

When entrant #64750 crossed the Sun Run finish line on April 21, 2013, he raised his arms jubilantly, and with a huge grin, pounded his chest with his fist and breathlessly yelled, “Done! It’s all heart, baby!” It didn’t matter that he clocked a time of more than two hours and was one of the last people to finish the race. What mattered is – he did it.

Diagnosed with cerebral palsy as an infant, Jamie Lange was dealt physical challenges that would daunt anyone. Walking is one of them. Doctors predicted he wouldn’t walk, but at four years old, he took his first steps (motivated by not letting his younger sister beat him to it!)

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Jamie, 37, doesn’t like to focus on his limitations; he’s a glass-half-full guy. But he freely admits that turning the glass right side up has been a work-in-progress throughout his adult life. “When I was younger, all I heard was ‘don’t get your hopes up. You’re different. There are things you just can’t do.’”

With that mental tape playing in his head, Jamie remembers a lot of pain during childhood and adolescence. He was bullied, teased and mocked for his awkward gait. Hurtful words like “nerd” and “cripple” were hurled at him. “I became angry in my late teens,” Jamie recalls. “I was foul-mouthed and lashed out. And when someone was nice to me, I didn’t trust their motives.”

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To cope, Jamie became numb to it all. He says it still hurts – “words are powerful” – but in his early twenties, he started to hear different messages from people. “I was at a nightclub dancing like no one’s watching and this guy came up to me and told me I was very inspirational. I’d never thought of myself that way before.”

At the time, he remembers it just went over his head, and didn't think about it again for a couple of years. "Then I was introduced to some people who started telling me I was a winner, not a loser. And they introduced me to other people who believed I could do more," Jamie says. As he started to be aware of more of these kinds of positive messages from people who believed in him, he says a huge shift took place: "I started hearing you can, you can, you can."

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Jamie reflected back on the comment made by the guy in the nightclub about how "inspirational" he was and said it dawned on him that people without a physical disability wouldn't even attempt to do what he does. "I thought I should live for a cause. What do I do better than anyone else? I realized that is my calling – to inspire people to do more than they think they can. If I can do it, they can, too."

Jamie says he's always loved a challenge; indeed, he says sometimes just getting through a day is enough. He sets himself small and big goals. "Something big every day would be too much. I just want to give whatever I do my best."

Completing the Sun Run was one of those bigger goals he can now check off his bucket list. He learned to ride a motorcycle. He's gone skydiving. He scuba dives, and wants to get his diving ticket. Getting his pilot's license is another sky-high challenge he's set for himself. Bungee jumping? Sure, bring it on! Jamie says, "I'm open to suggestions from people to do things I haven't even thought of." He is matter-of-fact about what he calls his 'main drive' and his mantra: "No one is better than me. I'm no better than anyone else. I just want to do the fun things I saw everybody else doing and started believing I can."

Jamie makes his living selling tools. He freely admits he knew nothing about tools when he started out, and was apprehensive about making cold calls. He got his confidence boost working in a supportive environment and readjusting his thinking about sales: "I'm not selling them something. I'm offering them something that they can use. It's all about how I can help them." In every interaction he has with a customer, his aim is to "make their day".

With an infectious grin and upbeat attitude, Jamie is friendly to everyone. “I try to make people laugh. I ask servers in restaurants ‘how was your day today?’ Sometimes it’s just as simple as walking up to someone and saying, ‘hi, how are you?’ I do that at trade shows. People don’t bite!”

As his confidence has grown over the past decade, Jamie’s keen to share his story of inspiration, to be a voice of encouragement: “I’ve done more than I was told I could do. So can you.” He’s been sharing his message through presentations and realized he’s a natural and comfortable speaker. “I presented to more than 300 students at a high school recently,” Jamie says proudly.

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The school volleyball team was going to compete in a big tournament, and he was asked to deliver the rallying cry message to the team and the students. “I came up with a presentation that included a video and music. The kids were singing along and were totally into it.” The principal called afterwards to tell Jamie that the team came second in the tournament – the best they’d ever done – and asked when he’s coming back. “He told me he’d never seen the students so engaged before.”

He’s completely hooked on making a difference and pushing people to quit coming up with excuses for themselves. As he puts it, “Excuses are the nails in your house of failure.” He also invokes the insight of tennis great John McEnroe, “It’s easier to go from failure to success than excuses to success.”

Excuses are the nails in your house of failure

Jamie has his sights set on sharing his message of inspiration and encouragement around the country – and beyond. And in true Jamie “bring it on” style, he’ll approach this challenge much like he did to complete the Sun Run – one step, one kilometer at a time.

Jamie Lange is going to need a bigger bucket – his list is long, his energy limitless and as he reminds us, “it’s all heart, baby!”



*David Haysom Filmed and edited the video ~ Actor at Spirit Fire Productions
It was a total pleasure creating the video of Jamie – he is an inspiration to us all*



*Tracey Wimperly Wrote the story ~ Storyteller at Encores and Trace of Whimsy
Jamie is changing his world one step at a time – I was very happy to help tell his story that we can
all live with purpose*