

I Can Do It

"C'mon Mom, don't be a party pooper!"

It was a beautiful Saturday afternoon, and my family was ready to hike the mountainous five-mile trail at a scenic state park in the North Georgia Mountains. Knowing that my knees would torment me on the hilly terrain, and that I would likely be unable to get up or down the stairs in my house without pain for a week after the endeavor, I elected to sit out the hike and enjoy the sunny day from a deck chair.

"I'm sorry, honey," I told my seven-year-old, "but with my bad knees, I just can't do it." So off they went, laughing and enjoying a family outing – without Mom and her bad knees.

Those words echoed in my mind as I read some of the inspiring personal stories in this issue. Would someone like David Jacobson (see page 48) ever say "I just can't do it"? Here was a man who needed a cane to walk due to the effects of psoriatic arthritis, yet he managed to ride 50 miles over seven hours on a cold blustery day – on a unicycle of all things – to raise money for the Arthritis Foundation.

David's story reminded me of others we have printed in the past – of Steve LaRue from Chicago, who completed an entire 26.2 mile marathon on crutches; of Tom Segar from San Francisco, who swam a grueling 1.5 mile race from Alcatraz Island to the mainland just eight months after having shoulder replacement surgery; and other everyday heroes who have overcome the limitations of the body to accomplish remarkable things.

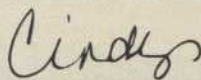
What, I wondered, set these people apart from the rest of us who watch them from the sidelines? My guess is it's a combination of well-orchestrated medical care, dedicated training and more than a little bit of sheer determination.

Even with good knees, I could never match the athleticism and determination of these extraordinary people, but I can hope to learn from them – to adopt some of their optimism; their willingness to take the steps needed to accomplish a goal; their "can-do" attitude.

As a starting point, I am working with my doctor on a program of exercise and physical therapy to strengthen the quadriceps muscles

that support my knees. He also advises me to take more medication before a strenuous outing and to ice my knees afterward to offset some of the lingering pain I have experienced in the past.

Chances are, I will never finish a marathon, ride a unicycle or race in icy waters, but I can – and I will – go on the next family hike, bad knees or not. And that just may make me a hero for a day to a certain seven-year-old I know.



Cindy McDaniel, Editor

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