

### The Relentless Pursuit

A significant writer and highly influential speaker across the globe, Ralph Waldo Emerson perfectly summed up the importance of happiness in perseverance in his statement that “nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm.” When faced with the will to accomplish an individual goal set forth, different people may arrive at their destination in countless ways. The freshman basketball player striving to make the varsity team may spend hours upon hours practicing the technique of mastering three-point shots. Nightly practice problem sets are a near must for the student intent on making the highest grade in math class. For the violinist, it may take many weeks and even more sore fingers to masterfully perform a lengthy Mozart piece. While I am skilled in none of the above talents, I can relate those who know the feeling of the late nights spent alone in front of a blinding computer screen, a cup of black coffee steaming idly by, with wrists sore after writing chapter upon chapter of a novel. I am proud of myself for writing a book I can call my own, but even the challenge of such a feat is not where the truth of perseverance lies for me.

Thinking back to Emerson’s quote, most are struck by his words as thinking that enthusiasm leads to greatness. I, on the other hand, prefer to take the approach that enthusiasm in and of itself is the true greatness that one must strive for, no matter who or where one may be. No one ever promised that life would be easy, and no matter how privileged a person may be, living is something that rich and poor alike must endure. To find a balance of happiness and optimism in no matter which walk of life a person may take is the greatest reward anyone can

obtain. As someone who has not always lived by these enthusiastic principles, I found this way of thinking some two years ago and my life changed for the better and has only improved since. This striving for positivity was brought about during the reading of Jonathan Safran Foer's "Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close." In this book, a child's grandmother explains that "it's a shame that we have to live, but it's a tragedy that we get to live only one life." This sentence, so hauntingly simple, spoke to me in such a way that nothing else has ever quite thought about. Of course, it is a shame we have to live because life can be so cruel and difficult. The tragedy of it all is only getting one chance though, because wisdom is gained through age and experience; by the time one figures out how to live peaceably, life is nearly over. No matter how tragically just one life may be, this speaking of only one chance to do things the right way changed me the very day that I read it.

I craved happiness and peace in my life. That Sunday I began listening more intently at church. I stopped worrying about what others thought about the shirt on my back. I started finding the beauty in every drop of formerly-dreary rain. The day I began to be happy was the day that something inside of me died and a better person was reborn from it. Life is not easy, and people can be mean. Things don't always go as planned and frustrations arise. No matter how negative the times may be, the ability to ignore them and try to focus on some ray of light in everything is the greatest challenge I have ever accepted, but nonetheless, one that I look forward to each and every day. My wish is that every person will persevere to see the importance of happiness in life and make it their goal to find it, and never give up until they have.