The Fine Print

Part two of a monthly series on health, fitness, and the second curve
By Guy Mofley

I stood up, and I could not walk.

We had just landed in Dubai after sixteen hours in a seat. I am not reaching for effect. I could not walk off the airplane. My team stood in the aisle, asking whether they should find a wheelchair to get me through the terminal. I had flown halfway around the world to do my job, and my colleagues were discussing how to get me around.

Last month I told you about the yes. This is what it cost.

The switch had flipped, and it flipped hard. Tony Horton and P90X became an integral part of my life almost immediately. I stopped borrowing and bought my own copy. I stayed with the program. I was actually doing the thing. And then, still inside that first month, I had to make that flight.

I thought I had an advantage

Here is how little I understood about my own body at that point. I boarded that plane feeling good about myself. Sixteen hours in a seat, and I honestly thought, "This is going to be nice. I am getting in shape now." I hadn't lost much weight yet, but I was starting to feel something happening in there. I figured it would help.

It did not help.

I was a man who had done nothing physical, essentially, in decades, and I had just spent a month running in place and jumping up and down in my living room. I wasn't even using weights yet. All I had were resistance bands. Those muscles had never been asked for anything in their lives.

Exercise physiologists have a name for what happens next. Delayed onset muscle soreness, or DOMS, is the deep ache that sets in a day or two after muscles do work they aren't used to. A 2003 review in *Sports Medicine* by Cheung, Hume, and Maxwell describes it as one of the most common results of unaccustomed exercise, especially the braking kind of work muscles do when you land from a jump. Then I locked those muscles into an airline seat for sixteen straight hours. A 2007 World Health Organization study found that sitting still for more than four hours lets blood pool in your leg veins.

That is the part nobody warns you about. The pain didn't come from quitting. The pain came from starting.

So let me give you the warning nobody gave me. If you are starting a demanding program after years of inactivity, talk with your doctor first. And if you ever have severe pain or swelling in a leg after a long flight, get it checked right away. That same WHO study found that long travel roughly doubles the risk of a blood clot. The overall risk stays low, but it is not a risk to shrug off. The same report notes that simply moving your feet up and down at the ankle while you sit helps keep blood moving through your calves, which is an easy habit on any long trip.

Two in the morning in Dubai

I ended up in a hotel room, sore in places I did not know could be sore, wide awake at two in the morning with jet lag stacked on top of everything else.

And I sat there and asked the question honestly. Do I need to go on? Should I continue?

It turns out that question is one of the most predictable moments in all of fitness. Exercise psychologist Rod Dishman, whose research on sticking with exercise goes back to the early 1980s, found that roughly half of the people who start an exercise program drop out within the first six months. Researchers have been confirming that pattern ever since. I was sitting right in the middle of the most common place to quit.

It had been a great start. But this was harder than I ever could have imagined. It felt like I was reading the fine print of a new life, and I did not remember seeing this part in anything I had read so far.

I have thought about that line many times since, and not only about fitness. Almost every new season I have entered has worked this way. The commitment comes first, full of hope, and the cost shows up afterward, in a place you didn't expect, at an hour when nobody you know is awake. If you are in the middle of a change you didn't fully choose, you may be reading that fine print right now.

I started flipping channels, trying to get tired. For whatever reason, only two of them were in English.

I landed on a rerun of Dr. Oz.

His guest was Tony Horton.

Do your best and forget the rest

I was blown away. Two in the morning, halfway around the world, aching, jet-lagged, sitting there convinced I had made a mistake and this was all too hard. And the voice I had been following every single morning for a month started talking on the screen in front of me.

I could have sworn he was talking straight to me.

“Don’t give up,” he said. Do your best and forget the rest.

He talked about the people he had seen change. And then, because it was television and because it was Tony, he was asked to flash those famous abs.

I needed every second of it. It was a shot of vitamin E. Encouragement.

Think about where I was. I was at the lowest point of a brand-new commitment, in a foreign country, at an hour when nobody I knew was awake, and the one voice I needed to hear was waiting on one of the only two channels I could understand.

I knew it was the Lord’s doing. I can’t explain it. He speaks to me in the strangest ways, and when He does, it is with the most powerful, poignant voice I know. That night in Dubai, He used a rerun.

From bad thinking to prayer

My thinking turned around in that room. It went from did I make a mistake to okay, you can do this, Mofley.

And then I started praying. “Lord, give me the strength to continue.”

That is when the verse came to me. In the ESV it reads, “But the one who endures to the end will be saved” (Matthew 24:13). Some translations render it “stands firm.”

Read in context, that verse does more than encourage. Jesus says it to his disciples right after warning them that “the love of many will grow cold” (v. 12). And the Greek word behind endure, *hypomenō*, means to remain under, to stay beneath a load without walking out from under it. It is not a finish line. It is a posture.

That was my hotel room exactly. Everything in me was cooling toward quitting, and the invitation was to stay under the weight a little longer. Tony had told me not to give up. The verse told me what not giving up actually is.

I sat with the word endurance, and I had to admit something uncomfortable. That was a topic I knew almost nothing about. Not in my body, not in my work, not in my walk with

God. I had spent my whole life being a man who started things and stopped things. Endurance was somebody else's category.

I decided it was time to make it mine. So, I did what I do. I put the first letter of my last name in front of it.

mDurance. Mofley endurance.

It looks a little silly written down. It has not been silly to live with. It is one of many small reminders I have built into my life that all signal the same handful of things. Keep going. Don't stop. Do your best and forget the rest.

That is really how the switch flipped and stayed flipped. Not because anything got easier. Because I finally had a word for the hard part.

Your turn

Last month I wrote about three men who invited me toward something for the better part of a decade. Notice who the Lord sent this time. A man on a television screen, in a rerun, who has never met me and never will, who had no idea I existed and no idea I was about two minutes from quitting.

You never know which invitation lands. Sometimes you aren't even in the room.

If you want one thing to try this week, try this. Name your own word for the hard part. It doesn't have to be clever. Write it somewhere you'll see it every morning. And the next time something in your new season hurts, let that word remind you to scale back rather than stop. Bands instead of weights. Fewer jumps instead of none.

Then tell me about it. Have you had a moment like mine, where the thing you said yes to cost more than the fine print let on, and something or someone showed up right when you were ready to walk away?

Leave a comment below. I would love to hear it.

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