

Friendship is a Mountain Hike

When you go on your next mountain hike, think of this as you do. When the world is going at the speed of light, take the time to pause and slow down. Let the rain fall, the trees grow, and the flowers bloom. Be aware of every little thing that happens and find joy in every moment. Especially now.

When you first begin, you're super excited, pumped, and ready. The trail is easy to hike up, with the new scent of evergreen all around, and the morning light raining down. Birds chirp overhead, a quiet rhythm of new beginnings. Trust grows like moss, beautiful, but dangerous if you aren't careful. The trees that stretch throughout the mountain look all alike, but each unique in their special ways. Then you look down, and the roots begin to show. Some are big and bold, and may pose trouble, while others are quiet and forgiving.

You reach the quarter mark. Things have evened out. The slope is level, and you reach a content place. You begin to feel at home, connected, calm. Thin tree branches may snag you, but you recover. Hopefully it'll be like this the rest of the way.

But you discover you are very wrong. You are at the halfway mark. The slope becomes steeper; the rocks slicker. Your heartbeat quickens and your muscles begin to ache. This is the test. Yet even still, through the pressure, everything around you is calmer. The wind may

pick up, and the rain may begin to fall, but the trees and the animals don't flinch. They are used to it. And you must become used to it, too. You feel like you are about to give up. But you can't. Through the struggle, the pain, the sorrow, you still find hope in the thought of the reward. And that is what keeps pushing you. You begin to grow. In body and in mind. Though the path is unyielding, you keep going. You figure it out. You learn through mistakes. But it wasn't a mistake to do this. You know it.

Finally, the mountain gives you leeway. The climb eases. The wind dies down; the rain is now just a mere sprinkle. The smell of prior rain gives you more strength, as life comes back through the branches. You're truly glad you kept going. For you're so, so close to the peak.

The mountain narrows into the wide peak. The sky is sprinkled with evening stars, the sun slipping into the horizon. The beauty of the landscape encapsulates you, and you realize how grateful you are. Of this opportunity, of not giving up. You have shown what you are made of, and pushed past the doubts, struggles, and pains of friendship. You have carved yourself into the mountain, and even though time may weather your image down, your spirit is still engraved into its history. Through the disrespect, gossiping, complaining, backstabs, and immaturity of your friends, you have made it. Friendship is a grueling hike that asks for devotion but gives back fond memories that'll last a lifetime. When the hike gets tough, keep going, and use that as a reminder to never give up in friendship.