

HEALTH & fitness

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The in's and out's of running

Staff Reports

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Audrey Springer, a buyer/sales associate at Runners Market, 4443 Kingston Pike, is an RRCA-certified running coach who has been running "for over 16 years."

Her blog, "Running the Alley," can be found among her social media pages @runningthealley on Instagram.

Answering the following questions about all aspects of running in the following story, "I think the biggest thing to remember with these questions is that everyone is different and is starting at a different place," she said. "Some people can't run 1 mile without stopping and some can run 4 miles their first go around.

"This is based on someone's recent experience, body mechanics, recent activity levels, their day to day work life/stress load and so many other things," Springer added. "So a lot of these questions are based around general thoughts or responses . . ."

• Tips to get in the habit of running regularly? Should I start with brisk walking? How far to run?

"The best way to get in the habit of running regularly is to make a routine. Staying consistent at running is key, as you get better at something you do often, not occasionally. If you need to do an (alternate) walk/run style to get started, you're meeting your body where it is."

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Driven beyond your limit

Athletes are flocking to Spartan races, pushing beyond their own limits

Michelle Hollenhead

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Athletes hoping to push themselves as far as they can go are flocking to Spartan races, where they become their own primary competitors.

The sport, founded in 2010 by Joe De Sena of Vermont, combines distance running with obstacle course components — wall and rope climbing, hurdles and carrying items that may include 100-pound boulders and filled buckets.

According to its website, the Spartan brand counts more than 1 million global participants annually competing in more than 200 events tailored to all fitness levels and ages.

Adult racers may choose from four levels of Spartan sport: Sprint, Super, Beast and Ultra.

Offering 3 to 5 miles of running and 20 to 25 obstacles, Spartan Sprint is considered a short distance race, and is the first part of the Spartan Trifecta, where participants are encouraged to complete three races to earn the "Ultimate Spartan Achievement." Each additional race then increases both the miles run and number of obstacles, all



Photo submitted

While competing in the Spartan Beast last year, Chris Stanley's obstacles included lifting this 100-pound rock.

the way up to the Ultra, which has 30 miles and more than 60 obstacles.

Chris Stanley of Knoxville is among the Spartan few, competing in five races over a one-year period, and earning the Trifecta medal last year.

"I'm just one of those people who is competitive with myself," said the athlete, who in addition to a day job with a supplement company, teaches classes at the West Knoxville Gold's Gym location.

Stanley, who has competed in triathalons and Iron Man races, too, said he was looking for something different when he discovered Spartan racing.

"For me, the biggest thing is that it is different from just running," he said. "There is running in it, but they really challenge you with different things. All the obstacles are different, and some look impossible."

One of the obstacles he encountered was a ropes hoist.

"You had to hoist yourself from point A to point B," he said. "I would liken it to some (training) I have seen in the Navy, where

they try to get to a boat along an anchor line. I had to shimmy across about 60 feet.

"It is a mental challenge, too. The races not only challenge your endurance, but also your mental capacity to keep going."

Races are held throughout the country and in 30 countries outside the U.S. and overseas. This year's events will be held in locations including Jacksonville, Florida; Greek Peak Mountain Resort in Corlant, New York; the Hawaii Trifecta Weekend on Kualoa Ranch on Oahu Island, Kane'Ohe, Hawaii in August; and the Carolina Ultra, Beast and Sprint Weekend to be held at an as yet determined location in November in North Carolina.

As much as he has come to enjoy the physical tests, Stanley said his first race was almost his last.

"The first one I ever did was the shortest, but it was also the hardest," he said of the Spartan Sprint that took place at Black Mountain in Asheville, North Carolina.

"I'm just one of those people who is competitive with myself,"

~ Chris Stanley
Local Spartan competitor

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Photos submitted
CrossFit Knoxville member Lizzi lifts weights in the Cedar Bluff gym.

Get 'CrossFit'

Tammy Cheek
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CrossFit training, which started in residential garages in the late 1990s, continues to explode, according to local trainers.

"It's gained a lot of popularity over the years," said Rick Mulholland, general manager of CrossFit Knoxville, 9311 Kingston Pike in Cedar Bluff's Market Place shopping center.

"I think the style of training is growing, but there're more gyms doing it not under the CrossFit name," said Zack Kramer, owner/head coach of Trinity Strength, 11211 Outlet Drive. "Group fitness, on a whole, is growing."

He said Greg Glassman and Lauren Jenal founded CrossFit, now a branded fitness regimen, in the mid- to late-1990s in Santa Cruz, California. Today, there are more than 13,000 gyms using the CrossFit method.

Johnny Davis, owner of CrossFit Knoxville, also started his business in his garage in 2008 and opened his first storefront gym a year later.

"We grew really rapidly, from 2011 to 2014, and opened up a second location in 2013 in North Knoxville," Mulholland said.

"Then we moved (the West Knoxville gym) across the parking lot to this (location) in 2014" because it offered more space.

As affiliates of CrossFit Inc., CrossFit Knoxville pays an affiliation fee, gets to use the brand and "basically runs the gym however we want to run it," he added.

Kramer defined CrossFit as a "constantly varied, functional movement performed at high intensity."

"CrossFit is not a system of movements; it's more of a methodology that whatever works is what we're going to do," Mulholland said. "So we're going to do functional movements that mimic real-life tasks. You know, we pick things off the ground; we put things over our heads ... anything that will help us perform better in the real world is what we do."

"We do it with a focus on great technique and great mechanics, and then we slowly increase intensity over time, and with that intensity comes real results," he added.

"I think the CrossFit name probably originated because it is kind of a cross-training methodology, where we're mixing different modalities like strength, conditioning, plyometrics (jump training), sports ... all these things, so, cross is all the



different domains."

"Trinity Strength's primary focus is health, longevity and really teaching people proper form and technique," Kramer said. "I think one thing people don't know about CrossFit is every gym is different."

"You can go to two different CrossFit gyms and their goal is different," he said.

However, they both agreed high intensity is relative.

"I think I would describe the high-in-

tensity part a little different than it comes across," Kramer said. "The intensity level we use is relative to what we are trying to get out of the day."

"Each day has a different goal and the intensity is kind of based upon that," he added.

At CrossFit Knoxville, Mulholland noted the intensity for a professional athlete

See CROSSFIT on Page 3C

Exercise and aging: How to work out safely after 50

In an ideal world, people young and old exercise each day. But as men and women age, finding time to work out is not so easy.

Commitments to work and family often take precedence over daily exercise. As a result, many people 50 and over might not have exercised regularly or at all in many years. But as children grow up or even move out, people facing down their golden years are often compelled to get back in the gym. That's a wise decision that can increase a person's chances of being healthy and happy in retirement. But before beginning a new exercise regimen, men and women over 50 should take heed of the following safety tips to ensure their efforts are not

derailed by accident or injury.

• **Speak with your physician.**

The National Institute on Aging notes that even people with chronic conditions such as heart disease, diabetes or arthritis can be physically active. However, anyone with such a condition and even those who don't fall into those categories should consult with their physicians and receive a full physical before exercising. Such a consultation and checkup can shed light on any unknown issues, and physicians can offer advice on how to safely manage any problems that may arise.

• **Begin with low-intensity exercises.**

Even if you feel great and have main-

tained a healthy weight, don't push yourself too hard at the start. Your body needs time to adjust to physical activity, so choose low-intensity exercises like walking and light strength training so your muscles, tendons and ligaments can adjust. Initially, exercise every other day so your body has ample time to recover between workouts.

• **Choose the right places to exercise outdoors.**

Exercising outside provides the best of both worlds for many people, providing a chance to get healthy all while enjoying the great outdoors. When exercising outdoors, choose areas that are not remote and where others can see you and offer help if you suf-

fer an injury or have an accident. Boardwalks, public parks and outdoor gyms are safer places to work out than wooded areas or other places well off the beaten path.

• **Stay hydrated.**

The NIA notes that many people lose their sense of thirst as they age. But just because you aren't thirsty does not mean you don't need water, especially while exercising. Water regulates body temperature and lubricates the joints, thereby decreasing your risk of injury during exercise.

Exercising after 50 can help people live healthy well into retirement. But caution must be exercised when aging men and women return to exercise after a long break.




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3 simple ways to eat healthier every day

Diets can be difficult to navigate. Since no two people are the same, a healthy diet that satisfies one person won't necessarily satisfy another. Vegetarians might be perfectly happy without chicken or steak, while some people might shudder at the notion of never indulging in the occasional filet mignon.

While the most effective diets tend to be those that emphasize nutrition while still allowing individuals to indulge in some of their favorite dishes in moderation, the following are three ways that everyone, regardless of their personal preference, can eat healthy every day.

1. Eat lots of whole-grain carbohydrates.

Fad diets tend to paint carbs as the enemy, but various studies have shown just how integral carbohydrates, particularly whole-grain varieties, are to a

healthy diet. One such study published in 2018 in the medical journal *The Lancet Public Health* found that diets that got between 50 and 55 percent of their calories from plant-based carbohydrates like whole grains were associated with a lower risk of mortality than low-carb diets that favored animal-derived protein sources. When buying carbs at the grocery store, shoppers can opt for whole-grain varieties, including whole-grain pastas, brown rice and cereals. That won't require sacrificing flavor and makes for a simple way to eat healthier every day.

2. Make a concerted effort to eat more fruits and vegetables.

The United Kingdom-based National Health Service, which is the largest single-payer health-care system in the world, recommends eating at least five portions of fruits and vegetables every day.

That may sound like a lot, but it's pretty easy to incorporate all those healthy fruits and veggies into a diet. For example, add a serving of antioxidant-rich blueberries to your cereal bowl each morning. At dinner time, allow vegetables to take up the most real estate on your plate. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention note that diets rich in fruits and veggies can help people control their weight and may even reduce their risk for certain diseases, including cancer.

3. Kick added sugars to the curb.

Avoiding added sugars is another way anyone, regardless of their food preferences, can eat healthier every day. Healthy foods such as fruit contain natural sugars, and these don't pose a threat to overall health. However, added sugars, which the Harvard Medical School notes are found in many foods and can include hon-



ey, molasses and corn syrup, can increase a person's risk for various conditions and diseases, including obesity, heart disease and diabetes. Fruit contains fiber that slows the absorption of natural sugars, but the body digests added sugars much more quickly, leading to an uptick in blood sugar levels that can ultimately contribute to diabetes. Added sugars can be found in a host of foods and beverages, including some that aren't

generally considered unhealthy, like bread, certain breakfast cereals and pasta sauces. When shopping, consumers should read nutrition labels and avoid products with excessive amounts of sugar.

Eating healthy does not require people to abandon their favorite foods. A few simple adjustments can be all it takes to improve the nutritional value of your diet.

Crossfit

From page 2C

would be defined differently than for a senior citizen.

Kramer and Mulholland noted CrossFit's popularity grew because of several reasons.

"No. 1, because it works," Mulholland said. "A lot of people, from all sorts of different fitness backgrounds, have found success with the type of training that we do here."

"So, when you find success and lose 50 pounds or you run your first marathon or you get off your diabetes medicine for the first time in 20 years, you are going to tell your friends about that," he added.

"A lot of people feel, when they start a workout routine, that they get stuck in a rut because they get bored with the routine — you know, the same thing over and over again in the gym every day. It just becomes monotonous."

"The fact CrossFit is so constantly varied keeps your body guessing," Mulholland added. "It keeps it fun, and we do a great job of creating a high-energy environment,

a welcoming environment,"

The sense of community CrossFit gyms provide also increase the regimen's popularity.

"The biggest thing that made it popular and what people love about our gym is the community atmosphere," Kramer said. "We really foster a community here where people cheer each other on, encourage one another."

"You become part of a family," he added. "Everybody is equal here. Everybody is in it together with just good goals of being healthy and being happy."

"Everything we do is in classes, so people get to know each other and we have outside gym events as well. It's really a community of people trying to get better together."

"I think maybe in an age where it's easy to feel isolated, it's a place of really strong community," he said. "I also think, just from a technical side of things, like there are lots of people who go and try to work out in gyms; they really aren't sure what they are doing."

At Trinity Strength, "there's a coach in

each class who makes sure you are doing it correctly, safely, helping you determine how hard you should be going," Kramer said. "We really take care of you."

Mulholland said the community aspect is also strong at CrossFit Knoxville.

"It's a community of like-minded individuals who are focused on getting better and who have a strong desire to work hard and we have fun," he said. "Everyone is positive."

"Our No. 1 rule is ... 'no complaints; you get to be here,'" Mulholland added. "So we leave all the negativity outside in the parking lot and bring in positive attitude. When everybody shares that, you have a really cool environment."

Another impact on the training's popularity is social media.

"You're able to get your name out to a lot more people much more rapidly," Mulholland said.

"It all boils down to people are excited about it," he said. "They finally found something that works, it's fun, it's exciting and it keeps them motivated."

Health benefits also factor in CrossFit's

popularity: weight loss; building strength and balance; being able to get off medications such as diabetes medications; and getting rid of chronic pain.

"The joints want to move the right way, but we have gotten into a sedentary lifestyle," Mulholland said, noting CrossFit's functional movements help members gain strength and body function.

"Obviously, exercise, in general, is very good for you," Kramer said, but specific to CrossFit, he added, "You are going to build strength here."

"There, the benefits are huge for people who want to live actively into their 90s or their 100s. Strength and balance is really big for that population."

"We're going to feel like you're not out of breath (while exercising)," he said. "You are going to have more energy, you are going to sleep better."

"Also, in a facility like this, where we focus on technique, we are going to keep you from getting injured because we are going to teach you how to pick up things," Kramer said.



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Why annual checkups are so important

Nutritious diets and routine exercise are two hallmarks of a healthy lifestyle. Combining the two can lower people's risk for various diseases and contribute to a high quality of life. But food and physical activity are not the only things people should do to improve their chances of living long, healthy lives.

Preventive care is important. One of the most effective principles of preventive care is to schedule an annual checkup with a physician. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, routine health exams and tests can find problems before they start. During annual checkups, doctors may notice some red flags, such as high cholesterol, that men and women won't detect on their own. These warning signs could be increasing people's risk for disease and/or discomfort. Many of these red flags are undetectable without proper screenings, which is why annual checkups are integral to maintaining one's health.

Annual checkups also serve as a great time for adults to be screened for certain cancers. The American Cancer Society notes that cancer screenings are used to find cancer before a person develops symptoms. That's a vital benefit of annual checkups, as cancers caught in their early

stages are more easily treated. In addition, catching cancer before it has metastasized greatly improves patients' prognosis.

Another reason to schedule annual checkups is that they make perfect opportunities for patients to discuss their family histories with their physicians. This is especially important for adults over 40, as age and family history are significant risk factors for a host

of conditions and diseases. Men and women concerned about conditions and diseases that their family members have had can discuss those concerns with their physicians during their annual checkups. Physicians can then recommend ways for patients to balance their risk, calming patients' concerns and giving them a road map to reduce their risk for conditions and diseases that

seem to run in their families.

Annual checkups are as vital a component of a healthy lifestyle as nutritious diets and routine exercise. By scheduling annual checkups with their physicians, adults can closely monitor their overall health and potentially uncover issues before they escalate into major health risks.

Preventive care includes safeguarding mental health

Preventive care is often looked at through the needs people need to do to protect their physical well-being. But taking steps to protect one's mental health also is vital to a long, productive life. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services notes that positive mental health and mental wellness can have a profoundly positive impact on a person's life. Positive mental health can help people realize their full potential, cope with the stresses of life and make meaningful contributions to their communities.

Learning to recognize the early warning signs of mental health problems can help prevent such problems from escalating and compel people to seek help. The DHHS advises anyone feeling these signs or recognizing these signs in others to seek help for themselves or their loved ones:

- Eating or sleeping too much or too little
- Pulling away from people and usual activities
- Having low or no energy
- Feeling numb or as if nothing matters

- Unexplained aches and pains
- Feeling helpless or hopeless
- Smoking, drinking, or using drugs more than usual
- Feeling unusually confused, forgetful, on edge, angry, upset, worried, or scared
- Yelling or fighting with family and friends
- Severe mood swings that cause problems in relationships
- Persistent thoughts and memories you can't get out of your head
- Hearing voices or believing things that are not true
- Thinking of harming yourself or others
- An inability to perform daily tasks, such as taking care of your children or getting to work or school

Taking steps to protect one's mental wellness is a vital component of preventive care. More information about mental health is available at www.mentalhealth.gov.

Running

From page 1C

• **Is there a technique to running, such as shorter strides? How you land on your feet?**

"My biggest advice to someone who is starting is to get fitted for a good pair of running shoes. This lays a great foundation for the miles to come. (A local run shop can) help all abilities and levels, from walkers to runners, and guide them to a shoe that would support them and give them the best ride for their body.

"Depending on the type of running you are doing determines the pace and distance. Try landing on your feet as if you don't want to step on a dog's tail, light and quick."

• **Alternate speeds while running?**

"For a good turnover in running, it is recommended one time a week for more advanced runners to introduce a 'speed day' where you can work on getting faster.

"If just beginning, try to keep your running at a conversational pace to encourage more blood flow into your muscles."

• **How to warm up before running (stretching and exercises? Walking first?)**

"A warm-up before running is recommended. Dynamic stretches where you are moving is best. Also, doing exercises where you are encouraging muscle activation."

• **Ways to reduce soreness, aches and injuries from running?**

"Ways that you can reduce soreness (include) Epsom salt baths, rolling with a foam roller, compression socks and elevation of the legs."

• **Is it good to walk on days you don't run? Don't run every day because you need recovery time?**

"Depending on the person and day to day activities determine how much recovery

time you need. A lot of runners take a full day of recovery, or more, a week. Your body recharges and needs the recovery day to be able to continually build and grow."

• **Can you break up your runs, especially if you are just beginning? If your goal is two miles, for example, maybe run 1/2 mile, walk some, then another half mile?**

"Yes, you can break up your miles. Pacing is important, so if you know you want to run 2 miles, start slow enough to be able to run the whole way. Walk/running is still allowing your body to go the distance and you are meeting your body where it is. With running, you're always trying to develop your aerobic capacity, so running slow will actually make you run faster later."

• **How to advise an ambitious regular runner, who regularly runs 10k or less, about tackling a half-marathon or marathon?**

"If you have a goal to run a half marathon or a marathon, it is such a rewarding journey. My biggest advice would be to follow a plan that is right for your lifestyle, ability and schedule. Having a plan or a coach to guide you for the training block helps keep you on track and allows you to build your mileage slowly while keeping you injury free. Depending on your background would determine whether your body could handle higher mileage or your need for more rest days."

• **When is it time to recycle or trash your running shoes?**

"The rule of thumb with running shoes is every 300 to 600 miles or 6 to 8 months they should be switched out. This differentiates per shoe style, running efficiency, weight, how many miles per week, whether they are used for strictly running, etc. Typically, if you start feeling like you aren't recovering as quick after a run or you're starting to have some nagging pain – it's time to switch your shoes. Check with your local run shop – most have a shoe recycling bin at the front and will be happy to take

them off your hands. I know ours at Runners Market: go to Knox County schools or Shoes4Funds organization."

• **Benefits of running during events, or joining a club? Does having the encouragement of others, and running partners who can push you a real benefit?**

"Joining a run group is typically free and worth putting yourself out there for. It is much more enjoyable to run with others when they can make the miles pass by quicker or help encourage you to push more than you would on a solo run. You might go a little faster or run a little more with a group. Runners Market offers a free group run on Wednesday nights at 5:30 p.m. and has since the store opened in 1995.

"It helps to have people keep you accountable for showing up and when these cold, dark months hit, having a friend with you is a lot safer. Signing up for a race gives you a date and goal to work towards.

"Standing on a start line for a race gives off an adrenaline rush unlike one you'll likely find running a loop in your neighborhood. Running releases endorphins (in the brain) and soon you'll experience the "runners high."

• **Ask your doctor if you're a beginner?**

"I would say if they are a new beginning runner, consulting with their doctor first isn't a bad idea. Just like with a workout class or anything – knowing their limitations."

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BONES STRENGTH BALANCE

The relationship between eating and exercise

Diet and exercise are each vital components of a healthy lifestyle. While these components tend to be looked at separately, diet and exercise are actually interconnected.

According to the American College of Sports Medicine, adequate food and fluid should be consumed before, during and after exercise. Following that advice can help men and women maintain their blood glucose concentration during exercise, which allows them to maximize their performance and improves their recovery time.

Some people understandably may feel that eating before exercising seems counterintuitive, as food may contribute to feelings of sluggishness that would make it hard to maximize a workout. But what people eat, and drink, prior to working out is important, as the right foods can make a positive impact while the wrong foods can have the opposite effect.

The American Heart Association and the ACSM recommend hydrating with water prior to working out. The ACSM recommends drinking between two and three cups of water two to three hours before exercising. Adults accustomed to working out in the early morning can try to wake up earlier so they can give their bodies time to hydrate before they begin exercising. It's also important to continue hydrating during

a workout, as the ACSM recommends drinking between 1/2 and one cup of water every 15 to 20 minutes during a workout (amounts can be adjusted based on variables such as the weather and individuals' body sizes). After a workout, the ACSM recommends drinking two to three cups of water for every pound lost during the exercise session.

Food also plays a vital role in maximizing a workout and improving recovery time. The AHA recommends fueling up on healthy carbohydrates, such as whole-grain cereals, whole-wheat toast or low-fat or fat-free yogurt, two hours before exercising. Doing so might pose a problem for early morning exercise enthusiasts, and in such instances the AHA advises eating a piece of fruit such as an apple or banana five to 10 minutes before beginning a workout. Avoid saturated fats and a lot of healthy protein prior to working out, as it takes longer for these fuels to digest in the stomach. Until foods are digested, muscles may not get all of the oxygen and energy-delivering blood they need during a workout, so it's best to stick with foods that the body can digest more quickly.

The Mayo Clinic notes that it's also important to make food a part of your post-workout routine. Eating a post-workout meal that contains both carbohydrates and protein can aid muscle recovery and



replace glycogen stores that help increase energy levels after working out.

The most effective way to exercise in-

volves healthy foods, which can improve performance and lead to quicker post-workout recovery.

Spartan

From page 1C

"The conditions, the weather — not just the race," were hard, he said. "They were against every racer. It had rained the night before, and made the course close to impossible to complete.

"I was slipping off everything," he continued. "Partially because I didn't have the right equipment, but also because the runners, of course, left so much mud. Combined with Mother Nature, it made the course very tough.

"I said then I will never do it again, but I learned after the race what to wear, how to train and how to make sure I could push myself during each obstacle. Eventually, after I

got started, I started getting better."

He said one of the draws for him has been the "unconventional way of training."

"Training is about endurance," Stanley said. "It is constant; that to me is the really cool thing. I upped my cardio conditioning and do a lot of upper body and leg work. I also do a lot of burpees. (The burpee, or squat thrust, is a full body exercise used in strength training and as an aerobic exercise).

"When I started training for Spartan races, I heard this, 'Do a lot of pull ups and burpees.'"

Burpees are important within the races themselves, as contestants may elect to do 30 if they can't complete the obstacle before them.

Stanley also likes that the Spartan brand targets youngsters, too. The Spartan Kids race is open to both boys and girls ages 4 to 13, offering half-mile runs, 2-mile runs with obstacles and 5-mile courses among others.

"I think it's really cool that the Spartan series and race itself has inspired new generations of athletes," he said. "Kids love these races and Spartan kids has become a brand itself. It's also helping kids stay active and try new things.

"My mom used to push me out of the house every day, and said, 'go play.' I got dirty, climbed things, crawled around and ran everywhere. Kids are doing less of that now, but Spartan has given them an opportunity to find that freedom once again.

"I'm training a kid right now that loves

them and will continue to do them as he grows up."

Stanley said the races can be solitary, as participants are primarily invested in their own completion.

"There are times when there is nobody around you, but there are other times when you find camaraderie and make friends with other racers," he said. "There was one race, where a girl was having a really hard time getting through an obstacle, and I told her I was going to help her get through it. She did it, and the only ones who knew about it were me, her and the guy running the obstacle.

"But she will never forget that, and I won't either. Making friends is part of the journey, too. It's also what keeps me coming back."

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