

## **The Best Pain Killer**

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*May 16, 2001*

What do you think is the best pain killer? Tylenol, Motrin or Tokuhon? No! I am going to tell you the answer in this article.

6 a.m. in the morning on May 13, nine of us showed up at the Tuxedo Park Train Station parking lot for the challenging 26-mile hike. We were Gin, George, Ah Chen, Marjorie, Williams, Chi, Joseph, Wade and I. All of us tough hikers had experience hiking 20+ miles. Some of us came for our first 26-mile trial but some of us just came to repeat the challenge.

We started at 6 a.m. sharp because we expected that it would take at least 12 hours to finish the whole trip. The sun would go down at around 8 p.m., so we had to make it back in 14 hours at the most. Since each hiker had his/her own pace, it was assumed we wouldn't be able to hike as a whole group. As expected, Ah Chen, Joseph and Wade were in the first group; Gin and Chi were in the middle, and the others were in the back. Williams is used to walking fast, but he suffered from asthma and allergies so he could not turn on his turbo. George could have been in the first group, but he preferred to be more relaxed on this trip.

The trip started with a few hills at the beginning. In less than 1 mile, Williams sat down on a fallen branch and said he could not breathe due to the heavy pollen in the air. He coughed a lot, and that made me feel he was going to quit and turn back to the parking lot. But, he kept going slowly with me in the back.

At the 4-mile point, I felt a minor pain in my left foot. I am used to having problems with my knees, but not my feet, especially when doing extensive downhill slopes. I was in a bad mood because I wondered how could I finish the trip if the pain kicked in so early. When I reached Times Square (6<sup>th</sup> mile), I needed to take off my shoe and massage my sore foot. I was the last one to reach the 8-mile point at 10 a.m. but I was still on schedule though. My right knee started aching because I used it more in order to release the pressure on my painful left foot.

The trip continued with 5 miles of relatively flat trail. I walked as quickly as I could because I knew it was the only portion on which I could save time. Whenever I met a down slope, my knee was in so much pain that I had to walk slower. I caught up with those three hiking friends again during their break, but I was alone again after restarting from the break.

I met Williams again on the way up Pingyp Mtn. Williams had difficulty climbing uphill because he needed to take heavier breaths to get energy, while I had problems hiking downhill. So, I always caught up to him on an uphill slope, and he would catch up with me on a downhill slope. We were really brothers!! After climbing down the cliff-like

Pingyp Mtn., my two knees were in pain and shaking. I questioned myself: why put yourself through this pain? I told myself: it was not a failure to quit if my legs hurt. I wondered how I could handle the pain for the next 11 miles! I told George I might cut short my hike and go to Johnstontown Circle if I found I did not have enough time. I was not going to hike alone in the dark.

Two miles up the Irish Mtn., I was fine, except for the pain. I was kind of hiking on “four legs”—I had a hiking pole in my right hand and a free left hand. I had to use the pole to push or hold branches with my left hand in order to lessen the pressure on both knees. When I reached the 17-mile point, I had to change my T-shirt again. Since I was sweating a lot and the backpack did not provide good ventilation, I got a rash on my back after 9 hours of hiking.

Williams caught up with me and we climbed Jackie Jones Mtn. I knew we were behind schedule. At the pace we were going, it would be 8:30 p.m. before we completed the trip. With each other’s companionship, we set our goal. Since we had finished 18 miles, we had to reach the end point no matter how many more hours it would take. Though we were ready to hike at dark, we wanted to avoid it. I started hiking crazy fast to chase the clock, disregarding the pain and numbness in both my feet and knees. Williams also pushed himself to the fullest extent, disregarding the explosive pain in his chest. When we reached the shelter on Big Hill at 4:15 p.m., we found we arrived just 15 minutes later than George & Marjorie, 30 minutes later than Gin & Chi and 1 hour later than the first group.

We caught up to George and Marjorie in 20 minutes, and they decided to slow down their pace to accompany us. During the remaining 6 miles, I used my will power to fight the pain I felt in every step. Once in awhile, the pain went to my head, but it didn’t stay long because I just ignored it. When our group reached the 23-mile point at 6:15 p.m., I was sure I would be able to complete the task. Even if I had to be hospitalized for overusing of my wounded legs, I would not give up at this moment. There were only Williams and I left to climb up and down a few hills in the final 3 miles. Each step on the trail was a process of transferring the pain from my toes to my knees. I had to keep shouting to myself to stimulate my willpower. I could think of nothing but commanding my legs to move forward. My pace had slowed down but was still good enough to bring me back to the parking lot at 8 p.m., before darkness fell. I did it, and my name could now be added to the CMC’s 26Mile Club.

From this story, I would like to tell you the best pain killer is: your willpower. I never thought I could survive and complete the whole trip in that morning when the pain started from my feet and knees. But, once we set the goal and there was no exit out, our willpower overcame whatever difficulties arose. In my story, of course, hiking endurance and peer support were also crucial to my success.