

The Strength of the Human Spirit

By Daisy Saunders

Wilma Rudolph, who overcame polio to become an Olympic sprint champion, is credited with the statement, “Never underestimate the power of dreams and the influence of the human spirit.”

Each week, I look for inspiring stories of people who have accomplished a great deal, in spite of what looked like impossible odds. This week my inspiration came from two sources: the Gabby Douglas Story which recently premiered on the Lifetime Television Channel and a repeat of Oprah’s Super Soul Sunday interview with Diana Nyad.

Let me remind you of the accomplishments of both women. Gabby Douglas, a U. S. Women’s Artistic gymnast, is the first woman of color of any nationality and the first African American gymnast in Olympic history to become the Individual All-Around Champion. Diana Nyad is a marathon swimmer who, after 5 attempts over a 30 plus year period, completed the swim from Cuba to Florida without the aid of a shark cage. She was in the water 53 hours, with no sleep.

Here are my 5 takeaways from both of these remarkable women.

- **Confidence and an unwavering belief in yourself.** Oftentimes, our dreams are not fulfilled because we never truly believed they were possible. We doubt ourselves. And, when we doubt ourselves, we sabotage ourselves. To believe in yourself means to trust and love yourself. When you have confidence and an unwavering belief (love and trust) in yourself, you have a deep *knowing* that no matter what obstacles come your way, you will prevail.
- **Find a way.** How many times have you heard, “Where there’s a will, there’s a way”? Yes, this is an old, established cliché but nonetheless true. If you truly want to do something, you will find a way. When Gabby decided, at age 14, that she needed better coaching to make her dream come true, she and her mother found a way to make it happen. Diana found a way to keep the sharks away and to get food while swimming for 53 hours.
- **Imagine the possibilities.** See it, picture it, and imagine it. And, keep the picture in your mind’s eye – no matter the circumstances or what your own mind or others may say. Keep reminding yourself, “The future belongs to those who believe in possibilities”.
- **Support system.** Not everyone is healthy enough to have a front row seat in your life. The people sitting closest to you (your inner circle) should be

those who love, nourish, and support you. Your inner circle must consist of people who believe in you; supports your dreams; and can see your vision. Beware of the naysayers...people who steal or smother your dreams.

- **Never. Give. Up.** Your dreams belong to you. And, no one can make them happen but you. There may be times when you feel tired, discouraged, or helpless. At times like this, pause, rest, take a break. But, never, ever give up!

While Gabby is in her teens, and Diana is in her 60s, both women embody the strength of the human spirit. Both clearly reinforce the notion that you are never too young to have a dream; and never too old to chase a dream.

Daisy Saunders is an author, lifestyle coach, and speaker on personal empowerment and positive aging. Visit her website at www.daisysaunders.com for free downloads of articles and resources on personal growth, wellness, and financial awareness, and to follow her weekly blog on positive aging.