



Find a Way

Diana Nyad

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On September 2, 2013, at the age of sixty-four, Diana Nyad emerged onto the sands of Key West after swimming 111 miles, nation to nation, Cuba to Florida, in an epic feat of both endurance and human will, in fifty-three hours. Diana carried three poignant messages on her way across this stretch of shark-infested waters, and she spoke them to the crowd in her moment of final triumph:

1. Never, ever give up.
2. You're never too old to chase your dreams.
3. It looks like a solitary sport, but it's a Team.

Millions of people around the world cheered this maverick on, moved by her undeniable tenacity to be the first to make the historic crossing without the aid of a shark cage. At the end of her magnificent journey, after thirty-five years and four crushing failures, the public found hope in Diana's perseverance. They were inspired by her mantra—find a way—that led her to realize a dream in her sixties that had eluded her as a young champion in peak form.

In *Find a Way*, Diana engages us with a unique, passionate story of this heroic adventure and the extraordinary life experiences that have served to carve her unwavering spirit.

Diana was a world champion in her twenties, setting the record for swimming around Manhattan Island, along with other ocean-swim achievements, all of which rendered her a star at the time. Back then, she made the first attempt at the Mount Everest of swims, the Cuba Swim, but after forty-two hours and seventy-nine miles she was blown desperately off course. Her dream unfulfilled, she didn't swim another stroke for three decades.

Why, at sixty-four, was she able to achieve what she could not at thirty? How did her dramatic failures push her to success? What inner resources did Diana draw on during her long days and nights of training, and how did the power of the human spirit trump both the limitations of the body and the forces of nature across this vast, dangerous wilderness? This is the gripping story of an athlete, of a hero, of a bold mind. This is a galvanizing meditation on facing fears, engaging in our lives full throttle, and living each day with no regrets.

Find a Way Details

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From Reader Review Find a Way for online ebook

Jennifer Madgiak says

Diana Nyad is an extreme ultra-swimmer, which is incredible as is her journey.

I'm a swimmer myself, so I can definitely admire her determination and the never give up mentality, just remarkable!

Diana Nyad is not, however, a good story-teller. I did appreciate the occasional sarcasm/jokes, but overall it was hard for me to follow the "plot" and order of events.

Estef Najera says

Is an inspiring story for “never, ever give up”

My best phrase is:

“What you get by achieving your goals is not as important as what you become by achieving your goals”

Btw #haters must die! Don't be envy of others !

Robin says

I am just in awe of this woman. She was one of my favorite NPR commentators and her storytelling skills transfer well to this autobiography. Her mental discipline through 50+ hours of nonstop swimming, repeatedly trying an unprecedented athletic feat in her 60s that she failed at in her 20s, her journalism career, and her physical abilities all just blow me away. Highly recommended.

Tara - Running 'n' Reading says

Absolutely incredible. At the end of this book, Nyad writes, in her author's notes,

"Eighty percent of what I wrote isn't in the book, but the pursuit of recalling a lifetime of experiences proved to be one of the most illuminating things I've ever done. Perspective of what was in the end important surfaced. Gratitude for this rocket ship of a life I've gotten to live overwhelmed me."

This book is so much more than the quest to reach Florida from Cuba as an open water swimmer, it is a true example of the relationship between the journey and the destination; the motivation, the struggle, the fear, the emotion and the dedication that it takes to reach a life goal and to summon every ounce of determination that one has in order to carry on, in spite of the inclination (and that of surrounding individuals) to give up.

Through the story of five attempts, Nyad also provides readers with a history of her life: a terrifying childhood, the barriers for female athletes, her difficult relationships with family and her desire to "engage"

with her life. It is a true life review and it is beautiful to read.

I would highly recommend this book to anyone who enjoys powerful memoirs, needs a push of inspiration/motivation and/or understands the journey that is required to work toward a goal; in addition, I must mention that there are some incredible pictures included within the hard copy. For those of you who participate in sports, like running, that lend themselves to chafing, you will not believe what she endured, as seen in some of the pictures (don't worry - they're not gross!) included in the book.

Alison says

Because I miss swimming so much I decided to torture myself / live vicariously through Diana Nyad in her memoir about her 110-mile swim through deadly box jellyfish infested waters from Cuba to Florida in 52 nonstop hours at the age of 64. It took her FIVE attempts to finally accomplish this, 35 years.

For a long time the long distance open water swim record was the infamous English Channel swim - 21 miles. When she was in her 20's she broke that record by swimming 28 miles around Manhattan. When she turned 60 she decided she wanted to "find a challenge that would consume her completely," so she decided to try to beat her own 28-mile open water swim world record with a one hundred mile swim. (Sure.)(Okay.)

The Florida Straits are infested with great whites and box jellyfish, whose venom is the most deadly of any creature on the planet. No one had attempted this swim without a shark cage before or made it more than a handful of hours before dying or *almost* dying from the stings of the jellyfish. She almost died from stings herself. In her first attempt in 1978 she was stung and continued to swim for 20 miles with partial paralysis and impaired lung capacity.

Each attempt took around \$300,000-500,000 for a crew to navigate a boat alongside her & guide her, access/paperwork to Cuba and Florida, a jellyfish expert to keep her alive, shark experts to keep sharks away, kayakers to keep her from straying too far from the lead boat (goggles fog & the swim is done in almost complete deprivation + no sleep for 50 hours through constant anaerobic exercise = hallucinations, guaranteed), a feeder / nutritionist on hand, an ER crew on hand for the inevitable stings, etc.

By her 4th failed attempt the crew had given up, and she wasn't done but couldn't do this alone. So she pigheaded her way to her way with some new crew plus some old crew that she managed to reinfect with hope of the mission. And finally on the 5th attempt, at 64 years old, she did the "impossible."

I'm not a big believer in fate or anything of that sort, but sometimes synchronicity does feel a bit eerie and suspicious. Sometimes it feels like certain books come into my life right when I need them. Last year I lost my gallbladder and hence my ability to eat lamb & duck, then I lost my last high-fat meat (beef), leaving me with only the ability to digest lean exotic meat and a few kinds of fish. I was battle fatigued with these never-ending food issues so rather than seeking yet another doctor out, I just dejectedly embraced acceptance of my situation. It wasn't until a friend with almost identical health issues pushed me into looking into Mast Cell that I got my head back into the game.

& despite the fact that I finally have a promising culprit so my head has been *mostly* back in the game, this book made me realize that I still have this tendency towards some sabotaging negative self-talk. ("I have this gut feeling I won't ever get any foods back into my diet." "I'll probably be one of those Mast Cell patients who can't find any medication that helps them.") This was mostly stemming from not wanting to jinx things

or get my hopes up for the millionth time only to be dashed yet again. Hope can be cruel.

But on the other hand, it is essential. Diana never would have been able to make the "impossible" happen had she allowed herself to really and truly accept that this swim was as futile as all the experts were telling her it was. She had more of that "shoot for the moon, end up amongst stars" mindset. And reading about not just her tenacity, but the insane capabilities of the human body to not only endure such a feat but bounce back from all of that abuse reminded me hey, dummy, maybe your goals need to be the moon, too.

I was excitedly chewing B's ear off about this book the other day at our favorite diner. I told him it's unfortunate that I discovered her story just now, because like her when I started getting into triathlons I realized I was only an okay-ish pool swimmer, but in open water I left everyone in my wake. And while telling him this, I slipped right back into my habit of acceptance of finality. I said I wish I had had an opportunity to attempt some long distance open water swims before the shit had hit the fan with my health.

And B, skipping clear over my inability to eat food and that whole hurdle (shooting right for the moon), said: "You're not 64 yet."

Donna says

This is the autobiography of Diana Nyad who set some impressive swimming records. She definitely has a story to tell and I found this very inspirational. She had trials to overcome, but I'm not sure "overcome" is the right word here. She more than 'overcame' them. She learned to deal with it and did not let them define her. She carved out her own place. Not only that, but she owned it and triumphed.

I admire her strength and dedication. This sounded honest and I appreciated her narrative voice here. So 5 stars....I would read this again.

Diane says

Diana Nyad is one tough woman. She is the person who swam from Cuba to Florida when she was 64. That's right, 64. It was her fifth attempt.

When Nyad was 26, she swam around the island of Manhattan, setting a world speed record. She also set a distance record for swimming from the Bahamas to Florida. And I hear she's good at playing squash.

This memoir covers Nyad's life from childhood to her 60s, but it jumps around and meanders quite a bit, almost as if her thoughts were being swayed by ocean waves. I admit I knew little about Nyad before I read this. I vaguely recall news stories in 2013 about her successful Cuba swim, but that was my only frame of reference.

For example, I didn't know that she had a long career in sports broadcasting. Or that she had been trying to complete the Cuba swim since 1978.

I also did not know that Nyad suffered extensive sexual abuse when she was a child, both from her stepfather and her swimming coach, who reportedly also abused many other young women. (Nyad doesn't name the guy, but a quick Google search ferreted him out.) At this point I need to pause and issue a warning to readers who are sensitive about graphic details of molestation and abuse. Nyad experienced truly horrible things, and there are some vivid descriptions given in this book.

But Nyad is so strong and resilient that she overcame the ordeal and has spoken publicly about the problems of sex abuse in sports. She doesn't like it when people imply she's a champion athlete *because* of her childhood abuse.

I've been asked this all my life. Was it the trauma of my younger days that drove me? I will not give credit to molesters, as if to say they in the end help us become more powerful individuals. I am confident I was this fierce person long before those events. At two, three, four, I believe I heard some version of "Reveille" in my spirit, at the crack of dawn, and went to bed exhausted at the end of each day, having put out so much that there wasn't a fingernail more to give.

Another surprising story is that when Nyad was in college, she learned that the man she thought was her father, Aristotle "Aris" Nyad, was actually her stepfather, and that her birth father's last name was Sneed.

I was born Diana Winslow Sneed. What? Can you imagine? Aris may have been a rogue, a liar, and a deviant. But at the very least I got from him the very cool name Nyad. (Today I'm listed in all those books where people live out the meaning of their names, a phenomenon referred to by the term "aptonym.")

Nyad — naiad, nymph of the sea, girl or woman champion swimmer — may not have been my birth name after all, but it had been my name all my life. And it was the perfect name.

My favorite parts of this book were the descriptions of the various Cuba swims. Each one had its own challenges and trials. Aside from the navigation of the Gulf Stream, which was tricky enough on its own, Nyad also had to risk sharks and swarms of jellyfish. She was repeatedly stung and nearly died. Each attempt at the supposedly impossible swim was an amazing, death-defying adventure, and only a true champion like Nyad would have kept trying for so many years.

I mentioned earlier that this book meanders a bit. Nyad's writing often relies on cliches, which is not surprising for someone trained in sports broadcasting, but she still tells good stories. I listened to this on audio, and it was interesting to hear how she would mentally train for the long-distance swims, often by singing favorite songs to match the pace of her stroke. She rarely complained about the challenges, and gave generous praise to everyone who has helped her. She's an incredible role model.

For the most part I enjoyed this book and just let myself be carried along by her currents. Recommended to those who like stories of athletes and outdoor adventures.

Favorite Quotes

"I have elevated this swim onto a pedestal far beyond an endurance record. In some ways, Cuba isn't even a

sporting event to me anymore. It's a life quest. It's a symbol of how I want to live my life, believing you can touch magic if the Dream is worthy enough, if you're willing to sacrifice enough for it."

"It's the tough stuff of life, profound disappointment. When we summon the guts to put ourselves out there, to reach for the highest star, when we march unafraid into dangerous territory, unwavering in our preparation, brimming with hope that we will succeed, the letdown, when it all comes crashing down in defeat, is colossal. They say we shouldn't contemplate the deeper issues of our lives when sick or exhausted. But my despair is at too wretched a level on that dock to mine down to common sense. The Dream lived somewhere in my imagination for thirty years, from the first spark of magic to it when I was in my twenties."

"I'm not sure where perseverance comes from. Do we inherit a will to push on? Do we survive a childhood ordeal that makes us gritty? When you hear the stories of most leaders and people who have attained high levels of success, meaning also non famous people who have triumphed over hellish circumstances, they can speak of natural talents, and experience, and good fortune, and timing, and mentors. But they collectively agree the critical denominator to any individual's succeeding is perseverance."

Companion Read

Another good book about a long-distance swimmer is *Swimming to Antarctica* by Lynne Cox. I highly recommend Cox's book.

Nita says

What a great story. I needed a story of someone who never gave up even when the world said differently. May we all have a passion like Diana Nyad and be able to doggedly pursue the dream.

Lynne Spreen says

Very inspiring. Some of the challenges Diana Nyad went through to achieve her dream were unbelievable! What a warrior woman. From her childhood, where sexual abuse turned her into an overachiever, to her mid-sixties, where she has one more chance to achieve her lifelong dream, Nyad inspires, yet she's very human. She is introspective, suffers emotionally, wonders about herself, but in the end, gets on with it.

This is a story not just of super-human athletic accomplishment, but also of rebirth at an age when conventional culture writes you off. For example, Nyad reflects on how she feels in her sixties as opposed to forty years earlier: "I'm not as sensitive or delicate emotionally, either, so I suppose the mental calm and perspective that comes with age contributes to being more robust in this new incarnation of my athletic self...In my sixties, I am far more patient, with myself and my crew..."

Nyad also talks about the fact that she is atheistic, disliking the slogan, "It was meant to be." She says, "I learned through my own life's journey that one makes oneself a champion...(if 'it was meant to be'), then where is hope? Where does will come in? Where is the inspiration to change and better oneself?" I enjoyed her story, and felt inspired and motivated after reading it.

Jennifer says

Excellent memoir. More than a book about an extreme athlete, this is a book about courage, determination, and the amazing power of the human spirit. Must read.

Paul Kiczek says

Diana Nyad holds an inexplicable power to push herself beyond personal limits. Whether that was created from innate personal strength or forged from unfortunate personal circumstances, we get to share a bit of what it's like to live a willful life on the edge. There is a life lesson here for all of us.

I guess I've always wondered what drives people to do the impossible. For many like me, Diana's stories have been heard over the years in short but stunning news blurbs, like swimming around Manhattan or across the English Channel. Diana was always a pioneer in these feats not to mention how she elevated the capability of women each time she broke a new record. These records get broken. But, what remains each time for all of us to ponder is the question "What are our limits?"

The book is a well-written riveting autobiography told around her ultimate personal challenge - completing a 110 mile swim from Cuba to Florida. The bizarre conditions of the sport of open water ocean swimming allows only to provide and protect, but not assist her swim or float in any way, She is adrift for over two days surrounded by a flotilla of boats and staff that can only help guide, manage and protect her.

What is perhaps as remarkable as breaking the record was that she accomplished what many thought impossible on her fifth attempt at the age of 64. In the sport of open ocean swimming Cuba to Florida was the "Everest" to be conquered. It required peak physical and mental conditioning even in her 60's and a blessing of fortunate natural conditions like warm temperatures, and favorable winds and currents. Sharks could be scared away but swarms of deadly box jellyfish were unpredictable and impossible to avoid. Through many painful experiences and many failed attempts she was able to "Find a Way" to overcome even these obstacles.

The book made me wonder whether it's the thoughts the person holds dearly or the challenge itself that leverages our capability to go beyond the ordinary. What do we gain by trying and failing and trying again? Certainly, it all starts with a dream and ends with our ability to fight off our demons and believe in ourselves. Diana Nyad's story is an inspiration to anyone who harbors an impossible dream.

Jennifer says

"Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?" Mary Oliver

Diana Nyad is nothing short of an inspiration, whether one is looking for a story of athletic achievement, triumph over adversity, dogged refusal to give up on a goal, or fully embracing life long after conventional wisdom might have said the best days were behind you.

"Find a Way" is a chronicle of Diana Nyad's life, including her successful record-setting 110.86 mile swim from Cuba to Florida (52 hours, 54 minutes, 18 seconds) in 2013. I'm not sure what is more amazing -- that

Nyad completed this swim at the age of 64, or that she did it after 4 failed attempts, including instances where she nearly died (I think I would have thrown in the towel, called it impossible, and walked away!)

Nyad studied comparative literature as a graduate student, and worked as a journalist. These skills are forefront in this book as she is a fluid and captivating writer. I felt her passion most as she described her childhood, the several attempts at the Cuba swim, and in the final chapter of the book. Other sections of the book (relationships, her 20s, and too-detailed descriptions of the final swim preparations) meandered and I found myself less engaged.

3.5 stars

Anita Pomerantz says

After reading this memoir, I seriously would rather climb Mt. Everest than attempt to swim from Cuba to Florida.

Diana Nyad relates her multiple attempts to complete this swim, and it certainly is inspirational. Talk about tenacity and energy. Honestly, I felt like the mental effort to simply organize her attempt(s) were equal to the physical effort of the swimming. I was exhausted merely reading about it.

Her message is one she encapsulates toward the end of her book in the following quote:

Whatever your Other Shore is, whatever you must do, whatever inspires you, you will find a way to get there.

Well, it really makes me want to get going on some long held life goals toward which I've made little progress (that novel isn't going to write itself, Anita).

So five star message!! And five stars for inspiration! The read itself was good - - especially if you like outdoor adventure stories (and I really, really do), but there's a repetitive quality to her tale that was probably unavoidable, and her Team is huge, so it was hard to get a real sense of who they were, even though they contributed tremendously to Diana's success.

The cool thing is Diana is speaking in Baltimore tonight, and I have tickets so looking forward to hearing her inspirational message in person!

Clif Hostetler says

Diana Nyad is my nomination for patron saint for those over age sixty who are searching for new challenges. Those striving for persistence and endurance can also find solace in her story as well.

She first tried to swim from Cuba to the United States in 1978 at age twenty-eight and failed. Then she went on to her midlife career consisting of broadcast journalism and motivational speaker. As she approached her retirement years she decided to try that swim again at age sixty. Again she failed, but she began to learn some things needed for the crossing and kept trying. In all she made five attempts finally succeeding in 2013.

This book is her memoir in which she skillfully interweaves personal aspects of her life together with her endeavors at endurance swimming. Some of intimate details she shares with readers includes accounts of sexual abuse, first from her stepfather and later a swimming coach. In her coverage of her adult life she has chapters addressing her lesbianism and atheism. Her accounts of her swimming the Florida straight are rendered so skillfully that some readers find themselves gasping for breath and grimacing in an effort to help Diana persevere during her crossing attempts. Below is a map that records the routes of those efforts.

DIANA NYAD'S CROSSING ATTEMPTS—CUBA TO USA

Jellyfish, sharks, weather, lightening, and rough seas all play roles in determining if a crossing attempt is successful. But the above map also raises the obvious question, "Why is it so hard to swim in a straight line?" This is a result of the unpredictability of the Gulf Stream Current. Its predominate flow is from west to east in the Florida Straight, but eddies and changing current directions form where flow can actually cause a swimmer trying to swim north to actually go south. One of the reasons the 2013 crossing was successful is because of favorable currents. In the latter part of the 2013 crossing Diana was ordered to swim toward her left side in order to make desired landfall. She was so delirious from sleep deprivation and muscle exhaustion that the support crew had a hard time making her swim toward the left.

Endurance swimming is a team sport in many ways. In the case of crossing from Cuba to USA getting needed governmental permissions is a significant obstacle. Then there's the virtual flotilla of boats which involved a crew totaling forty-four individuals that provided navigation, coaching, continual kayak escort, shark protection swimmers, shark repellent equipment, and most important, protection procedures from box jellyfish.

Anyone who reads this book will come away with a sober appreciation of the dangers posed by the box jellyfish. As a matter a fact Diana came close to death from her encounter with them during here second 2011 try. Development of techniques to protect her from them was a major problem that needed to be solved in order to achieve a successful crossing.

Link to TED talks by Diana Nyad:

https://www.ted.com/speakers/diana_nyad

Diane Yannick says

I loved reading about this extreme athlete who refused to give up on her dream. Yep, at age 64 she swam for 52 hours from Cuba to Florida. Two years later, she gives us a gift---her story. She figures out how to solve problems like those danged box jellyfish that sideline many others. The dedication of her team and her love for them is crystal clear. She was molested by an Olympic coach but appeared to use every negative experience as a way to strengthen her spirit. She trained relentlessly and her self discipline was superhuman. She had a playlist in her head and could repeat songs hundreds of times to pass the long nights of swimming.

This is a well-rounded look at her life and her sport. There are times when her hyper-focus makes her appear very self-centered. I don't think she could have achieved what she did without this tunnel vision.

As a 60-something I like this quote:

"I think 60 is when many people hit their prime. We elect many of our presidents in their 60s. At that age, people are full of ideas and their best self. I wanted to dig into my potential and bring out my best self."

After all, "Isn't life about determining your own finish line?" Set your goals then FIND A WAY. Thanks, Diana!
