

Award Winning Extreme Athlete Kyle Maynard at UVU: No Excuses

Utah Valley University student body (UVUSA) attempted to host Kyle Maynard for many years and finally was able to do that on February 1, 2018. So many students, me included were excited for him to become available. Mr. Maynard is an entrepreneur, speaker, bestselling author, award-winning extreme athlete, and the first man to bear crawl to the top of the highest mountain in Africa, Mount Kilimanjaro.



Kyle Maynard

Kyle Maynard is also an incapacitated man without limits. He was born without arms and without legs yet has never encountered a challenge or obstacle that he could not overcome. To begin his presentation, Kyle reminded the audience that nobody is self-made and that the only reason any human can reach their full potential is through the help of others. This serves as a valuable reminder that the only way that humankind can move forward, is by remembering and reflecting on where they have come from. The whole of Kyle's presentation was based upon the idea that when we are called to do the impossible, there is no room to make excuses.

One of Kyle's heroes, the Navy SEAL Richard Mackowicz, has been quoted as saying "not dead can't stop", a sentiment that reveals the true grit that is needed to attain impossible goals. The idea that Kyle presents in accordance with this statement is that anything can be done as long as an effort is put forth. He affirmed that there is always freedom to try, though that is without guarantee that it will be accompanied with success. He taught that the only thing that keeps a human from attaining their goal is the excuses that one makes. To overcome the negative excuses that stem from the desire to attain a difficult goal, one must remember the reason for which that goal is to be attained. The purpose is the motivator that can push the human mind beyond what is possible. Material things will never bring true happiness, that can only come about as goals are set and achieved. Kyle continues to compare mental perceptions and realities to a mental map. He affirms that the map is not the territory, that one can walk around with our mental map and perceptions and then go online and have those concrete ideas demolished and changed in a fraction of a moment. It is the constant update of the map that will everlastingly propagate happiness.

Kyle then proceeds to share his life history and the struggles and challenges that he had as he was growing up. Everyday he said that he prayed for arms and legs, yet the attitude his was treated with at home varied greatly from this precept. All throughout his formative pre-teenage life his parents never allowed him to address his own lack of external extremities. Kyle shared how this was critical in helping him while in his early years to understand that he is not limited by his physical disabilities. He talked about how life with disabilities is not much different than one with disabilities, there is just an increased need to learn how to adapt. He shared a touching story, about how he was once boarding an airplane when a flight attendant insisted that he needed the special disability chair. As she turned to get the chair he sprinted past her as fast as he could. He related this to everyone's reality, that sometimes people will claim that something cannot get done, when in reality the only thing to do is sprint past those that hold humankind back. To illustrate this point, Kyle shared the story of how he climbed the highest peak in South America. He had special shoes that allowed him to climb up the face of the mountain, a feat never attempted by anyone with his disability. Not only did he attempt this feat, he was able to accomplish his goal. Though it was difficult, by sacrificing his excuses and by exerting all the effort he could, Kyle was able to accomplish an impossible task.

Kyle's visit to Utah Valley University profoundly influenced lives of students across campus by teaching that anything is possible if excuses are removed and the true potential of the human race is realized.

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