moment when slowing down helped you return stronger. What allowed you to reset, and how can you honour that more intentionally?



If you have a Body
you are an Athlete



PRESENCE

“Breathe. Step. Repeat.”

For me, being present isn't about having a quiet mind or being endlessly grateful. It's more about slowing down whatever is happening in my life and just being with myself. When I do that, I start to notice small things, the way the air feels on my skin, the sound of leaves, Angus' paws on the pavement.

Things I used to rush past.

I used to run with music in my ears. Now I prefer to hear the world around me, footsteps, breath, birds, silence. It makes the moment feel more real.

Running pulls me back into my body. The fatigue forces me to narrow my focus. I don't have the energy to think about everything at once, so I think about breathing, about how my foot lands, about the cold morning air or the sun on my neck. It's like my mind gets busy with just one thing at a time instead of drifting everywhere.

After a run, I stretch. Not because I'm motivated, but because if I pause too long I'll lose momentum. Presence isn't always stillness. Sometimes it's attention. Sometimes it's effort.

I'm not always moving. Some of my most grounded moments are quiet ones, sitting at the end of the day, reading or listening to music, no noise except the kind I choose. I like being still. I like silence. It resets me. And in summer, when the light lingers, walking Angus in the evening feels like a reminder to keep things simple, step, breath, sky, dog. Walking with Mum and Angus, then stopping for coffee, might sound small, but it's the whole ritual I value, not just the drink. It slows life down just enough for me to feel it.

I have learned that presence often shows up when I stop trying to optimise the moment. When I am constantly planning what comes next or judging how I feel right now, I miss what is actually happening. Presence, for me, is allowing a moment to be ordinary. A run that is slow. A walk that goes nowhere in particular. A coffee that is just a coffee. When I let go of the need for moments to be productive or meaningful, they often become grounding on their own.

When I lose presence, I notice that too. I distract myself with scrolling. I look for noise to fill whatever I do not want to feel. I go to bed overstimulated, wake up foggy, and the cycle of negative thinking begins again. It is difficult to break that spiral, but I know the way out rarely comes from doing something dramatic. It comes from returning to simple things.

One of my favourite reminders is this too shall pass. Good or bad, nothing stays the same forever. Presence isn't about fixing things. Sometimes it means sitting with frustration or sadness and letting it be there. It can hurt. But it also makes me notice what hasn't gone wrong, the people still here, the things I can still do, the moments that feel calm. It reminds me that hard moments don't last forever. And that being here, even when it's uncomfortable, is better than being nowhere at all.

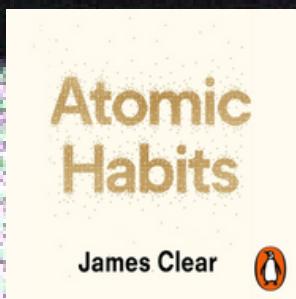
For you to explore

Recall a moment when you felt fully present, during a run, a walk with someone you love or a quiet coffee. What made that moment feel real?

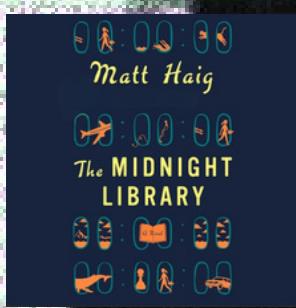
Take ten mindful minutes each day this week to simply be where you are. No distractions, no music, no phone. Observe the sounds, light and space around you.

Notice what pulls you out of the present. When you feel that drift, pause and choose one grounding action such as breath, movement or stillness.

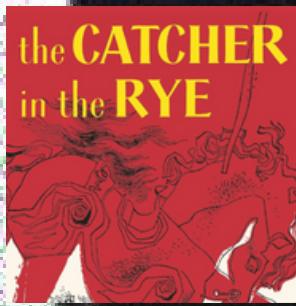
Books



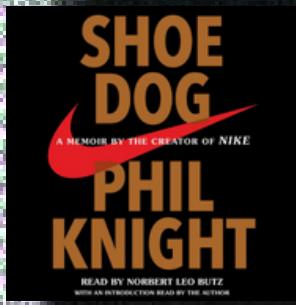
ATOMIC HABITS
BY JAMES CLEAR



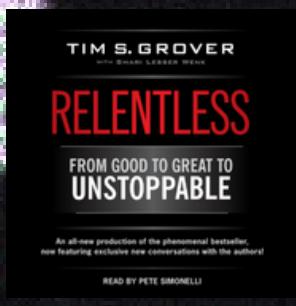
THE MIDNIGHT LIBRARY
BY MATT HAIG



THE CATCHER IN THE RYE
BY J.D. SALINGER



SHOE DOG
BY PHIL KNIGHT



RELENTLESS
BY TIM GROVER

7 **COMMUNITY**

“Together, we rise.”

Community means everything to me. Since my diagnosis, I've come to see how many people quietly stand behind the scenes helping me stay upright, physically, mentally, and emotionally. It's never just me doing this. I think that's why I'm so driven to give back. I don't want Running is a Gift to be about me as the focal point, but about the people and energy that make all of this possible.

Being part of RunAsOne has shown me that every single person has a reason for running. We all bring our own story, our own challenges, our own version of why we keep showing up. In a strange way, hearing people push themselves, hearing their effort and their breath, reminds me I'm not alone. There's comfort in shared struggle. Running with a group feels easier, less forced, than running alone. No matter how many playlists or motivational quotes I use, nothing compares to moving with others who share a common goal.

I'm lucky to have people around me who believe in me, often more than I believe in myself. My coach at RunAsOne writes my running plan, but it's not just the structure that helps. It's their belief, the small words of encouragement, the faith that I can get through the tough days. That kind of support builds confidence more than any finish time ever could.

My personal trainer at UBX is another important part of my journey. Strength work has taught me a different kind of patience and resilience. It's not about being a professional boxer or mastering technique, it's about balance, coordination, and giving my body a chance to adapt. Living with Ataxia means I tend to favour one side of my body more than the other, so training strength is my way of finding equilibrium. The stations at UBX are challenging but never intimidating. They're structured enough to push me, but flexible enough to make me feel included.

Another unexpected but important layer of community came from Dynamic Runner. I originally found it through my own research, wanting to add stretching and mobility to my routine. What surprised me most was not the exercises, but how much the structure helped. The guided videos take away the mental load of deciding what to do or how long to do it for. On mornings when motivation is low, opening the app and thinking, "Okay, I can do that," is sometimes all I need. For someone living with Ataxia, decision making can be tiring. Dynamic Runner keeps things simple and gives me confidence in what I am doing. And even though it is based in Canada, it reminds me how wide and connected the running community really is. The world feels smaller in the best way.

RunAsOne, UBX and Dynamic Runner are more than places or platforms. They are steady parts of my life. The people, the energy, the encouragement, it all adds up. People, at their core, want to help. Feeling part of something bigger than yourself is one of the most powerful motivators there is.

Outside of organised groups, community shows up in smaller ways too. A smile from another runner on the path, a barista who remembers my order, a stranger cheering during a race. Those tiny moments of connection matter more than they seem. They remind me that I am part of a much larger story, one built on kindness, belonging and showing up for one another.

For you to explore

Reflect on someone who has supported or encouraged you lately. How did their presence or words make a difference?

Reach out to one person. Send a message, thank them or simply check in. Remind them that what they do matters.

Think about a community you belong to, large or small. What does it give you, and what do you contribute in return?

Always sweat the
small stuff





GRATITUDE

“Run with a thankful heart.”

Gratitude feels like the foundation for everything else. It is what helps me build resilience when things get hard. I try to be grateful for what happens in my life, even when I cannot see the reason right away. It is not always easy. Sometimes the lesson or the growth hides behind frustration or pain. But with time, I have learned that those harder moments often shape me the most. Growth rarely feels good while it is happening, but it is still growth.

There are things I used to take for granted that now mean everything. I can run. I can donate. I can come home safely. I have a roof over my head, food to eat and clean water to drink. The list might sound simple, but it is not. Just the other day, on a run, I caught myself looking around at how lucky I am to live in Adelaide. The tracks, the fresh air, the space to move. Sure, things could always be better, but nothing is perfect and nothing is permanent.

Even though my movements are compromised, I am constantly amazed by how adaptable the human body is. Every time I find a new way to move, I feel thankful. Focusing on what I can do rather than what I cannot do is one of the most powerful shifts I have made. When frustration hits or I feel like I am not good enough, I try to let time bring perspective. Gratitude helps me reset. It helps me move forward without carrying so much weight.

I have said before that it is never just me on this journey. There are so many people who help build me, in small and big ways. My Mum and my dog Angus are at the heart of it. They give meaning to my life and remind me every day why I keep showing up. Because I receive so much support, I feel driven to give it back.

Gratitude, when it is honest, gives me energy.

Reflection helps me hold onto that feeling. Sometimes that means journalling. Other times, it is thinking while I run. Running without music has become a kind of meditation, my version of “shower thoughts.” The mind quiets down, the body moves, and space opens up for ideas or reminders of what really matters. Gratitude does not erase struggle, but it makes room for something stronger to grow beside it, perspective, kindness and peace.

For you to explore

Write down three small things you are grateful for today, things that often go unnoticed. Why do these matter to you right now?

Turn gratitude into action. Tell someone you appreciate them or do a small act of kindness that reflects what you feel.

Recall a moment when gratitude helped you shift perspective. How did it change the way you moved through that day?

*Never compromise
your self story*





RESILIENCE

“Struggle shapes strength.”

The common idea of resilience is that it is about bouncing back quickly, showing strength in the moment, or recovering without hesitation. But I think true resilience is something quieter and deeper. It is the groundwork you build slowly over time, until it becomes part of who you are. For me, it feels like preparedness, a sense that when challenges arrive, I can draw from what I have already learned. If something helped me once, I try it again. If it did not, I treat it as a chance to experiment with a new approach. That ability to adapt and stay open feels like the real core of resilience.

Resilience is not about absorbing every difficulty. It is about perspective. There is value in pausing, taking a breath, and letting time soften the edges of frustration or disappointment. I have learned that patience and composure are far more useful than reacting straight away. We often want results immediately, but waiting, reflecting and moving forward with intention creates far more lasting change.

One idea that has stuck with me comes from the book *Eat That Frog!* — the idea of setting yourself small, meaningful actions to start your day. Not necessarily tackling the hardest thing first, but doing something that builds momentum. This morning, for example, I had a run scheduled, but when my alarm went off, I did not feel rested. Instead of forcing myself out the door, I reset the alarm and gave myself a couple more hours of sleep. When I woke up again, I went outside for some natural light and did a short mobility routine. It was not the plan, but it still gave me a feeling of accomplishment. Then I started writing, aiming for just two lines, and before I knew it, I had written much more. That act of doing, no matter how small, shifted my direction. That is resilience at work.

Gratitude also strengthens resilience. It helps me keep things in perspective and focus on what I can control. Everyone is going through something, often quietly, and when I see someone else pushing through their own challenges, it reminds me that I can too. That kind of self-dialogue, drawing strength from the resilience of others, helps me stay grounded.

If someone is struggling with their own limits, I would say this. You do not need to be perfect. Small changes add up. When something difficult happens, try not to react immediately. Take a breath, literally or metaphorically, and give yourself a moment before deciding what to do next. There will be days when you are tired or overwhelmed. That is why building the groundwork early matters, so you can lean on it almost automatically when you need it most.

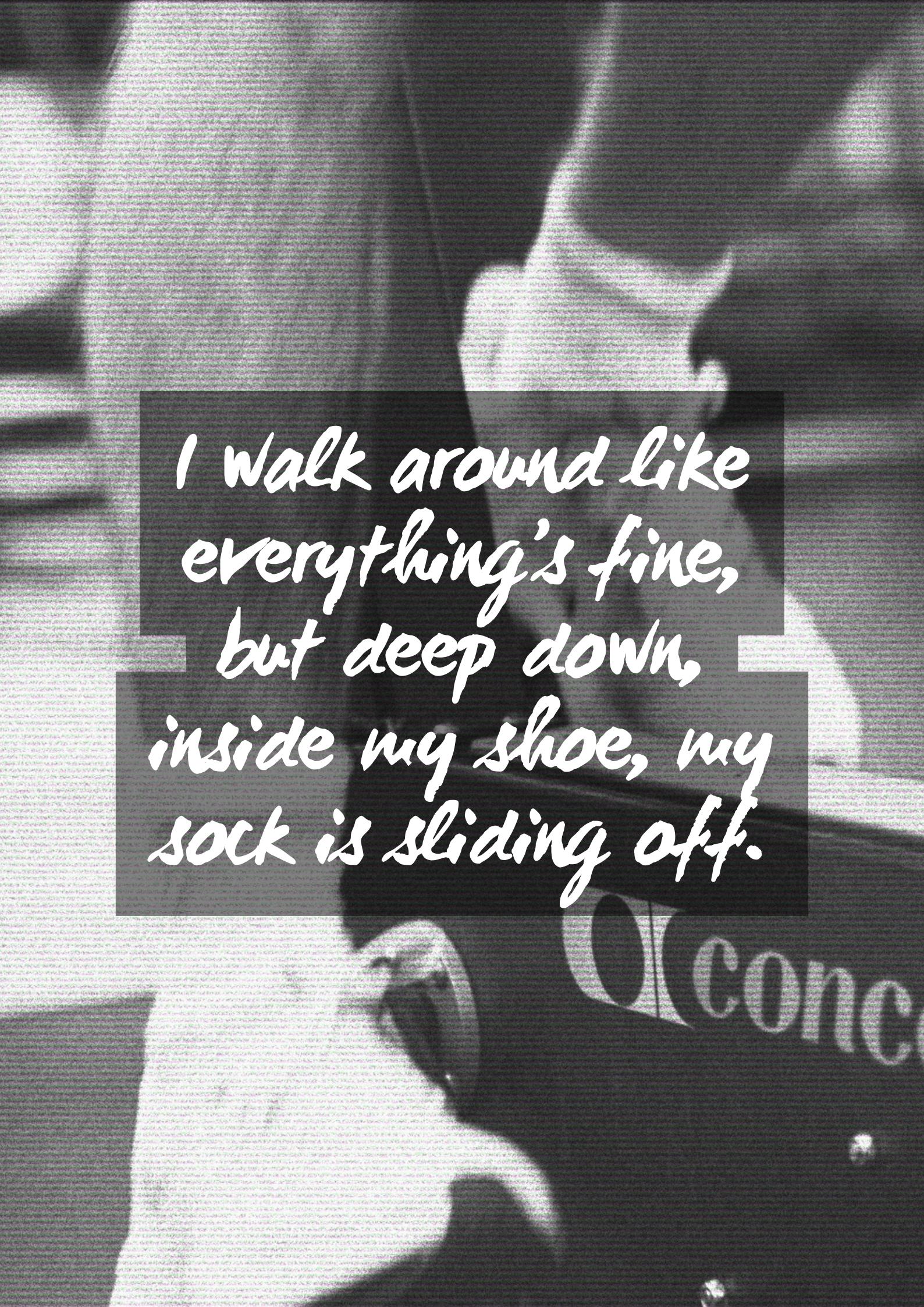
Resilience, for me, is not a single act or a dramatic moment of courage. It is a practice built from small resets, patience and kindness toward myself when plans fall apart. It is not about never falling. It is about learning how to rise again, even if it takes time.

For you to explore

Think of a time you faced something hard and came through the other side. What helped you keep going, even if it did not feel like strength at the time?

When the next challenge comes, practice taking one breath before reacting. That pause, even if it lasts a few seconds, helps you reset and respond with intention.

Write down one small reset ritual that helps you regain momentum on difficult days. Use it the next time things feel heavy.



I walk around like
everything's fine,
but deep down,
inside my shoe, my
sock is sliding off.

10 **LEGACY**

“Leave more than footprints.”

When I first heard the word legacy, I took it on face value to mean leaving a financial gift behind, something written into a will. But since losing my Grandpa, and even more so my Dad, I've come to see legacy differently. It's less about money or possessions, and more about what you stand for, how you show up, how you treat people, and how you keep going when things get hard. I've learned that legacy isn't a grand gesture, it's a series of small, deliberate moments that add up over time.

Since my diagnosis and through other big moments in my life, I've felt a stronger pull to live in a way that creates a legacy. To me that means embodying qualities like gratitude, grace, resilience, and a strong mindset, and recognising the people and communities that shape who I am. I see Running is a Gift as a bridge between what others gave me and what I can now give back. It's my way of honouring my parents and everything they've contributed to who I am. I'm not perfect, but through that humility comes a commitment to keep learning and improving, even in small ways.

I feel a deep connection to Bailey Minchington's story and the running scholarships created in his name. He reminded me that legacy can live on through how we inspire others to act. From him I learned that honesty and openness can help others heal, and that's something I want to carry forward.

For me, legacy is built through consistency. The habits and reflections I've shared in this book aren't rules for life, just what works for me. Marginal gains may not be flashy, but laying those quiet foundations creates something lasting. I share my story not because I have all the answers, but because I want people to know they're not alone.

One book that sums this up for me is *Fire Up!: Live Large, Do Tough Stuff and Give Back* by Nedd Brockmann. Those three principles — live large, do tough stuff, and give back — capture how I want to live and what I hope to leave behind. Giving back reminds me that I'm part of something bigger. Supporting causes like the Animal Welfare League and the Bailey Minchington Scholarships helps me turn struggle into purpose.

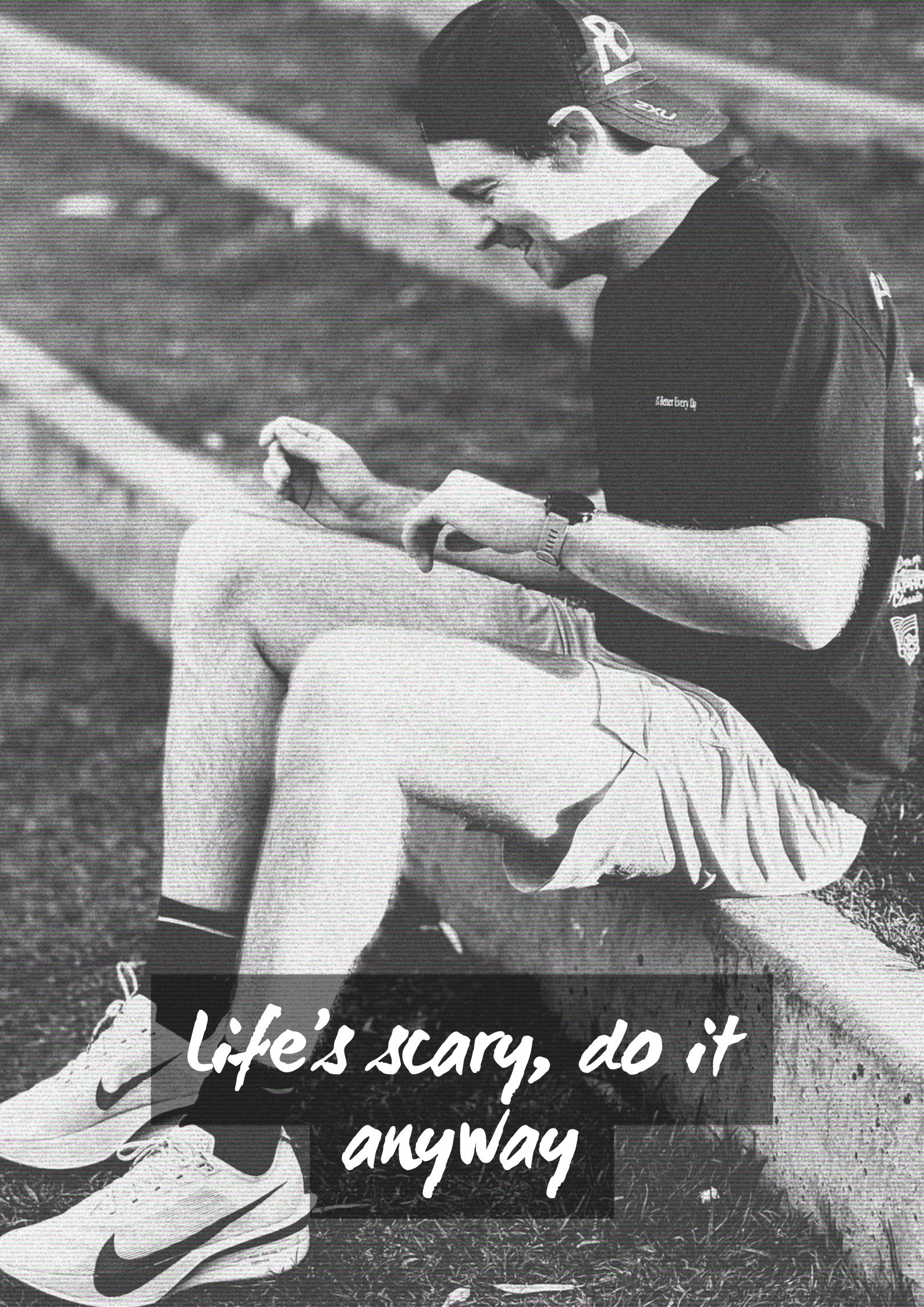
If my story makes even one person stop and think, or helps them find strength in their own struggle, that's part of my legacy.

For you to explore

What kind of legacy do you want to leave, not someday, but through how you live today? Write down three words you want others to feel when they think of you.

Take one small action this week that reflects those words. Choose something that aligns with who you want to be, not just what you want to achieve.

Reflect on someone whose influence shaped you. What did they leave with you, and how can you pass that forward?



A Better Every Day

Life's scary, do it
anyway



“Your 1% Better Plan”

Progress happens one small step at a time.

Scan below to download your free daily reflection tracker — a space to write:

Today I will...
My small win was...

and see how consistency shapes your growth.





RUN WITH HEART. GIVE WITH PURPOSE.



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