This I Believe

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Pen y Fan is the tallest mountain in the Brecon Beacons, a mountain range located in Southern Wales. Brecon Beacons, and particularly Pen y Fan, are used regularly by the British Special Air Service for some of their most difficult training evolutions. Only with intense mental and physical fortitude can potential recruits (who have already excelled in their normal military pipelines) hope to pass the so-called “Fan Dance” and “Long Drag” exercises. The potential SAS operators have worked very hard to get to their peak abilities, and any shortcomings will inevitably shatter them. There is no way to cheat the system, and no way to fake your way into the elite ranks of the world’s premier counter-terrorism unit; only hard work will allow one to succeed.

This same idea ultimately applies to anything someone tries to accomplish. The only way to truly achieve any goal, from winning a Rhodes Scholarship to making a new friend, is through hard work. In the example above, promising British citizens put in hours of work every day preparing their bodies for the rigors of these intense tests. The idea is universal; every Special Forces branch in the world employs some sort of similar program to sift through the waves of recruits that show up with high hopes of fighting alongside the most elite troops in the world. The United States Navy SEALs have Hell Week, and the Air Force Pararescue Jumpers have Extended Training Days. The military is one of the most extreme examples of goals being achieved only through hard work, but it is the most fitting because only the best can be accepted into their respective programs.

A smaller example would be working to achieve goals such as getting a good grade on a test. At first glance, you might think that it would be easy to simply cheat on the test and get high marks. This is not correct, however, as the reason you take a test is to make sure you learned everything that you are being tested over. If a person cheats to do well on a test, they ultimately have not achieved the goal of expanding their knowledge and becoming a better person.

The situation with the test brings up an interesting idea though. A person can set low, illogical, or unspecific goals, which are then very easy to accomplish. What is the difference between these “challenges” and the tests of supreme stamina put forth by elite Special Forces units? The harder, more real goals are better for a person. So it is not that anything can only be accomplished with hard work, but simply anything worthwhile can only be achieved with hard work. This is a philosophy that I try to live by every day of my life. It applies to both the setting of goals and the process of working towards them, and I know that I personally feel much better at the end of the day when I worked hard and accomplished something worthwhile.