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Running for Grace

Skills and Professional Development



Earlier this year, I officially finished the Third Annual Ragnar 31-Day Challenge. The challenge was simply to be active for 31 days straight to start the year off on a positive and active note. Ragnar, for those who are not familiar, is a relay racing series. The traditional events are road and trail relay races that cover distances of more than 200 miles (about 322 kilometers) over two days of continuous running. The races are about teamwork and camaraderie — and of course running. However, you don't have to be a great runner, or even a runner at all; walkers participate as well.

I have undertaken this challenge for all three years of its existence. In fact, I did a similar personal challenge the year before Ragnar launched its first challenge, which was originally only 30 days. While anytime is a good time to focus on health, the beginning of the new year is a traditional one and provides lots of support and company as others make or renew commitments to their health as well. However, for me, the challenge wasn't just about health — at least not just physical health.

Last year, I undertook the Miracle Morning 30-Day Challenge. The miracle morning concept, created by Hal Elrod in his series of Miracle Morning books, is about taking control of your morning in order to take control of your day — and ultimately taking and being in control of your life. The Miracle Morning Challenge is a jumpstart to embracing a lifetime of using a morning ritual or routine to set the tone for the day.

These challenges and others I have undertaken, such as 21 days of mediation or yoga, are about discipline and perseverance, mental and emotional health, and developing a positive winning attitude. It is easy to make plans and to set goals, but it is something altogether different to complete them. When life steps in, we often have to put one set of goals or plans on the back burner to address something equally or more important in the moment.



Both the Ragnar and Miracle Morning challenges included membership in Facebook pages intended as venues for support and encouragement. On the whole, the members of the groups were positive, but some spent a lot of energy making excuses about why they were not sticking with the challenges.

Sometimes the reasons were life, health issues, children, work, etc. But other times the reasons were about feelings of inadequacy, particularly in comparison to others embarking on the challenge.

And while there is nothing wrong with dealing with the higher priority issues that present themselves, what I have observed as not being helpful is a negative attitude about the progress gained and an attempt at perfection in the pursuit of goals. This leaves people feeling bad about themselves for either handling their business or not achieving the goal in an unrealistic manner.

If this sounds familiar, **stop it**. It's time to extend some grace and give yourself a break. How do you know if this is you? If you find yourself minimizing your accomplishments or using self-deprecating humor when explaining to others how you've fallen short of a goal or if you think you don't stack up to their accomplishments, this is you. If you think what you have done is not good enough when you have given your all and done the best you can, this is you. Of course, if what you are offering are excuses because you just haven't followed through and haven't given as much as you are capable of, that's a different situation.

A few helpful suggestions for sticking to your goals:

- Be honest about your reasons for pursuing the goal;
- Be honest about your progress or lack of progress in accomplishing the goal;
- Be flexible in how the goal is achieved;
- Be willing to extend yourself grace when progress is not happening in a preconceived manner;
- Be focused on yourself and not what others are doing, your competition is with yourself, not others; and
- Have fun along the journey.

As long as you have made a commitment to a goal and are disciplined in making progress toward its achievement, you have to cut yourself some slack. When you decided to address a competing higher priority, it is not necessary to justify why you didn't accomplish your goal or kick yourself for not reaching your desired outcome. That is not to say that you don't continue to try to pursue the goal or take time for introspection on why you fell short and what you can do to continue to make progress, but it does mean that you assess, analyze, and act, whether that is moving on to something else or moving forward in grace.

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Whitnie Wiley was a long-time columnist for the *ACC Docket*, where she wrote the *Lead the Way* column for more than seven years. The column provided leadership tips for in-house counsel and others as they pursue their personal and professional goals.