

Shelby S.: For some people, deciding to pursue an adventure, it's about doing something that hasn't been done before, but for others it's about shaking things up from their day-to-day routines. Sometimes adventures are more about the process of getting there, than accomplishing the feat itself. These days it's easy to find yourself living a life of busyness or just complacency. So, today I'm talking to three people of varied ages and backgrounds who all decided to shake themselves out of their own life by pushing themselves to complete an extreme adventure.

Shelby S.: I'm Shelby Stanger, and this is Wild Ideas Worth Living.

Shelby S.: Have you ever had the desire to leave your whole life behind, even if just for a week or maybe a few months? To forget about the emails, the traffic, the obligations, and just think about survival? Today I'm talking to three people who did just that. At age 57, Jerry Holl rode his bicycle from Alaska to Mexico. It took him 51 days and 3,364 miles. After finishing graduate school, Julie Hotz hiked the Pacific Crest Trail from Mexico to Canada. Ryan Higginbotham and his twin brother, Casey, they decided to also go along the Pacific Northwest, but they decided to hold their adventure in the Pacific Ocean starting in Alaska and ending in Mexico, but on paddle boards for over seven months.

Shelby S.: Each of these people put their lives on hold to complete a journey that would have a huge impact on who they are as a person. I talked to them about the decisions that led them to go on these adventures, some of the unexpected moments that happened within these grand journeys, and the lessons they learn that are influencing the lives they lead today.

Shelby S.: First up, Jerry Holl. Jerry was over 30 years into a traditional career in corporate sales. He was unsettled by the way that every day just felt the same. So, he decided to do something unexpected. He resigned from his job and he set out to Alaska, where he got on a bike he didn't even know how to fix and he just started pedaling. You can read all about his journey and why he was looking for an opportunity to grow and change in his book Downhills Don't Come Free. My partner, Johnny, read it cover-to-cover and he loved it.

Shelby S.: So, you set out to bike from Alaska to Mexico. Why that route, and why biking?

Jerry H.: Well, because when I resigned I said, "What am I going to do?" I wanted something big. I wanted to know what I was made of. I've read every adventure book. I've read about the pickles that women and men get themselves into, and I wanted to say, "What would I do?"

Jerry H.: So, when I resigned I said, "Okay, what am I going to do?" So, within just a few short days I said, "Well, I'm going to bike and I think I'll go from Seattle to San Diego." Then I ran into a guy and he looked at me and he goes, "Jerry, if you go, go big." I go, "I'm thinking too small. Oh my god." On the spot, in a snap I said, "I'm going Alaska to Mexico."

- Jerry H.: That's the amount of thinking that went into it, and that's about the amount of planning that went into it, and I just said, "I'm just going to go." I bought the bike, got on a plane, and the first time I was ever on a loaded bike, first time I was ever clipped in, was peddling on Anchorage. I never loaded it in Minneapolis, I'd never ridden in clips, I didn't have bike clothes, I had never done any of this, and I just, "I'm just going to figure it out along the way."
- Shelby S.: I don't know if I'd recommend trying that at all.
- Jerry H.: No, I'm not saying that's the brightest thing in the world, but what it is, is it's doable. You know?
- Shelby S.: Yeah, it is doable. So, Johnny said there's a lot of accounts right away where you just saw grizzly bears.
- Jerry H.: Yep. Totally. In the far north I was yelling at grizzly bears and bears every day. I had 20 bear encounters, all of them within 30 to 100 feet.
- Shelby S.: What does yelling at them do? I mean [crosstalk 00:03:55]
- Jerry H.: Four grizzlies, 16 black, a mama grizzly with her two cubs, and you're 50 feet away, and you go, "I'm already too close. I am screwed." You know, just serendipity and the luck of the wind got me through that.
- Shelby S.: So, on the way, you know, you hadn't done much camping. It sounds like you freedom camped along the way. How did you figure that out?
- Jerry H.: Shelby, here's the way I looked at it. I just took an inventory of my skills. It's kind of like ... They're called transferable skills. What do I have? I said to myself, "Here's my thinking." I didn't overthink it, I didn't over plan. I said, "I know how to camp. I know how to peddle. I know how to workout." Even though I wasn't biking, I was always in good shape. So, if I can do those three, what's the big deal? I'll just string a few of those days together, and I've got a trip. That's the way I looked at it.
- Shelby S.: You didn't have self doubt or fear, you just kind of had either blind ignorance, or you're just confident?
- Jerry H.: Well, there is a blind ignorance. I mean, it is ... which works to your advantage. Because things can happen out there, but I didn't let them stop me. What you realize and what you learn is that most Boogeymen are imagination gone wild. Of course, bad things could happen, but I just thought it was going to be ... The risks were going to be overwhelmed by the good. I just had confidence that I could do it. Then there's a little bit of luck in the casting your fate to the wind when you do these journeys, and you go with it.
- Shelby S.: Yeah.

- Jerry H.: But you trust yourself. You trust your judgment. What happens is that people confuse discomfort with danger. So, people think this trip was a hell of a lot more dangerous than I ever thought it was. Basically, people stop themselves because they let those Boogeymen loom larger than they really are.
- Jerry H.: So, what I would do, and when I'd come into a situation, is I'd give it what I called a big deal, little deal test. I'd say, "Okay, here's the test. If I can get killed or maimed in this moment, in this situation, that's a big deal. Everything else is a little deal. Everything."
- Shelby S.: So, bears were one thing you didn't expect. What else happened that you just didn't expect on the tour?
- Jerry H.: I didn't expect ... I was going up a hill late in the day on the Alaskan highway. It was like 5:00 in the afternoon, 85 miles into the ride. I'm in the wrong gear, I'm straining up a hill. My thighs are too heavy in the pedals. I reach down to downshift, and the chain comes across the sprocket and my whole sprocket, my whole chain explodes.
- Shelby S.: Ugh.
- Jerry H.: It unravels, and I hear it kind of grind the unravel, and then it plops to the ground. I'm pedaling air. My bike goes to a stop, I lay it down, I go down, and I pick up this chain. It was like a dead snake. I didn't have a clue what to do and how to fix my bike. It was late in the day. The wind is swirling high in the pines, and I glance in the distance, I see a yellow dot. All of a sudden this yellow dot's moving, and oh my god, it's another cyclist. Up rides a woman from my hometown.
- Shelby S.: No way.
- Jerry H.: My hometown in Minneapolis. She says, "Well, Jerry." You know, she calmly worked the problem out. I'm a little rattled. I'm about ready to pitch my tent, lay down, suck my thumb, and I'll worry about it in the morning. She says, "There's a way to fix this. Do you have a manual?" I shake my head no. I said, "No, I don't have a manual."
- Jerry H.: She says, "Well, I've got a manual." She digs deep in her pack. By the way, she had the exact same bike I did. Pulls up the manual, flips it to the chain section, says, "Do you have a Snap-Link? You can reattach the chain with a Snap-Link?" I said, "I don't know." When I bought the bike at REI, I told the REI guy, "Hey, if you're going on a trip like this, what parts would you bring?" I said, "Just throw them in a bag." So, he walked the parts rack and played it like a piano. Put it in a bag. I never looked in the bag. Wrapped it up, jammed it deep in my pack.
- Jerry H.: So, I unload that pack on the pavement, as the woman, named Sarah, is standing there, and all of a sudden, "Huh, the guy from REI put in a Snap-Link." So, she and I are on our hands and legs, restringing the chain, getting it all positioned, and click. It goes back in place. I'm back in business. She was an absolute godsend.

Jerry H.: What I learned is that you didn't ... Change and growth doesn't occur in safe harbors and calm waters. Change and growth occurs in the flameout zones. Put yourself in a position to hit them. Then rely on your instincts, skills, and then some luck, and you'll find out you're so much more capable than you ever thought. That's when your perspectives expand and your capabilities grow, and new opportunities arise.

Shelby S.: So, what were the key takeaways from this journey? I mean, there were so many moments, I'm sure. I mean, they're incredible. Like, it's just ... Everything you went through, without a lot of experience, sounds pretty wild. I mean, that's a wild idea, definitely.

Jerry H.: The key takeaways are that you can do so much more than you give yourself credit for. Everybody's got these innate skills that are laying dormant, in my opinion, and a big stretch awakens them. You won't ever draw on them or use them unless you go do that.

Jerry H.: What I also learned in that is that I learned that through my life, all the small stretches I'd done. Weekend warrior type stuff. All those ... Culmination of those small stretches, you just pile them on top of each other and you make a big stretch out of it. Small stretches shape your future. Then the big stretch makes your future. Because a key takeaway is I had no idea how I change or grow, or what would occur after this.

Jerry H.: I thought it was like, personal RND, this whole trip, personal research and development. I didn't know how I'd change and grow. I just knew I would. What you find is that you can do so much more, and the perspectives of what you learn and how you can do them better and faster than you've ever gave yourself credit for. That's probably the biggest thing.

Shelby S.: So, how did you change, personally? Like, when you came back, what was different?

Jerry H.: Here's what you find out, is that people went out of their way to help me whenever they just saw my exposure and vulnerability. They would go out of their way to help you. A car would pull in and do a health check on you. They'd top off your water bottles. A guy said, "Hey, I saw you climbing that mountain. I want you to have this candy bar."

Jerry H.: What I realized was how people were reading a blog that I was writing along the way. I didn't realize the change it was having on them, but inspired them to do things. So, what it made me think ... You said how did I change and grow. What it made me think is the way people went out of their way to push me forward, I'll go out of my way now to encourage and push someone else forward.

Shelby S.: So, you became nicer.

Jerry H.: Yeah. You totally do. You totally do. You say, "Oh my God. I know my vulnerabilities. I want to help them in any way I can. Now, what I want to do is inspire people to dig in and pull out their best."

Shelby S.: How was your family, in terms of how did they support you in this journey, and how did they react to it?

Jerry H.: My wife, when I, in pillow talk, when I told her what I was thinking just before resigning ... So, we had pillow talk, and I said to her, "You know, here's how I'm feeling, here's what I'm thinking. I'm stale. I need explosive growth. I need a new ... I don't want little baby steps and try and test and see how I do." She turns her head in the pillow and looks at me and goes, "What are you waiting for?"

Shelby S.: Wow.

Jerry H.: "Go. It's your turn." She says, "Look, we bought a house. We've raised three kids. We've educated those kids. You let me back away from my career, so I could spend most of my time with those kids. Go. It's your turn." Then I laid back in my pillow, and I said, "God, talk about supportive. What a gift." Then I said, "Actually, that was pretty easy." Then I thought a little more. She goes ... In fact, she was even a little enthusiastic about it.

Shelby S.: She's like, "Get out of the house, Jerry!"

Jerry H.: Yeah!

Shelby S.: That's awesome.

Jerry H.: But, I mean, the kids ... Because I had never done anything big like that, but they weren't shocked by it, just from an attitude standpoint. They didn't love the idea of it, but they knew that it wasn't going to change anything. They just had confidence I could do it, and so did I.

Jerry H.: This trip was very physical, but it was more mental than physical. It's all about attitude. What you learn, another one of the, "What do you take away," is that the biggest thing I had along the way was an attitude of little things, discomfort versus danger, very few things are dangerous, a lot of it's uncomfortable.

Shelby S.: Why is it so important to get outside? You know, instead of reading about it or watching a movie about it?

Jerry H.: You can't possibly know what your capabilities are unless you put yourself out there, and try things. Then that's not just an adventure, it's not just physical, but sing in the church, or write your book, or do something that you feel really exposed with, and then just enjoy the ride.

Shelby S.: Any advice to people? The whole point of this show is like, why do something big? Not everybody needs to do something as wild as bike from Alaska to Mexico, which, by the way, we're interviewing someone who paddled on a paddleboard from Alaska to Mexico.

Jerry H.: How cool is that?

Shelby S.: They're twins. They did it together, but, you know, I think solo adventuring is also really interesting. It doesn't have to be that wild. It can be just a one day backpacking trip, or one day paddling down the Amazon River. Whatever it is you do, just advice to people who want to do something a little extreme. What can you say to them?

Jerry H.: Don't stop yourself. Get on with it. You can do more than you think. Get on with it, and just say yes. You don't know what you'll learn, but you'll learn a ton. You can't uncouple that from everything else you do in your life, personally and professionally. That becomes part of your fabric.

Jerry H.: The more of that kind of stuff that you do, it develops your attitude that anything is possible. Not so much that I know how to do it, but I can figure it out.

Shelby S.: Mmm. Love it.

Jerry H.: You can figure out anything if you're stimulated and motivated to do it. Then just draw on your strengths and let the weaknesses, you know ... Ignore them. That's what I did.

Shelby S.: Julie Hotz is a filmmaker, photographer, and a creative from Dallas, Texas. After attending graduate school, Julie moved back home to save money and to figure out her next move. She heard about the Pacific Crest Trail from a friend, and made an offhand comment about wanting to do it someday.

Shelby S.: Not long after, a couple of friends invited her along their Pacific Crest Trail hike, and she jumped at the chance to join in. Little did she know what an impact those five months would have on her life.

Shelby S.: So, what did you set out to do that was one of the biggest things you've done in your life?

Julie H.: I began hiking the Pacific Crest Trail in 2010. It was my first backpacking trip. I'd never been backpacking and hardly ever been hiking before, but when I had first heard of the Pacific Crest Trail, by means of a friend, it sounded like an adventure, and it's a very privileged thing to do, but I also had this feeling deep inside me that if I did something like that, it would really make me grow up and teach me lessons that I might not be able to learn in comfort.

Shelby S.: How old were you? So, you were like 27, 28-ish?

Julie H.: I was 26 when I started.

Shelby S.: 26.

Julie H.: For clarification, I was very slow, and I was on a major learning curve. I was not an athlete before this at all. So, I did end up splitting hiking it into two different seasons. So, I hiked three fifths of it in 2010, and I hiked my additional missing chunk in 2013.

Shelby S.: Wow. That's so interesting. So, where did the Pacific Crest Trail idea come into play?

Julie H.: One of my friends, when he graduated from grad school, he was going out to Los Angeles, and he called me along the drive, and he happened to mention, "Oh, hey. I just intersected with the Pacific Crest Trail in the desert of California." I was like, "What's the Pacific Crest Trail?" Then he proceeded to tell me, "Oh, it's this trail that goes from Mexico to Canada, and you go through these stretches in the desert where there's no water, and you have to hide water for yourself." He made it sound crazy and amazing, and extreme.

Julie H.: I just, in my head, thought, "I want to do that one day." A few months later, I was at two of my friends' house. They had both hiked the Appalachian Trail, a couple seasons prior, and they were showing me their photographs, because we're all photographers. Just like, off the cuff, I said, "Oh, I think I'd like to hike the Pacific Crest Trail one day." Then a couple months after that, one of them sent me a message on Facebook that was like, "Hey, remember when you said you wanted to hike the Pacific Crest Trail? Well, I think I'm going to do it. Do you want to come?"

Shelby S.: That's awesome!

Julie H.: They had backpacking experience. You know, what a privilege to be able to have that resource, because I knew nothing about anything when it came to that. I just thought, "If I don't do this right now, I won't do it again. I'm going to move somewhere and start my career, and this is the moment where I should do it or not do it."

Julie H.: So, I saved up for a year, and I started to prep, you know, buying gear. I would scour websites for sales for almost every item I was trying to buy. I love researching, but the thing is, because this is such a physical thing and I'd never done such a physical outdoor thing, like, I was not an outdoors person. I was just guessing at a lot of things, and, you know, ended up buying some things I didn't need, and had a very heavy backpack to start with. I dehydrated all my meals, and I just ... I really went all out on the prep.

Shelby S.: You dehydrated all your meals? So, you like, when out and got like, veggies, and dehydrated all of them?

Julie H.: Yeah.

Shelby S.: Beans or whatever?

Julie H.: I've actually done that for every one of my long distance hikes.

Shelby S.: That's impressive.

Julie H.: I do get mac and cheese too because I love that, but I have some dietary restrictions, so. I love my favorite meals. You can't always find my favorite meals.

Shelby S.: So, before, what were you doing? Were you a filmmaker? You're just out of grad school.

Julie H.: So, I quite literally was a ... waited tables at a restaurant. It was a restaurant that was flexible enough with my schedule that when I would get film gigs, they would let me take off for that.

Shelby S.: Oh, that's awesome.

Julie H.: I mean, but I was not ... The only way I was able to save up this money was to live at home with my parents. I would like to be fully transparent about that because it can be really hard sometimes if you're trying to like, set yourself up for adventure, and you're like, "How do people save up for this?"

Julie H.: So, I'm, you know ... I was very fortunate to be in that situation. Then there were other things I was cutting corners around. I was just trying to live super minimally.

Shelby S.: Mmm. So, what was it like when you finally hit the Pacific Crest Trail, that first night?

Julie H.: Well, the morning that we were driving out to the trail, I was nauseous all morning, and had the feeling of, "What the hell am I getting myself into?" We hiked, I think, seven miles in the first day. I remember after two miles I had a little pee break, and that was the first time I'd ever peed in the woods. Like, not in an outhouse. I remember thinking, getting up and being like, "Okay, 2,650 divided by two. That's, you know, 1,325. Okay, I only have to do this 1,325 more times."

Julie H.: From the beginning, because my body was adjusting, it was so painful. My whole body was in pain for the first several months.

Shelby S.: Wow. How long did it take you to do that first stretch?

Julie H.: So, it took me ... I did have a couple breaks in there. Like, I stopped for a week to work at a goat farm, to let snow melt. I did a few things on the way. So, it took me about four and a half, five months.

Shelby S.: Wow.

Julie H.: Which sounds like an extremely long time, because a lot of people do hike the whole trail in that time, but I was doing what I could do.

Shelby S.: So, what happened on the adventure that you just didn't expect?

Julie H.: Some of the biggest things that I didn't expect were 500 miles in I decided to stop hiking with the group I had started hiking with. They had different paces that I did. They were



much more experienced. There was no like, animosity or anything. It was just I wanted to wait for more snow to melt in the Sierras, and I was just trying to slow down a little bit. So, I started hiking with another group of people.

Julie H.: After hiking with them, going into the Sierras, I realized that also their pace was way faster than mine. I was just killing myself to keep up. I remember there was one morning I woke up, and I cried before even sitting up. I was so blistered and sad, and I just felt like, "Okay, I knew there were going to be challenges coming out here, but I'm not trying to have a summer of 100% pure misery. Like, I want to be able to get something more than misery out of this." That day I decided to get off the trail.

Julie H.: Most of my life I had... I knew going into the PCT that there would be challenges, and discomfort, and that's exactly why I was hiking it. But I had also never really failed in things I had set out to do. I am a pretty determined person, but most of that had been like, academically, in a totally different setting. So, to feel like I utterly failed just felt terrible, but I got off the trail, and I went into a town, and I met some other hikers. Another hiker encouraged me. He's like, "Don't worry about the pace that everyone else is hiking. Hike your own hike. You can do whatever you want this summer."

Julie H.: I remember my mother telling me like, "You said you wanted to have an adventure. You've already had an adventure. I know whatever you do with the rest of your summer is going to be an adventure." So, I decided I didn't have enough snow experience. I had hardly ever been in snow in my life, except for like, a snow pile in a gas station in Utah, and snow I had walked over in Southern California on the PCT, just a few weeks prior.

Julie H.: So, I decided to skip north. I promised myself that I would come back and hike whatever miles I skipped, someday in the future. I got back on and hiked at my own pace. That is when, you know, I realized that sometimes failure is the best thing. Like, it can be something that really tears you down, or it can be a gift.

Shelby S.: Failure's so hard. It's something we don't talk about enough. I've been trying to bring this up as much as I can on the podcast. I mean, it's brutal.

Shelby S.: So, what was the timeline of when you got off and got back on?

Julie H.: So, I got off at mile 751. I actually have it tattooed on my arm because it was such a poignant place. It took me ... My dad had actually been planning on coming out and doing a short section with me. So, when I got off I kind of noodled around in the area, and then we went and hiked a small portion in Yosemite. He dropped me off in Tahoe, and I did a 75 mile section around Tahoe, which I got to get some more snow experience, and navigating in snow experience. Then I went north to Crater Lake.

Julie H.: So, to get from the actual point that I got off and got back on at Crater Lake, it was probably about three weeks.

Shelby S.: But it sounds like you were still like, doing stuff, and hiking, and hanging out in the towns, and it wasn't like you flew home.

- Julie H.: No, not at all. No, I was ... yeah. Definitely on the West Coast all that season.
- Shelby S.: Then you went back and you did it again. When was this?
- Julie H.: So, I finished my missing chunk in 2013, which was from just south of Mount Whitney to Crater Lake.
- Shelby S.: So, how much longer was that after your first attempt?
- Julie H.: There was a gap of about three years because once I finished hiking in 2010, I decided to move out to Los Angeles. In fact, like, one of the gifts that being on the trail gave me was less fear of everything people tell you to be afraid about in society, like, "Oh, you have to have enough money to move." I moved to Los Angeles with \$100 because hiking on the trail reminded me, "I will be okay. If I need to sleep in my car, I will be okay."
- Julie H.: So, I moved to LA, and in 2011 I didn't have enough money to take off, you know, that time off to finish the trail. In 2012, I worked too much. I was still in a place in my life where I didn't know how to say no. So, in 2013 my like, New Year's resolution was learn to say no. Then I found out that Reese Witherspoon had bought the rights to the Wild.
- Shelby S.: Yeah.
- Julie H.: I knew that the trail would get busier. I think everybody who wants to do a long distance hike should be able to do it. So, I was excited that more people would probably be getting on the trail, but I also was like, "Oh, it will probably be quieter if you go this year." So, I said no to people and I took the time to finish it that year.
- Shelby S.: Awesome.
- Julie H.: But there's always, you know, there's new challenges and different things that happened. I realized, by going back and doing it, that ... Because if I had done it all in 2010 I don't know that I would have taken the time to do another long distance kind of hike. I realized, by doing it that second time, that this was something I wanted to keep bringing back in my life, to find challenges and to tackle things.
- Shelby S.: When you finished hiking the PCT that first year, I mean, I'm guessing that was probably one of the most profound experiences of your life, because it was the first time. What did you take away from it?
- Julie H.: When people would ask me, "Oh, how was your hike," I'd be like, "How can you expect me to sum up this whole thing that just shifted my paradigm, all the priorities in my life, into a little sentence?" I finally came up with, "It is the best thing I've ever done and the hardest thing I've ever done."

Shelby S.: Talk to me about this. How did your priorities shift? Like, what happened? What changed in you? Obviously, you developed a different relationship with failure. That's huge.

Julie H.: I think, also, I'm somebody who lives in my head a lot. I was not, you know, I hadn't been in sports before. It was the first time that I really had to become like, so much happened in my body. I have a problem living in the past and the future more than the present. Being so in your body, in these places where you have to be observant, really allowed me to be in the present more.

Julie H.: There was so much time and space to ask questions, and to sit with myself. Like, I think I had pushed questions away that I had been trying to ask, and filled my life with busyness previous to that. Here, yes, I was busy with walking miles, but again, there was all that space to ask questions, and really start to learn who I was. When you're outside, I think a couple things happen when you do something that's longterm.

Julie H.: One is, I think something in your brain gets rewired by the fact that every single day I was walking on the trail, and then I could look over my shoulder at the end of the day and be like, "Wow, I came from there." When you do that day, after day, after day, after day, it becomes so obvious and so tangible that you can do more than you think you can, and that you can go for mountains. Not just on the outside and outside, but that you can go for mountains on the inside, and that is something that you can take into every day of your life. When you are struggling at home, when you're working through depression, when you feel like you're in a hole, you're like, "I know how to walk over mountains. I know how to walk long distances."

Julie H.: Also, from just like, a really practical standpoint, it's nice to have your only worries be food, shelter, warmth, maybe some occasional human interaction. I had culture shock when I got off the trail. That culture shock was, "Wow, there's all these problems we create for ourselves," and so many things that were not important on the trail that suddenly everybody thinks are important in society.

Julie H.: So, it really helped me figure out what my priorities are.

Shelby S.: Yeah. I mean, you hit on so many beautiful points. I so appreciate you sharing your story. One is busyness. It's a theme that we've talked about a lot this year. It's one of these accepted addictions in our society.

Shelby S.: The other thing is you kind of ... there's this thing called ... I've been really interested in lately, decision fatigue.

Julie H.: Ugh. Yes.

Shelby S.: We have to make so many decisions on the daily, and what I would say off the trail, when I'm out in the wild I feel like it's so much easier to make decisions. They might be more critical, but there's just less distractions and I can focus, and I just feel better in my

busy mind. It sounds like that happened to you a lot, especially magnified day in, day out.

Shelby S.: The last thing is like, you proved to yourself that you were a badass every single day, whatever that meant to you. That's powerful. That's confidence. I imagine you were able to take that into the world just tenfold.

Julie H.: Yeah. I think that, you know, there's times where it's been a long time since I've been in the woods, and so, sometimes those lessons get a little bit quieter, why I still struggle with self esteem, but then I can go back to that place, and I can, you know, just have to wake up in the morning and tell myself, "Okay, you did learn these things. You know you can do it. You just have to remind yourself every single day."

Shelby S.: Any advice to people who want to do something wild, a little extreme, and that definition, obviously, is individual. But advice you can give to people?

Julie H.: Yeah. You know, because I, now, I'm at a point in my life where I do struggle. Like, would I do another long distance hike? Now I struggle with, "Oh, is that selfish for me to take all this time and do this thing just for me?" But I became a better person, who can communicate more effectively, who can sit in pain and discomfort easier, who can walk with other people through pain.

Julie H.: I would say, you know, if you're a caretaker to someone it might be impossible for you to leave right now. But I would say do it sooner or later, because a person that you might become by doing this, you want that person to arrive as soon as possible. Also, to the person who doesn't feel like a long distance hike is for them, there's all other ... I've done long distance cycling, or last year when I was in New York, I actually had to stay in the city a lot. It was a time of stillness. I did some workbooks that I wouldn't have had time to do otherwise. It was like, a long distance hike through the inner scape. I think that that is just as important.

Julie H.: So, whatever your challenges, whatever your through hike is, you know, it can be a physical extreme adventure in the outdoors, or it can be an extreme digging into yourself. It's life changing. It sounds so cheesy, and I was so hesitant to tell people when I got back from the trail, like, "Oh, it changed my life," but it did.

Shelby S.: When we come back, hear about one more adventurer, who, along with his twin brother, made his way south through the waters off the West Coast, from Alaska to Mexico on a paddleboard.

Shelby S.: Summer is the best time to get out and try something new or different. For me, I enjoy being near the water or in the mountains. Did you know that REI offers classes and guided trips all over the country? From paddling, to climbing, hiking, and camp outs, there's something for everyone. What better way to spend a weekend than rock climbing in Colorado at sunset, or taking a moonlight hike in the Smoky Mountains, or even going standup paddling on a camping trip in San Diego.

- Shelby S.: REI will provide the guides and connect you with the gear you need to create an epic Summer moment. Experience more with REI, and register at [REI.com/events](https://www.rei.com/events).
- Shelby S.: At age 22, Ryan Higginbotham and his twin brother, Casey, decided to do something wild, something that would really push themselves. They had backgrounds in endurance sports. They'd done the Iron Man, plenty of all day adventure races, and they'd go for five mile swims, or even run a marathon, just for fun. Inspired by their father and grandfather, great athletes themselves, Ryan and Casey wanted to do something that would push their limits and test their abilities even more.
- Shelby S.: So, one night over a couple of beers, they decided that adventure would be to paddle from Alaska to Mexico on paddle boards, carrying all of their food and equipment themselves.
- Shelby S.: So, tell us a little bit about kind of what you do, and why you had this desire to paddle from Alaska to Mexico on a paddleboard?
- Ryan H.: Casey and I, my brother I did it with, we were both graduating college at the time. We both felt like we'd never been tested to the extent that I wanted to, and nor, I think, he was feeling the same way. Like, growing up, we always set bars for each other, doing different endurance races and whatnot, and then decided to test ourselves beyond what we knew we could do.
- Shelby S.: So, in college, did you guys go to college in San Luis Obispo?
- Ryan H.: I did. Casey jumped around quite a bit, and then he spent the last year at San Luis Obispo.
- Shelby S.: So, you guys are twins?
- Ryan H.: Yeah.
- Shelby S.: Okay. How old were you when you had this wild idea?
- Ryan H.: 22.
- Shelby S.: 22. So, you didn't have a job. You'd graduated college. Maybe you had some money, I don't know.
- Ryan H.: Not a lot of money, but we basically sold all of our stuff, he and I both, to save up, moved back in with our parents for a brief period of time, and thankfully, they let us live there and not pay rent for that ... I think it was like, 10 months.
- Shelby S.: What were you doing before? I know you graduated college, but you obviously had a little background in endurance sports.

- Ryan H.: Yeah, we were both life guarding and had background in endurance sports, doing anything from Iron Man to all day adventures races, and things of that sort.
- Shelby S.: So, tell me a little bit about how you got the idea to paddle from Alaska to Mexico. Like, where did that come from?
- Ryan H.: Well, I mean, it was a culmination of things, I think. Coming to the end of school, and not knowing what either of us wanted to do with our lives, I felt like I was in a weird spot. I really wanted to push myself and test myself, and Casey and I started throwing ideas around. Basically, for a big adventure. A big adventure we didn't know we could complete. Something that we would learn as much as possible.
- Ryan H.: He wanted to take horses across Mongolia. We didn't know anything about horses. It was a bad idea, a really bad idea. Then I think I said, "Let's do California on rescue boards." Lifeguard rescue boards. Then it just progressed from there. Like, "All right, let's go to Alaska. Let's do paddle boards. No support. Just dry bags with our gear."
- Ryan H.: I think we settled on it, we were having a couple beers one night, and that's how we got into it and stuck with it.
- Shelby S.: How all great ideas happen, right? Over [crosstalk 00:38:11] couple cocktails with your twin brother [crosstalk 00:38:15]
- Shelby S.: A lot of people come up with a lot of ideas. How did you turn that like, "I wonder if," to then like, actually getting on the paddleboard and going?
- Ryan H.: Yeah, it was a long process. I mean, it didn't really seem real. It seemed real once we got the paddle boards. Then it was like, "Oh, wow. Okay. Like, we're invested in this. We just put money into the boards. We're doing it."
- Ryan H.: But, I mean, it was a long process. It's, you know, training. We planned every single night, where we camped. Every site based on a water source and whether there were hazards.
- Shelby S.: Kind of similar to people who hike the PCT, or like, we just interviewed a guy who biked from Alaska to Mexico, as well.
- Shelby S.: So, from the day you had that idea at the bar to the day you guys got to Alaska, what was that timeframe like?
- Ryan H.: That was about one year. We came up with the idea in March of 2015, and then left in March of 2016.
- Shelby S.: You were saying you just felt like you wanted to be tested. What do you mean by that? Had things just been too easy for you? I mean, you guys are good looking kids. You're lifeguards. You went to school.

Ryan H.: Yeah, I think ... You know, I had a great family, great upbringing. It was awesome. Went to a great school. You know, when I look at like, the stories my dad would tell us about he grew up, he was in Vietnam, and different things he's done. There was just this level of toughness that, I think, Casey and I were probably trying to push towards. You know, doing different competitive events. But it just never matched up in my mind.

Ryan H.: I think, personally, there's ... I don't know what it is, is this feeling of lack of fulfillment, you know, if I'm doing something that I know I can complete. So, I think part of it goes back to my dad. Part of it goes to the stories he told us about his dad and the stuff he did. I think we both wanted to, you know, live up to the gene pool, in a way.

Shelby S.: Twins are so interesting, because they push each other to a level like no other.

Ryan H.: For sure. Yeah.

Shelby S.: Are you guys fraternal or ...

Ryan H.: Identical.

Shelby S.: Identical twins. Are you a lot alike?

Ryan H.: There are definitely a lot of similarities. There are a lot of differences as well.

Shelby S.: So, let's talk about the adventure. How many days was it? When did you start? I want to hear about those first initial days?

Ryan H.: We started on March 18th, 2016. In total, it took us seven months and three days to get down to the border.

Shelby S.: Seven months?

Ryan H.: Yeah. Yeah. It was a long time.

Shelby S.: Holy cow. How did you get off ... So, you just took off work? You're like, "Hey, I don't know when I'll be back."

Ryan H.: Yeah. I mean, we had everything we needed. We had ... We bought all the dehydrated food we were going to eat for what we thought was going to be four and a half months or so. We were, you know, self sustained. So, we had everything we'd need to go out there and pull it off.

Ryan H.: As a lifeguard, the schedule is pretty flexible. I'm like, "Yeah, I'm gone. I'm going to be out of here." So.

Shelby S.: Yeah. I mean, that's good training to be a lifeguard.

Shelby S.: So, you started in Alaska in March, and you just started paddling.

Ryan H.: Yeah, it was ... I mean, so, one thing that we forgot to do, training, was we never paddled with weight on the boards, more than a water bottle, which was pretty ...

Shelby S.: So, you never paddled with your camping gear on the board?

Ryan H.: Not until day one. Yeah.

Shelby S.: Wow.

Ryan H.: Yeah. It was a bad idea.

Shelby S.: So, tell me a little bit about what you learned, what happened.

Ryan H.: Yeah. So, we get up to ... A friend drops us off in Prince Rupert, BC. We take a ferry up to Ketchikan, Alaska. It took us about four hours. I think the ferry ride was four hours, what it took us to take ... It took 10 days to get there paddling.

Ryan H.: So, we get up there on, I think, five days before we left. It's a terrible storm. We get off the ferry and we're just holding our boards so they don't blow away in the wind. It's nighttime. It's raining. We're just like, "All right, now we're in Alaska. This is what it's going to be like."

Ryan H.: So, we waited it out. Got our weather window, day after St. Paddy's Day. Paddled off, and all I was thinking, going away from the dock, was basically I didn't want to tip over my board, because we had a couple people that came out to watch us, and just look like an idiot. Putting 70 pounds of gear on the board, without having put weight on before, just sucked.

Shelby S.: So, you didn't tip it over?

Ryan H.: We tipped plenty of times. But I got, I think, a couple miles out before I tipped the first time. Thankfully, yeah.

Shelby S.: So, everything's in a dry back though. I mean, this is totally different than the PCT, because you're in water.

Ryan H.: Yeah. Super dynamic.

Shelby S.: Okay. So, like, how did you do it?

Ryan H.: Well, we packed ... I mean, pack everything in dry bags. So, we mounted these plastic racks on the front and the back of the boards, so they were off about an inch. So, when waves hit and water could pass underneath the bags. Wouldn't tip us over as much. We



did that. We had a ton of gear on. We carried a shotgun with slugs because we were scared of bears. So, that was a lot of weight.

Ryan H.: I had a camera on me. Just like the PCT guys and gals do, we ship our food about every 200 miles, 250 miles down the coast. There would be a small outpost, even in BC, that you could go to. They held the packages for us. But it also had this like, sense of accountability then. You know? If you don't get to your food drop in time, something happens, you're going to be hungry.

Shelby S.: Wow. So, how did you get to the actual food? I mean, you land on the beach. So, it's a little different. And then to get from the beach to these outposts, what would you do? Walk? Hitchhike?

Ryan H.: Yeah. Exactly. Some of the places, yeah. So, the earlier ones, you know, we'd get to a spot, our first food drop. It's a small ... It's, I guess, a decent sized town. Prince Rupert, British Columbia. We could just walk, walk from there to the post office.

Ryan H.: The next place was on Denny Island, a place called Shearwater. There's like, 75 people that live there. So, that was like, pull up to the dock, put our boards there, no one's going to touch them. Walk over to the only post office in town. Pick them up.

Ryan H.: We did hitchhike a couple times. Hitchhiked, got rides from people, yeah.

Shelby S.: That's crazy. What sort of food did you eat? Same kind of food that hikers eat and bikers eat, or it was different?

Ryan H.: Yeah. Dehydrated food. The same brand. Same stuff. It got really old.

Shelby S.: Was there a couple of things that you had that you are really glad you had? Like, types of stove? Did you use a Jetboil? What'd you use?

Ryan H.: MSR makes this little Jetboil. That's what we used, with a decent sized pot. That was super light. We could store other gear inside the pot while paddling. I mean, gear-wise, nothing beats something that's really waterproof. I found out that nothing is really waterproof, except this watch I have that my dad gave me, that survived the whole way down. Everything else died that was outside of the bags.

Shelby S.: Okay. So, just three like, highlights, scary moments, of the trip? Just moments where you're like, "Are you kidding me? Why are we doing this?" What tested you?

Ryan H.: Well, I lost a wetsuit glove on day five in Alaska.

Shelby S.: Ugh.

Ryan H.: The weather was really nice up to that point.

Shelby S.: So, how cold is it in Alaska?

Ryan H.: 42 degree water. The air would be like, mid 30s, and then sometimes get up into the 50s, depending on what it was like. It wasn't freezing but when the weather hit and the wind comes down, then it got pretty cold.

Shelby S.: Yeah. You're in the water all day. I mean, getting ... Chances of hypothermia are pretty high without wetsuit gloves.

Ryan H.: Yeah. We didn't use ... We should have used thicker wetsuits. We used the four mils with wool on the inside. Those are great. Six and a half mil glove, six and a half mil booties, but yeah, I lost the glove. So, that was kind of like, "Okay, I'm the only person, I think, can get myself out of this situation."

Ryan H.: I put a bootie on my hand and a wool sock on my foot, and just paddled like that for the day. Then we found this random building in the middle of nowhere with a couple electricians that were there, and some caretakers. The electricians were getting picked up by a floatplane the next day, and they flew in a pair of gloves for me.

Shelby S.: That's interesting though because people talk about trail angels, but it sounds like there was like water angels.

Ryan H.: Yeah. I've heard that. I've totally heard that. Right after that we had to go across this spot called the Portland Inlet. It basically separates Alaska and Canada. A bunch of people told us that's like, "You're going to die at the Portland Inlet." Fishermen told us, this one guy specifically up in Ketchikan, he asked me if I had seen The Perfect Storm. I was like, "Oh, yeah. I've seen it." He goes, "Yeah, that was nothing, man. You should see the Portland Inlet when it blows up." I'm like, "All right. Great. Looking forward to going across on a paddleboard."

Ryan H.: So, that was interesting. We got there and we got across right before the tide switched. Or, but the tide had switched but the current switches later because they're like, 20 foot plus tides up there. We got through and we looked back about 15 minutes later. The whole thing was just blown up. The current switched and it ... You know, collided with the wind, collided with the waves coming into the inlet.

Shelby S.: So, what does that mean? That means like, if you were to try to paddle like, 15 minutes later, it would have been like, paddling against a treadmill? Going the other way?

Ryan H.: It would have been like ... We would have got sucked out to sea in the current and then just like, insane chop and wind. It would have been terrible.

Shelby S.: I can only imagine. I once tried to paddle across a channel when a Navy ship was coming, on a standup paddleboard. A guy just came up to me and he's like, "You need to just grab on to my rope right now. That submarine is going to be right where you are in three minutes and you're not going anywhere." I was terrified. I was like, "Oh, okay. Cool. Thanks." I was just dumb and like, 20.

Ryan H.: Yeah.

Shelby S.: And on a standup paddleboard. This was just like, San Diego Harbor, but it was just a weird day. All of a sudden the wind switched and I just ... I wasn't going anywhere. It was awful.

Shelby S.: So, I imagine that happened a lot to an extreme case.

Ryan H.: Yeah.

Shelby S.: And waves. Like, how big were the waves?

Ryan H.: The waves, I mean, so, in the beginning we took the inside passage from Alaska down. That spot was exposed up in the Dixon Entrance. But we took the inside passage. So, we mostly had to worry about currents, whirlpools, crazy currents in there. I mean, you get 16 knot currents in certain spots.

Ryan H.: The waves were basically ... So, we didn't have any issues with waves until we got to Washington. Then it was like, south winds every day. The first swell hit. Everywhere from like, head high to when ... I broke my board in Cape Mendocino. The waves were like, 10 foot faces. We were trying to land through it. That was a bad idea.

Shelby S.: Yeah. So, for people listening who don't know about paddle boarding, these boards aren't really like surfboards. They're thicker. They're not the easiest to just take in to the beach.

Ryan H.: Oh, yeah. They're not made to go through the surf. I mean, so, Joe Bark shaped them, and he's an insane ... I mean, he's an amazing shaper. He shaped them specifically for this. They were thicker. They had thicker glassing. They were like ... I mean, everything that he could think of to make them better fit for this journey, he did. But you just can't take those things with a ton of weight on them through 10 foot surf.

Shelby S.: So, test one was losing your glove. What was the second one?

Ryan H.: Just going across the Portland Inlet, for sure. I mean, it's a three mile crossing but it just scared the hell out of us. Then just getting into Prince Rupert, we ran out of our food the last day. The tides started pushing against us and we landed about a mile short of town on this little island, in this storm. You could barely see town through the storm.

Ryan H.: Landed, woke up the next day, and paddled across into town. So, that sucked, but we were near town so it's like, "All right. We're going to get food tomorrow, as long as the weather gets better."

Shelby S.: You were just hungry.

- Ryan H.: Yeah. Just hungry. Just hungry and beat up. It was the first ... That was the first really tough paddle for us. It was kind of like, "All right, this is what it took to get to food drop number one," and you just have to think like, "All right." You have to compartmentalize those because otherwise, it would have just seemed crazy that we've got to do that for 2,000 more miles.
- Shelby S.: How many miles would you paddle between each stop a day?
- Ryan H.: In each day we'd do about 20.
- Shelby S.: Holy cow.
- Ryan H.: Probably between like ... Yeah, I'd say 15 to 20 miles a day. Most were about 20. In Canada, we had a day where we covered like, three miles because we were trying to cross the Queen Charlotte Strait and the weather was just terrible. So, we kept working our way inside.
- Shelby S.: Then the camping was fun, exciting, all of it?
- Ryan H.: The longest camping trip I'd done before that was like, three days. So, I wasn't really a hard camper at the time, I'd say.
- Ryan H.: So, yeah. The camping was interesting. At first, we were just scared of bears. That was it. We had to start figuring out the routine of like, "All right, you take care of this job. I'll take care of this, so we can use our time wisely." Get the food prepped, everything you have to do. Set up camp, find a good campsite, food, water, security with our bear situation
- Shelby S.: So, what was the deal with the bears? Did you see any? I mean, the guy I interviewed who biked from Alaska, he saw tons.
- Ryan H.: We saw no brown bears. We saw one black bear the first ... Actually, we saw a few black bears, but the first one was the first night on Vancouver Island. No brown bears. When we hit shore, we were really loud. We would just like ... You sing songs, or just yell into the forest, whatever you're going to do, because you're like, "All right, they don't want to be around us, so we're going to keep them away." Then I would just spoon the shotgun every night, scared of the bears.
- Ryan H.: We never saw any. Everybody would say, "Oh, yeah. They're going to come down, eat the skunk cabbage this time of year to clear their digestive track. They're going to get really hungry, and you guys are going to be right there on the beach." So, it got to our heads a little bit.
- Shelby S.: Yeah, that's so mean of people ... Well, I mean, maybe they were trying to help you, or maybe they were trying to scare you. I don't know.

Ryan H.: Who knows?

Shelby S.: What was it like being with your brother for that long, in that intimate of a setting, and just testing each other and yourselves every day?

Ryan H.: You get pretty sick of talking to one guy, you know, for that long, for sure. But definitely when it was tough, or the things that were more daunting, it brings you together as a team, for sure. I mean, we definitely work better together as a team after that experience versus before.

Ryan H.: I could tell from the beginning, when I lost the glove. It was like, a dumb, calm situation and that happens, and we weren't a good team at the time. Then problems would happen in California and it was like, "No worries. No problem."

Shelby S.: Did he just totally call you a dumb ass when you lost it?

Ryan H.: He was pissed. Oh, yeah. He thought I just ruined the whole thing. He was pissed.

Shelby S.: He let into you. That's what you do to your sibling though.

Ryan H.: Oh, yeah. We were used to it. I mean, that's how we motivate each other in general, you know? Like, "You're an idiot."

Shelby S.: That is funny. When you guys finished, it had been seven months. What was finishing like?

Ryan H.: It was not this like, grand thing you'd imagine. I mean, there were a few friends and family members on the beach. It was kind of anticlimactic. We were just like, "We did it." You know? I had this feeling like, I was looking down the coast. Every single day, you know, every single paddle for the past half year, I'd found out what was around the next corner. What's around the next point? What the next challenge is? Who's going to be around the corner? What that next day's going to be like. The next adventure.

Ryan H.: Then all of a sudden, it was over. I was looking down the coast like, "Man, if there was nobody here waiting for us to come in, we'd probably just keep going."

Shelby S.: Wow.

Ryan H.: It was definitely fulfilling. I mean, any time you set out to accomplish something you don't know if you can do ... I mean, once we got around into Southern California, we knew we had it. But you just ... There's always a possibility of something happening. So, once you accomplish that goal, it's pretty exciting. Then you just kind of have to come up with new goals.

Shelby S.: So, what did you do afterwards?

Ryan H.: Afterwards, basically, the goal was like, "All right, we're going to make this movie. We're going to work together with Kellen and make it happen." So, started doing that. I took up a job doing commercial fishing in Alaska to get my adventure fix. It was an interesting ... kind of an interesting time period. Then we were like, "All right. Let's go do another one."

Ryan H.: Then we paddled down the Baja Peninsula.

Shelby S.: You just said that really casually. So, like, just recently you paddled down the Baja Peninsula?

Ryan H.: Yeah. So, we started in October of last year and finished in January of this year.

Shelby S.: Nice.

Ryan H.: Yeah.

Shelby S.: The weather's not exactly perfect, is it?

Ryan H.: It's not ... It's not the Mexico, I think, that most people imagine. It's a little cooler, for sure.

Shelby S.: Yeah.

Ryan H.: It's a lot of fog. We got a few, you know, few rainstorms that came through.

Shelby S.: How did you do the food drops? It's not like there's like, USPS.

Ryan H.: Yeah. We called people ... Yeah, totally. I mean, that's more complicated there. So, a couple of them, we buried in the ground ahead of time. We drove down, buried them at a few sites, and then knew when we'd get there a few months later. We'd pick them up and ... So, that was cool.

Shelby S.: Wow. They were there? Every single one of them?

Ryan H.: They were there. Every single one of them. They were there.

Shelby S.: How did you remember where they were?

Ryan H.: You know, just do a little marker in a certain spot. Set up rocks in a certain manner, and you know where to find it.

Shelby S.: Amazing. So, what happened that you just didn't expect?

Ryan H.: What stands out, actually, I didn't expect people to be so helpful.

- Shelby S.: Mmm.
- Ryan H.: I mean, it really restores ... restored like, my hope in people just help you. We would hit a beach. People would give us food. They'd put a roof over our heads for the night. I mean, we got taken in by so many people, and given rides to places, everything. It was insane. Total strangers. They're like, "Hey, what are you guys doing? How can we help? What do you need?"
- Shelby S.: That's really cool. What was the most fun, exciting, kind of memorable times on the trip?
- Ryan H.: Any of the nice ... The bad days and the nice days. We had a day right before Vancouver Island, and it was just ... We woke up to a terrible storm. Everything was wet. It just sucked. We just started laughing about it because it was so terrible. It was like, "What are ..."
- Ryan H.: Whenever are you on an island with your brother, and the weather's terrible, and you don't ... You know, you're running out of food. You've got to get to this next stop. It's just raining down on you. It's just a shitty situation. So, what else are you going to do? You're just going to laugh.
- Shelby S.: Now that it's been a couple years, what are some of the key takeaways, and how did this trip change you?
- Ryan H.: Key takeaways, for me, would be approaching everything with a complete open mind. You don't know who you're going to meet. You don't know what your day's going to be like. You don't know what you're going to do. Things don't always go according to plan.
- Ryan H.: So, I think I just kind of learned to learn again, and absorb everything, and have no expectations, and take things as they come. I'm a much better teammate. Learning to work with somebody else, who you've clashed with seriously in the past, you know? Working together to get through, you know, every day's little micro goal, towards a larger goal. That was a big one.
- Ryan H.: It's a small team. Two people.
- Shelby S.: And your family member, but it must have been kind of nice. I mean, could you imagine doing this solo?
- Ryan H.: That would suck. No.
- Shelby S.: How did this trip change you?
- Ryan H.: I mean, it completely changed my perspective on things. You learn to care about the things that, I would say, are important in life. I mean, at the very base of that would be, "Okay, if I am warm and dry, and I've got some food, I'm good to go." That feeling

doesn't last, you know? That would make me ... I'd be a 10 out of 10 on the happy scale right when I got back from that trip if I was warm, I was dry, and I had a full stomach. But you get back into living your everyday life and that changes a little bit.

Ryan H.: But I think the thing that doesn't change is realizing what's important, in terms of like, your family, and, you know, the people you have around you.

Shelby S.: Any advice to people who want to do a long distance paddle?

Ryan H.: Yeah. Train up. Prepare as well as you can. Go for it.

Shelby S.: So, this sounds like you've had like, not one but two adventures of a lifetime. Why should people go out and just do something extreme?

Ryan H.: I think that any time you get out of your comfort zone, you're going to learn a lot. If anybody was thinking about going and doing something like that, that's what I would tell them. I'd say, "You know, attack it with an open mind. You know, absorb everything as you go. Go for it."

Ryan H.: That was the advice I got, to approach everything with an open mind, and be open to new ideas. You know, listen to people. Listen to what they're saying about, you know, the locals in certain areas. Listen to your surroundings. Absorb it all. I think when you're committed to a goal that's going to be difficult, you just have to adapt to each day as it comes.

Shelby S.: The great thing about going on an adventure is that something unexpected always happens. Whether it's good or bad, you're bound to learn a lesson or two that you can bring back to your normal life.

Shelby S.: According to these three guests, you can do more than you think you can if you just go into it with an open mind. One thing that Julie said that really stuck with me since our conversation, the person you're going to become on this journey, you want them around sooner rather than later. So, go. The time is now.

Shelby S.: To follow along on the adventures of today's guests, you can check out DownhillsDontComeFree.com, JulieHotz.com. That's Julie, J-U-L-I-E H-O-T-Z dot com. You can check out Ryan and Casey's adventure ... and they're doing another adventure right now, so you should check them out ... at ByHandProject.com.

Shelby S.: You can also follow Julie on Instagram at @julieahotz, and Ryan at @byhandproject.

Shelby S.: This podcast is produced by REI, with help from Annie Fassler and Chelsea Davis. Thank you so much to Jerry, to Julie, and to Ryan for coming on this show. It was inspiring to hear all of your stories, and I appreciate you sharing them with me.



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Shelby S.: To all the listeners who write me daily about your own adventures, thank you. I love hearing about them.

Shelby S.: Tune in week after next to hear from a talented writer about the power of water in her life. Also, about the power of lying fallow.

Shelby S.: As always, we appreciate when you subscribe, rate, and review the show wherever you listen. Some of you have been writing incredibly thoughtful reviews. I really appreciate them. I also appreciate your hilarious review names: GringoBurns, Biking Billy Bob, Show Me The Trail. They're awesome. I appreciate it. If you can take the two minutes to write a review, if you haven't, please do so, and share this podcast with a friend.

Shelby S.: Remember, wherever you are, some of the best adventures often happen when you follow your wildest idea.