

FINDING COURAGE IN TRIALS

By [TheHouseSparrow](#), Allendale, MI

The morning was crisp and clear, a premonition to the warm day to come. The sun was peering through the tree tops and a cloudless sky hung above the horizon. A bright, yellow bus came around the corner and a team of students climbed in. The ride was long and seemed to drag on, but finally it ceased. The coach gave them a diminutive speech and they shuffled off to their stations. Some went to their tent, some went to the bathrooms, and one sprang out of her seat expecting that she could have a relaxing experience. Her coach came up to her and told her to grab her shoes because she was going to run the race that she had prepared for the entire summer. She dragged her shoes out of her small, black bag and began to place them on her sore feet. Girls began to gather by the starting line and she followed like a small sheep that was lost. She looked around at the other girls, noticing them and how she was different. Nevertheless, her team prayed and they went back to their locations on the line. There was a break in the silence, and everyone started to dart towards the gap in the woods. This was not going to be a race against anyone on the team, but a race against herself. After about twenty five minutes, every runner had completed the course in hopes of making a personal record. She was still running for the next forty minutes. As she came around the corner, there were fellow athletes, parents, and coaches of other teams, including her three coaches. They yelled her name and told her to run faster and to not stop until the end. Sweat was pouring down her face and her expression showed the sign of acute pain. She ran faster and faster until she crossed the line.

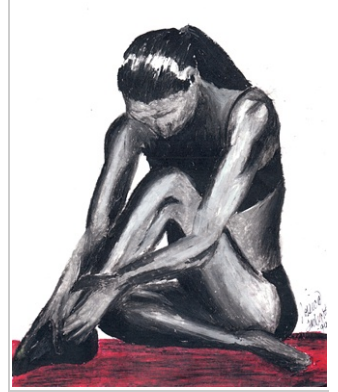
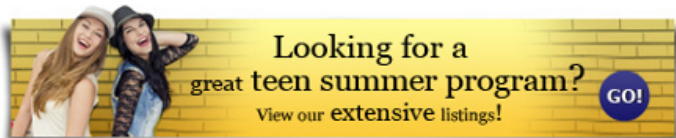


Image Credit: Jessie Y., Ahwahnee, CA

I was that girl. I never noticed that day my exact time, but I know that I would never trade anything in the world for the success of completing my first cross country race. With each race I became more determined to trim seconds and minutes off my time. I was never a first, second, or third place winner, but that did not matter. I wanted to walk away feeling great about how I ran each race. Every one of my runs took hard work and perseverance to the end. I was not a natural-born runner, but my determination made me want to become one. Completing this race instilled courage and drive that made me realize that I can do anything with God's strength. I continued to struggle with every run, every practice, and every race. I never walked during my races because I rejoiced when I successfully completed a race. I have become more determined and driven in everything that I do. I am so thankful that I continued to persevere because running cross country has helped shape me to who I am today.





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