

BIRTH OF "I WALK THRU IT"

Each step I took during training for and on the Appalachian Trail brought lessons in resilience, humility, and the raw, undeniable power of simply moving forward. When I began the trail, I thought I was embarking on a physical journey. By the end, it became something much bigger—a journey into understanding the depths of purpose, connection, and what it means to keep going even when the path feels impossible. From that transformation, “I Walk Thru It” was born.

The idea didn’t come to me all at once. It was planted like a seed during the long, silent stretches on the trails, when the only sounds were the crunch of my boots on dirt and the whisper of the wind through the trees. The trail stripped away so much of what felt important in the “real world” and replaced it with clarity. I began to understand the value of intentionality—not just in hiking, but in life. The act of walking, one deliberate step at a time, became a metaphor for everything.

After Helene forced me off the trail, I couldn’t shake the feeling that my journey wasn’t over. Yes, the miles were incomplete, but the lessons I had learned were bigger than the trail itself. Back at home, as I grappled with the transition back to everyday life, I started to reflect on what the trail had truly given me. It wasn’t just a collection of beautiful views or a sense of accomplishment. It was a way of seeing the world differently, of finding gratitude in the small things and strength in the hard ones.

That’s when the vision for “I Walk Thru It” began to take shape. I wanted to create something that would help others experience the same transformation I had felt on the trails. I wanted it to be about more than just physical fitness—it had to encompass the emotional and mental strength that walking can bring.

“I Walk Thru It” is a membership-based program that encourages people to set intentional walking goals, focusing on emotional and mental well-being as much as physical benefits. It’s structured in levels, each one designed to challenge members to push themselves while celebrating their progress. Just as the Appalachian Trail gave me a sense of purpose and clarity, I wanted to offer others a way to move forward in their own lives—one step, one milestone at a time.

The program draws heavily from the rhythms of the trail. Members are encouraged to set intentions before their walks and reflect on moments of gratitude afterward, echoing the introspection that became second nature to me during my thru-hike. They log their steps and progress, much like I logged miles, and as they reach each level, they’re rewarded with certificates, swag, and the opportunity to participate in walking adventures—some virtual, others in-person.

The rewards are inspired by the generosity of trail angels and the camaraderie of fellow hikers.

BIRTH OF "I WALK THRU IT"

On the Appalachian Trail, every small act of kindness felt monumental—a shared snack, a helpful tip, or just a warm smile from someone who understood the journey. Through "I Walk Thru It," I wanted to build that same sense of community, where every member feels supported, encouraged, and celebrated for their progress.

"I Walk Thru It" isn't just about walking. It's about the lessons I learned on the trail: how to find beauty in the struggle, how to keep moving forward even when the path is unclear, and how to celebrate every small victory along the way. It's about taking the grit and determination that the trail demands and channeling it into a meaningful, shareable experience.

The Appalachian Trail taught me that walking isn't just a means of transportation—it's a way of processing, of healing, of connecting with ourselves and the world around us. That's the heart of "I Walk Thru It." It's not just about completing steps; it's about the journey those steps represent.

As I work to build this program, I feel the same mix of excitement and trepidation I felt standing at the trailhead in Maine. The path ahead is unknown, but the lessons of the trail guide me: Take it one step at a time. Celebrate the small victories. And above all, keep moving forward.

With gratitude,

Melanie Wood

Melanie Wood

Founder of I Walk Thru It

