

Preparation for G204—Above and Beyond: Achieving the Impossible

Humans are capable of extraordinary feats, some of which seem impossible. Here are just a few examples:

- In 1954, Englishman Roger Bannister ran a four-minute mile which was thought to be impossible until Bannister broke this barrier. Now many male athletes have run a four-minute mile.
- In the mid 1980s, climber Joe Simpson fell and broke his leg after reaching the summit of Siula Grande in Peru. When his climbing rope was cut, Joe landed in a crevasse, and his climbing partner, assuming Joe was dead, continued his descent. In the inspiring book, *Touching the Void*, Joe Simpson tells how he survived against impossible odds.
- Mahatma Gandhi led India to independence from foreign domination by using peaceful means. To have achieved victory using active, non-violent resistance is something that seemed impossible at the time, but Gandhi succeeded and inspired movements for civil rights and freedom throughout the world, including the United States.

Then there are activities that some “ordinary” people do that seem impossible to others. Think of a climber scaling Half Dome ... a breakdancer spinning around on the top of his head ... a surgeon suturing microscopic blood vessels ... someone losing 75 pounds ... the First Unitarian Church of San Jose raising over \$8 million to rebuild after a disastrous fire. Or how about public speaking ... running a marathon ... serving as president of a group ... traveling to a foreign country?

1. Tell about a famous person you admire because they have done something that is seemingly impossible.
2. Tell about someone you know who has done something extraordinary that may have seemed impossible.
3. Tell about a time in your life when you did something that you had always thought was impossible for you to do. What made it doable? How did you feel afterward?
4. Do you have a list of “can’ts” in your head? For example: “I could never travel around the world.” “I’ll never be able to own a house.” “I can’t run a marathon—or even one mile.”
5. Is there anything in your life right now that you would like to achieve but which seems impossible? What are the barriers in your way?
6. What would it take for you to achieve your “impossible” goals?

The song for this session is “The Impossible Dream.” You can listen to it at: <http://www.reelclassics.com/Actors/O'Toole/impossibledream-lyrics.htm> or on the soundtrack for *The Man of La Mancha*.