Hello. For those that don't know me, I'm Brendan Ritter. I'm originally from the other Arlington in Virginia, I went to Olin college.

There are two thing you should know about me. One is that as of three months ago, I run almost every day. The other thing you should know is that I hate running. With a passion. Every second is agony.

The story I want to share happened just a few weeks ago. It was right after the reminants of the hurricane passed through and it was hot! Normally I try to run in the morning but this day, I had slept in late. Rather than skip the day, I told my self that I would go running after work, regardless of how miserable it was. Big mistake.

So there I was, breathing heavily, almost literally swimming through the humidity, trunging my way down Mt. Auburn street. I ran my normal route, which is a there and back of about 4 miles. This typically takes me about 40 minutes, and I pride myself on not stopping or walking.

However, today was different. As I dodged pedestrians, ran around cars heedlessly pulling out of insignificant side streets, I realized that I was going stop running today. I tried to ignore this fact, but every foot fall that brought me closer to the turn around point reminded me that this was by definition only the half way point.

And then I was there, it happened. Amid the angry horns of the frustuated cars and the beltching busses , I ground to a halt.

Typically, running for me is an all or nothing ordeal. Either I run every day, or I don't. Either I run all the way or I don't. Normally this works out pretty well for me. I never stop. I always run. Its just what happens. I don't think about whether or not I run, I just do. I don't think about stopping, I just don't.

So, due to my mental and physical break for the norm, I resigned myself to walking back the rest of the way, an hour at best. Starting running again was unimaginable.

But as I started the long journey of shame back home, some thought peirced its way into my mind. It was from a service or sermon, perhaps at the high holy days. In it, there was a singular phrase that I remembered. “I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. Choose life” (Parshah Nitzavim)

Now, ignoring the possible other interpretations of this phrase, a sudden realization came to me. At this moment, as I sweated my way across the shimmering pavement, I had a choice in the outcome of this run. I had the ability to finish it out.

And if this were a normal motivational speech, I would have done that, everything would have been fine, and everyone would be happy. But that’s not what happened.

Pushed by this realization, I resigned myself to *run the way I had come* to the point where I had started walking. Go backwards? Preposterious. But I did it. But as I came back, a bit after where I had turned for the second time, my legs grew tired, a cramp appeared, my shorts started sticking to my legs, my throat became sticky. And I stopped again.

Damn it! Body and mind? I thought we had gone through this! I'm finishing the run! The physicalities didn't care.

So I walked again. But this time, I had just enough mental energy not to allow myself to walk home. I walked *away* so I would have to come back. And this continued. Time after time. What was supposed to be a 40 minute run was turning into quite an excursion.

Back and forth I went, easily six or seven times on the way back, running, walking, running, walking. Eventually, the lowered to a light simmer as the sun slunk below the horizon, and the cars finished their daily aggressive return. And I ran and walked. And ran. And walked.

Until I made it home.

Again, one might interpret this as a feel good story. Stick to things, they would say! Persevere! See, didn't things turn out good in the end?

Thats full of shit in my opinion. And here's why. I tricked you. This isn't a story about a run at all. This is a story about life. About lives. About hundred upon thousands of lives. Every day we are confronted with our run and our heat: the things in our life that are difficult, exhausting, hard to get through.

And every day, there are thousands of people that, like me, decide to walk. Too disciplined to ignore the run completely, but feeling too tired to confront it directly. And just like me, they actually spend more time in this hellish middle path, watching netflix because the job was draining, sleeping in because they had to stay out late to make up for the lack of excitement, browsing imgur and reddit because the effort of thinking of what to do is too much because its a habit.

But, just like my run, there is something that you can do. You can choose your life. You can decide when you are running, you can decide when you are going to turn off the TV, shut the computer and learn something, make something, explore, wonder, think. And you can do it every second. Right now you can do it.

So, right now, put down this paper, or turn off the screen and go do something. There's a whole world out there. And there’s no reason you can't run right all over it.