

Adventure of Saying Yes



By [Susan Peterson](#), CFA, *Managing Director*

19,341 ft. That's the height of Mt. Kilimanjaro. It says so on the sign that's behind me as I stand on "The World's Highest Free-Standing Mountain" on September 28, 2018. Did I feel amazing? Yes and no. Yes, because I'd made it to Uhuru Peak along with 13 other kickass women I'd become incredibly connected with as we trained together all summer for this moment. No, because my friend Chris and I were on "Team Nausea," having literally left it all on the mountain. But the amazing YES was that much sweeter because of the icky no.

However, that's not my key takeaway from this experience. **Success is often satisfying because of the hard work that preceded it.** My biggest aha moment was recognizing the life-changing adventure of saying yes. We've all heard the speech, read the article, likely benefited from the practice of exercising our "no muscle." It's safe, comfortable, and rarely leads to altitude sickness! And if you are a control freak like me, those are considered positive outcomes. But, can't we agree that it's also boring?

So what to do? Here are 6 things to consider:

1. **Examine what has or may soon shift in your life that could open up an opportunity to accept an invitation or sign up for a challenge.** For me, it was our son heading to college. Suddenly I could be gone for 2 weeks and no one starved. Weekends were free for training hikes because our 10+ year routine of Saturday soccer tournaments and baseball games was over. **Rather than mourning this change, I elected to see it as a newly available space to add in different life-giving pursuits.** The relationships I gained along the way were priceless (and it's pretty fun to impress your kid when you conquer a mountain.)
2. **What's on your bucket list and what is keeping you from checking it off this year?** I had wanted to climb Mt. Kilimanjaro ever since watching an IMAX movie at the Pacific Science Center more than 15 years ago. It showed regular folk taking on this challenge and I'd had it in the back of my mind as a "someday . . ." ever since. That someday became today because my friend Chris invited me to join her in a woman-only travel adventure to Africa and I said yes. What have you been yearning to do for years?
3. **What's the downside?** I recently cut my hair super short and bleached it platinum blond. The most common question I've gotten is 'what prompted this decision?' Simple answer - high upside (got out of a rut), low downside (it will grow back). What's an equivalent decision in your life?
4. **The scientific research is undisputed: Challenges build brain cells and strengthen the connections between them.** For me, saying yes to Kilimanjaro created an internal tension which was highly motivating as not being prepared wasn't an option. Is there a challenge you need to sign up for that will create an equivalent positive motivation?
5. **What are you already doing that you could take to the next level?** As a long-time resident of the Pacific Northwest, it was natural that our family enjoyed the occasional weekend hike. Preparing to hike at significant elevation upped my game. The new me added barbells to my backpack and flew to Park City to hike at 10,000'+ elevation. Do you run 3 miles every other day? Sign up for a 10k this summer. Always travel to places where they speak English? Go to Japan!
6. **Relationships are key to success and the biggest prize for saying yes.** Who is in your friend group with whom you can say yes together? I invited my friend, Paloma, to climb Mt. Kilimanjaro with me. Best decision ever. A good friend became my best friend because in walking a lot of steps together up and down a mountain, we also shared the highs and lows of life's journey.

Now it's up to you. Where are you choosing the status quo or saying "someday?" What's the downside to saying yes? Are you looking for a challenge? Are you ready to up your game? Is there an acquaintance that you'd like to transform into a lifelong friend? **What's the next step? Take it. Now. Today.**

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About the Author



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