



## EXCUSES, EXCUSES

Three women who live without them.

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RIGHT AROUND HALLOWEEN, I received a forwarded email nearly a dozen times. The subject: *Why dogs hate their owners*. A quick click revealed the sender thought I might relate to those disillusioned folks who believe dressing their dog like a princess, ghost or George Bush is a good idea. Looking at my sleeping canine curled in his Roots hoody, I knew the sender was right. But after the fifth time I saw it in my list of new mail, I grew weary: who am I, and what do they see, that so many friends feel I need to see this?

Not long after, a similar flurry of activity made its way to my account. Only this time, instead of being concerned I was on the receiving end of an e-intervention for crazy dog-ladies, its message was somewhat more profound. The email contained a video clip of father-son duo, Dick and Ricky Hoyt. Together, the Hoyts compete in family-bonding feats like the Ironman. Short of a Shitzu dressed as Darth

Vader, there's nothing as touching as watching a dad and son cross the finish line after a grueling day on a punishing course. Unless, as is the case for Ricky, the son has cerebral palsy and, confined to a wheelchair, is physically transported by dad for the entire race. Tugged in a dinghy for the 4 kilometre swim, buckled into a seat on Dick's bike for the 180 kilometre ride and pushed in his chair for the 42 kilometre marathon. Each time I read the subject *Incredible Dad and Son*, I chose to accept the message as an opportunity to relive my initial astonishment.

Hoyts or no Hoyts in our in-box, at this time of year we are faced with re-evaluating our own priorities. While it's refreshing to list resolutions that don't pertain to looking great in a bikini, noble ambitions don't guarantee the goal-setter will succeed. Whether it is running a marathon, starting an RRSP, or learning Urdu, statistics show most people eventually throw in the proverbial towel. When the clock strikes midnight, we would be wise to identify the culprit that has prevented us from succeeding before. The painful part of the act of pinpointing culpability, however, is that frequently the

guilty one is little old us. Well, little old us and a long list of excuses: kids to get to soccer, knees that creak, *Law & Order* re-runs to watch.

The downside of learning about the Hoyts is that we begin to comprehend how lame those excuses sound. The significant upside is that we become aware of people around us who are already embracing their version of Hoytism. Coquitlam's Lilo Ljubisic, for example, has been on the podium an astounding 19 times for international wins in discus, shot put and goalball, setting world records along the way. While familiar with the feeling of medals around her neck, she's also a recognized trail-blazer and self-professed "squeaky wheel" when it comes to equalizing the playing field for athletes with disabilities. Named one of Canada's *Top 20 Most Influential Women In Sport* and one of the country's *Top 100 Most Successful Women*, Lilo currently serves as the first woman Chair on the International Paralympic Committee as Chairperson of the Athletes Council. While hers is an oft-heard voice on a global scale, the irony is that for all her ability to see ways of turning wrong into right, Lilo actually is blind.

