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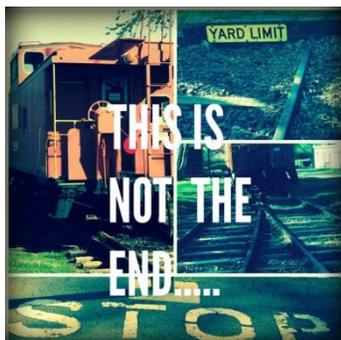


THIS IS NOT THE END... YOU CAN START AGAIN

Rebecca Burtram

Plantar fasciitis has taken a good deal of joy out of my runs since about February. The past few months have made me question if it might be time to turn my running shoes in for some other type of exercise equipment.

Some people would gladly toss out their running shoes, but I have been running for the love of running since sixth grade. In many ways it has become a major part of who I am. Because of this, I decided not to throw my Brooks away just yet. I am taking time to heal and look at my running from a new perspective. This difficulty is not the end; it is a chance to start over.



I'm always amazed by how running is full of lessons for living. As I ran past the caboose on my running trail, the yard limit sign, and the stop painted on the ground, I thought about how we can feel

everything is telling us that it's time to give up on a job, a spouse, our faith, or ourselves.

Facing too much pain, we begin to doubt if it is really worth it anymore.

I've been there.

On top of the deaths of many loved ones over the years, the second loss of a pregnancy in less than a year's time sent me over the edge. I looked like I had it together, but I was completely falling apart. I doubted my worth as a woman and wanted to give up on myself. Soon after, my marriage teetered on the brink of coming to an end. We didn't know if we could continue on in the hurt, and we found we couldn't.....

That was not the end. That was when we decided to start over.

We looked back over our relationship, and we decided it was worth saving. I had to give focused time and energy to nursing my broken heart and broken faith. My husband had to do the same. It wasn't easy. It took work, counseling, determination, prayer, patience, and the decision to love. Coming through it on the other side, we are stronger and healthier now than we ever were.

Some relationships do not survive, but that is not the end of your ability to love and be loved.

Sometimes jobs are lost or not worth keeping, but that does not mean your ability to succeed has come to an end.

Sometimes you can't figure out who you are anymore, but this is not the end either.

The beauty of life is there is ALWAYS a chance to start over. Every new day with His mercies new every morning is the constant opportunity to start again. Some things are healthier to let go, and some are meant to be held on to with all you are worth. The choice is yours. I am here to say, "You can start again."

We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love. (Romans 5:3-5 NLT)

I think I'll lace my running shoes up again tomorrow and put one foot in front of the other.