

# **The Underground Guide to the Breast Cancer Walks 2010 Edition**



*It's supposed to be hard.  
If it wasn't hard, everyone would do it.  
The hard... is what makes it great.*

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## Why?

The Underground Guide to the Breast Cancer Walks has one simple purpose: to help you have a great experience when you participate in one of the Breast Cancer Walks. That includes: making your training and fundraising easier and less stressful; ensuring you pack everything you need (and avoid packing everything you don't need); helping make sure you stay safe and healthy; and finally, helping you to keep things in perspective before, during, and after your Walk.



Maybe you're new to the Walk and are looking for answers to the questions that have popped into your head (the first question is usually "What the hell did I get myself into?") Perhaps you've walked in the past and are looking to avoid the mistakes you made last time. Maybe you're considering walking for the first time and someone sent this to you, hoping it might convince you to join them on the Walk. Perhaps you're reading this because someone told you "You have to read this, it is a riot!" Whatever the reason, I hope you'll find the following pages helpful, amusing and a good use of your time. If not, I promise you a full refund of your purchase price.

I've participated in more than two dozen Walks, including the old Avon 3-Day and the new Avon Walk for Breast Cancer, the Komen Breast Cancer 3-Day, as well as a very special event called Out of the Darkness, which raises money to support a range of suicide prevention programs ([www.theovernight.org](http://www.theovernight.org)). Over the course of being involved in Walks in a half dozen different cities, some as a walker, some as volunteer crew, I've learned things (on my own and from other walkers and crew) that I thought that others might find useful. For years, I posted tips and bits of advice to the message boards (more on those later). Then in 2005, someone suggested that I should "write a book and sell it."

I was flattered (there is an old adage that "everyone has at least one good book in them"), but wasn't quite sure that the world needed yet another book, let alone another aspiring author. And I wasn't looking to make money from other Walk participants. But just in case it might be helpful to people, I figured it couldn't hurt to collect all those random thoughts and messages into one document. Since the release of the original Underground Guide in 2006, and the New Underground Guide in 2008, I've gotten a lot of helpful feedback, so the 2010 Underground Guide includes many additional tips and lots of new stories (hopefully an incentive for those of you who've read an earlier version to continue reading).

I'll use the word Walk (capitalized) as a generic term. Whether you're participating in the Avon Walk for Breast Cancer (a two day format, with either a 26 mile or 39 mile total Route) or the Komen Breast Cancer 3-Day (a three day format, with an approximately 60 mile total Route), much of this information will apply to you. If the difference in the Walk format has some implication for a particular tip (e.g. towel service), I'll try to make that clear as well.

The tips are divided into 3 sections; Before the Walk, During the Walk, and After the Walk (I never claimed this was rocket science.) Also sprinkled throughout the document are "Interludes", which you may find interesting or amusing. The goal of each Interlude is to share a story or anecdote that reinforces a key point. Stories are often the best way to learn an important lesson while also providing a helpful way of remembering and reinforcing that lesson in the future.

The personal stories in the Interludes are true. I'm a great believer in a piece of wisdom I learned from a former colleague: You can't make the best shit up! By the way, while I'll do my best to avoid the use of

gratuitous profanity and unnecessarily graphic imagery, there are times when using alternatives such as “s\*\*t” or “heck” just doesn’t work for me. If you are offended by anything, grab a pen and feel free to cross out the words you don’t like and replace them with whatever words, abbreviations or euphemism you prefer. You have my permission.



As you read, you may have suggestions for additions, improvements or clarifications. You may even disagree with something I’ve written. I’d love your feedback (both positive and negative); my email address is on the front page. I update the Underground Guide on a regular basis, sometime between “every so often” and “when I get around to it.” And I’m always open to suggestions for the next edition.

If you find the Underground Guide helpful in any way, please “pay it forward” by finding someone each day you can help in some way, large or small. Even a kind word or a smile can help change someone’s life. The person you help will appreciate your kindness. And you’ll sleep better each night knowing that you’ve done something that day to make the world a better place.

If you are looking for more specific ways to “pay me back” for the Underground Guide, here are some additional suggestions:

- The 60-Mile Men are a group of guys who “bare all” to help fight Breast Cancer (remember the movie *Calendar Girls*?) Visit [www.60milenen.org](http://www.60milenen.org) to learn more. The 60-Mile Men pin-up calendar is a great gift to give yourself or your major donors. Each month has a picture of a man who shows his best side (discreetly, of course) for the cause, and all proceeds go to breast cancer charities. The 60 Mile Men you meet on your Walk are always willing to autograph the calendar and take a picture with you while wearing their official sash (and as much or as little else as you’d like). Yes, we do all have an official sash (yours-truly was Mr. October 2009.) If you’ve seen the 2009 calendar (or read to the end of this Guide), the answers to your questions are “No, I wasn’t wearing anything else.” and “It was a wide-screen laptop.”
- Patients undergoing surgery, chemo, radiation or transplants often need transfusions of platelets. And donors are constantly needed, due to the limited storage life of platelets. Donating is almost painless and only takes a few hours. Call the Red Cross or your local blood donation organization to schedule a platelet donation. You never know whose life you’ll save!
- I also volunteer at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington DC. Whatever your opinion about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the men and women in our military who have been gravely wounded, and their families, can use our support. The Fisher House program provides a “home away from home” at 18 military hospital centers where families (including parents, spouses and children) can live, at no charge, while their loved ones are receiving months (or even years) of extended medical care and rehab services. Whether you can donate your time, or your hard-earned dollars, the Fisher House program is a worthy cause. To learn more, visit [www.fisherhouse.org](http://www.fisherhouse.org)
- In November 2010, I’m walking in the Breast Cancer 3-Day in San Diego with my 16-year-old son A.J. This will be his first Walk, and I’m proud of him for making such a major commitment at his age. If you can help A.J. with his fundraising, I’d consider it a personal favor. To donate, please visit: [www.the3day.org/goto/father-and-son](http://www.the3day.org/goto/father-and-son)

## ***Prelude***

“Excuse me. When you come out, can you tell me if there’s anyone else in the Men’s Room? There’s a long line for the Ladies Room, and I really have to go!” Not the sort of question a guy gets every day. Not at 6:00 in the morning in the Baltimore Convention Center. And not from a lovely older woman dressed in a jogging suit and a well-worn pair of running shoes.



It was the morning of my first Breast Cancer Walk, from Baltimore to Washington DC in 2002. Since I’d be depending on porta-potties for the rest of the weekend, I figured it wouldn’t hurt to take advantage of indoor plumbing one last time. Unfortunately, thousands of other people had the same idea. There were more than five thousand walkers and the vast majority of them were women (typically the case in the early days of the Walks), so the lines for the Ladies Room stretched down the hall. And the nice lady in the jogging suit couldn’t wait.

I told her I’d check. As I walked into the Men’s Room, I called out “Anyone in here?” I was greeted by a loud chorus of women’s voices from behind the closed doors of a long row of bathroom stalls. I quickly backed out, and told my friend in the jogging suit that she might as well go in, since lots of other women already had the same idea. Then I stood outside, waiting my turn. While waiting, I tried to keep track of how many women went in, and how many came out, so I’d know when the Men’s Room was empty.

Two women came out, but then three more women went in. Then two more women came out, but four more went in. It was beginning to feel like one of those 3rd grade math problems, except this time I was trying to do the math while shifting my weight from one foot to the other. I really had to go! As one of the women came out, she noticed my discomfort and said “Just go on in, no one will mind.” A good point, especially since by then I was seriously at risk of doing something I hadn’t done since I was a very little boy. So I went inside, past a growing line of women that were now waiting patiently for their turn at the stalls in the Men’s Room. Trying to appear inconspicuous, I found a urinal at the very end of the row. Unfortunately, it can be hard to be inconspicuous when you’re the only man among a crowd of women in the Men’s Room.

I’m the first to admit that women know many things about which men are completely oblivious. For example, most men couldn’t identify the color “taupe” if you put a gun to their head. We might not notice that the milk we just poured on our cereal had gone bad a long time ago. Hell, sometimes we can’t even tell when the women in our lives are pissed off at us.

But there is at least one thing that is well known to all men, but apparently not to most women. Men, even close friends, do not speak to each other in the Men’s Room. Period. I’m sure you have an exception in mind, but you are wrong. We just don’t. In contrast, women view a visit to the Ladies Room as a combination field trip and group bonding experience. They go together, even if they don’t have to go. And this is something that most men find completely and utterly incomprehensible.

Most men would probably prefer to die of a heart attack if the only alternative was asking his friend at the next urinal to call 911. Women have no such cultural restriction. So I’m standing at the urinal and some of the women waiting in line for the stalls decide to strike up a conversation. With me! “It’s so nice

of you to share the Men's Room with us." "Aren't you just wonderful for walking in a breast cancer walk." "Have you walked before?"

Here I was, finally with a chance to go, but I couldn't. Not at all. Not a drop. There was a lull in their attempts at conversation, and I thought I finally could, but then someone chimed in again. It would have been laughable, if it weren't so painful. Finally, I couldn't take it anymore. "Ladies, you may not know this, but men do not speak to each other in the restroom. And unless you stop talking to me, I'm not going to be able to do what I really need to do right now. So can we please hold the conversation for a bit?" They got silent for a moment, and then all burst out laughing and started talking amongst themselves. This gave me a chance to finish what I'd come to do, and get the hell out of there.

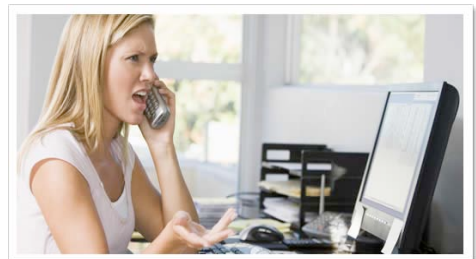
But my story doesn't really start there...

### ***How I Got Started (A Typical Story)***

It was a brutally hot and humid day in 2000, and I was driving to the supermarket, comfortable in my air-conditioned car. On the sidewalk, I saw a large woman, with a bright red face and a big beautiful smile, striding along and glistening with sweat. Then I noticed she wasn't alone. Ten yards behind her were two other women, and behind them was a cluster of half a dozen women walking together. The further I drove, the more women I saw walking. And while the weather was miserable, they seemed to be having fun. Some of them even seemed to be singing!

"Are these women insane? Why are they out walking on a day like this?" I drove past a local park that was overflowing with hundreds of women in various pink shirts, dark shorts and white running shoes. I saw a sign that mentioned something about a Breast Cancer Walk. I realized that they weren't just out for a stroll, that this was some kind of fundraiser. And I didn't think about it again for quite a while.

It was six months later, and my wife Laurie had just gotten off the phone with her mother. Laurie was angry and she wanted to make sure I knew (over the years, she's learned that I don't always notice unless she points it out to me). My mother-in-law is a breast cancer survivor. During their phone call, her mother mentioned that she was going to come up from Florida to walk in the Avon Breast Cancer 3-Day in Washington DC that spring, along with her daughter-in-law who would come down from New York.



My wife and I live in the DC area, but my mother-in-law hadn't invited her own daughter, who actually lived in the DC area, to join her. That didn't sit well with Laurie. Not one bit.

When that phone call ended, my wife was angry. I was glad that I wasn't the cause of her anger, but that didn't mean that I wasn't going to pay a price for it anyway. So I jumped in, trying to defuse the situation before it got any worse. I don't remember exactly, but I was probably in the middle of watching some terribly important rerun on TV, so I was motivated to get this resolved quickly. I said "You should sign up to do the Walk with them. And I'll be glad to watch the kids for the weekend while you're gone." That seemed to calm her down. She called her mother back and told her that she would be walking too.

When I told Laurie that I'd watch our three kids while she was on the Breast Cancer Walk, I also (unknowingly) agreed to watch them while she was training for the walk; training every weekend for the next five months. As a husband, this is sort of like agreeing to go to the supermarket to buy ice cream and then being handed an eleven-page grocery list.

My wife trained on her own and with friends. She found a group that trained on weekends in a local park. She walked outside, no matter how cold it was. And if it was raining, she walked inside on the treadmill. This created a small problem, as the handrails of the treadmill were an excellent place for me to hang my clothing, but she pointed out that we had plenty of closets and hangers. Who knew?

She did long training walks on weekends when I was home to watch the kids. Like many fathers, I'm a sucker for the line "but Mom always lets us..." especially if it meant I didn't have to cook yet another box of macaroni and cheese. If they had told me "Mom always lets us juggle flaming chain saws while blindfolded", I'd probably have gone along. It was just easier that way.

As her Walk got closer, we went out shopping for an air mattress and sleeping bag for her to use while camping out during the Walk. I didn't see it as real camping. No woods, no campfires, no peeing behind a tree or washing up in a lake. I thought of it as "Designer Camping." The campsites were typically school fields or parks, and there would be hot showers, a dining tent with hot breakfast and dinner, and even porta-potties. While Laurie had never done much camping before, she was excited about it, and didn't even seem to mind the idea of showering in a large trailer truck.

Fundraising and training were both done. Everything seemed to be going smoothly, so far. If this were a movie, the words "so far" would be accompanied by ominous background music!



The night before the Walk, I spent the evening repacking everyone's duffel bags, so that all their stuff would fit inside, instead of bulging out explosively from every zipper and seam. At 4:30AM on Friday morning, my father-in-law drove the three walkers and their duffel bags (jammed full of clothing, toiletries, running shoes, toiletries, sleeping bags, toiletries, air mattresses, toiletries, etc.) to the Opening Ceremonies site for the Walk, which was about an hour away. It was a hot and humid day, just like that day one year earlier, when I first saw those hordes of sweaty smiling walkers.

About midnight, I got a phone call. Not everything was going as smoothly as planned (cue the ominous music!) After walking all day Friday, and spending a few hours in Camp, Laurie was now in the Emergency Department of a local hospital, hooked to an IV. In the next bed was her friend, also hooked to an IV (presumably a different IV, but I forgot to ask). Her friend was in such bad shape that that she had seizures and ended up spending a week in the hospital. My mother-in-law had avoided the hospital, but was feeling ill back at the medical tent in Camp. Most of the walkers were doing a Walk for the first time and didn't know how to take proper care of themselves in that heat and humidity. There were many cases of dehydration, because the walkers hadn't been drinking enough fluids to replace the fluids lost from sweating. And worse, there were many cases of hyponatremia.

It's important to drink both water and sports drink when exercising for extended periods of time, especially in heat and humidity. Ever notice that sweat tastes salty? That's from the electrolytes your

body is losing. And while pretzels or chips may replace the sodium (table salt is sodium chloride) they won't replace the magnesium, potassium or other electrolytes in your blood. If you just keep drinking water, and sweating out your electrolytes, you risk diluting your blood (literally) as more plain water goes into your blood stream that is already low on electrolytes. You have to drink the sports drink.

Laurie was relatively lucky. After a night in the hospital, and "only" three bags of IV fluid, she was discharged. I picked her up at 5:30 AM and took her home, assuming she was done for the weekend. But after some sleep at home on Saturday, a good meal and a hot shower, Laurie insisted I take her back to the Walk, so she could sleep in Camp that night and walk on Sunday (Day 3 of the walk). I thought she was crazy. I absolutely refused to allow her to return to the Walk. She was not going back, and that was it. End of discussion. I was the man of the house, and I put my foot down. I had spoken!

So I drove her back to the Camp (you knew that was coming, didn't you?) We brought along my father-in-law for the ride, because he wanted to check on his wife and see how she was doing. When we got to Camp, I was amazed at what I saw. The pictures I had seen didn't do it justice.

There were thousands of sleeping tents lined up in long rows. There was an enormous dining tent, with a stage used for entertainment and announcements. There were shower trucks -- large tractor-trailers with changing areas and hot showers. There were rows of shiny blue porta-potties and Laurie told us how clean they were. It was the first time I ever heard the words "really clean" and "porta-potty" in the same sentence.

My father-in-law, a retired physician, had one question: "Where is the mortuary? Because I know four people on this walk, three of them needed medical attention, two of them went to the hospital, and one is still there. So where do they keep the dead bodies?" I found this absolutely hysterical, but Laurie was a bit less amused, despite years of experiences with her father's dry sense of humor.

Laurie was energized now that she was back in Camp and back on the Walk. Even after spending the previous night in the hospital, she walked the whole day on Sunday, arriving at the Closing Ceremonies site on the grounds of the Washington Monument.

I drove into DC to pick everyone up at Closing Ceremonies, along with all their gear. I saw people carrying handmade signs cheering on their loved ones. I didn't think to do that. Some were wearing personalized shirts with the names and pictures of their loved ones on them. Nope, not me. Many were carrying bouquets of beautiful flowers to give to their walkers. Didn't think of that! Damn, I was "0 for 3." How come no one put together an official list of thoughtful things for clueless husbands? By the way, at the right time, you might want to highlight key parts of this Guide, and "accidentally" leave it on your spouse's pillow for them to see. I sure wish someone had done that for me!



I talked to women and men at Closing Ceremonies who were survivors and who were there to support the people who walked for them. By the way, many people don't realize that one percent of all breast cancer diagnoses are for men. Two thousand men are diagnosed each year, and 450 men die each year of breast cancer. Men have a 1 in 1,000 lifetime risk of developing breast cancer. While the survival rates for male breast cancer are the same as for female breast cancer at the same stage, men tend to be diagnosed at a later stage, due to a lack of awareness of the risk. We all need to be concerned.

I talked to a family who had lost their grandmother/mother/sister/aunt to breast cancer, and were there to cheer on family members who had walked in her memory. Each person I spoke with had their own story, of pain, of fear, of struggle, of triumph and of loss.

The setting at the foot of the Washington Monument, along with the soaring music and the thousands of dedicated people who had come together for this cause, was unlike anything I had ever experienced before. From the stage, a speaker shared the following words:

*You have asked for no glory, but you deserve it. What you have done here is magnificent. You have given the full measure of yourselves. Everything you had, you offered, with nothing left over and nothing left out. All the currency of inspiration you could find in your thoughts to keep you from quitting you spent, with not a penny left in the register.*



*Tomorrow you go back to your jobs and your homes. And people may not tell you every day that you are incredible. In fact, you may not ever hear it. So I want to leave you with a reminder. You ARE magnificent. You ARE an inspiration. You ARE a force of nature. You are not insignificant. You are not a moth. You are an eagle. Remember this, in those wintry moments of February, when you feel far away from the glory of this day, that that glory comes not from this event, or from this stage. It comes from within you. It is who you are. It is always available to you. No one can ever take it away.*

All these people, training for months, raising thousands of dollars in donations, all for the privilege of walking 60 miles in the heat and humidity, had come together for a reason. Individually and collectively, they chose to make a difference, to stand up and show the world that they were not going to give in to breast cancer, and that they would invest their time, their energy, and their money to fight this disease.

Laurie was tired but still energized. She couldn't wait to tell me every detail of the walk, and she remembered every detail! She had already decided to sign up to walk again the following year. As for me, I had two concerns. First, would she end up in the hospital again, and second, what about me? I was amazed and wanted to be a part of it too. And don't tell my kids, but I figured the training, fundraising and walking had to be more fun than watching the kids every weekend for all those months.

I told her that if she wanted to walk next year, I'd walk with her. One reason was to make sure she didn't end up in the hospital again. I'd been an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT), and could make sure she did the right things this time, and avoid another trip to the ER. Not that any self-respecting wife would actually listen to her husband for three days straight (or even 3 minutes straight), but it sounded good in theory. But watching Closing Ceremonies had given me a new perspective and I wanted to experience a Walk from the inside. That night, as Laurie showered before dinner, I went online and signed us up to walk together the next year. And that is how I got started.

## Before the Walk

### *Training*

13 miles? In one day? Are you serious? Wait! What? Did you say 20 miles? Or up to 26 miles? In one day? On foot? You've got to be kidding!



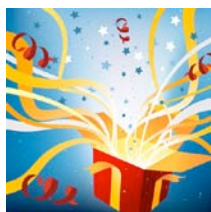
The thought of walking 13 miles, let alone 20 or even 26 miles, in one day, can seem overwhelming, especially if you've never done anything like this before. For some of us, walking is what we do to get from the couch to the refrigerator. Yet somehow we end up agreeing to walk a whole lot more than that.

And if that doesn't scare you off, the thought of walking that sort of distance for 2 or 3 days in a row might. Despite that, you'll be surprised at what you are capable of doing. But until you start walking, you won't really believe me. The key is to trust in yourself, and get started with your training.

There is no "right way" to train. We are all different, in terms of our bodies, our schedules, and our approaches to training. Some people are already in pretty good physical shape before they start training. Some of us consider it exercise to push away from the dinner table. As one person told me, "Up until this point, my idea of exercise was to take a bath, then open the drain and fight the current until the water was all gone."

Try to be reasonable when you start to plan your training. It sounds good to set ambitious goals, but if you aren't going to meet those goals, you're just setting yourself up for disappointment. Walk when you can, even if you split your training up across different times of the day. If you're the kind of person who likes to follow a plan, each of the Walks has official training guides with schedules (e.g. 16 week or 24 week training programs) and suggested distances as you increase your endurance. There is even a Virtual Trainer option on some of the Walks, where you can sign-up to receive a weekly email with the official training program for your specific Walk. I've found this very helpful in reminding me about what I should be doing (walking, cross training or resting) for each day of the coming week.

If you are more of an independent thinker, just start training. You'll do fine, even if you don't follow an official training program to the letter. The key is to just start walking! It will toughen up your feet, strengthen your muscles, increase your stamina, and perhaps most important, build up your self-confidence.



Enjoy your training. Training is not a chore, and it's not punishment (even if it does feel like that sometimes). If you think of it that way, it will be a whole lot harder. Think of your training time as a gift. It's a gift of time to yourself, and a gift of fitness and health to your body. And it's a gift to your family and friends (especially your children or grandchildren) to show them, by your example, that life is about what we do for others, not just about what we do for ourselves.

Over the years, I've had a number of people ask me "Why do you go through all that effort? Why don't you just write a check?" My response is usually a variation of "We spend our time on things we feel are important. And this is something that I feel is important. And if I want my kids to feel a responsibility to help others, what better way to teach them that, than by example?"

One of my favorite quotes is from the writer Leo Rosten:

*I cannot believe that the purpose of life is to be happy. I think the purpose of life is to be useful, to be responsible, to be compassionate. It is, above all to matter, to count, to stand for something, to have made some difference that you lived at all.*

I think about that quote sometimes when I train (let alone when I'm crawling out of a warm sleeping bag at 4AM to go crew). Clearly, there are many ways to be useful, to be responsible and to be compassionate. I think the work we do in our training and fundraising, and our walking or crewing, is one way that we each make a difference. I've found that seeing the endless hours of training in that light makes them pass by more quickly. Or at least I've successfully deluded myself into believing that.

Keep in mind that you won't really be walking 26, or 20, or even 13 miles at one time during your actual event. You're really training to walk about 3 miles at a time between stops (now doesn't that sound a lot more manageable?) You'll have plenty of time each day during your Walk to get to the end of the Route, even with stops at every single rest area to eat, drink, stretch and use the porta-potties. It's a Walk, not a Race. Keep that in mind as you train. Speed doesn't matter, but endurance does.

Training is important. No matter what physical shape you are in, it isn't realistic to plan to just show up and walk. Some people can pull it off, but they are the lucky few. And you won't know if you are one of those lucky few until "after". And that may be "after" a successful walk without training, or that may "after" a ride in an ambulance to the nearest hospital. So please make sure you train.

Walking for that many miles in one day, followed by another day (or two) of distance walking (particularly after having slept on the ground in a tent), will use different muscles and require a different level of endurance training than playing tennis or jogging for an hour at a time, a few times a week. Even people who run marathons find that there is a difference between running for 3-4 hours on one day, and walking for 8-10 hours a day, for multiple days. When you run a marathon or even do a triathlon, you don't have to worry about doing it all over again the next day. On these Walks, you do.



So no matter your physical shape, you need to train. But even if your idea of exercise today is pushing yourself up from the couch and walking all the way into the kitchen for a snack, you can train your body to successfully complete your Walk. The key to training is the same as the key to actually doing the Walk: take it easy and listen to your body. Your age, your weight and your physical condition don't matter as much as your attitude. If you take your training seriously, you can do this.

Most people who can't finish the Walk find it is not due to exhaustion but because of dehydration (or hyponatremia, more on that below), injury (sprained or sore muscles are a common issue) or blisters. The most common medical issues on each Walk are (in order of frequency): blisters; blisters; and blisters.

The purpose of training is not only to develop your endurance, but also to acclimate your muscles to being used for hours at a time, develop good habits when it comes to hydration and nutrition, figure out the right combination of running shoes and socks that work for you, and learn to recognize the warning signs of foot problems (so that you can prevent blisters, rather than treating them). If you can get your leg and back muscles into shape, and learn how to stay properly hydrated and avoid blisters, the odds are that you'll have no problem finishing the Route each day.

A survey reported that 80% of American men ranked themselves in the Top 25% in terms of athletic ability. While this doesn't surprise me, I'm not one of them. I'd never been terribly athletic. Since the vast majority of exercise-related injuries occurred while exercising, I figured "Why take the chance?" The only reason that I wasn't the last kid picked for a sports team in gym was that I was bigger than the other kids, so people mistakenly assumed that my size also indicated at least a modicum of athletic ability. It didn't. I have no aversion to physical labor, and actually enjoy it. I'm just not a big fan of formal exercise programs or playing organized sports.

Before my first Walk, I hadn't followed any sort of regular exercise program for years, so I was a bit worried about my ability to walk those 60 miles. I knew I was a slow walker; my darling wife describes my pace as "tedious." My philosophy has always been "start slow, then taper off." I just wanted to make sure to train enough so that I didn't embarrass myself. No guy wants to be hauled off in an ambulance in front of thousands of women. That was my motivation to train; you'll need to find your own.

It can be hard to find time to train, especially if you have to juggle parenting and another job, or even two jobs. Many people find that walking for 45 minutes each day during their lunch break is a great way to add to their weekly mileage and reduce their stress level. Another option, depending on where you live, and the time of year, is to walk outside (on a well lit sidewalk or path, with a walking partner and a cell phone in your fanny pack just in case you need to make a call) after the kids are in bed for the night, or before your spouse leaves for work in the morning. If finding someone to watch your kids while you train is a problem, consider setting up a babysitting cooperative with some other walkers. You watch their kids for a few hours and they agree to watch your kids for a few hours, so everyone has a chance to do some long training walks. Or arrange for the non-walking spouses and kids to get together for a play date while you and the other walkers are training together. The spouses and kids will get to know each other and can even plan how they'll cheer you on during the actual Walk.

If your kids complain about all the time you are spending training, get them involved. Teach them how to fill your water bottle. Put them in charge of making sure you have your hat, fanny pack and water bottle before each training walk. Create a checklist they can use (with words or pictures) to make sure you are prepared before each training walk. Let them mark a calendar with your training distances. Have them make signs for your fundraising activities or for the cheering stations on your Walk. Make a paper chain to help count down the days until your Walk.

Think about becoming part of a training group in your area. For many people, walking with other people is less boring than walking alone. Even if you are training for a Walk in another city, you can still train with people in your area. No one minds if you're training with people that will be doing a 3-Day Walk locally while you'll be doing an Avon Walk in another city. It's one cause.

Another issue that comes up is "How do I do long training walks, and deal with water, sports drink, snacks and finding a bathroom? I don't want to lug all that food and water, and there aren't any public bathrooms." This can be hard if you feel that you can't stop by your house (either because you don't want your family to see you, or because you're worried you'll be tempted to quit early).



One technique that has worked well for some people is to use a supportive friend or relative's house as your Start, Rest Stop and End Point. Start there, and leave a stash of drinks and snacks there as well.

Walk a few miles in one direction (e.g. North), then turn around and walk back. Use the friend's house for the bathroom (if you aren't peeing every few miles, you aren't drinking enough!), and replenish your snacks, water and sports drink. Then head out again in another direction (e.g. East), walk a few miles, then return and repeat in another direction (e.g. West or South). If you can't find a helpful friend, you can always drive to a local mall or shopping center and have that be your Start, Rest Stop and End Point. Use your car to store extra supplies, and rely on a store or restaurant for your bathroom facility.

Essentially, you'll be walking in a cloverleaf pattern. As your training distances increase, simply increase the distance of each out/back leg. There are advantages to this approach:

- You are able to replenish food and drinks without having to lug it with you the whole time
- There is less temptation to stop walking than if you were stopping at home
- Your kids and spouse aren't there to distract you from focusing on training
- Walking in different directions is less boring than doing the same loop repeatedly.

Some folks have really tiny bladders (or other medical issues) and need frequent bathroom stops. For many people, a key issue is "How do I do long training walks and make sure I can find a bathroom?" If possible, plan your training route to include fast food restaurants, gas stations or a convenience store. They provide you with a chance to use a bathroom, discard trash, refill your water bottles, and purchase a snack or drink if necessary. If all else fails, ask a friend or acquaintance if you can use their house for a bathroom stop while training. Not only will most people say yes, but many of them will donate as well.

Remember to train in all sorts of weather. The Walk will continue, rain or shine. And that includes heat, cold, and humidity. Over the years, we've had brutal heat, humidity, hail, snow, and hurricanes (Relax. They weren't all at the same time or even in the same city.) Since you may be walking in all sorts of weather, it makes sense to train in all sorts of weather. It's also a great opportunity to train in the gear that you may need to have with you on the Walk. It is far better to learn on a training walk that the hood on your poncho leaks than during Opening Ceremonies with 20+ miles ahead of you that day.



You should also make sure to train on hills. While there are a few Walks held in very flat terrain, most will have their fair share of hills. If you don't know the geography of your Walk city, and will be coming in from out of town, check with some locals. Many people have learned the hard way that the city in which they are walking has a lot more hills than they thought.

You also need to think about the altitude where you'll be walking. If you live in a coastal city (i.e. sea level), and will be walking at a higher elevation (e.g. Denver, the Mile High City) you should either try to get some training in at that altitude (which may not be possible), or at least plan to arrive in the city a few days early to acclimate as much as possible to the altitude and thinner air.

As tough as some people find walking uphill, there are times when walking downhill is even worse, because you are putting a strain on different muscles. So make sure that your training includes going up and down hills. Remember not to lean while walking on a hill. You want to keep your head above your shoulders, your shoulders above your hips, and your hips above your knees. If you find yourself leaning

(either forward or backwards), you are putting unnecessary stress on your stomach and lower back muscles. Don't.

While walking on an incline on a treadmill is better than nothing, you are much better off training outside on actual hills. By the way, that goes for treadmill training in general. While time on the treadmill will help build up your endurance and strengthen some key muscles, there is no substitute for time spent training outdoors. Even if a treadmill is your main alternative, try to get some time outdoors whenever possible. Walking outside will use and strengthen muscles that aren't used on a treadmill, and you'll be using those muscles on your actual Walk. It will also prepare you for walking on a variety of surfaces (cement, asphalt, packed dirt trails) that are harder on your feet and legs than a treadmill.

If you are training alone, you may find it a bit boring at times. I've found that my iPod was a wonderful addition to certain parts of my training routine, particularly while walking on my own in areas that didn't require me to cross streets or pay attention to vehicle traffic (e.g. paved trails or the local high school track). Not only can you listen to your favorite music, podcasts or audio books, but I also downloaded a wide range of university lectures on interesting topics. Go to the iTunes Store, and search for "iTunes U." There is an incredible range of free lectures and classes on all sorts of topics. I'm sure you can find something that interests you and that will help the training miles go by more rapidly.



If you use an iPod while you train, make sure you keep the volume low enough so that you can hear passing bicyclists, car horns, emergency sirens, etc. You can get pretty seriously injured if a bicycle hits you, let alone a car, truck, or bus, because your iPod was so loud you couldn't hear it coming.

You are not permitted to use iPods (or similar devices) or cell phones while walking on the Route during your Walk. During the Walk, the Route will cross many streets, and it's extremely unsafe (and anti-social) to be distracted when you should be paying attention to traffic and the walkers around you. It's particularly dangerous on a Walk, because the drivers are often distracted by the seemingly endless flow of walkers going by. Listening to an iPod or being on your cell phone while you're walking on your event is going to be a further distraction, since there is already a tendency to just follow the person in front of you. If you are not paying attention, it is fairly easy to walk into the path of a turning car, or into an intersection after the light has changed. If you need to take or make a call, or need to read or send an email or text, just step to the side for a few minutes, and then continue walking. This is true whether or not you are using a Bluetooth earpiece. If you absolutely need to hear music while on the Route, you can feel free to sing.

Each Walk will have a place on their website where they list local training walks. This is a great way to meet new people while getting a chance to do some training in a group. There is no long-term commitment necessary, though the volunteers who coordinate and lead the walks will sometimes ask people to sign up in advance, so they have an idea of how many people to expect. These training walks are usually tied to a particular Walk in that city, so that the distances of each training walk increase in line with the official training schedule as that Walk gets closer.

Training walks are a great way to meet people, and help you decide if you'd like to be on a team with them. Teams often do joint fundraising, train together, and walk together on their event (often wearing matching outfits, and no, I am not making that up). There is no requirement to be part of a team; it is entirely a personal choice. However, if you are on a team, please try to be sensitive to other people's feelings. I've heard a number of stories over the years of people feeling that they were "rejected" from

joining a particular team, and for all of us, this brings back bad memories of junior high school or middle school. No one is suggesting you have to let people join your team with whom you don't feel compatible, but if that happens, try to do it in a kind and compassionate way.

Due to your schedule, or where you live, you may find it difficult to find people to go on training walks with you. Some teams with members in different cities have instituted a Cyber Training program. People who are training on their own connect with each other via Facebook, email or the message boards, set up a common training time (each in their respective areas) and then check-in via cell phones two or three times during their training walk (more if it's a long walk) to keep each other motivated. And for added safety, they let each know where they'll be walking and check-in when they each get home from their walk.



One of the most important parts of a successful training process is doing a "back to back" walk. Once you work your way up to be able to do 12+ miles in a single day, your next big goal is to be able to do two long days consecutively to prepare for your actual Walk experience. The official training schedules will have a "back to back" built into the schedule, typically about a month or so before your actual Walk. This gives you a chance to taper down your distance in the weeks immediately before your Walk, so you are both prepared and rested.

The purpose of your training is to get you to the point where you can do two or three long days in a row, which is what you'll need to do on your actual Walk. Some training groups turn the "back to back" into a fun weekend. They walk in one direction for the entire distance (usually 15-18 miles), and end up at a hotel. They have their friends or family members drop off an overnight bag for them at the hotel, go out for a nice dinner together, relax in the Jacuzzi or sauna, and then walk back home the next day. Turns a tough weekend into a bit of a fun getaway.

One last thought on training. Take advantage of the coaches and mentors provided by your Walk, and of local training walk leaders. They can be a great help in getting you through motivational problems, training issues and even fundraising problems. If you happen to live in a city where a Walk is taking place (and it doesn't have to be the specific Walk you are doing), there will be a number of free clinics and Expos offered during the course of the year. Not only are these a great way to meet other walkers, but you'll also be able to learn valuable information about equipment, training, and fundraising. You can learn about these events in the regular emails you should be receiving from your Walk or on the Walk website. If you'll be walking in a different city (not the one where you live) check to see if there is also a Walk taking place locally, and consider participating in any local training or educational events.

### ***Interlude***

It was the afternoon of the second day of a Walk, and my wife had ditched me (again), because she said that walking with me was (still) too tedious. So after a couple of miles on my own, I found myself walking out of a rest stop alongside a lovely woman who appeared to be somewhere between 70 and 75 years of age. We had a nice conversation about the weather, the Walk, and the Route, and then she asked me what I did for a living. After I told her, I thought it polite to ask her the same question, so I asked "What do you do?" To be honest, I was thinking that she probably wasn't



working at that point in her life, but that it would be rude to make any assumptions or to act as if I weren't interested. Her response? "I'm a sister." My first thought was that she misunderstood my question, and was telling me that she was walking for her sister. But it turns out that she didn't misunderstand at all; she was a Catholic nun, a retired schoolteacher and a survivor. She had lots of interesting perspective on things, and we had a very nice conversation.

After a mile or so, she asked if I minded stepping off the Route and stopping for a few minutes. I thought she had a blister or needed a break, but I was only partly right. She pulled a pack of cigarettes out of her fanny pack, and lit up with a big smile on her face. I didn't think it was my role to lecture a survivor (or a nun) on the perils of smoking and lung cancer. When she finished her cigarette, she thought about lighting another one, but decided against it and we began walking again.

After a lull in the conversation, she casually said "God, I could use a shot and a beer." Now let me be clear about this. She was not uttering her Lord's name in vain. She was making a personal request, in a very friendly conversational tone, much like I might say "Joe, I'd like to borrow your lawn mower." And for the next mile or so, she glanced around every intersection for a local bar, because as she reminded me, "God provides." I got the sense that she was on very good terms with God, but I didn't want to ask. And I wasn't sure what I'd do if we did find a bar. How would I explain to my wife that I had stopped off for a shot and a beer with a chain-smoking nun (active-duty or retired) in the middle of the Walk? However, God was either preoccupied with more important matters, or just chose not to provide.

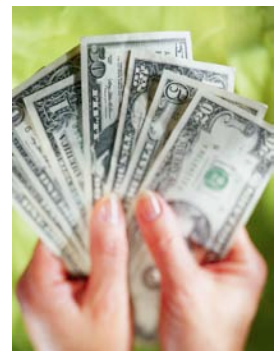
Eventually, despite the cigarette breaks, the sister and I got to the next rest stop. The crew had elaborately decorated the stop with a wedding theme. However, the crew was made up of a group of gay men and lesbian women, and they had put together a cross-dressed wedding theme. The women wore black t-shirts with a tuxedo printed on the front, and the men were dressed in bridesmaid gowns, with the exception of one big guy who was in a very large white wedding dress! I was thinking "this might get ugly", but I underestimated my friend the nun. She thought this was hysterical, and insisted that I take a picture with her and the "bride", who was almost a foot taller than she was.

We got separated in the crowds at the wedding, and I never saw her again. But as I've told people this story over the years, I've learned that "my" Sister was well known to many on the Walks, and had touched many peoples' lives with her kindness, compassion, and commitment to service. So it just goes to show, you never can tell who you'll meet on your Walk. Set yourself a goal of meeting 3 walkers, and 3 crew each day. You'll be amazed at the variety of people on these events, and you'll hear some amazing personal stories, if you listen. Please take the time to listen. You'll be glad you did.

## ***Raising Money***

The web site for your Walk contains lots of good advice on fundraising. I won't duplicate it here. If you are feeling intimidated by how much money you have to raise to participate in your Walk, just remember it can be quicker and often easier to get 25 pledges of \$100 each (\$2,500) than it is to get 250 pledges of \$10 each (\$2,500).

Many walkers are afraid to ask for money. They make it more difficult for themselves by asking for small amounts ("even \$10 will help"). Bake sales or selling lollipops are an extreme example of this approach. It takes lots of time and effort to meet your minimum fundraising commitment this way. While there



is nothing wrong with it, there are more productive ways to spend your fundraising time and reduce your stress. How much time did it take to raise money on a given day? Then calculate how much money you raised per hour, on average. If it takes an hour to raise \$10 or \$20, it will take you a long time to hit your minimum fundraising goal.

If you do want to sell things to help with your fundraising, try to find products that will sell for at least \$10 or \$20 each, rather than 50 cents or a dollar. There are a number of great websites (many can be found on the message boards) that sell products that you can use for your fundraising projects and to outfit your team members. These sites have a wide variety of clothing, pins, temporary tattoos, and other materials. For example, [www.pinkwings.com](http://www.pinkwings.com) is run by Courtney, a breast cancer survivor and active member of the Walk community, and they donate a percentage of each sale to breast cancer charities. Pink Wings will even do custom designs for you and your team.

Bear in mind that there are many short-distance charity walks that have fairly minimal fundraising requirements, such as \$50 to participate. The person from whom you are soliciting a donation may not be aware that there is a difference between raising \$50 to do a 5K Walk one morning and the thousands of dollars you are required to raise for your Walk, where you'll be walking 39 or 60 miles over a weekend. Make sure your potential donors understand that you are making an enormous commitment of your time (for fundraising and training, as well as the actual Walk) and that you have to raise a large amount of money to participate. People tend to donate more when they understand both your level of commitment and what is required of you.

Let's talk a bit about the fundraising requirement. Every year, someone on one of the message boards raises the issue of the fundraising minimum. Essentially "Why can't I walk, even though I haven't raised my fundraising minimum? It's not fair!" This is a difficult conversation, but let me try to explain.



It costs a lot of money to support the walkers on each event. Costs include buying food, hiring a catering company to prepare meals, renting shower trucks, renting the trucks used to move your gear, purchasing and cleaning sleeping tents, renting the enormous dining hall tent, purchasing medical supplies, buying water and sports drinks, renting the vehicles to move the crew to their stops on the Route, renting the buses to move walkers when needed, paying to put up the staging for Opening and Closing Ceremonies, paying the salaries of the coaches and other staff who work year-round, paying for advertising to drive participation, etc. etc. etc. It costs a great deal of money to put on this type of event, but the money spent is an investment, with the expectation that the event will raise donations that

will far outweigh the production costs. If there were no minimum fundraising commitment, or a lower minimum, the event would actually lose money. And the goal here is to raise money, not to lose money.

"Just let the people participate who tried to hit their minimum but couldn't quite make it." So where do we draw the line? Missed by \$100? Missed by \$500? Missed by \$1,000? It's a slippery slope, and once you make the goal subjective (versus objective) you create resentment on the part of walkers who used their own money to hit their minimum, or walkers who worked very hard to fundraise their minimum, or people who chose not to try because they didn't feel that they could hit the minimum.

Now here is a bit of good news. Each Walk is a community, and communities look out for each other. So if you find yourself struggling with your fundraising, ask for support from your Walk community.

Someone may invite you to join them in a fundraising event. Someone may give you a great suggestion for a way to raise funds in your area. Someone may even have a few extra donation checks they'd be willing to share with you. All anyone asks is that you make an effort to help yourself. If you can't raise the minimum amount by the date of your Walk, you have the option of self-pledging the balance on your credit card. You then have approximately one month (make sure to check the exact amount of time with your Walk staff before you do this) to raise the additional funds to hit your minimum, or your credit card will be charged the balance. Some people find that they can raise a lot of funds after their Walk, when they can share pictures and stories of their Walk with potential donors. Of course, self-pledging does entail some risk. If you walk and don't raise the rest of the funds to hit your minimum, then you are on the hook to pay the balance yourself. So if you end up going down this path, make sure you are comfortable either raising the balance, or paying it yourself.

In the past, people went to the check-in event the day before their Walk and tried to find other walkers who had extra donations they were willing to share. However, this strategy doesn't work quite as well anymore, since most walkers do their check-in online, and don't have to attend a check-in event. As an alternative, I've seen people during the Walk carrying or wearing a sign that says "I still need to raise \$250" or whatever amount they need. Usually, they'll find another walker willing to help by sharing their extra donations, or even get donations from people at the cheering stations along the Route. And they carry a marker to cross off the old amount and write in a new one, as they get additional donations. People are more generous if they see that other people have already donated.

If you decide to try either of these strategies, keep in mind that people are most open to helping people who have made a significant effort on their own. If your fundraising minimum is \$2,300 and you walk around with a sign saying you still need \$2,000 to hit your minimum, don't expect quite as much support as if you raised \$2,000 of it through your own hard work and just need the \$300 balance.



How much should you ask for from a prospective donor? In my experience, if you ask for \$10, you may get \$10. If you ask for \$100, you may get \$100. Or you may get \$50, or \$25, or \$10, or nothing at all. But it can't hurt to ask. People may be more generous than you expect, so when you ask, don't ask for too little. Let them decide what they can afford, instead of giving them a "low ball" suggestion.

Remember to consider your entire personal network and holiday card list when it comes to fundraising. Don't make assumptions about who will or won't be willing or able to donate. Your job is to add people to the list of prospective donors, not to take people off the list. While friends, close family, and neighbors are a great place to start, also remember your co-workers, your extended family, donations from your company (along with any matching donations it might do), donations from local businesses, and donations from teachers, professors, accountants, physicians, or attorneys. If you ever write them a check or hand them a credit card during the course of the year, feel free to ask them for a donation. You may be surprised at how generous they'll be, particularly if they or a loved one have battled breast cancer. I got a very generous donation from my accountant because his wife is a survivor. I had no idea about that when I asked him for a donation. And they thanked me for giving them to the opportunity to donate. So ask!

Also remember tax time at the end of the year. In the last weeks of December, many people make their charitable donations for the year, in order to make them deductible for that tax year. If possible, try to get your first round of fundraising letters (or emails) out by then, to take advantage of that behavior.

Most people aren't quite that proactive about starting their fundraising that early, but if you are the chronically organized type (you know who you are), go for it.

There are some very creative fundraising ideas that people have come up with. One of my favorites is a fundraising yard sale. Solicit your relatives, friends and neighbors for items that you can sell, with the stipulation that all the proceeds will go to your fundraising efforts for the Walk. You help them clean out their basement, attic and garage, focusing on items that can sell at a good price (e.g. furniture, small appliances, bicycles, sporting goods, etc.). If you have friends who are skilled in the kitchen, ask them if they'd like to contribute some individually portioned baked goods or snacks that you can then sell to hungry yard sale shoppers. Remember to put out a donation jar and fundraising sign as well, as many people will donate even if they don't purchase anything. You handle the logistics of the yard sale, and the money goes to a good cause.



If you look at the message boards, you'll see lots of creative fundraising ideas, including: car wash; lawn mowing; bake sale; bowl-a-thon; horse show; garden tour; candy sale; video game competition; swim-a-thon (sponsors pay for each lap); "Wear Jeans to Work" (people make a donation for the privilege of wearing jeans instead of business attire on a particular day); house cleaning; or "Hat Day" (students who donate are allowed to wear a hat in school that day). Another option for fundraisers is to leverage a particular skill or hobby you already have. If you are a great cook, offer to sell seats for a gourmet dinner. If you are a whiz at crafts, make something of value (e.g. handmade cards, scarves, etc.) on those cold winter nights when you can't train, and sell them at a craft fair on the weekend. Be creative, in all senses of the word!

Teams will often be able to raise more money per person than you can raise on your own. While team fundraising may not be an option for you (depending on your location and your schedule), it is something worth considering. A group of people can often put on a larger fundraising event than can a single person, and as a result, the funds raised per person can be quite significant from a single event. Bear in the mind that you can't just join a team and expect a "piece of the action." You will need to actively participate in the fundraising event, both in terms of driving attendance, and in terms of helping run the actual fundraiser. I've seen teams raise amazing amounts of money from activities that included Happy Hours, garage sales, bowl-a-thons, and fundraising fairs with activities for kids.



At some point in your fundraising efforts, you might get frustrated. You'll worry that you'll never be able to hit your minimum. You may get to feeling sorry for yourself, and decide to have your own private pity party. There are two big problems with a private pity party. The first is that no one else will want to come. The second is that no one will be serving cake or ice cream, so it's not really much of a party.

If you hit the point of frustration, don't just give up. Reach out to the professional staff on your Event for help and advice. Reach out to other walkers on the message boards for advice. Look into joining a local team to get involved in their group fundraising projects. Send out another wave of letters or emails, because sometimes people who want to donate have forgotten and need a reminder. Put something on your Facebook page asking for donations.

While it is normal to hit some speed bumps during fundraising, that's no reason to give up. Even in a bad economy, even in a small struggling town, even in the worst of circumstances, you can do it. It just takes some hard work, and a willingness to pick yourself up when you stumble and keep going. Think of it this way: The thousands of dollars in donations you raise could fund the research that finally finds the cure we've all been working towards.

## ***Handling Objections***

Some people just can't donate, for financial reasons. Consider giving them another way to contribute to your success that doesn't require them to spend money. Ask them to keep you company on a training walk, or watch your kids for you while you train. They can come out and cheer for you during your Walk, send you encouraging emails as you train, and provide extra emotional support if fundraising gets tough, or if you've just gotten a really bad set of blisters from training too hard.



Others just won't contribute. Maybe they've already maxed out their charitable donations for the year to other worthy causes; let's assume the best about people. Or maybe they just don't believe in charity. Whatever their reason, don't spend too much time with them. Wish them well, and move on. There are lots of opportunities to speak with people who will want to give.

In particular, don't invest your time, or physical and emotional energy on those who won't contribute and who want to drag your spirits down by discouraging you (e.g. "Why don't you just write a check, and not waste all your time with training and walking?" or "You can't bring back my loved one who died from cancer" or even worse "All those walks are scams.") You won't be able to convince these people to donate, and all you will do is get yourself into an endless debate or argument. Just move on.

I would make one exception. Every so often, you may run into someone who is opposed to abortion and who says "I won't donate because breast cancer donations go to pay for abortions." Someone probably told them that the beneficiary gives money to Planned Parenthood, or a similar agency, and so their donation would be supporting abortion. This misunderstanding comes up every year, particularly in certain parts of the country, and it occurs because well-meaning people share incorrect information within their community. There have been a number of circumstances when faith-based organizations have sent out information to their members telling them not to donate to breast cancer charities because funds are used for purposes that are found objectionable by that organization and its members. Fortunately, there have also been many cases where a walker has been able to educate the head of a particular local organization (often a religious or political group), convince them that their concerns are unwarranted in this particular case, and have the organization send out a correction or a clarification.

Let me explain the confusion, in case it might help with educating them to the reality of the situation (and of course, assuming that they are open to listening). Breast Cancer charities grant hundreds of millions of dollars to fund research, education, screening and treatment programs all over the world. These dollars are specifically allocated to breast cancer-related programs, and saving lives. When a request for a grant does not in some way relate directly to their specific mission of supporting breast cancer research, education or treatment, that grant is denied.

Grant money from Breast Cancer charities is not used to fund abortions, hand out condoms, provide education about sexually transmitted diseases, or for any other purpose. The money that is granted is audited to make sure it is used specifically and exclusively to fund breast cancer related programming.

Similarly, these same charities provide grant dollars to hospitals for breast cancer education, screening, or treatment. While those facilities may also perform heart transplants and appendectomies, deliver babies, or do nose jobs and tummy tucks, the money from Breast Cancer charities is specifically used only for programs related directly to breast cancer.

Some people will argue that the donations from Breast Cancer charities somehow make available other funds that can then be spent on abortion. This may seem logical, but is just not true. These agencies provide breast cancer related services because they get funding from Breast Cancer charities. If they didn't get those funds, they wouldn't provide breast cancer services. And without those screening or diagnostic programs, especially for the poor people in our communities, more people would die from breast cancer.

A friend shared the following story:

*I had asked my tent neighbors, two sisters in their 30's, why they decided to do the Walk. One spoke up immediately, explaining that several years ago she had no insurance and was going to Planned Parenthood for her women's health needs. At a point in time, she had a suspicious lump in her breast, but couldn't afford a mammogram and the other necessary testing. A grant from the breast cancer charity that sponsored this Walk paid for her testing and as it turned out, she was fine. She vowed that one day when she "was in a different place financially," she would do something to give back. So she registered to walk and asked her sister to join her.*

We live in a divided society, where many people disagree passionately about important issues such as abortion. But when it comes to saving the women and men in our lives from breast cancer, let's see past the things that divide us and instead focus on the values that we share and the lives we can save.

## ***Other Sources of Information***



Each Walk has an official handbook available on their website. I highly recommend you make a point of downloading and reading this handbook from cover to cover, several times over the months leading up to your walk. It will provide a lot of very useful information, and also help you feel less uncertain about what to expect.

In addition to the official handbook, I also recommend "The Participant's Guide to the 3-Day" and "The Crew Supplement", written by Pete Miller, an experienced walker and member of the 3-Day crew. Though there is some overlap between the content in Pete's Guides and the Underground Guide (not surprising, since they cover the same topics), the Guides are different enough in their approach and their details that it is worthwhile reading both. And while Pete's Guides are written for the 3-Day, they contain useful information for all Walks. You can find Pete's Guides at [www.walkpetewalk.com](http://www.walkpetewalk.com)

I'm always surprised to hear that people aren't aware of the message boards. Every Walk has a message board on their web site. Anyone who is registered for that Walk can use the message board, free of charge. It is a great place to ask questions, share ideas, gather tips and get emotional and moral support. In fact, some of the topics in this document first appeared on various message boards over the years.

Learn how to access the message board for your Walk. You'll find it a great source of information, as well as a source of motivation and emotional support as you train and fundraise. If you don't feel comfortable writing something, then just read what is there. The message board is a virtual community where you can share your experiences or fears about the Walk, and your experiences as a survivor or as the relative or friend of someone who is fighting breast cancer.

Remember that the message board is made up of many different people with many different opinions. Take advice with a grain of salt, since what is right for one person may not be right for someone else. The message boards are not moderated, although the Walk Staff do read (and sometimes post to) the message boards. The organizations that provide these message boards rely on participants to police themselves regarding manners and opinions. It's not uncommon to hear conflicting opinions.

On occasion, people can get a bit emotional about a topic. On rare occasions, people momentarily forget their manners, and write things that can be hurtful or a bit offensive, or that can be perceived that way. For example, typing in all capital letters means you're SHOUTING in message board and e-mail etiquette. Shouting is considered rude, so use either lower case or sentence case in your messages. Think about what you're writing before you post your message, to make sure you aren't offending anyone else, intentionally or inadvertently. If someone writes something that you find offensive, please give them the benefit of the doubt. Sometimes we inadvertently write things that come off worse than we intended. Rather than "flaming" them with a harsh reply, ask them to clarify what they wrote, to see if they meant it quite that way. You can always flame them later, but it's harder to "unflame."

Also remember that, although you need to be a registered participant (walker or crew) to log in and make postings, on some Walks anyone can read the messages posted on the message board. To protect your privacy, avoid posting your phone number, email or home address on the message boards.

## ***Packing***

I wanted to share some tips that should make packing your gear easier for you. There is a lot here, but hopefully it will alleviate some of your stress about getting ready for the Walk. Many people worry more about packing than they do about training, fundraising or actually walking.

"Gear" is the official term for "the amazing amounts of crap that some walkers bring with them for no particularly good reason." The packing list on the web site for your Walk is a complete list of what you might need. Check the weather a couple of days before the event to see if you'll really need a sweatshirt, rain gear, parka, etc. Just because something is on the list does not mean that you have to bring it for that particular Walk. What you need for a cool rainy weekend in New England might be very different than what you need for a hot sunny weekend in Arizona. Since I have sprinkled suggestions throughout the Underground Guide on what else to bring (beyond the basics), I'll make it easy for you to keep track of them by writing **bring** (or **don't bring**) each time I mention something you should (or should not) bring with you.



By the way, I'm consciously not including a detailed packing list in the Underground Guide. Not only do the official Walk websites include a helpful packing list, but what you need to bring will differ based on whether you are walking for two days (the Avon Walk) or for three days (the Breast Cancer 3-Day). Here are a couple of suggestions specifically for crew to **bring**, in addition to what you'll find on the official packing lists:

- A small pocket knife or box cutter to use during the Walk, mostly for cutting cardboard boxes (don't put it in your carry-on if you are flying)
- Work or gardening gloves that fit (the work gloves you might get on the Walk are usually "one size fits no one")
- A couple of bandanas (you will be sweating a lot!)
- Some extra t-shirts (same reason as the bandanas!)
- Rain gear (because you'll be working rain or shine)

As a rule of thumb, for both walkers and crew, your clothing for the Walk (with the exception of your jacket, sneakers, fanny pack, sleeping bag and air mattress/pad) should fit into a paper grocery bag. This is just to measure. I'm not suggesting you pack in a grocery bag! If you've got more than that, you may be bringing too much. Not only do you want to make sure you don't exceed the weight limit on your gear, but remember that you'll have to carry your gear to your tent at the end of the day.

Let me help you put the weight of your gear into perspective. For most Walks, the limit is 35 pounds per person. While there are no scales to weigh your bag when you drop them off, and no financial penalties for excess weight (unlike our friends in the airline business), you do want to be compassionate about the crew who will be hauling your gear. Each gear truck (used to move your bag from Opening Ceremonies to the Camp, and then back to Closing Ceremonies after the Walk) holds up to 300 gear bags, and is loaded, and unloaded, by two or three people on the crew. If each person's bag weighs 35 pounds (the suggested maximum), and there are 300 bags, that means those people will be moving more than 10,000 pounds of gear. They will be loading it onto the truck, stacking it, driving it to the destination, and then unloading it. That is more than 5 tons of gear moved by two or three people. Five tons! So as you pack, think about those volunteer crew who will be moving your gear for you. Do you really need all that?

#### Toiletries: size does matter



Your toiletries should all fit easily into a paper lunch bag (again, just to measure). **Don't bring** full size bottles of shampoo, bath size bars of soap, etc. **Bring** trial sizes or the little bottles you get at hotels, or use tiny zip top bags to hold a small supply of liquids such as shampoo or conditioner. **Don't bring** a blow dryer for your hair, since there is nowhere to plug it in. No one will care how your hair looks after sleeping with it wet. Now you know why most people wear hats when they walk.

If you need to **bring** medication, you may want to pack your morning and your evening meds in little zip top baggies, appropriately labeled for day and time (e.g. Day 1 Evening, Day 2 Morning). Pack those bags with your clothing for that day and time of day. Be careful that the pills don't get crushed, so think about cushioning the baggie with a shirt or putting it inside a rolled up pair of socks. This may help remind you to take your medication as appropriate, or at least remind you that you forgot!

Make sure you have a list with you of all the prescription medications you take and the dosages, in case you have a medical problem and the medical crew needs to know what medications you are on. If you

are having a blister treated, your medication may not be terribly relevant. However, if you are having chest pains, or dizziness, or nausea, the medical crew will need to know about all medications you are taking and any medical conditions (e.g. pregnancy, kidney problems, or a history of heart or lung problems). Telling a doctor that “I take a couple of small white pills twice a day, and a big yellow pill at night” is not terribly helpful, so have your list of medications with you on the Route, and available if you need to visit the medical tent in Camp.

While we’re talking about medications, you may want to keep over-the-counter medications in your fanny pack, either in separately labeled zip top baggies, small pill bottles, or in the individual-serving packets you’ll find in first aid kits. While the medical tents will have common over-the-counter medications such as ibuprofen (e.g. Advil) or acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol), they may not have your favorite brand of antacid, or allergy pill. And if it is “that time of the month”, make sure to **bring** what you need, and don’t count on having the appropriate supplies you’ll need available at the medical tents.

Since the last edition of the Underground Guide, I’ve realized that the previous paragraph was a little too subtle. So let me be less subtle. If you absolutely require (and are going to insist upon) having the “ultra thin thong pads with wings” (or whatever type you prefer), then you should bring your own supply, or buy some when you pass a drug store or supermarket. Under no circumstances should you walk up to a male crew person who is not part of the Medical Crew, and ask “Do you know if they have the ultra thin thong pads with wings over at Medical?” On behalf of all men, let me make it very clear. We don’t know. We don’t want to know. We don’t understand why they need wings, or why aerodynamics is relevant in this case. And we don’t want to understand. So please **bring** your own. Or was that still too subtle?



If your Walk provides towel service, you should take advantage of it. The 3-Day Walk provides towel service, while the Avon Walk does not. You don’t need it on the Avon Walk, since you’ll shower after the first day, and then bring home your wet towel the next day. But on the 3-Day, you’ll be showering at least twice (after Day 1 and after Day 2), there won’t be any way to effectively dry out your towel in between, and you won’t want to bring 2 full sets of towels. If they offer towel service, it is worth the price (they charged \$12 last time I checked), which gets you clean dry towels both morning and evening. Though remember that the towel service does not include washcloths, so you might want to **bring** your own washcloth if you like to use one.

If you do **bring** a towel, remember one important thing. It doesn’t have to be an enormous beach towel or bath sheet. Trust me, no matter what you might think when you look in the mirror, your body is not that big. And it’s not like you’ll be walking around Camp wrapped in it; you just need it to dry off before getting dressed in the shower truck.

You may want to **bring** a separate hair towel (no blow dryers!), depending on how much hair you have. If you have thick or long hair, you may find that you’ll go to bed with wet hair, and wake up with cold and wet hair. One suggestion that some walkers have made is to use a couple of paper towels (provided at the sink area) to blot the moisture out of your hair. They say that it sucks up all the extra water, and your hair will actually dry. I can’t vouch for this, but it does seem to make sense.

I've also been told:

*Target has a microfiber hair-and-body towel for sale in its bath section; for about \$10, you get a super-absorbent towel that packs really small and you can dry your body and your hair with it very well. If you have shoulder-length hair or longer, you can also consider the "Turbie Twist" which is a microfiber hair-wrap, sold in 2-packs at houseware stores like Bed, Bath & Beyond or Linens 'n Things; it's about \$20 for a 2-pack, which is well worth it because they last a long time. A swimmer's towel, like the "Sammy" brand, is another good option ... plus the towel comes in a plastic cylinder for storage (or you can use a plastic zip-top baggie).*

Another option for you rugged outdoorsy types is to purchase an ultra light (chamois) towel from an outdoor store. The fabric absorbs water like a sponge and wrings out almost completely dry. They are compact, and many have a hang loop for drying convenience and a pouch that can be used for storage.

Some walkers have told me that they use the pump for their air mattress to dry their hair. If this is important to you, you might want to give it a try. However, be careful not to get your hair into the intake valve of the air pump while you are doing this. If you have to walk across Camp to the Medical tent, in order to have them cut the hair that is now attaching your head to the air pump, you might wish you had just let your hair dry naturally.

**Don't bring** anything valuable or of tremendous sentimental value. You probably don't have to worry about theft, but things do get lost, or broken, or covered in mud. On one Walk, a woman accidentally left her diamond engagement ring in her tent, and then rolled up the tent, and dropped it off with a couple of hundred other tents. About an hour later, she realized that her ring was somewhere in a truckload of tents. Fortunately for her, some very kind people on the crew volunteered to unload hundreds of tents, and unroll them, one at a time, to try to find her ring. They got lucky and "only" had to open, search and repack about a hundred tents before they found her ring. She was extremely grateful, and extremely fortunate that they found it. Leave your valuables at home.



You know those return address labels that you get from charitable organizations, in hope that you'll send them a donation? Well, now is a good time to use them. Put one on your camera, even if it is a cheap disposable camera. Put one on your cell phone. Put one inside your hat. That way, when you accidentally leave it somewhere, someone may be able to get it back to you. Each year, the Crew finds dozens of phones, cameras and hats in the Rest Stops and in Camp. If you have your name and address on it, there is a chance you'll recover it. If you don't, you may never see it again. If you do lose something, check Information Services that night or call your local Walk office and leave them a message after the Walk is over. Don't wait too long, or they may dispose of lost items.

Usually, when someone finds a phone, hat, camera or water bottle, it is because it was left on the table outside the porta-potties, or on the grass at a stop or at lunch. Double check your things before you leave each stop. By the way, if the crew finds a cell phone, they may try to call the last number dialed, to let someone know that the phone was found, and that it will be waiting at Information Services at the Camp that night. So if you lose your phone, borrow a phone to call the last person you had dialed from your own phone, to see if they got a call letting them know it was found. Either way, it's a good idea to check at Camp to see if it was turned in.

If they find your digital camera, the crew will not try to look through the photos to try to see who was in the pictures. Please don't take this personally, but on a 3-inch digital screen, all walkers look pretty much alike. So keep track of your possessions, or least put your name on them.

Separate your clothing into what you need by day or night (e.g. Day 1 morning, Day 1 night, Day 2 morning, etc.). You don't need much for the evenings, as most people eat, shower, put on their pajamas or other sleeping stuff, go back to the dining tent for the evening entertainment, then go to sleep. Put each set of clothing into a 2-gallon (or larger) zip top bag (if you can't find them at your local supermarket, try Target® or Wal-Mart®), and squeeze out all the air (have someone sit on it while you zip it shut.) When it is sealed, the bag should look vacuum packed, and is now air-tight and waterproof. Write the contents (e.g. Day 1 AM) on the bag with a wide tipped permanent marker. This has three benefits. It makes the bags easier to pack (since they take up less space), it makes it much easier to find your clothing as you rummage through your gear (in the dark), and it keeps things dry in case your bag gets wet. Zip top bags come in all sizes (from tiny to gigantic) and are truly a blessing when packing for the Walks.

You may be wondering "How can my gear get wet?" Your bag will be packed onto a large box truck, along with hundreds of other bags. When the truck gets to Camp, all the bags on the truck will have to be unloaded. Why not leave them on the truck until a walker needs their bag? Imagine the delay, the chaos and the amount of grueling work if the gear crew unloaded the truck to find one bag, then reloaded hundreds of bags again, repeating for each walker, just to keep bags out of the rain?



The bags will be placed on the ground, and if it looks like rain, they'll throw a clear tarp over them. If it is raining when the first walkers come in, they will grab their bags, and (hopefully) try to replace the tarp. In the meantime, any rainwater that has collected on top of the tarp will spill onto the bags below. This process will be repeated over and over again for hours. If it rains, there's a good chance your gear bag will get drenched. That is why you make sure that everything inside your bag is packed in waterproof plastic bags.

If you plan to **bring** a pillow, consider bringing a small pillow. If you want to bring a full size pillow, try to roll it up into your sleeping bag, in order to compress it.

Put your sleeping bag (rolled up or in a stuff sack) in a large plastic trash bag or ultra-large zip top bag, sit on it (to squeeze out the air), and then twist tie it shut. The bag should look puckered. Leave it for an hour, and then check to see if air leaked back in. If so, then try again. If not, the bag is now airtight and waterproof.

If you've done all this, your things will take up much less space (since you aren't packing extra air that will bulk things up), you can use a smaller (and lighter) duffle bag, you'll have more room in your tent, and your things will stay dry if (when?) your bag gets rained on.

Your gear should weigh no more than 35 pounds, which is a lot of gear. The simplest way to measure it is to weigh yourself on your bathroom scale, and then weigh yourself holding your fully packed duffle bag. The difference is the weight of your duffle and gear. If you can't manage to lift and hold the bag while you weigh it, then you have too much stuff! If you can't lift it in your bathroom, exactly how do you think you are going to get it from the gear truck to your tent? There are no bellboys on the Walks.

Avoid packing anything heavy or bulky that you plan to “throw away” while at the Walk. While it may make your life easier not to carry it back home, someone on the pack-up crew will have to haul your trash to a dumpster for you! So please be considerate. Some Walks are experimenting with donation stations, where you can leave things behind that will be donated to a needy cause (e.g. sleeping bag, t-shirts, towels, whatever). However, it is always best to follow the unofficial backpackers motto of “Take nothing but photographs and memories; leave nothing but footprints.”

Put something unique on your duffle bag to make it easy to identify. There will be hundreds of seemingly identical black wheeled duffle bags (available at Target or Wal-Mart for about \$30) on each gear truck. Attach something to your bag that will make it easy for you to identify. No, a pink ribbon is not a unique idea. This is especially important if someone else has to find your bag for you, either at Closing or in the unfortunate situation where you end up in Medical and have to return home early.



**Bring** a flashlight that can be hands-free, either one with a lanyard you can put around your neck, or one with a headband. When you go to the porta-potty at night (and you will go to the porta-potty at night), you'll need a light (there is no light inside), and you will find it easier if you don't have to dedicate one hand to holding a flashlight, or worrying about it (or you) falling in. You'll also have a hand free to prevent the porta-potty door from slamming shut and waking everyone within earshot, which will

be greatly appreciated by anyone sleeping within 100 yards of the porta-potty.

**Bring** two extra large plastic trash bags and twist ties. If your tent is cramped, put your duffle bag into a garbage bag, tie it shut, then in a second bag, tie that one shut, and leave it outside (the trash bags will keep your duffle bag dry from rain and from morning dew.)

You need to **bring** something with you during the Walk to hold your water bottle, and any other sundry things you'll be carrying along with you as you walk each day (e.g. tissues, cell phone, camera, extra socks, etc.). Some people use a waist pack, or fanny pack (no, a fanny pack will not make your butt look big.) Other people prefer a backpack. There is no right answer. You may wish to borrow and try different options while training, until you decide what works best for you. Once you make your decision, make sure to train with the equipment you are going to use, and train carrying the weight you'll be carrying on your Walk (e.g. full water bottles, extra socks, sunscreen, etc.)

## ***Interlude***

My wife and I did a Walk together. We tried training together. I got us lost. I refused to ask for directions. She was not happy with me.



I sent out fundraising emails to a few dozen business associates, with a link to my web page. I told them my goal was \$10,000 and asked for a minimum of \$100. She sent out a dozens of printed letters, with hand addressed envelopes, and stamps. She told them even \$10 would help. I hit my minimum in 48 hours, and my goal in about a week. She worked very diligently for months to raise funds. She was not happy with me.

After all that training, and all that fundraising, it was finally time for my first walk. Laurie and I walked together on Day 1. The fact that we were still married on Day 2 is a testament to the strength of our relationship.

The day started at the Baltimore Convention Center, with roughly five thousand walkers (mostly women, nearly all of whom had just been using the Men's Room with me). From the stage, someone led us in a group stretching exercise. I was supposed to stand on one leg, grab the ankle of my other leg, and pull it up behind me. Bad idea. Really bad idea. I have enough problems standing on two legs (an aerobics instructor once asked me not to return to her class after I tripped and fell into a potted palm). Balancing on one leg was just a recipe for disaster. Fortunately, the crowds of people around me kept me from falling as I hopped around trying to either get my balance or at least avoid banging my head on the floor. And of course, trying to look both macho and suave at the same time (it's a guy thing.)

After an emotional and inspiring Opening Ceremony, the walk began. We streamed out of the Convention Center, and onto a local street that had been closed by the Baltimore Police. We walked down the street about two blocks, and got to Camden Yards, the stadium for the Baltimore Orioles. At this point, Laurie needed to use the bathroom. After two blocks! No, I am not making this up. And there was a long line of women waiting to use the bathroom. So I waited. Patiently. By the time she was done, we were at the tail end of five thousand walkers. At the time, I didn't realize what this meant.

For about a half-mile, the streets were closed and we walked in a boisterous column about 20 people wide. Then we got to a point where the streets were no longer closed, and five thousand people had to funnel onto a sidewalk. Let's just say that took a while. We had now been "walking" for about an hour, and I had gone about a thousand yards. A quick mental calculation told me that at that rate, it would take us roughly 40 hours to finish the first day's Route (about 22 miles, give or take).



Eventually, we got to the first official rest stop. Imagine a large grassy field in an urban park, brightly decorated with signs and banners, and staffed by volunteer crew in costumes. Then add a couple of tent shelters, one with tables covered with snack food, another with tables covered with containers of water and Gatorade. Add a couple of dozen porta-potties lined up in one straight row along one side. Finally, add long lines of walkers, mostly women, mostly in running shorts and pink tops, lined up for the porta-potties. Now you have the idea.

We stopped to refill our water bottles, grab a quick snack, and use the porta potties. This was Laurie's second bathroom stop so far, and a portent of the day to come. She stopped at every bathroom she could find. Not just every porta-potty, but pretty much every bathroom in Baltimore County. Every fire station. Every donut shop and 7-11. Every single bathroom, and every porta-potty. And she wasn't alone. It turns out that if you take thousands of women and have them drink thousands of gallons of liquid, and make them walk while drinking, there are going to be a lot of bathroom breaks. I was lucky that Laurie was able to make it to the next bathroom. At one point, I was on the sidewalk, looked over and saw a woman about 20 feet away who was squatting behind a tree! If you ever put yourself in this position, please beware of poison ivy. I'm just saying.

It took us almost 12 hours to finish the Route on Day 1 (positively brisk compared to my earlier estimate). And by the time we got into camp and set up our tent, I was starving. We walked over to the

dining tent, and got in line for dinner. I must have looked like something out of the movie “Oliver.” The crew person who was serving put some spaghetti on my plate, and in the most pathetic voice I could muster, I asked “Can I have some more please?” Fortunately, she took pity on me, and put an enormous mound of food on my plate. I think I swallowed it all without chewing, because it was gone in about 90 seconds. And yes, I went back for seconds.

My wife and I shared a tent that night. She got up every hour, to use the porta-potty. Every single hour. Open the zipper. ZZZIIIPPPP!!!! Close the zipper. ZZZIIIPPPP!!!! Off to the porta-potty, as I fell back asleep. Then 5 minutes later, she is back. Open the zipper. ZZZIIIPPPP!!!! Close the zipper. ZZZIIIPPPP!!!! Guess who woke up again? I was not happy with her. It took five more years until we agreed to do another Walk together, but that is another story.

## ***Sleeping***

Even in the heat of the summer, it can cool down quite a bit at night, particularly if there is rain or wind. Even 60 degrees at night can feel cold when you are sleeping in a tent. On some Walks it has dropped into the 30’s overnight in May or October. Being warm and comfortable at night is critical to getting a good night’s sleep. If the weather forecast predicts temperatures below 60 degrees at night, play it safe and bring some warm clothing for sleeping.

There are many kinds of sleeping bags. They range in quality, price, size and comfort. If you plan on doing more than just one Walk, it makes sense to invest the \$60 or \$70 in a decent sleeping bag. Otherwise, if you’re not sure yet, you’re better off borrowing a good sleeping bag, or renting one from a camping store for the weekend. You can buy an inexpensive sleeping bag, but they are bulky, and not very warm. Don’t even think about bringing the cute Little Mermaid sleeping bag that your daughter got for her 4th birthday. It will take up lots of room in your gear, won’t keep you warm, and either your toes will get jammed in the bottom zipper because the bag is not long enough, or your shoulders will be cold. Either way, not good. You’ll be up all night, and won’t feel particularly energized to walk the next day.

If you only have a lightweight (cotton or polyester filled) sleeping bag, **bring** a flannel or knit cotton flat sheet, or a small down comforter, as an extra layer to supplement the sleeping bag for cold nights. A twin-size sheet is usually a perfect fit for a sleeping bag. On warmer nights, you can sleep on top of your sleeping bag and use the sheet as a lightweight blanket. If it will be cold, or the lining of your sleeping bag is scratchy (and it’s your own bag) use safety pins to secure the sheet to the inside of your sleeping bag so that it does not shift or bunch in weird places when you move as you sleep. This will also keep it from getting stuck in your bag’s zipper when you’re trying to close it. If your bag is borrowed, ask its owner if they have any suggestions for you to stay warmer before you use safety pins in their sleeping bag.



Some Walks, I **bring** a lightweight sleeping bag and a small down throw (which squishes into a zip top bag and doubles as a pillow). I’m comfortable on a warm night and use them together on a cool night. If I know it will be cool or cold at night, I’ll **bring** my artificial down sleeping bag (it’s lightweight, packs small, and is very warm even when wet).

Sleeping bags are great for warmth, but don’t provide much cushioning. If you are an experienced camper, or a very sound sleeper, then sleeping on the ground on a sleeping bag may be just fine for you. The tents are usually on grass and sometimes on packed dirt. To get an idea of what to expect, find

some packed dirt, lay out your sleeping bag, and crawl in. If you're comfortable (unlikely), great! Otherwise, **bring** either an air mattress or a camping pad.

Air mattresses need to be inflated. Since you won't want to blow it up with your mouth at the end of a day of walking, and since there is no electricity in Camp, **bring** a battery operated pump if you are bringing an air mattress. They are a bit heavy, but if you are going to bring an air mattress, they are an absolute necessity. You could bring a foot operated pump, but your feet may be a bit tired by the time you get to Camp and need to inflate your mattress. If you are walking with a team, you don't each need your own air pump; you can share one between you. This will save space and weight in your gear bag.

If you know your tent mate, try to coordinate who will bring which shared items. That way, both of you won't lug along a battery powered lantern (for inside the tent at night), and an air pump, and plastic rain tarps, and a decoration to identify your tent at night. If you are packing a large air mattress in your gear for you both to share, then have them pack the pump, or your sleeping bag. That way, you'll balance the size and weight of each person's bag.

When you pack the pump, make sure either to remove the batteries and pack them separately, or reverse the direction of one of the batteries (which will prevent the pump from operating). Otherwise, with all the jostling your bag will receive, the pump may accidentally turn on. While the crew may find your vibrating bag to be a source of great amusement, it's a safety hazard. Leaving the pump on inside a closed bag can cause the pump to overheat, and eventually start to smolder and then burn. Someone in the crew will have to open your bag and rummage through your things to find the pump and remove the batteries for you. So, pack your batteries separately or otherwise temporarily disable the pump.

A queen size air mattress will take up most of the floor space of the tent, and leave a small side area for your gear bags. This means to get in or out of the tent you'll be climbing over your mattress and gear. A king size mattress will fit into the tent, but they will take up every inch of space inside, and you'll either have to pile all your gear on the mattress, or leave it outside (wrapped in plastic trash bags to keep it from getting wet in the rain or the morning dew.) Either a queen or king size is fine, if you are comfortable spooning with your tent mate, and if you don't mind the air mattress shifting when someone rolls over. If you don't know your tent mate, expecting them to share your air mattress is a bit presumptuous.

Two twin air mattresses are the same size as a king mattress. The advantage is that one person's movement while sleeping won't have as much effect on their tent mate's sleep. However, you'll still take up every inch of space in the tent, which means you'll have to either climb over your gear, or leave it outside.



If you bring a queen or king sized air mattress, make sure to inflate it inside your tent, not outside your tent. Otherwise, you may not be able to get it inside the tent once it is inflated.

Another sleeping alternative is to **bring** a camping pad (also called an air pad). These are thin pads that self-inflate when you roll them out. They are not as thick or as comfortable as an air mattress, but they're smaller, lighter and narrower. Since they don't re-inflate very quickly if they have been stored tightly rolled for a long period, remember to blow in a few puffs of air after you unroll it, and before you close the inflation valve. This will inflate it to the maximum thickness, and make you much more comfy. Otherwise, just roll it out with the valve open, and leave it like that while you eat and then shower. When you come back, close the valve.

Even if you are using an air mattress, I recommend a sleeping bag rather than bringing sheets and blankets. Trying to make a bed inside a tent is not a lot of fun, and there is a good chance that you'll wake up freezing in the middle of the night on a bare mattress, snuggled next to a large wad of crumpled sheets and blankets.

Some people may find that their exhaustion at night is offset by being on a "sugar high" from a day full of snacks and sports drink, combined with the excitement of the event. I can't imagine it would be much fun to be awake with insomnia while lying in a dark tent with a sleeping tent mate.

If you tend to have trouble sleeping at night due to too much sugar or excitement (or both), you might want to consider the use of a sleeping pill (either prescription or over-the-counter) for use the night before your Walk and during your Walk. As with all other suggestions, try using it one night before the Walk. In some instances, a sleeping pill will knock someone out for 12 hours or more, meaning while you might sleep well, you'll miss walking the next day! Alternately, a side effect of some sleeping pills is insomnia (I don't make this stuff up!) Don't experiment for the first time on your actual Walk.

## ***Strapping***

Each year, walkers come up with the bright idea of putting their sleeping bag in a large plastic trash bag, and attaching it to the outside of their bag to give them more space to pack their gear inside their bag. This is not as bright an idea as they'd like to think. In fact, this is one of the biggest mistakes you can make in packing for your Walk.



Yes, technically, you are allowed to attach your sleeping bag to the outside of your duffle bag, as long as you don't use bungee cords (since they can snap and injure the crew who are loading or unloading your gear). You are also allowed to walk all 20+ miles in high heels, wearing a scuba suit, a fur coat and a ski hat. Just because something is allowed doesn't mean it is a good idea.

When you drop off your gear each morning, it will be loaded, along with hundreds of other bags, onto a 24 foot box truck. The truck will be loaded wall to wall, floor to ceiling, with bags. And while the gear crew will try to be considerate, let's remember that the gear crew is made up of volunteers, moving thousands of pounds of gear on and off the trucks each day.

This is not the Ritz Carlton. Your bag may be tossed. Your bag may be dragged. Your bag may be dropped. Your bag may be on the bottom of a pile of other bags. If you strap your sleeping bag outside your duffle bag, it is very possible that it will get lost, or it will get torn, or it will get soaking wet in a rain shower. Maybe all of the above. Or maybe someone will think that the big wet torn lump in a black plastic bag is trash, and throw it away?

What will happen if your sleeping bag is lost, torn, or wet? We don't have spares on the Walk. If it is only torn, consider yourself lucky. If it is lost or soaked, you will go over to the Medical tent, where you will have to ask them for a Mylar® blanket (also called an emergency blanket). If you aren't familiar with the term, a Mylar blanket is a thin piece of Mylar (sort of like Christmas tinsel, but in a big sheet). If you wrap it tightly around you, it will retain your body heat and keep you warm. We use them in the medical tents for warming walkers who are hypothermic (i.e. freezing cold). You may have also seen them at Marathon races, where the runners are sometimes wrapped in them when they cross the finish line,

looking like a cross between a Hershey's Kiss® and a package of Jiffy Pop®. Unfortunately, a Mylar blanket will crinkle and rustle every time you move (or even breathe). Which means while you may be warm, you will have a hard time sleeping. I can't think of many things worse than trying to sleep on the ground, wrapped in Mylar, let alone doing so after having walked all day. Though I suppose it would be even worse to share a tent with someone else trying to sleep while wrapped in Mylar!

If your sleeping bag won't fit into your duffle bag, get a bigger duffle bag, or get a smaller sleeping bag, or get rid of some of the other crap you were planning to bring (I told you that you had too much!) or have someone help you pack more efficiently. If you happen to have an adult male around the house somewhere, this is a good time to solicit their help. While I'll admit that men are useless in some situations, we can be good at packing (maybe it has something to do with the Y chromosome and a more intuitive grasp of spatial geometry?) Just be sure that if someone helps you to pack, you'll be able to repack it again to come home. I've seen many cases where people have gotten frustrated because everything "just fit" when they packed it at home, but now they can't get everything back in to return home with it. It's hard to pack as tightly and efficiently while inside a tent as it is while at home. Leave yourself a little spare room when you pack your bag at home, so you'll be able to repack it on Sunday morning in your tent.

If you absolutely feel compelled to strap your sleeping bag to the outside of your gear bag, they now make super-sized, heavy-duty zip top bags designed for storage of bulky items such as sleeping bags. You get 3 bags to a pack for about \$5. Like freezer bags, they have a spot to write your name (address, cell phone number, etc.) so that you can find your sleeping bag if it should become separated from your duffle. And, since they are clear, the Gear and Tent Crew will be able to distinguish your sleeping bag from some random trash. The "L" size should fit either a mummy-style bag in its stuff sack or a regular rectangular sleeping bag that has been rolled tightly. If you are worried, get the "XL" size. Trust me; it will be \$5 well spent.

## ***Tenting***

You will be sleeping in a small two person tent. There will be literally thousands of other tents around you, in long rows. When you register, you will have the option of choosing a tent mate. If you don't choose a tent mate, another walker will be assigned to you. Since it's a charitable event, and not a fraternity party, you won't be randomly assigned a tent mate of the opposite sex, but you can request a specific person (by name, not by physical description).



Co-ed tents are permissible, as long as the tent mates request each other. Also, please bear in mind that the tents are not soundproof, so discretion and quiet is highly recommended when it comes to conversation or anything else (i.e. other intimate physical activities) you do in your tent with your tent mate. For those of you upon whom subtlety is wasted, what I meant by "anything else" was, umm, err, oh never mind.... Just keep it down in there.

There are different tent sections for walkers and crew. That way, when some of the crew gets up at 4:00 AM (no, I'm not kidding), they won't wake up the walkers, just the other crew. If you are crewing, you might want to check in advance to find out what time your tent mate needs to be up.

It's possible for a member of the crew and a walker to share a tent, but the tent should be in the crew section. That way, the only walker disturbed by early rising crew will be the walker that shares a tent with a member of the crew. On some Walks, teams can tent together, so it is possible for a walker and a member of the crew to tent in the same team area, where hopefully the crew person will only disturb their own team!

It's just my opinion, but if you are walking, I think you'd be better off sharing a tent with another walker, even a stranger, rather than sharing with a friend or relative in the crew tent area. You'll get more sleep and interact more with other walkers. The crew tent area is a pretty boring place, since the crew is either off working or asleep. I often share a tent with a stranger, and I've met lots of wonderful people that way (they may not have felt the same about me.) If the thought of tenting with a stranger makes you uncomfortable, you can meet someone via the message board or from a local training group before the Walk, and then decide if you want to share a tent with them. It's only for one or two nights.

If you are on the crew, you may find yourself with a creative alternative to sleeping in a tent. The Gear & Tent crew or the Route Hydration crew will sometimes choose to sleep in the back of their empty box trucks. They'll either lay down a couple of sheets of cardboard on top of the metal floor, or just put an air mattress on the metal floor. I've even seen people put up a tent inside the truck (to give themselves a place to change clothing in private). Because the truck body blocks the wind, and is up off the ground, it is usually warmer than being in a tent outside, and in the case of rain, you aren't climbing in and out of a tent through the mud. Sometimes the sweep crews will sleep inside their vans as well, depending on the weather, the temperature, and their interest in setting up a tent. If you do sleep in the back of a truck, make sure you leave the door partway open (for ventilation and to make sure you don't get locked in), and keep the keys with you (not in the ignition). Last thing you want is for someone to decide to move the truck while you are sleeping in the back.

When you register, you will be given a tent number (e.g. C47). Your tent number tells you the row (Row C) and the number of your tent (#47). The letter has nothing to do with the first letter of your last name. When you get to camp, you'll pick up your gear from your Gear truck (e.g. Truck C), and grab a tent. You'll find the tent spot marked C47, and put up your tent. While you can put your gear on any Gear truck, put it on the one for your tent section, since that will be the gear truck parked closest to your tent area when you get to camp. Why carry your gear any further than you have to?

Please make sure to put your tent up in the correct spot, and not expand into another spot. A small card on a stake in the ground will mark the proper spot for your tent, with an arrow pointing to where your tent should go. If you don't follow that exactly, then tent creep causes a ripple effect. Eventually, someone will go to put up their tent, and find that they only have a 2 foot wide spot to put up their 6-½ foot wide tent. Also, you must put your tent in your assigned spot, not just pick a pretty place, or block an aisle. In an emergency (or a lost phone or camera), this is the only way someone can find you. And in the event of a medical problem, we'll need the aisles open to get in a wheelchair or golf cart to transport an ill or injured walker. Also, you don't want to take the risk of having you and your tent run over in the dark by an event vehicle if you camp out in the middle of an otherwise open area!



Putting up a tent only takes about three minutes, so don't spend the next three months worrying about it. Two important things to remember when it comes to putting up your tent:

- Remember how you put up your tent. You'll take it down in the reverse order.
- If you have no idea how to put up a tent, don't worry. There will be plenty of crew and experienced walkers around to help you put it up if you are clueless (or choose to pretend to be). And if you're lucky, there may be Tent Angels (local teens who come down to help put up tents for community service).

Tent Angels can be scarce on Sunday mornings at 6:00 AM. So even if you are fortunate to have someone there to put your tent up for you, pay attention, as you'll be taking it down on Sunday morning. Please don't leave it for "someone else" to take care of, as that "someone else" is a hard working crew person who also has lots of other things to do that day to support you.

As soon as the tent is up, put something inside it. A fanny pack will do just fine if there is only a light breeze. If there is a brisk wind, put your gear back inside. Otherwise, if the wind picks up, your empty tent will fly across the field like a giant box kite. There is nothing sadder (or more tragically amusing) than watching a tired walker running across a field, chasing their empty tent.

On one Walk, Tent Angels put up all the tents before walkers arrived, and delivered the corresponding luggage right outside each tent. A lovely gesture. Unfortunately, a tremendous storm came up, the luggage was soaked, and some of the tents were found a mile away! So if you are on the crew, keep that in mind. And if you are a walker, don't be upset if your bag and tent aren't there waiting for you.

When you get your tent, it will fit neatly into the nylon carrying bag. It is actually possible for you to get the tent back into the bag on Sunday morning. Just remember these tips:

- Fold it into quarters (a long skinny rectangle, not a square!) before you roll it up
- Roll it towards the tent door, so any excess air can escape
- Roll it around the collapsed tent poles, to keep it nice and tight

If this makes no sense to you, don't worry. It will when the time comes.



**Bring** something warm to sleep in (e.g. sweats, or even thermal underwear), just in case you get cold at night. Tents don't really keep out the cold. And even if you are toasty warm in your sleeping bag, when you get up at night to use the porta-potties, you'll wish you had something warm to wear outside. And if you have been hydrating properly, you will wake in the middle of the night and have to pee. This is when you will debate about whether to get out of your warm tent and into the cold air and rush to a porta-potty, or just try and go back to sleep. Get up and go pee! You'll sleep better the rest of the night.

**Bring** something you can hang outside your tent to identify it. This will be important when it is 3:00 AM and you are coming back from the porta-potty, and trying to find your tent in an endless sea of identical tents. At that point, the small cards that are stuck in the ground to mark the tent addresses may not be

very visible. A pink ribbon or a pink bra is not a unique idea for a tent decoration, and may lead to the awkward situation of your crawling into a stranger's tent in the middle of the night.

I have seen people bring quite elaborate decorations for their tents (e.g. white picket fences, plastic flowers, blow up dolls, etc.) Just remember that whatever you use will have to fit in your gear bag. The alternative to making your tent easily identifiable at night is to walk up and down every tent row, whispering loudly for your tent mate. This is not only considered gauche, but is also liable to make you really unpopular among your fellow walkers.

Another way to help find your tent at night is to make a mental note of nearby "landmarks" relative to your row of tents and your own tent. It can sometimes be just as hard to identify your tent row as it is to identify your specific tent. For example, there might be a light tower at the end of your row, and the tent next to yours might be decorated with a large blow-up doll. If you remember that, it will help you get close enough to your own tent to recognize your own decorations, and spare you the agony of wandering around in the dark (literally and figuratively).

### ***SHSHSH!***



Tents are not soundproof. Just because the people in the adjoining tents can't see you does not mean they can't hear you. Keep your voice down when in your tent in the evening or early morning. Your neighbors may prefer an extra hour of sleep to listening to you berate your husband for not giving the kids a bath, or whatever else he screwed up that day. Turn off your cell phone after 9:00 PM and before 6:00 AM. Then the whole Camp won't get woken up when your husband calls at 11:00 PM to ask how to turn on (or find) the dishwasher.

Unless you are a very heavy sleeper, bring earplugs. You'd be amazed at how many people (men and women) snore loudly. Even if the person snoring is 3 tents away, you will still hear them! And there may also be the sound of cars on nearby roads, the sound of the doors closing on the porta-potties, and the sounds of event vehicles moving around Camp. If you'd like, feel free to use your iPod at night in your tent, which helps some people relax before going to sleep.

If you are a walker, please don't set an alarm to wake you up at a ridiculously early hour. Believe me, you won't oversleep. Not only will your alarm wake you up, but it will also wake up everyone within 50 feet of you, and that is probably at least 100 people! In the history of the Walks, only a handful of walkers have ever slept so soundly and so late that they had to be shuttled ahead on the Route because they didn't leave Camp in time. If you are the type who won't wake up without an alarm, please don't set it before 5:30 or 6:00 AM. Unless you are on the crew, there is absolutely no reason to be up before 5:30 A.M. The Route isn't open, breakfast isn't open, even medical isn't open. Even if you shower in the morning, you don't need that long to get ready.

If you do absolutely insist on getting up early (or staying up late), be as quiet as possible. Even a whisper can be heard in the tents around you. This might come as a surprise, but the people around you would probably rather sleep than hear about how cold you are, how many times you had to pee, or that you can't find your blue sports bra.

## **Rain**

As much as we all hate to think about it, there are times when it will rain during a Walk. Sometimes it is a light, refreshing sprinkle. Sometimes it will rain hard enough to make you look to see if anyone is building an ark. Either way, as long as it is safe for the walkers and crew on the Route, the Walk will go on. If you have reason to expect rain, then you might want to bring rain gear. This is a good time to remind you of the difference between “water proof” and “water resistant.”

Check the label. If something is “water resistant”, it will eventually get soaked through and be of no use in keeping you dry, so you can only rely on it for a brief period of rain. If something is “waterproof”, it will protect you from rain indefinitely. However, there are two kinds of “waterproof” materials. The expensive ones are “breathable”, which means they’ll let your sweat escape without letting in the rain. GORE-TEX® is a particular brand of rain gear that is extremely comfortable to wear during extended periods of time, for this reason. But GORE-TEX products are fairly expensive (e.g. \$100 for a rain jacket, another \$100 for rain pants). They are also relatively heavy to carry, if you aren’t sure if you’ll even need them. Some people recommend a waterproof brand called Frogg Toggs®, which are a bit lighter weight and less expensive.

An example of the other “waterproof” option is one of those cheap lightweight ponchos you get at the Dollar store, that come in a small folded package. Inexpensive but not much help in strong winds, and they eventually turn into a sauna as you walk and sweat inside them, so you won’t want to rely on them for too long. Bottom line? Check the weather report. If you don’t expect rain, or just some light showers, go with the \$1 poncho. If you expect heavy rain, find someone who will lend you a breathable waterproof jacket for the weekend, or if you are a regular walker, invest in one yourself.

What about your running shoes? The challenge here is that you want to keep your feet dry both from rain and from sweat. If you wear heavy rain boots, you’ll be uncomfortable (they aren’t exactly designed for walking long distances) and your feet will sweat. If you wear the lightweight rainproof overshoes (Totes® or something like that), you are likely to rip through them after a few miles. And if you put your feet inside plastic bags and tape them closed around your ankles, and then put on running shoes, your feet will sweat inside the bags and create all sorts of problems. I suppose you could put your running shoes into plastic bags, and then tape them to your ankles, but it’s anyone’s guess as to whether you’ll slip and fall first, or rip through them first. Not a ton of good options here. You can bring a couple of pair of dry socks, so you can change into them if it stops raining, though by that point, your running shoes will be soaked. Or you can consider walking sandals, because then you won’t care as much about the rain, but as with everything else, you need to train with the walking sandals before using them on your Walk.



What if there is really severe weather? If there is lightning, or a tornado, or a hurricane, or heavy hail, you will be pulled off the Route for your own safety, and gathered into whatever school or other indoor facility is near each stop. If you are walking on the Route and not near a stop, find shelter indoors wherever possible. If there is lightning or even a chance of lightning, do not stand under a tree, because you are just putting yourself at greater risk. Hopefully, if you do run into bad weather, it will only be for a brief period until the dangerous weather passes. If it looks like it will be unsafe to be in Camp that night due to the weather, then there is always a relocation facility (typically a school, convention center

or other public facility) where walkers will be bused for the night. Depending on the facility, you may eat and shower in Camp before being bused to the relocation site, or they may set up the shower trucks and a dining facility at the relocation site.

You'd be surprised how often it rains on a Walk. And sometimes, it even snows (no, I'm not kidding, but it is rare, and usually just flurries). While the tents are theoretically waterproof, I wouldn't bet on it. Waterproofing can wear out over time, and you may not have a brand new tent. I doubt your gear bag is really waterproof, either.

The tent will usually have a couple of mesh panels at the top for ventilation, and then a nylon cover that goes over that (called a "fly"). Do not make the mistake of sleeping without the "fly", because you like to look up at the stars. You will wake up soaked in the morning from the dew. And if it rains, you will be incredibly unhappy to be woken up by the feel of rainwater pouring on your face.

Plan to **bring** two THIN plastic drop cloths (9'x12', 1 or 2mm thick, used for painting, you can find them in Wal-Mart, Home Depot or Lowe's, for about \$2) to help keep the water out of your tent. Another option is to buy a couple of cheap shower curtains. **Don't bring** something you'd use to cover firewood. They are heavy and no more waterproof than a lightweight tarp or shower curtain. And whatever you use for a drop cloth, don't unpack it before the Walk. You will never pack it back into its package as small as it is when it's right from the factory.



Also **bring** a dozen clothespins (if you have them) or black binder clips (available at any office supply store or borrow them from your office). Use one drop cloth to line the inside floor and up the inside walls of your tent. Put your gear and sleeping bag on top of the tarp inside your tent. Put the other tarp on top of the tent cover (i.e. the "fly") that goes over your tent. In case of rain, it will keep you from getting wet from water leaking into your tent. Clip the tarp tightly to the top of your tent, or it will flap in the wind and drive you crazy as you try to sleep. To prevent your tent from getting stuffy and humid, you might want to leave the tent door open a few inches (but keep the mesh screen door fully closed), or open the mesh window in the tent (not every tent will have a window.)

Don't put your drop cloth underneath your tent. You'll be creating a pool of water your tent will sit in if it rains. Rain will drip off your tent, onto the drop cloth under your tent, and come up through the floor. You'll be soaked in the morning, floating on your air mattress. Trust me on this; put it inside your tent, not on the ground underneath your tent. If you are the stubborn type, and absolutely insist on putting it underneath the tent, at least make sure to fold it under so that nothing protrudes outside the edges of the tent. This will reduce but not eliminate the possibility of your creating a swimming pool.

It is also a good idea to **bring** a small chamois towel (see more on towels in the Packing section.) Pack that in a zip top bag, and put it on the top of your duffle bag. That way, if your gear gets wet while sitting outside in the rain, you have something to use to dry the plastic bags off. One Walk, my bag got drenched in a storm. I used the towel to dry the zip top bags and then threw them in my tent. I poured about a gallon of water out of my empty bag, wiped it dry, and threw it in my tent. Voilà, no wet stuff!

If it rains, there will be mud. The crew will put down cardboard in heavily trafficked areas (e.g. the food lines), so that you don't have to walk through the mud. Avoid taking a shortcut through the mud. It's not unusual for someone to step into mud that turns out to be deep enough to suck the shoe or flip-flop

right off their foot. This is not as much fun as you might think, especially if you are the one who has to be rescued and you have to dig your shoe out of a foot of mud.

I once had to help a woman who had taken a short-cut through the mud outside the dining tent. As soon as she stepped off the cardboard, she sank in up to her calves, and couldn't get out. Two of us got close enough to help pull her out, but one of her running shoes stayed deep in the mud. It took a lot of digging, by hand, to get it, and it was not exactly wearable when she got it back.

## ***Interlude***

You will be showering in a large shower truck. There are typically many showers for women, and a few for men. This is due to the fact that there are many more women than men on a Walk, though each year the number of men participating does increase. Despite the number of showers for women, there tend to be long lines at the women's showers, and short lines for the men's showers.



On the first Walk I did with my wife (this will be important later in this story) I was in the dressing area of the men's shower truck, after having taken my shower. In the dressing area with me were two other guys, one almost fully dressed, and another with nothing on but a towel. I was wearing sweat pants and putting on my t-shirt. This will all be relevant in a moment, so pay attention.

Suddenly, we hear a woman's voice announce "ok guys, the line is too long for the women's showers, so we are coming in to use the men's showers." We thought she was kidding, so one of the guy's called out "Come on in!" She was not kidding. Next thing we knew, three women, in running shorts and tops, come into the men's shower. At this point, the first guy is standing there stark naked, holding his towel. He starts to blush. One of the women, probably in an attempt to make him feel less embarrassed, decides to say something to him to reassure him. Now I'm guessing that she meant to say something like "don't worry; it's nothing we haven't seen before." What she actually said was "don't worry; it's not worth looking at." Ladies, you'll have to trust me on this, but no guy ever wants to hear a woman say that to him.



He blushes bright red, gets dressed as quickly as possible, and bolts out of the shower truck. The rest of us smile at each other as he leaves, and then we all introduce ourselves. One woman starts to get undressed, and then realizes that she is stripping in front of two guys who are complete strangers. She pauses, and looks at me and the other guy, who smiles and says "It's ok, I'm gay." She continues to get undressed. Then she looks at me, and asks "Larry, you are gay too, right?" I smile sweetly, and reply "Actually, I'm straight." Now it's her turn to blush.

Since I like to at least pretend that I'm a gentleman, I decide that it is time for me to leave and give them some privacy. Besides, I couldn't plausibly continue to take that long to put on my socks without looking suspicious. I went outside to use the sinks alongside the shower truck to shave and brush my teeth. There were probably a half-dozen other people by the sinks.

A while later, as I was finishing up, a woman in sweat pants and with her hair wrapped in a towel comes up to me and starts apologizing. It took me a minute to realize it was the woman from the men's shower, the one who had gotten undressed. And without thinking (really!), I blurted out "I'm sorry, I didn't recognize you with your clothes on." Well everyone around us cracked up.

The next day, my wife and I are at a Rest Stop, waiting in line for the porta-potties along with about a thousand of my wife's closest friends and training partners. Suddenly, I hear a familiar voice calling out loudly (very loudly) "Larry, Larry, is that you?" as she points to me. As I turn to look at her, so does my wife and everyone around us. I realize that it's the woman from the shower. And as everyone watches, she smiles sweetly and says "I'm sorry, I didn't recognize you with your clothes on."

My wife's friends looked at her. My wife looked at me. And I just looked at the ground. Did I mention that my wife didn't do another Walk with me for five years afterwards?

## ***Travel***

Coordinating travel logistics can be a major source of stress and cost for people who are doing an out-of-town Walk. The key is to anticipate what you'll need, plan ahead, and be prepared to make decisions at the right time in order to minimize your stress and your costs.

The key questions are about how you are getting to the Opening Ceremonies site. Are you flying, driving, or taking a train? If flying or taking a train, how do you plan to get to the hotel where you'll be staying? While a taxi is always an option, it can be expensive depending on the distance. Many cities have a relatively inexpensive private shuttle bus system from the airport to other areas, and may also have public transportation available. Look on the airport's (or train station's) web site for more information. Or post something on the message board to get advice or assistance from someone in that city.



If you're driving, where are you going to leave your car for the weekend? For some Walks, the Opening and Closing Ceremonies sites are the same, which means you'll end up back where you left your car. For others, the Opening and Closing Ceremonies sites are many miles apart, which means if you leave a car anywhere near the Opening Ceremonies site, you'll need to arrange a ride or use an official event shuttle bus back to your car after Closing Ceremonies. Depending on the city, some hotels will allow you to leave your car there free of charge over the weekend. Others (usually in downtown areas) will charge a small fortune for each day you park your car there.

If you live far from the Closing Ceremonies site, you might want to stay over after your Walk and drive home on Monday. Traveling home after walking such a long distance can be agonizing and even unsafe if you are exhausted. If you have the flexibility in your life, consider staying at a hotel after Closing Ceremonies and traveling home the next day. If possible, stay at the same hotel after the Walk that you stayed at prior to the event. If you are traveling to the event, you are going to have travel clothes and items that you won't need on the actual Walk. If you are returning to that same hotel, you can ask the front desk if you can leave a small bag or suitcase in the baggage room at the hotel with your non-Walk travel items. Or if you have a car, you can leave your extra bag in the car while you are walking. No sense bringing any extra non-Walk clothing with you on the Walk if you don't have to. This is especially

important if you are adding any tourist days before or after your Walk, and you'll have a fair amount of extra "civilian" clothing.

Six to eight weeks before your Walk, you'll get a Travel Planner email, with information on hotels, shuttle buses, long-term parking, etc. Read it immediately, and carefully. If you need a hotel reservation, make it as soon as possible (no dawdling), as the official hotel fills up quickly. While there may be other local hotels you can use (some of which are actually less expensive), you also need to consider if there will be transportation you can use from another hotel to Opening Ceremonies, or back to that hotel after Closing Ceremonies. Sometimes the cost of taxis will far outweigh any savings from staying at a different hotel. An alternative is to stay at an inexpensive hotel, drive yourself to Opening Ceremonies, and leave your car at the long-term parking lot for your Walk.

If you have decided not to stay in Camp over the weekend, you'll have to make your own hotel arrangements. Depending on the Walk, you may also have to make your own travel arrangements to get from Camp to your hotel at the end of the day, and from the hotel back to Camp in the morning (to start walking). Don't assume you'll be able to get a taxi at Camp in the evening, as the Camp locations are typically parks, schools or other facilities that are away from downtown areas. It's not a bad idea to have the phone numbers of a couple of local taxi companies with you each day. While you may be tempted to arrange for a pickup in advance, it is almost impossible to predict what time you'll actually finish walking each day. Your best bet is to wait until you get to Camp, and then check with someone on the Traffic & Safety Crew (usually in orange t-shirts) to find out the best place to have a cab come and meet you. The



Camp is typically spread out over a large area, and the cab can spend a lot of time trying to find you before giving up and taking someone else. The more specifically you tell them the pick-up location, the less risk that the driver will pick up someone else instead and leave you waiting. When you call the cab company, give them your name and the exact pick-up location so there is no confusion or controversy later about whose cab it is.

If this will be your first Walk, I'd strongly encourage you to sleep in Camp (unless of course you have a family or medical situation that prevents that). The logistics are a lot easier, and while you may be more comfortable in a hotel bed than a sleeping bag, you will miss out on a special part of the experience. Even if you decide to stay in a hotel rather than in a tent, I would encourage you to stay for a few hours at Camp in the evening to experience the atmosphere. A large part of each Walk is the community that develops as people eat dinner, listen to the announcements, and enjoy the evening entertainment and sometimes even dancing. Don't be in such a rush to leave that you miss something you'd enjoy and cherish.

In recent years, more and more people are participating (as walkers or crew) in out-of-town Walks. For some, it is a chance to visit a new city, or experience what it is like to crew while still being able to walk in their "home" city. Others are combining a travel or tourist experience with a Walk.

Some teams have refined this to an art form. A group of walkers may choose a different city to walk in each year. They arrive a few days early to "play tourist", then they do the Walk together, enjoy a relaxing night at a hotel after Closing Ceremonies on Sunday (try to choose a hotel with a hot tub or Jacuzzi), and then return home on Monday. Not a bad way to combine a get-away with a good cause.

## ***For Men Only***

I'll be talking to the men about power tools, beer, and sports radio. So if you are a woman, feel free to skip ahead to the next section... Ok guys, are we alone now? Good....



A typical Walk has a ratio of roughly ten women for every man. If you are a single man (of any age and orientation) the odds are that every woman there has at least one single friend or relative that they would like you to meet. And the fact that you are a single man participating in the Walk is a clear sign that you are kind, caring, compassionate, and an ideal match for their single friend or relative. Along the same lines, the fact that they are participating in the Walk may be a good indication of the kind of friends and relatives with whom they'll be offering to fix you up. A number of couples first met on a Breast Cancer Walk, but please remember it's a charitable event not a singles bar.

Due to the ratio of women to men, there are usually more showers for women than there are for men. Sometimes, if the lines for the women's showers are incredibly long, they'll reallocate all or most of the men's showers for the women. A man's best bet for showering is either late afternoon (4:00PM, before it gets too crowded), later in the evening (8:00 PM), or in the morning (6:00 AM). You've been warned.

Be very careful about which shower truck you enter. It's not uncommon for shower trucks to get shifted from "Men" to "Women" due to over-crowding and long lines. And therefore it is not uncommon for the shower truck that said "Men" when you walked by an hour ago to now be a truck for "Women." Make sure to double-check the sign on the entrance before you walk in. There are many stories of men and women accidentally using the wrong shower truck. This is at best awkward, and at worst safety issue. So please look carefully.

On the Walk, you'll see women wearing shirts and hats with breast-related sayings that range from clever to almost obscene. As a guy, you can wear a shirt that would get you fired in daily life (e.g. a male high school teacher can wear a shirt with "I Care about Your Breasts" on the Walk, but not to work.) Please be sensitive to the fact that there are things a woman can wear that a man probably should not. So before you print up that shirt, hat or button, check with your mother, sister or a close female friend to see what they think. You don't want to offend anyone on the Walk (intentionally or not).

One team made their own hats, using large Styrofoam balls and small pink Styrofoam cylinders to create a pair of anatomically correct breasts. Very creative and very distinctive. One man on the team decided to create his own version by adding a small patch of brown fake fur below the "breasts" to look like a hairy man's chest. Unfortunately, that wasn't what it looked like to everyone else. Pretty much everyone who looked at his hat did a double-take, and many people asked him if he was doing a fund raiser for cervical cancer. It took him the better part of the first day to realize that what he thought of as a "hairy chest" on his hat looked like something very different to everyone else.

Finally, be aware that men can end up with serious medical problems on the Walk, due to what is known as testosterone poisoning. Men's macho inclinations, especially if they've played sports in college, high school, or even pre-school, can cause them to ignore blisters, sprains, dehydration or hyponatremia until the problem requires serious medical intervention. Don't let your ego get in the way of finishing your Walk. Walking through the pain is just plain stupid. Get medical attention early while the problem can be fixed easily. I once saw a guy walk 10 miles with an ice bagged taped to his crotch, because of a groin pull that he had ignored for too long. I cannot imagine that was any fun at all.

## During the Walk

### *Opening Ceremonies*

So now it all begins. After all those months of training, worrying, fundraising, worrying, packing, worrying and travel, it's time to start your Walk. Plan to arrive at the Opening Ceremonies site with plenty of time to spare. If you've stayed at an official event hotel the night before, you'll be able to catch a shuttle bus to the Opening Ceremonies site from the hotel, but you may need to wait a while for it to depart the hotel. Don't plan to catch the very last shuttle. If you are driving to the Opening Ceremonies site, you'll need to park your car and then walk (or shuttle bus) over to the Opening Ceremonies site. In many cities, the long-term parking lot is not immediately adjacent to the Opening Ceremonies site, so you'll need to leave time to get from your car to where you need to be. And even if you are having a friend or family member drop you at Opening Ceremonies, you still need to leave time to drive there and find the drop-off location. Even though Opening Ceremonies is quite early in the morning, there is always the risk of a road closure or a traffic delay, so avoid the last-minutes problems and plan to arrive early.



You should also make plans to have breakfast prior to arriving at Opening Ceremonies. It's not likely that there will be any open restaurant or coffee shop nearby, and even if there were, the lines would be enormous. If you are coming from home, plan to have something quick and easy ready for the morning (cold cereal or a muffin), and bring your coffee or tea in a travel mug in the car. If you are staying in a hotel, the hotel may not be serving breakfast that early in the morning, so bring along a muffin or bagel and hope that there is an in-room coffee maker. Some Event Hotels will arrange to have coffee and a continental breakfast available early in the morning for walkers, but check first.

The gear drop-off is typically adjacent to the Opening Ceremonies site. While you may be tempted to drop your gear at the first truck you find, don't. The letters for each truck correspond to your tent section. At Camp, the "A" truck will be near the "A" tents. If you drop your gear at the "A" truck in the morning, and are in a "J" tent that night, you will be hauling your bag a long way! It is easier to carry your bag an extra 100 feet in the morning than to carry it an extra 250 yards in the late afternoon.

### *Walking Alone*



Some people worry that they are doing the Walk alone, that they won't know anyone, and that they'll have trouble meeting people. Relax. Walkers who show up alone at Opening Ceremonies usually meet people before the Walk even starts, meet people throughout the Walk, and often make friendships that will last a lifetime. In addition, on each Walk there is usually at least one team made up of people from multiple cities that have banded together to form a team of "solo walkers." You can often find these teams via the message boards. In my experience, they are great groups of people and help make the Walk a lot of fun for both their new and their experienced team members.

There are going to be thousands of walkers and hundreds of crew, and the vast majority of them would love to meet you. I've been on quite a number of events and I've been consistently amazed at the kindness of people who were total strangers just one day earlier. While there may be a handful of people who don't want to meet anyone new, the vast majority of people on the Walk are warm and

welcoming. That said, not every team is looking for new members. A team may consist of a group of old friends, or a group of business colleagues, or a family group. The best way to find a team to join, if that is your inclination, is to post something to the message board for your event or ask your assigned “coach” or “walker buddy” for advice.

Many of us walk with friends or with family as part of a local team. We look forward to sharing the Walk with our training partners and our loved ones. But let's not forget that some walkers travel great distances and arrive at the Walk alone. Walking is hard enough without feeling like you don't know a soul or worrying about having to eat on your own. Just because you are walking with your family members or college friends doesn't mean you can't meet new people too. And teams will often find that their members walk at different rates, so they won't stay together the entire day anyway.

So please, those of you who are with a team, make an effort to include those who are alone. Reach out to them at Opening Ceremonies, at a Rest Stop, at lunch, or at dinner. It can be very difficult for a solo walker to be told “sorry, this seat is saved!” when they are looking for a place to eat their dinner. Invite them to join you and your friends, as you would want to be included if you were alone.

## ***Feet***

You work so hard to train, and all it takes is one large blister to make you feel that your Walk is ruined. However, no one ever died from a blister, so let's keep things in perspective. People who've been through chemotherapy or radiation would gladly have traded it for a foot full of blisters.



Blisters occur when your feet get hot and sweaty, making socks stick to your feet. The sock and foot rub against each other and the inside of the shoe, causing friction burns. As the outer skin layer separates from the inner layers, the space between fills with fluid. Further pressure on the skin irritates nerve endings, causing discomfort. Or in non-scientific terms, blisters suck. If you can manage to

keep your foot, your sock and your running shoe all moving together as a single unit, you will significantly reduce the chances of your getting a blister. Friction is your enemy.

So, how can you absolutely guarantee that you will have blisters of biblical proportions, ensuring that you will be hobbling by Mile 5 on your first day?

- Don't train. That way, the skin on your feet will be nice and soft when you start the Walk
- Buy a cheap pair of heavy walking sneakers, at a discount store, in the same size as your regular shoes, and preferably a pair that rub against your foot with every step
- Buy cheap cotton socks that hold in the moisture, ensuring that your feet stay hot and sweaty
- When you feel a hot spot while walking, just ignore it. Maybe it will go away on its own.

On the other hand, you are less likely to have problems with blisters if you:

- Train and toughen up your feet. In the months prior to the Walk, walk around barefoot when you can (on safe surfaces or indoors). This will help toughen up the skin on your feet. While baby-soft skin may be good for some parts of your body, for your Walk, you want tough feet.
- Buy professionally fitted running shoes that are at least a half-size larger than your street shoes. Your feet will swell as you walk, and you want room to prevent friction.
- Buy wicking socks that won't absorb the moisture from your sweaty feet, and will let it evaporate out through your running shoes. Change your socks at least once during the day, which means you need to **bring** plenty of pairs of clean socks.

- Stop walking immediately if you feel a hot spot. Don't walk to the next Rest Stop, by then you'll have a blister. Step to the side of the Route, find a place to sit, and put on a piece of moleskin.

Moleskin is a thick piece of cotton fabric that has a soft fluffy side, and an adhesive side. When you have a place on your foot that is feeling hot (due to friction), you cut a small piece of moleskin, and cover that skin to prevent further friction (and hopefully prevent a blister). If there is already a blister, you cut a doughnut shape out of moleskin (with a hole in the center) to surround but not cover the blister. You don't want to pull the moleskin off your skin, since the adhesive can take the skin off a blister with it! The moleskin will come off easily when you shower or bathe.

Make sure your toenails are cut short before the Walk. For some people, the rubbing of a toe nail against the front of their running shoe (especially if their shoes are too small) will cause a blood blister under their nail. This can be horribly painful, and will ultimately cause you to lose your nail. While this isn't a serious medical issue, it does tend to freak some people out. However, make sure you don't get a pedicure less than a week before the Walk, so you give your toes and cuticles a chance to heal up before you start the Walk. Make sure they don't remove all your hard-earned calluses during a pedicure. The last thing you want is tender skin on your feet before walking.

I've been asked to remind walkers that they should avoid getting a bikini wax (American, French or Brazilian) immediately prior to the Walk. While I have my own theories as to why this is probably an excellent suggestion ("raw skin" and "chafing" come to mind), I'll leave some space here for you to make your own notes on this topic, because I have absolutely nothing else to say...

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Most experienced walkers prefer wearing running shoes rather than what the footwear industry calls walking shoes. While this is also a matter of opinion, running shoes are lighter, more flexible, more breathable, and more shock absorbent. The design of the sole and heel provides a heel-to-toe motion that may help reduce the chance of shin splints (a common injury).

Some people swear by what are called walking sandals. I've never tried them. If you are going to consider them, use them for a couple of long training walks before you make a decision. This is important no matter what kind of shoes you wear on the event. Never bring a pair of shoes you haven't used for training walks, even if they are the exact same brand and model. It is a guarantee for blisters. Many people also train in and bring two pair of shoes to the Walk. If it rains the first day, you (and your feet) will be very happy to have a dry pair of shoes that have been packed in waterproof zip top bags.

Keep in mind that running shoes will wear out after 250-300 miles of use. And the internal cushioning will often wear out before the soles start to show much wear. So don't keep wearing them in training until they fall apart. Once you've hit the 250 mile point (based on how much you've trained), start thinking about buying a new pair. If you have two pair that you use alternately while training, then you can train about 500 -600 miles before you need to replace both pairs at once. Keep in mind that you do not want to be wearing brand new running shoes on your Walk, even if they are your favorite brand and style. Plan to have two pairs of running shoes that are broken-in (not broken-down) ready for you to use on your Walk. This means replacing your training shoes sometime about a month or so before your Walk (actual time will depend on your training schedule) so that you have two pairs that are broken-in but still in good shape.



There is also the issue of what sort of goop to apply to your feet. Some people suggest powder on your feet. Some people swear by Vaseline®, or Body Glide®, or some other cream, lotion or potion. It really doesn't matter. Whatever you find that works for you during training, use during the Walk.

My first Walk, I didn't want to take chances, so I used Body Glide on my feet, followed by a layer of Vaseline, followed by a layer of powder. Body Glide is a lubricant that comes in a stick (like deodorant), and you apply to wherever you have chafing or friction. I squished when I walked, but I didn't get any blisters. However, I did have to throw away my socks after the Walk, since they were caked in goop. I wouldn't recommend this approach.

The next time I walked, I just used Body Glide and had no problems until it rained. Then I got huge blisters on each foot, due to the wet socks and running shoes. They slowed me down quite a bit, but fortunately I still managed to complete the Walk. The moral of the story? Blisters happen sometimes, no matter how carefully you prepare. So don't beat yourself up if you get a blister or even lots of them.

You may hear people talk about using duct tape (also known as "duck tape") on their feet. For the few people who may be unfamiliar with it, duct tape is the shiny thick gray tape that is easily molded to fit a shape, has a very strong adhesive, and can be easily ripped without a knife or scissor. It was originally developed in World War II to provide a watertight seal for ammunition cases, but nowadays is used for everything from home repair to creating prom dresses to wrapping feet on the Walks. I've never used it for my feet, but some people swear it prevents blisters. I suppose it makes sense, since it prevents friction, though as with other things, I'd suggest you try it on a training walk first.

There are also a number of different techniques for how you lace your running shoes, depending on what sort of problem you might be having (e.g. heel blisters, rubbing on your big toe, rubbing on the top of your foot, etc.) There are a number of great websites that explain the different approaches, complete with little video segments showing exactly how to do it. Do a web search for "lace your running shoes" (include the quotation marks when you do the search, so that it will find an exact match for that phrase). You'll see a number of articles and websites listed that will teach you different ways to tie your running shoes to help address various problems.

## ***Pedometers***

People often ask “Should I use my pedometer on the Walk?” No. And that holds true for a GPS as well. And for those of you who insist on more detail, and enjoy arithmetic.....

Each year, some walkers use a pedometer during the actual Walk, and claim on the message board that “They lied to us! Day X was actually 25 miles, not 20 miles!” or some such. At the risk of preventing this year’s version of that perennial Board Game (pun intended) called “Let’s Argue about the Distance of the Route”, let me share a few facts.



The Route is measured, in advance, by a dozen different people, in at least a half dozen vehicles. When they say “Today’s Route is 20 miles” it means that it is 20 miles (give or take a half mile or so). So, why do the pedometer people say “It was actually 25 miles, not 20 miles!”? (And no, it is not because people walked an extra 5 miles in Camp, or made really excessive trips to the porta-potties!)

Pedometers are calibrated based on your individual stride, typically using a measured distance (e.g. a high school track). Say it takes you 1,000 steps to walk a quarter mile around the track. That means it takes 4,000 steps to walk a mile at that stride. And 4,000 steps times 20 miles equals 80,000 steps for twenty miles (these numbers are just for the purposes of this example; your mileage may vary.)

On the actual Walk, you won’t be walking with the same pace or stride as when calibrating your pedometer. At times, you’ll be walking slower, sometimes much slower, with shorter steps. You’ll be on narrow sidewalks, walking behind some slower walkers. You’ll be sore, or a little tired after sleeping in a tent. You’ll be having a great chat with a slower walker, and won’t be at your training pace. As a result, instead of it taking 4,000 steps to do that mile, maybe it will take you 5,000 steps per mile.

And if you do the math again, you’ll find that 5,000 steps times 20 miles would equal 100,000 steps per mile (again, just for example). So what’s the problem? Well, your pedometer thinks that it is supposed to count off a mile for every 4,000 steps. And it does that during the actual Walk. Except, because you are tired/slow/chatty/whatever, it should really be counting a mile for every 5,000 steps. After 100,000 steps, it thinks you walked 25 miles (100,000 divided by 4,000) when you actually only walked 20 miles (100,000 divided by 5,000). I told you there would be math involved.

Feel free to bring your pedometer, if you like the way it bangs against your side as you walk. But please, don’t bother looking at it, and if you do look at it, don’t believe what it says! And if you insist on believing what it says, well, just keep it your little secret, ok?

Other people bring along a portable GPS unit to measure how far they’ve gone. I still don’t get this. Maybe they plan on stopping when their GPS tells them they have reached the proper mileage for the day, and will refuse to walk another step? I have this mental image of a walker sitting down in the middle of the Route, with a sign saying “When my GPS says I’m done, I’m done!”

Without getting into a detailed technical discussion of the need for narrow correlator spacing or a choke ring antenna to mitigate multipath errors when using a GPS at a slow speed (less than 4mph), just trust me when I tell you that a commercial-grade GPS is not as accurate for measuring distance during a Walk

as you might think. I have no idea why people feel the need to carry the extra weight of a pedometer or GPS, but if it makes you happy, who am I to argue?

Some people have told me that they carry a GPS to help them see if there is a Starbucks® nearby. Doesn't seem worth it to me, but I don't drink coffee.

## ***Interlude***

Many women go on the Walk, and leave their husband, father or boyfriend in charge at home while they're gone. I'm sure this must have seemed like a good idea at the time. There are some men who are veritable paragons of domestic service, and who'll run a household smoothly and efficiently, ensuring that it is in tip-top shape in your absence. If you have one of those at home, you are in luck.



If you don't and you're going to leave the man you happen to have laying around the house in charge, here are some tips to ensure that your home and your relationship are both intact upon your return:

- Teach him the difference between dishwashing soap and dishwasher soap. If you don't feel that it is necessary to cover this, at least make sure he knows that he cannot use the vacuum cleaner to clean up the suds that cover the kitchen floor.
- The kids won't starve or die of malnutrition while you're gone. Still, remind him that Fruit Loops are not really fruit, ketchup is not a vegetable, and pizza is not a basic food group.
- While it might seem illogical to him, try to convince him that a pan of brownies actually will not bake in half the time if you double the temperature of the oven.
- Make sure to leave the number of your veterinarian. That way, if he does set the oven to 550 degrees to bake brownies, the smoke detector goes off, and the dog gets knocked unconscious when it runs into the sliding glass door, he'll know who to call.
- Arrange for someone to deliver dinner on Sunday when you get home. You'll be too tired to go to a restaurant, you definitely won't want to cook, and the odds of him successfully making an edible meal (since he's exhausted from taking care of the kids) are between slim and none.
- Ask a friend to drop off some flowers at your house on Sunday afternoon. This is the best way to guarantee that someone will give you flowers when you get home from the Walk.
- Arrange to have a full body massage after the Walk. Many spas even offer at-home service if you explain why you need it. You might want to have it done at a friend's house, which could be quieter and more relaxing than your own home. There is a chance that the man in your life will think of it himself, and surprise you, but what do you think the odds are of that happening?
- Write down the kids' bed times. Otherwise, he will put them to bed when they seem tired, which is a euphemism for when he remembers and there is a commercial on TV. Unless you want to come home to some cranky, over-tired kids, write down the kids' bed times.
- Don't ask him to do laundry while you are gone. Just don't. Yes, he should be able to. But if you ask him, he is almost guaranteed to bleach things that shouldn't be bleached, put things in the dryer that shouldn't be dried, and generally ruin some of your favorite clothing. Just don't ask.

## ***Tips While Walking***

Pace yourself. It is absolutely ok to take a break to stretch, drink, and pee at every rest stop. Don't rush. A little known fact about the Route is that it always opens in stages during the course of the day. If you are walking very quickly, and are way out in front, you may have to wait for a while at some stop along the Route, until they open the next part of the Route. Even if you like to walk at a brisk pace, take time to relax at each stop. Frankly, getting into Camp at 2:00PM is not all that it is cracked up to be. There just isn't that much going on that early, so you are better off taking your time on the Route during the day and getting in a bit later.

Don't try to convince the crew that your muscles will tighten if you can't keep walking, or that you need to catch a flight. They can't open the Route early just for you, because the upcoming stops may not be ready, there may not be any sweep vans along that part of the Route, or there may be a problem with the Route marking signs that needs to be fixed before that part of the Route can be opened.

I was on the crew at lunch one day, and we had to "hold" the walkers for about 20 minutes before they could continue. One person tried to convince me that she couldn't stop walking once she starts. I have to admit that I was curious, so I asked her what she meant. She said that once she starts moving, she can never stop walking or she'll be in severe pain. I asked "Never?" and she proudly replied "Never!" So then I asked what she planned to do when she got to Camp later that day, and that seemed to stump her. She just gave me a dirty look, and wandered off to use the porta-potties. I was tempted to ask if she jogged in place while in the porta-potty, but decided that she might not find that as amusing as I did.

Take the time to enjoy the Walk. Stretch. Eat. Drink. Pee. Schmooze. Talk to the other walkers, and the crew. Enjoy the themes at the Stops. Notice the scenery and interesting architecture you may pass. Soak in the sights and sounds of new-to-you communities. Ask people why they are doing the Walk. If you are walking with friends, spend some time away from them, so you can meet new people. If you see someone who seems to be on their own, introduce yourself.

You don't have to finish the Route each day if you aren't able. Don't push yourself so hard one day that you won't be able to walk at all the next day. No one will know and no one will care if you don't finish every mile on a given day. In terms of pace, remember that if you take a 30 minute break at every stop, you won't have time to finish, and they'll have to put you on a bus because you'll run out of time. Typically, the Route closes at dusk, for safety reasons. So don't rush, but don't dawdle too much.



If you don't want to walk any further at any point during the day, you have a couple of options. You can flag down a passing sweep van, which will take you to the next Rest Stop. From there, you can take an Event Bus either to the Lunch Stop, or to Camp. Since lunch is only served at the Lunch Stop (and not at Camp), the buses on the first part of the Route will take you up to the Lunch Stop (so you can eat). The buses on the latter part of the Route will take you straight to Camp. Keep in mind that the sweep vans and the buses are not a taxi service. They will take you to specific locations, not to where you feel like going. So just because you want to catch up with a teammate that is waiting for you at Rest Stop 4, don't assume that a sweep or shuttle bus will be able to take you right there. And even if

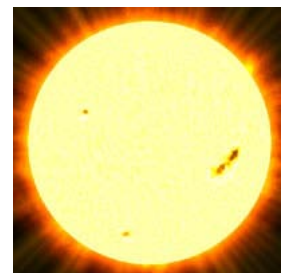
they happen to be going there anyway, it may take a while for them to get there, as they have to accommodate the needs of other walkers as well.

There are a number of official Cheering Stations along the Route each day. These are areas that the event coordinators have arranged for (in advance) to allow families and friends to gather along the Route to cheer on the walkers. They can be parking lots, or parks, or even the plaza in front of an office building, church, synagogue, temple or mosque. These sites are typically announced a few weeks before each Walk, so you can let your family and friends know where they can go to cheer. They can bring signs, or balloons, or musical instruments, or anything that will make the Cheering Station festive and fun. Some people will spend their own money to bring stickers or candy or ice pops or other things to hand-out to the walkers. Cheering stations provide a great emotional lift for the walkers.

If your family or friends plan to meet you at a Cheering Station, make sure they understand that it is completely unpredictable as to when you will get there. This is especially important if they have brought along young kids or grumpy teenagers to cheer for you. Kids (and many adults) don't have the patience to stand out in the sun for hours at a time, just waiting for "their" walker to arrive. And this is particularly frustrating when they see other walkers coming by, and want to know "when will she get here?" If you have people planning to meet you, you might want to have them wait to head over to the Cheering Station until you've given them a call and let them know you are roughly an hour away (depending on where they are coming from, of course). In the meantime, they can find a playground, park, mall, or restaurant to wait in until they hear from you.

While there are official Cheering Stations, some cities also have unofficial Cheering Stations. This can be something as simple as a couple of people by the side of the road, cheering and clapping as walkers come by. In some cities, a group of merchants or a community group will get together to sponsor their own unofficial Cheering Station. There are some individuals who have become what are known as "walker stalkers." They might wear a distinctive article of clothing or costume, hold an amusing sign, and show-up at various places along the Route. If you are unable to participate in a Walk in your area (either as a walker or as crew), consider being a "walker stalker" for a few hours. It really helps lift the spirits of the walkers as they put in mile after mile.

**Bring** sunglasses. The glare from the road can get pretty rough after a few hours. If you are wearing sunglasses, or regular glasses, it is a good idea to have a strap or string to hold them on. That way, they are unlikely to fall into the porta-potty. It happens. If they fall in, you won't want to retrieve them.



Wear sunscreen, preferably sweat-proof sunscreen. You will be outside in the sun for many hours, and you will get badly burned if you don't apply, and regularly reapply, sunscreen. Pay particular attention to your ears, nose, and neck. I don't really care if you already have a wonderful tan, or if you never get a sunburn. On a Walk like this, the last thing you want is to have anything chafing against sunburned skin, or trying to sleep with sunburn. And since everyone (including people of African, Asian, Middle Eastern or Hispanic descent) can get sunburn, everyone needs to wear sunscreen. Wear sunscreen, even if it seems cloudy. I've seen people get sunburns of truly epic proportions on a cloudy day with intermittent rain showers.

People find that their lips get dry and sunburned while walking. Lip balm can help, and if you can find some with sunscreen in it, so much the better.

Do not use anything on the Walk that you haven't used during training, even if someone you know offers it. For example, your Walk may provide all sorts of great products from a sponsor. But as with any product, there is a chance you may have an allergy or sensitivity to some ingredient. You really do not want to find out during the Walk that you are allergic to the sunscreen you just smeared all over your body. Either test out the product before the Walk, or use it after the Walk. This is not just a hypothetical concern.

The first time I walked with my wife, I used a sunscreen on my face that I had never used before. When I started sweating, it dripped into my eyes, causing my eyes to turn bright red and start tearing uncontrollably. My wife was (as usual) walking way ahead of me, but had said she would meet me at the next rest stop. So when I walked into that next stop, I started looking around for my wife. A woman on the crew saw me crying and looking around, and asked if I was ok. I told her "I'm fine, I just lost my wife." She gave me a great big hug, and told me it was okay to cry. It took me a minute to realize that while I had meant "lost" as in "I can't find her", she thought I meant "lost" as in "she had died." As I stood there crying and laughing, explaining "I didn't lose her, I just misplaced her" she looked at me like I was crazy. Then she started backing away slowly. And it took a lot of water to get rid of the burning sensation in my eyes. Fortunately, a very kind person was watering the flowers in their front yard and let me borrow their garden hose to rinse out my eyes.



Not using anything on the walk that you didn't use in training also holds true for your gear. Don't buy a new fanny pack just before the Walk. You may find that it rubs on your hips, isn't comfortable on your lower back, or that the water bottles interfere with the swing of your arms on every step. Try your walking gear out before the Walk. In general, if you didn't train with it, don't bring it.

Stretch. Regularly. Thoroughly. Constantly. And not just your legs. Stretch your arms, your back, and your neck. You'd be amazed at how tight all your muscles can get from walking. This is particularly true if you have a bad habit of leaning while walking up or down hills. This puts a lot of strain on your lower back. The best solution (besides stretching) is to try to relax your body as you walk. Muscle tension is not a good thing.

At times, you may find yourself walking at a faster pace than the people immediately in front of you. While it is perfectly fine to pass them, there is a safe and courteous way to do so. Just say (in a kind and friendly tone of voice) "Passing on your left" and then actually pass that person on their left side. This will avoid any confusion, or collisions, and will let you move at your preferred (faster) pace while not offending the people who are walking at their preferred (slower) pace. Alternately, I suppose you could step out into the street to pass someone, but this could cause you to get hit by a car. You decide.

Also be aware of the fact that you may need to share the path or sidewalk with people on bicycles, people pushing strollers, people using rollerblades, runners, and recreational walkers. Be considerate; don't walk four abreast, because you're actually just creating a slow moving obstacle for other people. If a cyclist has a bell, he or she will usually ring it multiple times in an attempt to get you to clear out of the way, or call out "On your left." Sometimes a walker behind you will shout "Bike coming through!" Please pay attention to your surroundings. Cities do not typically close their streets, parks or paths for us; we have to share them with everyone else who would normally be using them, particularly on weekends.

On a related note, if you see an obstacle or a potential safety hazard while walking (e.g. broken glass, a low hanging tree branch, or patch of broken pavement), call it out to the people behind you to warn them. They may be temporarily distracted, and your warning may save them from a painful injury.

Chafing can be a problem while walking (anywhere that cloth rubs against skin, or skin rubs against skin, as you walk). You'll be very surprised to find some of the places that you may be chafing as you walk. If you find that you are getting irritation or a rash during training walks, go out and buy some Body Glide. It works extremely well and lasts a lot longer than Vaseline. You can find it in running stores and sporting goods stores, as well as online. Some people also use it on their feet, to prevent blisters.

Other people swear by diaper cream for helping sooth sore skin. Someone once provided me with a tip on chafing that I am quoting verbatim, since I have no idea what she is talking about, and I didn't want to ask:

*Chafing in genital areas can be an issue and I found using an ultra-thin sanitary napkin with a "dry-weave" lining works like a wicking fabric. They take up little space in a fanny pack and can be disposed of at each rest stop if necessary and replaced with a new one ("the pause that refreshes"). I would bet some men could use this tip too, but I'm sure they would never admit it!*

Wiggle your fingers, preferably with your hands above your head, as you walk to keep the blood flowing, and minimize the swelling in your hands. Yes, this looks ridiculous. But it will help. Another way to avoid swelling (if you are prone to this problem) is to fill a small zip top bag with ice, zip the bags shut, and hold one in each hand while you walk. The cold will help reduce the swelling in your fingers.



Don't hoard snacks. There's more food along the Route every few miles. You won't starve, I promise. Hoarding is unnecessary, and a bit selfish towards people behind you on the Walk. And why carry that extra weight with you if you don't need it?

There may also be dunking stations at the Rest Stop, where you can soak a bandana or hat in cold water. Do what you want, but I would suggest you pour some cold water from your water bottle onto your bandana or hat, and not dunk it into a container filled with water into which dozens of other people have already put their sweaty hats and bandanas. I'm not usually a cleanliness fanatic, but just think about it for a second. It's like soaking in bathwater that's been used by dozens of other sweaty people first! After the first few people use it, there is usually a thin oil slick (presumably from sunscreen) on the top of the water. It is a complete mystery to me why people are enthusiastic about dipping something in this, and then putting it on their body. I suppose they feel so hot and miserable by that point that they just don't care anymore?

There is a product called a neck chiller that you can soak in ice water and hang around your neck to help keep you cool. It is basically a long cloth tube filled with a special chemical that is very water absorbent. When you soak the chiller in ice cold water, it absorbs the water and then you put it around the back of your neck to help cool you off. They work great! Rather than soaking it in the skuzzy water in the dunking station, **bring** a quart size zip top bag in your fanny pack, and just fill that with clean ice water to soak your neck chiller, bandana or hat.

**Bring** extra socks during the day. Putting on clean socks at lunch is a thin slice of heaven. Pack extra dry socks in a zip top bag, so that you can put the dirty/sweaty ones back in your fanny pack without having them touch all your other things. Some people also like to **bring** a change of dry underwear as well.

By the way, if it is cold when you start walking in the morning, you can use your extra pair of socks as a pair of make-shift mittens to keep your hands warm. That way, your hands stay warm and you don't have to carry gloves all day when you'll need them only for the first hour or so.

Take your shoes off at lunch and let your feet breathe. When you take off your socks, check for hot spots, red spots or blisters. The sooner you treat them, the less trouble you'll have later. Wash your feet with some ice cold water from your water bottle (this is an old infantry trick to reduce swelling and refresh tired feet.) It's hard to describe how good this feels. Then let the water evaporate, which will also help cool those hot tired feet. Then dry them, reapply powder or Body Glide or whatever you prefer, and put on clean socks.

Some people **bring** a small spray bottle with Sea Breeze®. During your stops, spray your feet with it and let it evaporate for a nice cooling tingle! Dry your feet thoroughly and put clean socks on. You'll be amazed at how great your feet will feel after a bit of ice water or Sea Breeze!

It bears repeating, so I'll say it again. Don't wear an iPod while walking. It is against the Walk's rules. It is unsafe, as it will prevent you from hearing someone warn you that you're about to get hit by a bus while crossing the street. It also sends a subtle message to the walkers around you that you have absolutely no interest in talking to them. For people who feel the absolutely must have music while walking in their event and who can't sing, look into a set of lightweight battery powered speakers that you can attach to a backpack or fanny pack while walking. That will leave your ears "unplugged", though please keep the volume fairly low. Not everyone around you will have the same taste in music as you do.



Similarly, please don't talk on a cell phone, text or email while walking on the Route. If you want to make or take a call, or deal with messages, just step off to the side. Walking and talking/reading/typing on a cell phone, especially when you are tired, is the quickest way to trip and fall. Do you really want to miss the rest of the Walk, due to a sprained ankle, or getting run over by a bus, just for that one call? Or worse, cause someone else to trip and fall over you?

And if someone reminds you politely that you aren't supposed to be on the phone while walking, don't glare at them and say "Excuse me, I'm on the phone!" They know you are on the phone; that is why they are talking to you! And if you are wearing a Bluetooth earpiece, and seemingly talking to yourself, that is usually a pretty clear sign that you are on a phone call. Well, either that, or you have some other serious issues that might warrant having you step off the Route anyway.

Keep in mind that there are absolutely no electrical outlets on the Walk. That means not only that there is nowhere to plug in a blow dryer, but also that there is nowhere to recharge your cell phone. One alternative to make sure the battery lasts the whole weekend is to only turn it on a few times a day, to check messages and call anyone you need to call. Alternately, if that doesn't work for you, you can buy a small battery powered cell phone recharger that you can use to recharge your phone. There are some people who plan to recharge their phone at a coffee shop along the Route. While this will work in theory, they'll have to carry the recharger with them (and who needs the extra weight in their fanny

pack), hope that they find somewhere they can plug it in, and then sit around waiting for it to recharge. Not my idea of a good time.

Finally, remember it is a Walk, not a Race. There is a reason the word “Walk” is in the title of the event. You are never allowed to run on the Route. It is dangerous for both you and for the other walkers. If you are uncomfortable keeping to a walking pace and feel you must run, then this is not the event for you. Find an event that has the word “Race” or “Run” in the title.

## ***Porta-Potties***

They aren’t that bad. Really. In fact most walkers will tell you that they are the cleanest porta-potties that they have ever seen. I’m not sure that is the highest praise, but take it for what it is worth. They are cleaned daily, so if you are amongst the first couple of dozen people who use it, it won’t be bad at all. Later in the day, not so much, so don’t plan to linger.

Since there won’t be any running water nearby to use to wash your hands afterwards (and you will want to wash your hands afterwards), you’ll have to rely on chemical hand sanitizer. Sometimes the hand sanitizer will be in a dispenser inside the porta-potty or on a table set up outside the porta-potties. Just in case, it’s a good idea to keep a small container of hand sanitizer in your pack as a back-up. You can find them at a local drug store in the sample section for about a dollar. You may be able to find a small bottle of hand sanitizer with a clip that attaches to your fanny pack. This way you do not have to unzip, get it out, and then put it away each time you need it.

There are two important things to remember about the porta-potties:

- 1) Do not bring anything valuable into the porta-potty if there is even a remote possibility that it might accidentally fall in. Your best bet is to leave your fanny pack or back pack with a friend outside, or leave it safely on the ground outside the porta-potty.
- 2) When you enter the porta-potty, the first thing you should do, the very first thing, without exception, is to check to see if it is stocked with toilet paper. If it isn’t, now is an excellent time to either get a spare roll from the table outside (if the crew thought to leave them there), or to choose another porta-potty. While this is especially important in the middle of the night (when someone might not have taken the time to find a spare roll for the next “guest”), it can even happen in the middle of the day at a busy stop. You’ve been warned.

## ***Hydration***

You must **bring** your own water bottle or CamelBak® (which is basically a backpack with a built-in water container and a sipping tube.) Years ago, on some Walks, a sponsor gave water bottles away at Opening Ceremonies but that hasn’t happened in years. **Bring** your own water bottle or CamelBak.

If you are using a water bottle, **bring** one with a narrow spout for drinking, and a wide opening for refilling. A water bottle with a narrow spout is much easier to drink from while you are walking. A water bottle with a wide opening for refilling is much easier to refill; you can add ice (if available at a stop) and you won’t end up spilling water or sticky sports drink on your arm or foot each time you refill it. Plus it makes things go quicker if everyone can refill their bottles more rapidly.



On a related note, it is much quicker to refill your bottle from the wider opening of a gallon jug than from the narrow spigot on a cooler jug at the stop. So if you have a choice, use a gallon jug from the table to refill, instead of waiting on line for the narrow spigot. A gallon jug will also make it much easier to refill a CamelBak. The crew will pass a gallon jug across the table to you if you ask.

If you lose your water bottle, stop at a store and buy another one. You'll pass plenty of convenience stores, gas stations, and super markets. Do not count on getting a paper or plastic cup at each stop. First, that won't be enough liquid to keep you hydrated. Second, it isn't practical to walk while carrying a cup of water or sports drink. And third, the stops don't usually have paper or plastic cups anyway! So keep track of your water bottle, but if you do lose it along the Route, buy a replacement the first chance you get (even if it is just a bottle of water or energy drink with a sports top). As an alternative, you can just ask the crew to give you an empty gallon water bottle to carry, but you'll just look downright silly walking with it, it will be heavy, and they aren't easy to drink from without making a mess.

Let's talk for a moment about ice. At some of the stops, there may be a cooler full of ice, which you can put in your water bottle or CamelBak. On a hot day, there is nothing better than an ice cold drink. However, and this is important so pay attention, under absolutely no circumstances should you stick your bare hand in the ice. There should be a member of the crew there to serve you; please wait for them to use either a service spoon or a plastic food service glove to serve you. If by chance there is no crew person there, please use whatever utensil is provided. If there is no utensil, go find the nearest crew person and explain the following to them:

Why am I making such a big deal about this? It's because there are always a number of walkers who are either in chemotherapy or have recently completed chemotherapy. They have a compromised (reduced functioning) immune system and are susceptible to catching an infection from someone else. So if someone sticks their hand into the ice, and a few minutes later one of those walkers goes to get some of the ice, they stand a good chance of getting what is called an "opportunistic" infection. An opportunistic infection is an infection caused by a pathogen (bacterial, viral, fungal or protozoan) that usually does not cause disease in a healthy person (that is, the person with a healthy immune system who sticks their hand in the ice). A compromised immune system presents an "opportunity" for the pathogen that someone just "donated" to the ice to infect another person. Which means that one person's decision to get some ice by sticking their bare hand in the ice container puts another person's health (and life) at risk. We are doing these Walks to save people, not to knock them off because we're in a rush!



Remember this. If you are thirsty, you are dehydrated. If you are not stopping to use the porta-potties at almost every stop, you are dehydrated. If you feel a little "woozy from the sun" or have an upset stomach, you are probably dehydrated (or hyponatremic, but that is the next section).

You need to drink a lot of water and a lot of sports drink. You'd be amazed at how much water you will be losing, even if the weather is not hot or sunny. Your body uses water in the process of producing energy. So you aren't just losing water through perspiration; you are also losing it through your accelerated metabolism as you walk. And the metabolic process that produces energy also produces heat, which your body compensates for through perspiration. Hell, you are losing water at every step.

One way to check if you are properly hydrated is to check the color of your urine. It should be very pale yellow, almost clear. If it is the color of a bright yellow Post-It® Note, or even worse, a golden yellow color, you are already severely dehydrated, and need to start drinking more ASAP. For those of us who stand while urinating, it is relatively easy to tell the color of your urine. Otherwise, a few drops on a clean piece of toilet paper, while seated, should give you a good idea of the color. If it is yellow, you are already in trouble, and you better start drinking more, and I mean now!

The only beverages at stops and at lunch are water and sports drink. By the way, the brand of sports drink could vary from year to year, and from event to event, and the flavor of sports drink will vary from stop to stop on the same Walk. Just because the grape flavor is available at one stop doesn't mean it will be available at another. The crew can only serve the flavors they've been given, so please don't argue with them about why they don't have your favorite flavor! They don't order it; they just mix and serve it.

If you really need a soft drink or coffee during the day, feel free to stop along the Route and buy one. Some walkers think it is "illegal" to drink or eat anything other than what is provided. Not at all. If you pass a Starbucks, and want your favorite 700-calorie "caramel-mocha-soy-decaf-frappa-cappa-whatever" (I told you I'm not a coffee drinker), go for it. If you want to buy a doughnut, or a burger, or a can of soda, go for it. And if you happen to be on a Walk with me, and bring me a Diet Pepsi, you will earn my eternal gratitude, a huge hug, and maybe an extra pack of cookies if I'm on the lunch crew!

There are usually soft drinks, water, coffee and tea at dinner. At breakfast, there will be orange juice, coffee, tea and hot chocolate. If you drink diet soda with breakfast (we all have our little idiosyncrasies), stash a can in your tent the night before, and then bring it with you to breakfast.

## ***Hyponatremia***

You have to drink both water and sports drink. While it is possible to become mildly ill from drinking way too much sports drink, the worst case is usually an upset stomach or other gastric distress. On the other hand, if you don't drink enough sports drink, you are at risk of hyponatremia.

Hyponatremia is a very serious medical condition that occurs when you lose electrolytes as you sweat, but you don't replace them. And while pretzels and chips may replace the sodium (from the salt), they won't replace the magnesium, the potassium, or other vital electrolytes in your blood. If you keep drinking water, and sweating out your electrolytes, you risk diluting your blood (literally), and screwing up your electrolyte balance. You'll start with a headache, then nausea, diarrhea, vomiting and eventually seizures, coma and death. Fun stuff, huh? And if you have hyponatremia and you drink even more water, you'll get even sicker from what is euphemistically called "water intoxication." Sound fun? It isn't!

I'm pretty low key about most things, but this is not one of them. Don't mess around with hyponatremia. I don't care that you found magic jelly beans that contain electrolytes. I don't care that your cousin's next-door neighbor is a nurse who said it was okay to only drink water as long as you eat pretzels. I don't care that your father-in-law is a retired proctologist and said "all that sports drink stuff is a bunch of hooey." And I don't care if you don't like the taste of sports drink. Just drink the damn stuff.

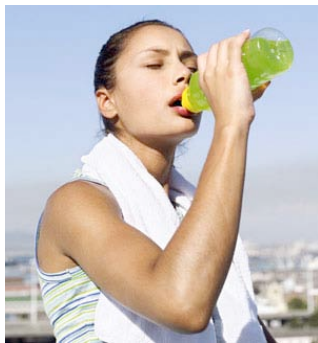


On every walk, there are always walkers in the medical tent at night that didn't follow this advice. And if the weather is warm, the medical tent may be overflowing with people who are only there because they are too stubborn to drink the sports drink. Sometimes they pass out in the showers, sometimes in their tent, and sometimes in the dining hall. Then they get to spend a few hours in the medical tent, or take an ambulance ride to the hospital, or have to call their family to take them home. And all of this could have been avoided if they simply made a point of drinking a lot of sports drink.

A good rule of thumb is to switch between water and sports drinks at every stop. You should be finishing a bottle between every stop anyway, and this will allow you to balance your intake. If you can't drink sports drink straight, then dilute it and adjust the amount you drink accordingly. This is important even on a cool and cloudy day. If it is hot and sunny, you are asking for serious medical trouble if you don't drink a lot of sports drink.

On some of the Walks, I help out with triage in the medical tent in the evening (I was licensed as an EMT). When a walker comes in (either on their own, or after being carried or wheeled in after they almost passed out) and complains of dizziness and nausea, among my first questions are: "When was the last time you urinated?" And "What were you drinking today?" In most cases, the answers are "hours ago" and "mostly water." By now, you know the answers should be "In the last hour." and "Both water and sports drinks. Lots of water and lots of sports drink!"

If they are too far gone, they'll need an IV, and maybe even transport via ambulance to the hospital. If they are not too bad (yet!), it usually takes six or seven 12 ounce cups of diluted sports drink (50% water, 50% sports drink) over the course of an hour for them to feel better, need to urinate and be able to avoid that IV. Think about this for a second. If they had to drink more than a half gallon of liquid before they had to urinate, do you think they were drinking enough during the day? They could have avoided the misery and the trip to medical if they had just been drinking the right things in the right quantities during the day.



There are different brands of sports drinks on different Walks. Your best bet is to find out what will be on your Walk, and try it beforehand. If it causes you serious stomach problems, or if you hate the taste of it, then find another brand you can tolerate and **bring** your own drink powder. You can bring your own drink powder in small zip top bags in your fanny pack, and mix it up in cold water as needed.

Unless you have consulted a licensed physician who specializes in sports medicine, and who told you personally that you don't need to drink sports drink during long periods of exercise in the sun, do not take a risk. Each year, people get sick while walking, and despite all their training and hard work at fundraising, they end up spending the day in the Emergency Department with an IV. I've seen people have seizures and end up spending a week in the hospital. Don't let it be you this year. If you don't like the taste of sports drink, dilute it. Or think of it as medicine, and just drink some of it while holding your nose. If you can only have a particular brand and flavor of sports drink (perhaps the lemon/lime flavor of an organic vegan brand manufactured by Buddhist monks in the foothills of the Himalayas) bring the powder with you. But drink the damn sports drink. Any questions?

## ***Interlude***

It's a good idea to watch where you sit, especially on the grass. Once, while crewing, I got to talking with a team of women who were sitting on a curb, eating their lunch. One of them decided to sit on the grass instead. Turns out there was some sort of insect on the grass, and this insect decided to take a large bite out of this woman's rear-end.



As you'd expect, she jumps up in pain. But she didn't just comment on the pain. No, she proceeded to pull down her running shorts, bend over and ask me (why is it always me?) "Did I get a bug bite on my ass?" To this day, I do not know why she asked me, and not one of the eleven women from her team that were sitting right there (including her stepmother!) So I'm standing there, looking at the red mark on her bare butt (and only the red mark, I swear!) Relying on a combination of 18 years of formal education and my EMT license, I informed her that "yup, looks like you got stung."

Suddenly, one of the Walk staff people calls me on my walkie-talkie. So I politely excuse myself (as the walker finally pulled up her shorts!), and asked the staff person what she wanted. Seems she was standing about 15 feet behind me, watching this whole adventure. The staff person proceeds to tell me (quite formally) "You should not encourage women to pull down their shorts while on the Route."

I was going to ask her why she was under the impression that I had been encouraging it, or whether it was ok for me to encourage women to pull down their shorts as long as it was not on the Route, but figured there was no way I was going to win this argument. So, for your sake and mine, watch where you sit, especially on the grass.

## ***The Crew***

The Walk would not be possible without the crew -- hundreds of people who volunteer their time for the entire weekend and who have been preparing for the Walk for months. The crew typically wakes up earlier than the walkers (some as early as 3:30 AM), stays up later than the walkers (some until 11:00PM, some even overnight), and does hard physical labor all day while doing their best to make sure that everyone is safe, happy, healthy, safe, well-fed, hydrated, safe, comfortable, and most importantly, safe. When someone on the crew has provided you with food, water, help, or simply a smile, please remember to say "Thank you." A handshake, a hug, a smile, or a wave (using all five fingers, not just the middle one) is very much appreciated by everyone on the crew.

There may be times during your Walk when things don't go entirely smoothly, times when the weather doesn't cooperate, or when things have to change unexpectedly, or when you simply don't like what you have been asked to do, or asked not to do. Please try not to argue with or yell at the crew. They are simply following their instructions and doing what is required to keep you safe. Just because you don't necessarily understand or agree with what they are telling you does not mean that there is not a perfectly legitimate reason for what you are being told. Remember that they are just as tired, just as hot (or cold), and just as wet as you are. And they will be working very long hours under those conditions with little rest. They are doing everything they can to help make your Walk easier and safe. So please remember to smile and say "Thank you." A hug is even better.

If you're on the crew, remember that you are there to ensure the safety of the walkers and to ensure that they have a positive experience. While someone on the crew can't do much to impact the current

year's fundraising, your efforts this year will help tremendously with next year's fundraising. "How?" you ask. If a walker has a positive experience on their walk, they'll come back next year, raise even more money, and bring along additional walkers who will also raise more money. And one of the greatest factors in a walker's having a positive experience is the attitude, support, and kindness from the crew.

## ***In Camp (The Wellness Village)***

When you get to Camp (also known as "The Wellness Village" on some Walks), the first thing you should do is get something to eat and drink -- before you put up your tent, before you get your gear, and before you shower. Go to the dining tent (the extremely large tent in the center of the Camp), get something to eat and drink and sit for a few minutes. This serves two purposes. First, it gets you out of the weather (sun, rain, whatever) and gives your body a chance to calm down from all those hours of walking. Second, it gives your body some much needed nutrition and hydration.



If you don't want to eat dinner yet, that is ok. Just sit there and drink something (a soft drink, or some water, or more sports drink), and have something to eat. If dinner isn't being served yet, or you aren't up for dinner just yet, the Information Services tent in Camp always has snack food available (the same food that is at the rest stops, including chips, granola bars, fruit, pretzels, etc.)

By the way, no one is keeping track of how many times you go into or out of the dining tent. So you can stop there when you get to Camp, then go put up your tent and get your gear, then go back to the dining tent for dinner, then go shower, and then go back again to the dining tent for the evening entertainment.

If you are in to Camp early enough, grab your water bottle and help other walkers set up their tents. Go stretch. Cheer on the walkers as they enter the camp; this is especially important for the walkers who are coming in towards the end of the day and really need the morale boost. After you are done cheering, go relax in the dining tent, share stories with fellow participants, and make new friends. Enjoy the atmosphere and experience.

Do not climb into your tent for a nap. Let me repeat that: Do not climb into your tent to take a nap. A tent, under even a little sunshine, can quickly heat up and turn into a sauna. Even with the door open, you will still be sweating as you sleep. And since other walkers won't want to disturb a fellow tired walker, you will be in your tent until your tent mate shows up hours later and can't wake you. Instead of an evening at Camp, you'll get a fun ride in an ambulance (siren included), and win a night with an IV. If you really need to lie down, do it outside on the grass.

When it is time for you to shower (after you've had a chance to rest and eat), there are a few things you need to know. On each Walk, there may be some private showers, where you can undress and shower in complete privacy. In contrast, the shower trucks are semi-private, where you might have a small curtained area in which you can undress and then dress again, or even a group changing area.

Anyone is welcome to use any available private showers. In general, some people are more comfortable undressing in private. Some survivors are uncomfortable with the idea of undressing in front of others as a result of scars from their surgery. Other people may have concerns about undressing in front of

others, due to a variety of physical issues or based on their own personal history. The lines for the private showers tend to be fairly long, so if you don't feel strongly about needing them, it might not be worth the wait to you.

Bring comfortable clothing to put on for dinner and the evening activities. Big baggy sweatpants, a t-shirt, sweatshirt and a pair of loose shoes or slippers make for ideal evening attire. Depending on the weather report, bring a hat and a pair of light gloves as well, as it cools off quickly when the sun goes down. By the way, some guys have suggested that if the women on the Walk wore lacy negligees to dinner, we'd attract more men to the Walk, but I have no opinion on that topic.



Each evening, in the dining tent, there are a variety of announcements, presentations, and forms of entertainment. Sometimes there is even dancing, which is an amazing thing given how tired everyone should be by that point in the evening. It's usually a great deal of fun, and a nice way to meet all sorts of interesting people. Rather than rushing back to sit in your sleeping tent or your hotel room, make it a point to spend some time hanging out in the dining tent. Depending on what time you get in after walking, there is usually plenty of time to relax, shower, and eat before the evening's activities start. In addition, there are usually a number of other areas with stretching, yoga, and materials from various vendors and event sponsors, so make sure to check them out as well.

### ***Fainting in the Shower***



On almost every Walk, someone passes out in the showers. Why? Because they didn't keep hydrating after they finished walking that day. When you take a hot shower, your blood vessels dilate (expand). If you're dehydrated, this may cause your blood pressure to drop, resulting in dizziness, or even loss of consciousness.

Imagine the situation. There you are, in the shower, completely naked and covered in soapy water. Suddenly, you pass out. Maybe you're lucky and only get a bruise when you fall. Maybe you are not so lucky, and end up with a cut from where you bang your head. Either way, you're lying naked and dazed on the floor of the shower.

At this point, the nice person in the adjacent shower goes running outside to get help. They'll ask the first crew person they see for help, and I promise you, it will be a man!

So this guy will go and help haul your naked soapy body out of the shower, as you slowly regain consciousness and become aware of exactly what is going on. I speak from experience when I tell you that this is not as much fun for the men on the crew as you might think. First, your naked soapy body is slippery. Second, there are other women standing around, so the poor guy is terrified that he might grab hold of the wrong body part and be accused of being a pervert. And third, 110 pounds of anything, naked or not, soapy or not, is heavy. I assume that all women weigh 110 pounds or less.

So do the hard-working crew a favor. When you get to Camp, keep hydrating before you shower. Eat dinner (or even a snack) before you shower. As an added incentive, the food line is usually shorter than the shower lines in the late afternoon, so set up your tent, grab some dinner and then go take your shower in the early evening.

Otherwise, if it is once again my turn to haul your naked soapy body out of the shower, I promise I'll be whistling *Getting to Know You, Getting to Know All About You*. And if I see you the next day, I promise to say (loudly!) "Hi, I didn't recognize you with your clothes on!" One of these years, I'm going to make up a commemorative souvenir:



## ***Medical Stuff***

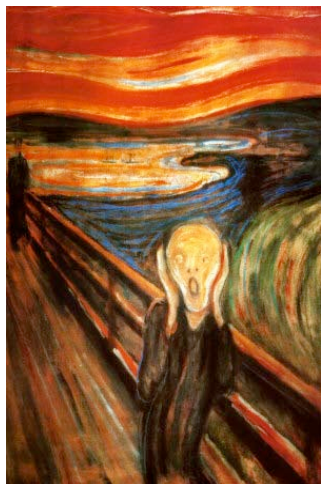
There will be a medical tent in camp, staffed by licensed and highly qualified physicians, physician assistants and nurses, as well as other health care specialists. There is often a long line of people waiting to see them. If you take good care of yourself during the day, and visit the medical tents along the Route to treat minor issues, you reduce the chance that you'll need to wait on a long line at camp to treat what is now a major issue.

Do not try to hide from the medical crew. Many people worry that a relatively minor medical problem will cause them to be removed from the Walk by the medical crew. Instead of getting help when they can be easily treated, they wait until they are in serious trouble, and are at risk of an ambulance ride to the nearest hospital. The medical crew is there to help, and they will only prevent you from walking when it would be a serious health risk for you to do so.

To avoid a free ride to the hospital (complete with sirens and flashing lights), follow proper hydration, nutrition, and stretching practices, and seek help before little problems become big problems. And while the medical team is available around the clock, be considerate and go for help during normal hours when you feel only mildly awful, and don't wait until the middle of the night when you are feeling extremely awful.

If you have to visit the medical tent in Camp or on the Route, make sure to share the details of your medical history with the medical professionals, and bring along your list of medications and dosages. While you will have completed a basic medical form as part of the registration process, it isn't a comprehensive medical history. This isn't a doctor's office; it is a large tent in the middle of a big field, and depending on the weather, it can be extremely busy. So if you are in the midst of chemotherapy, or are pregnant, or only have one kidney, now is an excellent time to mention it! Don't hope they'll guess,

and don't be embarrassed to mention anything (and I mean anything!) that might be even remotely relevant to your treatment. It is better to mention something that is irrelevant (e.g. a bunion, halitosis or chronic flatulence) than to skip over something that is relevant (e.g. asthma, heart disease and a history of kidney failure). This is one of those cases where the life you save may literally be your own.



Some people like to use a cream/ointment to help with sore muscles. Some brands include BenGay®, Icy Hot®, and BioFreeze®. These creams contain menthol, which provides a cooling and then heating sensation that some people find helps to relieve muscle pain after a long day of walking. However, like most things in life, just because a little bit is good does not mean that a lot is better. One walker stripped down in the privacy of her tent and slathered a layer of cream all over her body. All over her body. Then it started to heat up. And heat up... I'll share her exact words, because mine won't do them justice:

*I almost killed myself. Due to my late check-in I was not assigned a tent mate. I thank God for this otherwise it could have been considered a murder/suicide.*

So, if you do choose to use one of those creams, use them only where necessary.

Some people develop what is known as "that funky road rash" on their legs. This is particularly likely on hot days. The medical term is capillaritis, and it looks like red pepper flakes sprinkled in patches on your thighs or calves. It is caused by leakage of red blood cells from small, superficial blood vessels that result in pinpoint-like hemorrhages (called petechiae). Capillaritis is common in people with long periods of walking or standing, especially in warm weather. Sound familiar?

Capillaritis looks worse than it is. There is nothing you can do to prevent it, or cure it. It doesn't usually itch until you notice it, and then it might bother you, just because you think about it. If it itches, put on a topical anti-itch ointment or some cool water. If you treat it with expensive creams and lotions, it will take seven to fourteen days to go away. If you ignore it, it will go away on its own in a week or two, as your body naturally reabsorbs the tiny drops of blood from under your skin.

Finally, you may have some special needs during the Walk. Perhaps you need to pump breast milk during the Walk. Perhaps you need a CPAP machine while sleeping. Perhaps you need special medications that have to be kept refrigerated. None of these are unusual, and you are not going to be the first person with that sort of special need on a Walk. All you need to do is contact your Walker Coach or Walker Buddy (or whatever they happen to be called on your Walk) and make the special arrangements well in advance. They will work with you to figure out how to accommodate your needs within the structure of the Walk.



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## ***Staying Warm at Night***

It can be hard getting out of a toasty warm sleeping bag in your tent in the morning, especially if it was a cool night (and even 50 degrees will feel cold after sleeping in a warm sleeping bag.) Putting on clothing that also cooled down to a brisk 50 degrees is not fun!

An old camping trick is to put the zip top bag with your clothes for the morning in the bottom of your sleeping bag as you sleep. It will warm up to your body temperature overnight, and your clothing will be a lot more comfortable to put on in the morning. Some people use their bag of clothing for the next day as a pillow, thus avoiding having to take up space in their duffle packing a dedicated pillow. And if you've gotten the air out of the bag before you sealed it, your clothing won't be too wrinkled in the morning (or at least not any more wrinkled than it already was in the bag).



Wear layers at night, e.g. a short sleeve shirt, then a long sleeve shirt, then a sweatshirt or fleece. Your body heat gets trapped between the layers, and helps insulate you from the cold. Wear warm socks while you are sleeping.

If you wear a warm hat to bed (e.g. a ski cap), it will keep you much warmer while you sleep, since you tend to lose a lot of heat from your head. And no one but your tent mate will ever know. This is particularly helpful if you don't have much hair on your head, or if you go to bed with wet hair. If your feet or your head are cold, then the rest of you will feel cold.

Some people dread the idea of being cold in the morning, when they have to get out of a nice warm bed or sleeping bag to strip off their sleeping clothes in a chilly tent so they can put on their walking clothes. If you are among them, you might want to put on your walking clothes for the next day after your evening shower, and then add a layer of sweats (pants and shirt) to sleep in overnight. In the morning, you just pull off the sweats and you are ready to go, without exposing your bare skin to the cool morning air. As someone told me "I don't know about you but I don't get dirty while I sleep and do you really think anyone notices wrinkles while you're walking the 3-Day?" As an alternative, you can at least put on your underwear for the next day after you shower, and then in the morning, you only need to take off your sleeping clothes and put on your walking clothes.

If your feet tend to swell, you can use your gear bag or fanny pack as a foot rest as you sleep. Keeping your feet elevated while sleeping may reduce the swelling that occurred while walking all day. Put your gear bag beneath the end of your air pad or air mattress to keep your feet inclined while you sleep. You may find sleeping on your side or stomach reduces the pressure that lying on your back might create for your knees in this position.

When you pack, pick up a chemical heat-pack at the drugstore (typically used for muscle soreness). They come in a "neck" version and a "lower back" version, and are usually good for 10-12 hours of warmth, which means you can put them on before bed, and they'll keep you warm all night. Use one (or both) on a cold night to help stay nice and toasty. These are especially wonderful when you have to go out in the cool night air to use the porta-potties. If you follow all this advice, you should have a warm and comfortable night's sleep.

## ***Interlude***

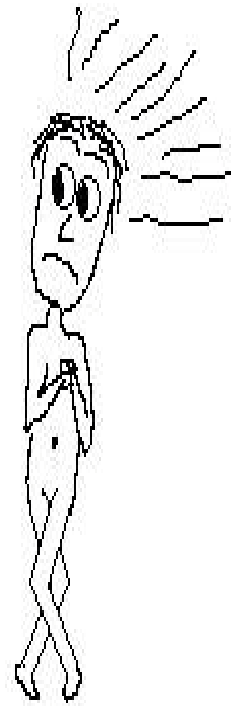
### ***Porta-potty Etiquette***

#### **For Men:**

- Do not bring in anything to read. Yes, I know you usually do, but this time, make an exception. First, you don't really want to spend any extra time inside. Second, there is likely to be a long line of uncomfortable women waiting outside. If they see you exit the porta-potty carrying a newspaper, we can't guarantee your safety.
- Make sure to lift the seat and aim carefully while standing. Your wife or girlfriend may tolerate sitting on a wet seat because you are otherwise a really wonderful guy. The thousands of other women on your Walk are not likely to think you are so wonderful.
- Put the seat down when you're done. Even if you don't do this at home, you need to do it now.
- If you forget to put the seat down, do not linger in the area. Run!

#### **For Women:**

- It is not a phone booth. Do not use your time inside to call your family. First, no matter how much they love you, they don't want you to be thinking of them at a time like this. Second, if you happen to drop the phone inside, it is gone forever. There is no amount of whining, begging, or crying that will convince a member of the crew to get it for you.
- You should be drinking enormous quantities of water and sports drink, and as a result you will have to pee almost constantly. Since you may normally pee almost constantly, you may not notice a difference. We realize that the porta-potty is not the most pleasant environment, but that is no excuse to cut back on your liquid consumption during the Walk.
- At night, if you are properly hydrating, you will undoubtedly have to get up at least once to pee. Remember not to let the door of the porta-potty slam shut, waking everyone for miles around.
- Remember exactly where your tent is located. At 3:00 AM, walking up and down the rows of identical tents, calling out your tent mate's name in a loud whisper is considered gauche.
- When you walk into the porta-potty, you'll see a large open plastic container attached to the wall. It is not a garbage receptacle. It is not for holding an extra roll of toilet paper. It is definitely not a fanny pack holder. It is a urinal. Now you know.



## ***What You'll Be Eating***

It's a Walk, not a Diet. You will not lose weight during your Walk. I realize that this is not what you were hoping to hear, but I thought I'd mention it anyway.

Think of the Walk as the world's longest buffet line. You will probably be eating non-stop from the time you wake up until the time you go to sleep. The food is actually pretty good for cafeteria-style food, though it is intentionally not low-calorie.

What should you expect in terms of food? First thing to remember is that you have to register (in advance) as to whether you want the regular or vegetarian meals. You need to choose in advance so that the Event staff knows how much food to order. It would be wasteful for them to pay for all sorts of extra meals, just in case someone might want to vary their selections each meal. It's a fundraising event, not a cruise line. Also keep in mind that the alternative option is vegetarian, not vegan. Many of the vegetarian options include cheese or eggs.

Finally, if you have particular dietary needs (e.g. kosher, halal, gluten-free, etc.) you should make sure to speak with the Event staff well in advance, so they can help you prepare. In some cases, walkers with very unique needs will bring their own food to the Walk. The Event staff will make sure to have it available for them at Camp for breakfast and dinner and waiting for them at the lunch site, so they can have a healthy filling meal that meets their dietary requirements without having to carry it with them all day. However, this needs to be arranged well in advance, so please don't wait until the last minute to discuss this with your walker coach or walker buddy. Also bear in mind that this is intended for people with medical or religious needs, not for people who are just picky eaters.

If you register as a vegetarian, you may get something that you will have to show to receive the vegetarian meal option at each meal. Depending on the Event, this may be a wristband, or some sort of icon on the Walk credentials that you'll wear around your neck. On those events, the crew that will be serving your food has been told to only serve the vegetarian food to walkers and crew with that wristband or icon on their credentials. This is to ensure that only people who have registered for vegetarian receive a vegetarian meal. If they didn't do that, some people who hadn't registered for vegetarian might take a vegetarian meal (because "it looked tasty") and then the last vegetarians to arrive at that meal wouldn't have anything to eat! Sure, the event could spend the money to buy extra vegetarian meals just in case, but is that really the best place to be spending donations? So if you do register for vegetarian meals, make sure your wristband or credentials has the correct designation if necessary. If it doesn't, you can go by the Information Services tent in Camp to get it fixed.

The menu options tend to be fairly consistent year after year. Breakfast usually includes some combination of eggs, hot cereal, potatoes, packaged muffins, fresh fruit, and some sort of breakfast meat (sausage or bacon). And of course, coffee, tea, hot chocolate, milk and juice. There is typically no specific vegetarian option for breakfast, since you can just not take the breakfast meat and everything else should be fine for a vegetarian. Breakfast is served on a buffet line, and you'll sit in the dining tent to eat.



Lunch for the meat eaters is typically some type of poultry sandwich (chicken breast and cheese on a roll, sliced turkey and cheese on bread, chicken in a wrap, etc.). Lunch for vegetarians may be a grilled portabella mushroom on a roll, or hummus and veggies, or a vegetarian wrap. All lunches include some sort of side salad (potato salad, pasta salad, coleslaw, whatever) chips, fruit, and a cookie. At the Lunch Stop on the Route, you'll pick up your food at a table, and then find a place to sit on the grass or the pavement.

Dinner at Camp for the meat eaters is usually pasta with meatballs or meat sauce, or some type of chicken cutlet. Dinner for vegetarians may be pasta with a primavera type of sauce or a vegetarian cutlet with sauce. Dinner will also include salad, bread, vegetables, and a dessert. There is typically coffee, tea, and an assortment of canned soft drinks. Dinner is served on a buffet line, and you'll sit in the dining tent to eat.

Along the Route, some of the Stops will have a range of snacks, which may include fruit (typically cut up bananas and oranges, or pre-washed grapes in little single serving bags), veggies (baby carrots in single serving bags), salty snacks (pretzels, chips, corn nuts or sunflower seeds in individual serving bags), granola bars, and cookies. Keep in mind that not every Stop will have food. Typically, "Rest Stops" or "Pit Stops" have food, drinks, medical, and porta-potties. The Lunch Stop will have lunch, drinks, medical and porta-potties, but none of the snacks that are at the Rest or Pit Stops. "Quick Stops" or "Grab and Go's" will only have drinks and porta-potties. So plan your calorie consumption accordingly.



You need to consume plenty of calories, as you'll be burning plenty of calories. You will also be drinking massive quantities of water and sports drink, and eating a lot of salty food. If you thought you retained water in the past, you ain't seen nothing yet!

It's not unusual to weigh significantly more on the Monday after your Walk than you did on the day before your Walk. If you are expecting that you will lose weight, think again. The good news is that the water weight you gained will disappear in a couple of days as you get back to your normal routine. But I'd strongly suggest you not weigh yourself immediately after the Walk. You won't like what you see.

The important thing to remember is that you absolutely must eat and drink. Trying to limit your food and liquid consumption during the Walk is a guaranteed recipe for medical problems. Besides, you'll be building up quite an appetite on the Walk, which makes the food taste especially good. One of the most memorable meals of my life was the spaghetti and meatballs that they served the evening of the first day of my first Walk, because I was so ravenously hungry. And if you're lucky enough to have the peanut butter and jelly graham cracker sandwiches at a stop, you have to try them! You can thank me later.

Research studies show that your metabolism continues to be in high gear for up to 48 hours after you've finished walking on an event like this, so you'll continue to burn more calories even after you're home!

## ***What If...?***

For those about to walk for the first time, I thought this might help address those nagging questions:

***I am so nervous!*** – Ok, you're nervous. So what?

***What if I can't walk all the way?*** – Who cares? No one is keeping track but you.

***What if I get a blister?*** – What if you do?

***What if I don't know anyone?*** – You'll meet hundreds of nice people.

***What if I packed too much?*** – You did.

***What if I didn't pack something?*** – You'll live.

***What if it rains?*** – You'll get wet; you won't drown.

***What if there's lightning?*** – You'll be moved to a safe indoor location.

***What if it's cold?*** - You won't freeze to death.

***What if it is hot?*** – You'll sweat.

***What if I don't like the food?*** – You'll pass 472 convenience stores; you'll manage.

***What if I don't like the porta-potties?*** – No one "likes" the porta-potties. You'll survive.

***What if I don't like the showers?*** – Ok, don't shower. But check with your tent mate first.

***What if I can't sleep in a tent?*** – You'll be tired; you'll sleep.

***What if...?***



Enough already with the "What if's?" You'll do fine. Relax and enjoy the experience. Because of the money you've raised, money is going to go towards early detection programs. In a few months, a woman or a man is going to take advantage of one of those programs and is going to find out that they have breast cancer. But because of you, they will have found out early enough to get treatment -- and to survive.

They're going to watch their kids grow up, and be at their concerts and games. They're going to go to their graduations and weddings. They're going to get to see their grandchildren. All because of you. While they'll never know it, you will know it. Any more questions? No?

## ***Keeping Things in Perspective***

In October 2004, a hurricane hit on Saturday afternoon of the Washington DC 3-Day. Really. The weather got pretty rough by evening, but all the walkers were off the Route by 3PM and bused to the relocation site, a convention center where we had "the world's largest slumber party." The hurricane blew through overnight, and we woke up Sunday morning to beautiful sunny skies and a great day for walking.

The last walker off the Route on Saturday was my friend Mary Barber, from Philadelphia. The only thing Mary loved more than her hometown of Philadelphia was the 3-Day. Since there was no 3-Day in Philadelphia in 2004, she came down to DC to walk.

Mary was a survivor, in all senses of the word, and she was absolutely drenched that day as she struggled to finish the Route. I mean she couldn't have been any wetter if she had jumped into a

swimming pool. When she walked into the relocation site, she was smiling from ear to ear, as the rain dripping off her poncho formed a large puddle where she stood. I gave her a big hug and handed her a towel. Mary gave me a funny look, like "what the hell good is that going to do?" Then she said "I've been through chemo, this is nothing."

A few weeks after that, Mary sent me an email. In it, she wrote:

*I will do whatever it takes to see this demon gone, and we will celebrate together to honor those who made it, and remember and honor those who paved the way to the Cure with their struggles.*

Mary lost her final battle with cancer about one year later. We buried Mary on January 13, 2006 in a beautiful old Catholic church in a wonderful Philadelphia city neighborhood. The poinsettias were still on the altar from Christmas, there was a fabulous old pipe organ, and the sun peeked in through the most amazing stained glass windows.



Mary won't be there to celebrate with us when we finally find that cure. But those of us who knew Mary Barber know that she never let anything, including a hurricane, get in her way as she did everything in her power to fight this terrible disease for herself and others.

Mary always "encouraged" (pushed, nagged, browbeat, whatever) the women she knew, including her employees, to get regular checkups, including mammograms.

In the summer of 2005, Mary "encouraged" one of the young women who worked for her to get an annual exam, including a mammogram. The young woman's doctor told her that she didn't need a mammogram because she was "too young." When Mary heard that, she told the woman to find a new doctor. And as those of us who knew Mary will tell you, when Mary told you to do something, you did it. So the woman called her doctor to request her medical records to take with her to the new doctor. When the doctor asked why she was changing physicians, the woman told him "Mary told me to switch to a doctor who was up to date." And she did.

A lot of women are alive today because of Mary Barber, because of her commitment to this cause, and because of the life that she lived. A lot of women are alive, but we lost Mary. I miss her a lot. You would have liked her.

So what does this have to do with you? Sometimes it will rain on a Walk. Sometimes it will be cold. Or it will be hot. Or there'll be a problem with the signs that mark the Route, and you'll walk a few blocks extra by mistake. Or they'll run out of ice or your favorite snack at a Rest Stop. Or there will be a long wait at the showers, or a long line at dinner, or you can't find your gear bag, or you step in a huge puddle. Whatever.

Try to keep things in perspective. Remember that we walk not just for ourselves, but for our loved ones, and for the ones we lost. I once walked behind a young woman who had a picture of her mother on the back of her shirt. Below it, she had written "Mom, I'd walk a million miles for one more day with you." I still get choked-up thinking about it. But when the inevitable glitch occurs on a Walk, it's experiences like that, and people like my friend Mary, that remind me to keep things in perspective.

## *Closing Ceremonies*



By mid-afternoon on Sunday, you should arrive at the Closing Ceremonies site. Depending on your event, it may be the same location as your Opening Ceremonies site (typical on the Avon Walk), or a different location (typical on the 3-Day). In either case, Closing Ceremonies are roughly the same.

When you get to the Closing Ceremonies site, there will be some sort of entrance area (think of it as the “finish line”). People often like to have their picture taken at that point, or with some nearby signage, so either have your camera ready to ask someone to take your picture or arrange to meet a friend or family member at that point so that they can take your picture. Depending on the number of walkers on your event and what time you get in, that area can get pretty crowded. If you are meeting someone at Closing, arrange a specific meeting point or make sure your respective cell phones are turned on.

Once you arrive at Closing, you’ll pick up your victory t-shirt and then have some time to wait until Closing Ceremonies begin. Depending on how quickly you walked on that last day, you may have a few hours to wait, because Closing Ceremonies don’t start until the last walker is in. The Walk starts together as a community, and we end together as a community. While you wait, there will be porta-potties, snacks, water, and sports drink available for you. You can either wait in a holding area (only open to walkers and crew) or you can wait with your family or friends outside the holding area until everyone lines up to start Closing Ceremonies.

You may be tempted to grab your gear and head home before Closing. Please don’t. I’ve heard from many walkers who missed Closing their first year, and regretted it in later years, once they understood what they had missed. Closing Ceremonies are moving and meaningful, and provide a nice ending to a special weekend. I’ve been to dozens of them, and each one is special to me. And if your friends or family are nagging you to leave early, tell them that you earned the right to stay for Closing.

Each Walk has a special process for Closing Ceremonies, but basically the walkers, survivors, and crew walk into Closing as separate groups, to the cheers and applause of both the other groups and of their collective family and friends. On some Walks, you’ll see people take off one running shoe and hold it up in the air when the survivors come in. This is meant as a tribute to their courage, and in memory of those we’ve lost to this terrible disease. It’s not required (some of us will have trouble bending down at that point, let alone taking off a running shoe), but it is very touching. And at least now you’ll now why people are doing it. A first time walker once asked me “Why was everyone airing out one of their shoes in the middle of Closing?”

Before returning home, someone will need to pick up your gear bag. It will be arranged in groups, according to tent sections. So when you left Camp that morning, you would have dropped your bag on the nearest truck, which was the one for your tent section. If you were in tent J29, then you’d put your bag on the “J” truck, and at Closing, you’ll find your bag lined up in a long row of bags next to a sign that has a “J” on it. Feel free to send a friend or family member to get your bag for you and bring it to the car while you are all waiting for Closing to begin. Just make absolutely sure that they get the right bag. You don’t want to get home and find out that you now have the wrong black wheeled duffel bag. That is, unless you enjoy doing someone else’s laundry.



## After The Walk

### *Keep Hydrating*

It is extremely important that you keep drinking both water and the sports drink of your choice for the 48 hours after you complete your Walk, whether you are at home or in a hotel. While I know it is tempting to think that you are finished with that damn stuff when you get home, your body will still need the extra fluids and electrolytes. It's not unusual for walkers to end up in the hospital on Sunday evening or even Monday after their Walk, due to dehydration or even hyponatremia.

Please re-read the previous paragraph. You'll notice that I mentioned drinking a lot of water and sports drink and did not mention beer, wine, margaritas or martinis. I know it is tempting, but it is not a good idea to drink alcohol immediately after the Walk. While a little champagne or a couple of sips of wine are ok to celebrate, you are asking for trouble if you drink much more than that.

Some people will be able to tolerate alcohol with no problem, but many people (especially those who didn't properly hydrate during the Walk) may find that consuming any appreciable amount of alcohol after the Walk will actually increase their dehydration and the resulting headache and nausea. Skip the alcohol, and double-up on the water and sports drink instead. That is, unless you like hangovers.

One easy way to tell if you are properly hydrated after the Walk is whether or not you wake up in the middle of the night on Sunday to pee. Think of your body as a sponge. If it is dried out, it will soak up any liquid you add, but if it is fully saturated, any extra liquid you add won't be able to be absorbed. If you aren't getting up to go to the bathroom in the middle of the night, your body is still dried out and needs more liquid (water and sports drink). By the way, as long as you are up in the middle of the night, drink another glass of sports drink. No need to thank me.

### *Interlude*

My wife and I walked together again in Tampa in 2007, after a five year break. It took us both about that long to forget our prior training and walking experiences. We were Team Tortoise & Hare. I was the Tortoise, she was the Hare. The name was based on her comments to me during training about my walking speed. I tend to walk way too slow for her. She tends to walk way too fast for me. When we trained together, she liked to mention that it was "painful" walking with me!



On Day 1, her shirt said "He Walks Too Slow!", and mine said "She Walks Too Fast!". We walked together for about the first 10 miles and got all sorts of friendly comments from people about our shirts. After lunch, she gave up on me and took off. So I walked on my own, meeting lots of nice people and keeping to my preferred pace (somewhere between a slow stroll and a brisk meander).

On Day 2, her shirt said "Anyone Seen My Husband?", and mine said "Anyone Seen My Wife?" We walked together for the first 50 feet, then she was gone! Throughout the day, I met people who had seen her (they recognized our matching shirts) and gave me her regards! We hadn't planned it that way, but it was nice to know where she was (usually about an hour ahead of me). We met at lunch, and then she was gone again!

On Day 3, her shirt said “Pick up the pace, dough boy”, and mine said “I’m walking as fast as I can!” I sauntered into Closing Ceremonies about an hour after her. She was nice enough to come back out and walk in again with me so someone could take a picture of us walking together into Closing.



My wife is one of those people who doesn’t like the taste of the sports drink. She drank it, but not enough. So she ended up on Sunday night in our hotel room feeling mildly awful, from a mild case of hyponatremia. I told her she needed to drink sports drink. She drank more water. I told her she really needed to drink sports drink, and she told me that I should go get some dinner and leave her alone (literally and figuratively). So I did.

On my way back from dinner, my cell phone rang. It was the front desk of the hotel. My wife (the consummate organizer and efficiency expert) had asked the desk clerk to call the hospital to see if there was a wait at the Emergency Room, and they (wisely) suggested that they should call me first. When I got back to the room, my wife was feeling truly, epically, awful. If there had been an Olympic event for “Feeling Miserable” she’d have taken the Gold. Turns out she had been drinking lots of water, which only made her feel worse. I told her that I would be glad to take her to the hospital, but first she should drink a bottle of sports drink. She was not happy with me, but she listened. By the time she got the whole 32-ounce bottle in her, she felt much better and didn’t need the hospital.



And being the wonderful husband that I am, I only said “I told you so” about every fifteen minutes for the next two days....

## ***Homework***

When we were kids, and we didn't finish a lesson in class, we would get assigned the remaining part of the lesson as homework. As I see it, the Walk doesn't end at Closing Ceremonies. Closing Ceremonies are just one step in our life’s journey. For all of us, there will be some homework when we are back in the real world:

- The next time we see someone in trouble and who needs help, walk towards them, not away from them. That's our homework.
- The next time we see someone who is in pain and who needs someone to listen, walk towards them, not away from them. That's our homework.
- And the next time we are tired and miserable and don't know if we can take another step, take it anyway. That's our final exam.

Some people use the word “addictive” to describe the Walks. I suppose it is, in the most positive of ways. I think of it as transformative, because it can change the way you look at your life, and change the way you interact with others, for the better. If you open yourself up to the experience, you will never be the same person you were before your first Walk. That is a good thing. And that is why you now get homework.

## *Next Steps*



For a few days, we come together on the Walk to create a better world, a world where no one is ignored or overlooked, a world where everyone is cherished and included.

And then we go back to the real world, to our homes, and our jobs, and our families. Remember to hydrate. Remember to stretch. And please remember that now you have to flush!

Back in the real world, you may notice some differences. People may not be lined up to cheer for you as you go to lunch, or as you walk down the street. You may not run into people who have breasts decorating their hats, or their clothing, or their vehicles. And people may not thank you every day, or tell you how magnificent you are. In fact, sadly, you may never hear it. And that is a shame. In fact, for some people, the days after they finish their Walk can be a bit difficult and anticlimactic.

I want you to remember something, no matter how many miles you walk or how much money you raised. You **are** extraordinary. You **do** matter. You **can** make a difference. Remember this in the days and months after the Walk, when the kids pull at you, or your boss criticizes you, or your spouse or partner seems insensitive.

When you find yourself feeling far away from the emotion you felt at the Closing Ceremonies, remember that what made the Walk special wasn't really the walking, or the tents, or the porta-potties. What made those few days special comes from within you. It is who you are, and who you choose to be. The Walk didn't make you special; it simply gave you a place to show how special a person you already are.



Our journey doesn't end at Closing Ceremonies; it is simply another step along the path of our lives. The challenge is to try to make each day a special day: To live our lives so that each and every day is full of kindness and compassion, a tribute to the memory of women and men we have lost and to the lives of those women and men who have survived. I look forward to our paths crossing again in the future.

*Larry*  
*Mr. October 2009*

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Due to his inspiration and hard work in starting the AIDS Ride, the original Avon Breast Cancer 3-Day, and Out of the Darkness, hundreds of millions of dollars have been raised over the years to fight AIDS, Breast Cancer and Depression, and to provide support for those in our communities who fight these terrible diseases. As a result of Dan's efforts to make a difference in the world, hundreds of thousands of people who have participated in these events have learned a simple message:

# Humankind. Be Both.

