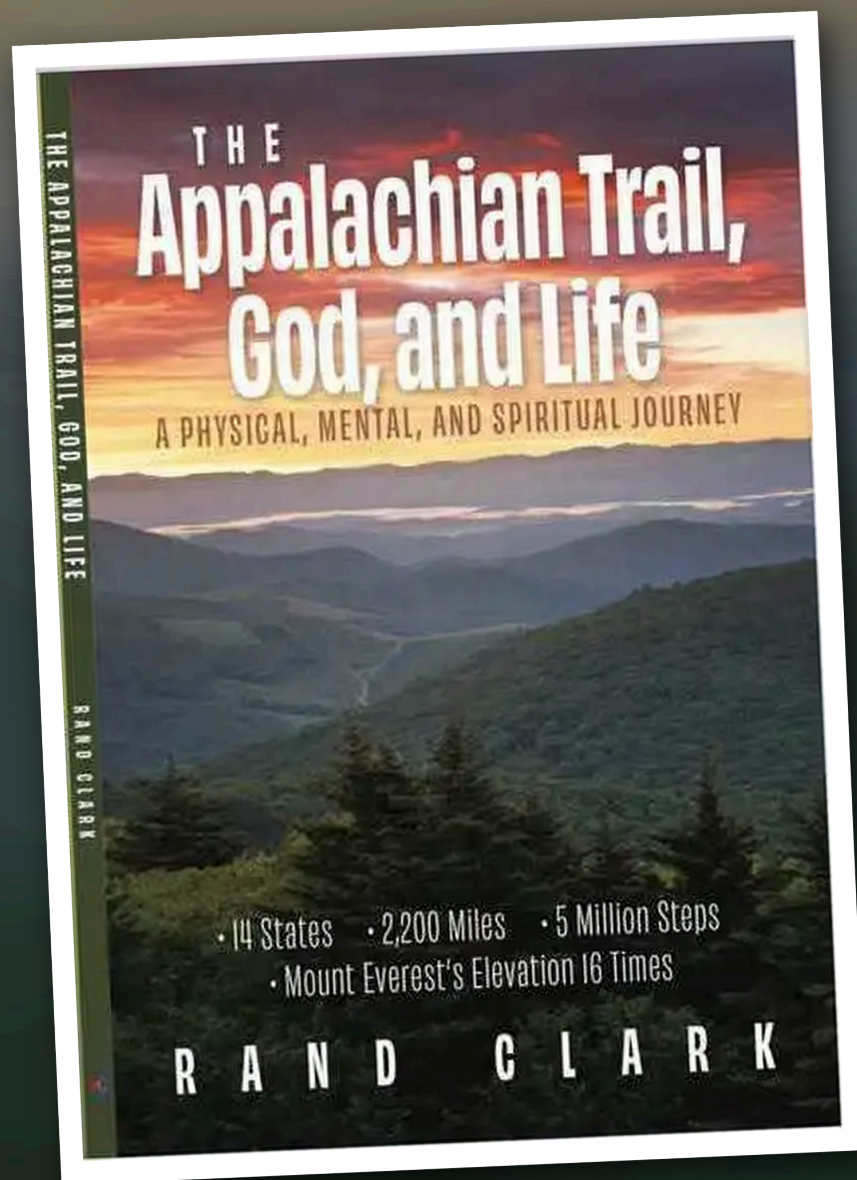


TRIPLE CROWN BOOK SERIES

The Five Mental Challenges of Accomplishing a **2,000-Plus-Mile** Thru-Hike

Fears faced and lessons learned on the Appalachian Trail



by **Rand Clark**

TRIPLE CROWN THRU-HIKER | AUTHOR | LECTURER

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Before You Take the First Step

So often we are defeated mentally before we even take action on an adventure. Said another way, our infant dream is strangled in its crib before it ever gets a chance to walk.

Here are the five mental fears I faced hiking the 2,200-mile Appalachian Trail from Maine to Georgia.

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FEAR 1 OF 5

The Fear of Starting

1

How do I start to plan a 2,000-mile hike? Where do I begin? Can I hike 2,000 miles? What if I fail? How do I handle disappointing friends and supporters?

For me the answer was to start with something small. When I dream through an adventure, break it into manageable pieces, and then take small actions forward, those actions give me light to see the way ahead and the energy to keep taking action.

Start small. Break the dream into pieces, then take one small action forward.

Go deeper. See the full answer in my book, Chapter One: How to Turn a Dream into a Reality.

FEAR 2 OF 5

The Fear of Night Hiking

The first time I hiked at night for hours at a time, I had to overcome fears. The moonlight shining through trees moving in the wind casts eerie shadows. Trees creak and snap in the forests of the trail. Leaves rustle, and moving water takes on different sounds.

Without the distraction of sight, my ears keyed in on every sound.

Now I can hike for hours free of fear – or almost free of fear.

Go deeper. More stories from the trail are waiting in the book.



FEAR 3 OF 5

The Fear of Facing Fears

3

It is of course easy to avoid, deny and procrastinate. “I will deal with that later.” “I will feel stronger tomorrow.”

I remember night hiking in thick woods, ascending a steep area, when something sizable made quite a stir in the bushes fifteen feet off the trail. I wanted to detour around the noise and avoid what scared me.

Even then I knew giving in to this fear would weaken me. Instead I forced myself to face the beast.

Mental retreat leads to physical retreat.

Go deeper. Read the book to learn what it was and what I learned.

FEAR 4 OF 5

The Fear of the Unknown

4

The fear of getting lost. The fear of running out of water on the long trail. The fear of “What If’s.”

I learned that the fear of what could happen can lead to the fear of “What If’s,” which can lead to fear of things that could never happen!

My mind must overrule and control my emotions, including fears.

Go deeper. Read the book for my expanded answer: Chapter Five, Plan to Get Lost, and Chapter Eight, Snakes, Bears, and Airplane Crash Sites.

FEAR 5 OF 5

The Fear of “Hitting the Wall”

This is a very real fear, and I am told everyone “hits the wall” on a 2,000-plus-mile hike. I did, each time.

I learned it will happen, and that there is prep work to do before the hike to prepare for it. The answer is time-tested and worked well all three times for me.

It will happen — so prepare before the hike.

Go deeper. Learn the full details in my book, Chapter Three: HYOH, Hike Your Own Hike.

Perhaps already you can see how the fears faced and lessons learned on the Appalachian Trail can help in everyday life.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rand Clark

Rand Clark is a Triple Crown thru-hiker, author and lecturer. He thru-hiked the Appalachian Trail in 2021, its 100th anniversary year, and the Pacific Crest Trail in 2024. Closer to home, he hiked all 67 of New England's 4,000-footers and completed the 100 highest peaks in New England.

His trail name is "Halftime," chosen because he treated the hike as a half-time break to reflect on life and plan what comes next. Rand lives in Dayton, Maine, with his wife, Susan. They have four children and eleven grandchildren.

He is available for guest speaking, lectures, podcasts, TV and other media, and interviews.



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