

Tyler Schaefer

If we want to achieve our dreams

Welcome and congratulations to everyone here today. I am honored to be speaking in front of you all. I want to thank Dr. Stimmel, the Board of Education and Mr. Hoffer for making today possible and my parents, friends, teachers, and family for helping me get to where I am currently standing. The last year and a half has been, undeniably, the weirdest period of our lives. Never, for the last century, has any society had to deal with what we dealt with. But we overcame the challenges and now we're here, graduating and ready to dive into the next chapter of our lives.

I first wanted to introduce myself. Some of you simply know me as Tyler Schaefer, a lot of you probably know me as Erin Schaefer's brother, and the rest of you may know me as that skinny kid that's always running through Sayville.

Running has become a significant part of my life over the past 5 years. Every day I look to improve my abilities to eventually achieve my dreams. One run I look forward to each week is my Sunday Long Run. This is a common day for the running community in which many people run their longest run of the week. For me, this run consists of a 10 to 14-mile loop around Sayville. Now, if you just heard 10 to 14 miles and thought in your head that I'm crazy, don't worry, you're not alone. It has taken me years to build up to these runs, and along the journey, I've learned a few lessons that are key to finishing a long run and can also be used as a recipe to achieve a goal in life.

One major step to completing a long run that often goes unnoticed is fueling your body. A long run requires a lot of energy, and to have this energy, you need to make sure you're drinking plenty of water and eating enough food. It can be as small as eating a granola bar or drinking a few ounces of water before you head out of the door in the morning. No matter what, it is important that you prepare your body to be physically ready for a long run. In life, we're going to have challenges that require much time or energy to overcome. If we want to achieve our goals, we must prepare ourselves physically to do so.

Sometimes, the hardest part of going on a long run is getting out the door and starting it. Sometimes, the weather may not be in our favor. Sometimes, you may be tired from a long night or after a trip to the beach. Sometimes, the sun may be going down too soon. Every time these thoughts creep into your mind, you become less likely to start the run. This can develop a bad habit, and before you know it, you have missed two, even

maybe three runs in a row. Not only is it bad to skip a run, but skipping a long run means your aerobic gain is significantly decreased for that week, which makes the next week harder, and the week after that even more challenging. This can all be prevented by just taking that first step out of the door.

Just one step and you've committed yourself to complete the run.

Just one step, and all the excuses about bad weather or tiredness seem to fade away.

In life, we're going to have "Reasons" why we can't start. If we want to achieve our dreams, we just need to take the first step. We can't let our excuses stop us from starting. Don't give up before you even start.

When running, it is easy to compare your times to those of other runners. People worry that if they aren't running faster than (let's say) 9 minutes per mile or if they don't finish faster than they started then they aren't going hard enough. I've definitely fallen victim to this; I would check my watch during a run and see that my pace isn't faster than the pace I knew other people were running. When I saw my "slow" pace, my body seemed to get more tired. When my body becomes more tired, my pace becomes even slower. This chain reaction all started from comparing myself to others. Instead of just running easy at 9 minute pace, I would unnecessarily push myself to run faster so I could record a more impressive time. While pushing yourself may be good on some days, setting expectations based on impressing others is dangerous. Injury and burnout is likely to follow which only hinders your abilities to achieve your goals. In life, there will be times where we want to over exert ourselves for the sole sake of impressing others. If we're going to achieve our dreams, we must not be afraid of running 9 minute pace when we need to.

Another skill I've learned from running, and possibly the most important, is how not to get hit by a car. Cars come in many different shapes and sizes and within each car are many different types of drivers. After running for some time, you start to pick up little hints on the suspected behavior drivers (Maybe just put it like you learn the behaviors of drivers). For example, if you watch a car speed through Main Street, the driver is more likely to end up on Sayville Moms than they are to stop for you at the pedestrian crosswalk. Or if you see a stop sign, that doesn't necessarily mean the driver will stop. The most important thing I've learned is that whether you are in the right or wrong, always understand your adversary. In no instance does a human beat a car and you must accept that to be safe. In life, there are going to be many types of "cars" with "drivers" who may be dangerous if we don't know how to watch for them. There may be no way we can beat

these cars and we may just have to accept that. We have to stay safe by acknowledging that not all cars follow the law and not all cars even bother checking for us. If we want to achieve our dreams, we must learn how to not get hit by a car.

The last lesson and most important lesson I've learned from long runs is to never "give up." Giving up can come in many forms. You can turn back earlier than you were supposed to, you can call your mom, dad or an uber to come pick you up, and you can even take a route home that you know is a shorter distance to your house. Give up, and you no longer have to finish your run. Give up, and maybe the blisters on your feet may not be as bad. Give up, and you no longer have to push yourself. It may seem easy to give up, and trust me, some days it definitely will cross your mind. But remember, the only way you are guaranteed not to finish your long run is if you give up running it. If we want to achieve our dreams, we must not EVER give up.

Now, to my fellow classmates of 2021, it is time that I wrap up my speech. We are closer than we have ever been to starting the next chapter of our lives. We will be leaving today, taking a path in which we may be on our own. We will each have our own dreams that inspire us to do better each day. It may not be easy to succeed, but if we prepare ourselves, take that first step, go at our own pace without letting the expectations of others affect us, learn how to avoid those who may hurt us, and never ever give up, we will be able to achieve our dreams.