4 Tips to Stay Motivated on Your Long Run

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For Active.com

Without a doubt the long run is one of the most important parts of your overall training cycle. For months you have been building your running fitness with the goal of completing the long runs that will ultimately shape your racing fitness. But when the big day comes and your alarm goes off...you have no juice!

Is your race in jeopardy? Is your mind checking out? Should you give up now?

The answer is a resounding NO across the board. Don't worry...you are not alone. Every weekend countless runners from total newbies to the most experienced veterans struggle to do the runs required by their training plans. Here are a few tips to keep you motivated on the hardest of days to start.

Tip #1: Getting Started

Don't think about the long run itself; focus instead on simply getting ready for a run. After all, getting ready to run is easy -- the concept of running 18 miles isn't. In order to do a run all you need is your shoes, your gear and maybe a watch. Done.

By breaking the longer run down into "just another run," you are effectively removing the mental obstacle 18 miles. And once you get your momentum going it will be much easier to carry that outside the door.

Another way to help pave the way for your success by doing as much prep work the night before your long run. This could be as simple as organizing your running clothes or as in-depth as laying out your nutrition, a route map and compiling a special playlist. Whatever you need, get it done before you go to bed and eliminate all those early morning excuses.

Tip #2: Get Halfway There

This is one of my personal favorite tips, and it's by far the simplest. Don't think about having to run an arduous 18 mile effort. Instead just focus on getting to the nine-mile mark. All you have to do then is get back home!

Seriously though, this approach also gives you the opportunity to planning for the second half of your run, where things will get more challenging. By thinking of it as two distinct parts, you'll be 100 percent ready to have a solid overall experience.

Tip #3: Be Social

If you know that being left to your own devices could mean a morning full of the "snooze" button, then plan ahead to outwit your weekend self. Do this by coordinating your longer runs with other people. If you don't have running partners, there might be other training groups or running clubs in the area who could help facilitate your longer efforts.

And you don't even have to go the whole distance with them. If your training partner is only interested in doing nine miles this weekend, then do the first half of your run solo. This way your buddy joins you just when you need it most for a mental and emotional boost.

If you can't even rally one person to join you, consider searching for a local race. Just like your running partner, you can either start early or continue running while everyone else is cooling down. Either way you get in the run you want and avoid doing it solo. If you are really organized, you can plan ahead to sign up for key races to help you over the impending "humps" in your training.

Tip #4: Be Creative

If you want a cheaper alternative that signing up for yet another race, spend a few minutes online and find a new route to run. One of the biggest reasons for burning out is having a redundant training routine. Nip this problem in the bud with some create planning.

Maybe the new route is in a new part of town; maybe you drive to a new town and run. Whatever you decide, do your best to keep it unique and simple--you do want to be able to get back home!

Conclusion

Running long isn't always as fun and as sexy as the commercials might make it out to be. But nothing beats the feeling of having done a particularly challenging run and being just that much closer to your race. Use the tips above to get your juices flowing and it'll be race day before you know it