

The York University Staff Association Health & Wellness News & Views

I spent the vast majority of my life as a proud member of the I HATE RUNNING club. Committing to a run used to feel as if I was volunteering for a beating. Pick me, pick me, ugh... Like cleaning gutters full of soaked leaves to negotiating with a lousy car salesman, every step of running enraged me. From the first step to the moment it ended, the lingering pain in my calves and a fear of the dreaded shin splints took centre stage. 10 minutes into my run and I was already looking at my watch. The next 5 seem to crawl by. How long do I still have to go? And how does everyone do this if its so dreadfully boring? Funny thing though, there is an odd draw to the things you obsessively hate. Repeat after me: it is okay to hate running. It took me what felt like forever to get to the point of acceptance, but I finally have, and I feel like I am healthier because of it, and not just physically.

An appreciation for running never happened for me in high school. It never happened to me in university either. When I worked out, I stuck to group exercise fitness classes. Step aerobics, dance, spinning were my passions. They were exhilarating and oh so much fun. The motivation of a great instructor, the group aspect and the inspiring music drew me in every time. Not to mention the fact that it was always sunny in the studio. Now however, with the new reality of the pandemic and all gyms and fitness studios closed, what is a quarantined fitness instructor to do? It was clear that moving forward exercise was going to be that much more of an individual activity. And it was becoming even more obvious that we were each going to have to sweat this one out on our own. It was time to go old school and learn to love to run. Lace up the ol' stomperinos as they say.

This was NO easy feat! Can we talk about those people who make running look effortless? When you are really trying to get started, they're the last people you want to see when you're wheezing, and a stone throw away from passing out. The truth of the matter is, I am starting to catch onto them. If you think all runners always love running, you are terribly mistaken. I recently joined a running community (yes me...) We maintain social distance of course. Where I met a bunch of people that like to suffer together

and then talk about it afterwards. The harder it gets the more they enjoy it later. Through the blood, sweat, and tears, many runners report that their favourite part of the reason they wake morning after morning to pound the pavement -- is what is referred to as "runner's high". This is something I have not lost myself in yet. That blissful runner's high remains a myth to me. I think I've flirted with it a couple of times. Regardless I am desperate enough, so I'll just keep putting one foot in front of the other.

Starting a new habit is hard, especially when it's one you might kind of dread. But here's the trick: Don't go all-out, and swear you'll run six days a week if you've barely run before. Create a realistic schedule and stick to it. If you are learning to run, you're going to spend a lot of time walking. I didn't like spending time walking because it didn't feel like work. It felt like walking. However, I quickly learned that walking during your running sessions is completely fine. It doesn't matter how much or how fast you run; what matters is that you challenge yourself based on your individual fitness level. Perhaps begin by running for 4 minutes and walking for 1 minute, until you complete 20 minutes. As you get stronger, begin eliminating the walk breaks. When you're a beginner, don't worry about how many miles you're running. Focus on the number of minutes instead. Gradually you'll begin to cover more ground in the same amount of time, and that's when you'll want to increase the duration of your workout. Following a plan like this can help keep you accountable and help you ease in without going too hard, too fast. There are several running apps. I use couch to 5k.

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/couch-to-5k-week-by-week/>

If you're new to running, you may be a bit overwhelmed by all the gear and lingo that gets thrown around by the more experienced runners. All you really need is a pair of good running shoes, something comfortable to wear while you run and, for women, a good sports bra. Seriously, that's it. Everything else is gravy. With COVID-19 causing the temporary closure of many stores and businesses it

can be difficult to purchase new running gear. When buying sneakers online during COVID-19, if possible, go with something you've worn before.



No one starts running just because. You, just like everyone else want to feel a sense of accomplishment. Whether its losing weight, improving cardiovascular health, or just being able to run a few K, you could use a tool that will reflect your progress. Use any device that has the capability to download a fitness tracker app. A fitbit, watch a phone, etc. It may sound shallow, but once you start tracking your progress you will feel like a real runner. Not only will it remind you when it is run o'clock, it will provide you with direct feedback on your hard work. Seeing the actual kilometers and calories burned takes your running to the next level. Allowing you to see even small improvements. You will also have immediate access to a community of runners ready to motivate each other.

Ever since the Walkman appearance in the 70s, music and training have gone hand in hand. More and more, runners are using headphones to drown out the distractions in their heads to push them through a run. Still, some purists consider running with something in your ears sacrilege, therefor the same conversation has been happening since yet again the invention of the Walkman. You might choose to listen to music while you're running just because it's the only opportunity in your day when you can listen to music of your choice. Alternatively, you may view it as your chance to switch off from all the sounds around you, particularly if you're running in a noisy urban area. We all know that certain inspirational songs can help to motivate while running. From hardcore trance to full-on rock anthems, everyone has their own motivational music which helps give them an extra push just when they need it. I on the other hand prefer listening to podcasts while

pounding the pavement. Music just doesn't cut it; it isn't engaging enough to keep my mind distracted from the actual exercise factor. If you find a podcast that you love, your mind gets exercised while your body gets exercised and you are practicing double the level of self-care.

Let's be clear, by no means do I love running now, and I certainly have a long way to go until I can honestly profess my undying love for it. But I must admit, every time I lace them up and get out there and do the work to become my fittest, healthiest self, I can't help but be surprised. Who would have ever thought that I would be giving running advice? I genuinely astonish and inspire myself with what I am capable of, and that keeps me coming back for more. Once you change your preconceptions of what running will be, you will find out what running can be. At the end of every run is clarity of mind. You start out in a junkyard and end up in a temple. There is a great realization that to exercise the body also helps to exercise the mind, which is a muscle that requires just as much attention as every other muscle in the body. So, let this uncharted difficult time be the time you conquer running. Afterall, maybe this "runner's high" thing everyone is talking about is actually real. I can't say for sure yet, but I'll keep on going till I find out. You are the only thing stopping you! Are you ready? Let's go!

June 2020