





ATTACK OF THE NAGGING FEARS!

WHAT ARE YOU AFRAID OF?

INJURY? BLISTERS? THE WALL?

WHATEVER IT IS, THERE'S A WAY TO

FIGHT BACK WHEN ANXIETY STRIKES

RUNNERS' FEARS are different than those of, say, mountaineers and motorcycle racers. Instead of a 100-foot fall or a 100-mile-per-hour wipeout, we fear troubles that take miles or months to develop, like an emerging injury or a failure to improve. But they are just as real. Here's how to fix any fear and nix any nightmare.

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RECOMMENDED

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Falling behind

FIX: NOT A RACE? GET OVER IT

GETTING DROPPED HAPPENS, WHETHER you're trying to keep up on a long, hard run or in track repeats. Stiffness or fatigue from a recent workout is a legit reason for not keeping up; allow more recovery in the future. So is running with a too-fast crowd; pick a slower group next time or accept that it may take a while to get fit enough to run with cheetahs. Or you might just be having an off day.

But sometimes there are no excuses. "If you think you're in the same shape as your buddies, and they start pulling away, close the gap before it gets too large," says Lowell Ladd, a 2:22 marathoner and on-line running coach. "Better yet, refuse to fall behind by more than three strides, because there's a psychological benefit to staying close. That's why packs form at races—because it's mentally easier to share the workload of hitting a pace."

WISDOM: "There is no failure here, sweetheart, just when you quit." —U2

Tackling hard hills

FIX: PUT IT IN PERSPECTIVE

LISA RAINSBERGER, THE LAST U.S. WOMAN to win Boston, in 1985, tempered her fear of Heartbreak Hill by focusing on the fact that it makes up only a small percentage of the total distance. "That's true of most race courses," says Rainsberger, who coaches U.S. Army World Class Athlete Program runners and civilians in Colorado Springs.

To help her runners conquer dread of hill repeats, Rainsberger has them run hills by time, not distance. "We do three sets of 30, 60, and 90 seconds, so they always know exactly how long they'll be in pain," she says. "It's the unknown that they fear, so knowing when they'll get to stop takes the fear away." Also, studies have found that people tend to overestimate the steepness of hills by an average of 18 to 19 degrees. So that monster hill may not be as monstrous as it looks.

WISDOM: "Never fear those mountains in the distance; never settle for the path of least resistance." —Lee Ann Womack

GETTING INJURED

FIX: TRAIN SMART

WHAT IS A RUNNER'S NUMBER ONE FEAR? INJURY, ACCORDING to two-thirds of respondents to a runnersworld.com poll. Many mistakes can lead to injuries; training cautiously can prevent most of them. Follow the famous "10 percent rule," that is, increase weekly mileage by just 10 percent. Separate all long runs, tempo runs, and speed workouts by at least 48 hours, with only easy runs, cross-training, or rest days between them. And don't pile on miles. "There is no evidence that training more than 45 weekly miles improves performance for most nonelite runners," says Evan Teplow, M.D., who treats injured runners and teaches physicians at the Lawrence Family Medicine Residency Program in Massachusetts. "But there is data showing it can increase injury risk."

Dr. Teplow also advises running on soft surfaces, replacing shoes every 500 miles, and icing painful spots. No guarantees, but lower odds of injury.

WISDOM: "I did everything by the seat of my pants. That's why I got hurt so much." —Evel Knievel

Failing to hit speedwork goals

FIX: CHANGE THE TARGET TIMES OR DISTANCES

“MISSING GOAL TIMES IS USUALLY THE result of a bad day or overly ambitious goals,” says Luke Humphrey, a 2:15 marathoner who’s head coach of Hanson’s Coaching Services in suburban Detroit. “You can’t do much about bad days, and it’s okay to completely miss once in a while. But there are a couple of ways to adjust targets if they’re too ambitious.”

Runners need to slowly increase the intensity over the weeks until they hit their faster goal race time. For runners who lack the confidence to hit a certain pace, Humphrey suggests at first reducing the repeat distance—by starting with 400-meter repeats at goal pace, say, instead of 800s—to remove the intimidation factor. “It’s better to make mistakes in training and learn from them,” he says, “than to make them on race day.”

WISDOM: “Failure isn’t failure if a lesson from it’s learned.” —Garth Brooks

Coming in last

FIX: HIGHLY IMPROBABLE, SO DON’T SWEAT IT

IF YOU TRAIN EVEN A LITTLE AND ENTER a large race with walkers, you will not finish last. But even if it happens, so what? “When I joined the Howard County [Maryland] Striders in 1999,” says Bev Byron, “I was so slow I had a T-shirt made that read, ‘Someone had to be last.’” Byron has gone on to coach hundreds of women to their first 5-K finishes with the Striders’ “Next Step Fit” program.

Byron builds their fitness and confidence by having them run or run/walk the full 5-K distance each weekend for three months leading up to the race. “I cannot guarantee they won’t finish last,” she says, “but I do assure them they will finish their first race.” Even if you’re last, you’re still beating everyone who dropped out or wouldn’t stand on a starting line if you paid them. They’re the real losers.

WISDOM: “You can’t win until you’re not afraid to lose.” —Bon Jovi

Falling off the treadmill

FIX: PAY ATTENTION!

THAT’S THE BEST WAY TO AVOID THIS painful but common mishap, which is also painfully embarrassing in a crowded gym, says Gregory Florez, an American Council on Exercise spokesperson and CEO of First Fitness in Salt Lake City. “As

you run, look straight ahead. Don’t watch TV, don’t talk on the phone, definitely don’t text. And periodically check where your feet are on the belt to ensure you aren’t drifting back.” Before you start, locate the large “kill” button, which stops the treadmill, and punch it the moment you begin to fall if you ever do.

WISDOM: “Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall.” —Confucius

HITTING THE WALL

FIX: KNOCK IT DOWN WITH GELS

ENERGY GELS DIDN’T EXIST WHEN I WAS RACING IN THE ’80S,” SAYS RAINSBERGER, “so runners were bonking all the time. The body runs out of stored glycogen at about 20 miles, so the Wall was almost unavoidable. But if you take in calories—I suggest one gel [most are about 100 calories] every 40 minutes—there’s no reason you should hit it.” (Same goes for long runs, with the gels’ calories also letting you recover faster post-run.) But the Wall still stands if you goof on race pace. “If you take in calories and still hit the Wall, it means you ran a pace your body wasn’t prepared to handle,” Rainsberger says. Race-pace training runs and “test” races are tools you can use to decide on the ideal race pace. Still, many runners miscalculate, and Rainsberger says it’s most often because the training timetable is too compressed. “Even the Olympic Trials runners I coach build up for five months,” she says.

WISDOM: “If you run into a wall...climb it, go through it, or work around it.” —Michael Jordan





GAINING WEIGHT

FIX: STOP PIGGING OUT

RUNNING DOES BURN CALORIES AND INCREASE YOUR metabolic rate for 14 hours postexercise, according to a study published in *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise*. But that doesn't mean you can eat like a sumo wrestler. "Some runners overcompensate by routinely treating themselves to big meals or desserts, thinking the extra calories they've burned justifies it," says Laura Kruskall, Ph.D., R.D., a sports nutrition specialist and nutrition sciences director at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. "Unless they did a long run, it doesn't." Despite evidence of carb intake boosting performance before, during, and after running, you'll add pounds if you overdo it. "You don't need extra carbs for runs of an hour or less."

WISDOM: "Without ice cream, there would be darkness and chaos." —Don Kardong

Facing resistance from my family

FIX: COMPROMISE

IF YOU CAN'T PERSUADE THEM TO JOIN you, tell them why running is important. "Explain how it adds value to your life by releasing stress, improving your health, and anything else," says David Smoot, Ph.D., a marathoner and family psychologist in Raleigh, North Carolina. "Find ways to run without taking time away."

Sometimes a constructive conversation helps. "Figure out what you can do together," says Smoot. "Developing a 'we' rather than 'me' mentality is an important trait for couples to nurture." You're a good role model for your kids, but don't be selfish. "If you miss a soccer game for a workout," says Smoot, "you're an absent parent no matter how fast you run."

WISDOM: "Every human benefit and enjoyment, every virtue, and every prudent act is founded on compromise and barter." —Edmund Burke

Feeling exhausted on hot runs

FIX: START EARLY, START SLOW, START DRINKING

FORTUNATELY, A PREDAWN "EARLY BIRD" run is not the only heat-beating recommendation of Jacksonville, Florida-based coach and 1996 Olympic marathoner Keith Brantly. "Like managing your pace, managing in the heat is a pay-as-you-go process," he says. "A quick early pace may not give your body enough time to start sweating, which carries heat away through evaporation, so start slow. Avoid sudden accelerations, which can push your core temperature over the top. In the heat it's already close to its functional maximum." Because speedwork is full of sudden accelerations, try to do it at a cool time of day.

"You lose up to two liters of fluid per hour when you run hard in the heat," Brantly says, adding that you're losing fluids even if it doesn't appear you're

sweating—which can happen when it's hot and dry. He suggests downing about a pint of water or sports drink every 20 minutes on hot days.

WISDOM: "When you're dying of thirst, it's too late to think about digging a well." — Japanese proverb

Getting blisters from new shoes

FIX: IF THE SHOES FIT, THE BLISTERS WILL QUIT

THERE'S ALWAYS A CHANCE YOU'LL develop blisters where shoe, sock, and skin meet. The odds rise with new shoes because your feet will be chafed in places, especially at seams, where your old shoes didn't necessarily apply pressure. "If you can find shoes that fit well, you won't need to break them in and you probably won't get blisters," says Scott Gill, general manager of Achilles Running Shop in Mentor, Ohio. When buying new shoes, wear the same socks (moisture-wicking synthetic, not blister-producing cotton) that you wear on runs. If you develop blisters, apply lubricant or athletic tape at the afflicted spot; try adding or removing the insert and lacing up more loosely.

WISDOM: "We do not need to be shoemakers to know if our shoes fit." —G.W.F. Hegel

THE PULSE What is your greatest running fear?

67% Getting injured 21% Failing to achieve my goals
8% Hitting the Wall 4% Falling behind training partner/group

Based on 5,417 respondents to an RW poll



Saying goodbye to personal bests

FIX: SET DIFFERENT GOALS

“EVERYONE SLOWS DOWN EVENTUALLY because aerobic capacity drops off as we age,” says Jeanne Hackett, a Maine-based running coach with an M.A. in counseling psychology. “Once you’ve run your last personal best, you may have half a lifetime left. So if you choose to stay in the running game, you need to renew and review your goals.” One way to do that is to set age-graded time goals each year. Try to beat the best time you’ve run for each distance while in the 45-49 age group, for example, or at age 47. Parse the stats as narrowly as you wish, like a Major League Baseball statistician. And if you still crave a lifetime best, enter a triathlon, or a road race at a distance you’ve never tried. Instant PR!

WISDOM: “Time is the one immaterial object which we cannot influence—neither speed up nor slow down.” —**Maya Angelou**

Not finishing

FIX: START SLOW AND TAKE WALK BREAKS

A **DNF (DID NOT FINISH)** CAN TORMENT you for years afterward, especially if it comes after months of training for the race. There’s no shame in dropping out if injury or dehydration is the cause, but if sore, fatigued muscles is the only problem, suck it up and walk the final miles if necessary. At least you’ll have the satisfaction of completing the distance and earning the T-shirt. Knowing that you have the option to walk is the best way to ease your fear of a DNF on a long run or race. “If you start to fall apart, it’s much better to take walk breaks than to keep running until you can’t run anymore and come to a dead stop,” says Coach Ladd. “Once you stop, it’s very hard to start up again.” The best insurance against a DNF, he adds, is to run a conservative early pace. That should make an even pace easier to manage and you may even run negative splits (a faster second half).

WISDOM: “Get up, stand up, don’t give up the fight.” —**Bob Marley**

NEEDING TO TAKE AN UNPLANNED PITSTOP

FIX: WATCH WHAT YOU EAT AND DRINK

RESPONDENTS TO AN **RW.COM** POLL WROTE IN THAT THEY DEEPLY feared the unscheduled pit stop. Emphasizing foods and drinks that don’t race through your digestive system like Usain Bolt should prevent a bolt for the bushes. “Try any new food or beverage before an everyday run, not a long run or a race, when a pit stop would be difficult and embarrassing,” says Stewart, whose Ph.D. is in exercise physiology and nutrition. Also, don’t eat too much the night before, and avoid new, spicy, dairy, and high-fiber foods, and alcoholic drinks. On race or long-run mornings, eat three hours before running and go easy on caffeine and high-fiber foods.

WISDOM: “Courage is fear holding on a minute longer.” —**George Patton**



Never getting into a bucket-list race

FIX: SEE THE BUCKET AS HALF-FULL, NOT HALF-EMPTY

REMEMBER THAT BOSTON AND NEW YORK City are just two marathons among hundreds. Yes, Boston filled its 2011 field in eight hours and a new, “rolling admission” process for 2012 gives priority to

runners who beat qualifying marks by the most time. At New York you have to be either lucky or fast, with a roughly 10 percent chance of snagging an entry in the lottery. The good news? While other big races also fill up fast—some in a matter of hours—signing up online the moment that en-



tries open usually succeeds because most allot them on a first-come, first-served basis. “When people hear that a race fills up fast, they don’t wait around,” says Ryan Lamppa of Running USA.

“You snooze, you lose’ is now the norm.” So don’t snooze. He adds that the vast majority of races that sell out are either mega-races, where 15,000-plus overcrowd the streets, those with field limits, or trail races, where even a few hundred can overcrowd narrow trails. Yet these races account for a tiny percentage of the 18,000-plus road and trail races held annually in the United States. So stop moping, find a race, and fill your bucket.

WISDOM: “Two roads diverged...I took the one less traveled.” —Robert Frost

RACING ANXIETY

FIX: CHANNEL YOUR FEAR

CAN I HANDLE MY GOAL PACE? WHAT IF I CHOKE? WHAT IF A SIDE STITCH ruins everything? Prerace anxiety is normal and can even be beneficial, says sports psychologist JoAnn Dahlkoetter, Ph.D., author of *Your Performing Edge*. “Fear is a sign that you’re excited and ready to roll,” she says. “It can be your best friend. Instead of interfering with your performance, your nervous energy can be channeled to work for you.” The former San Francisco Marathon champion suggests visualizing positive race scenarios during your warmup, such as a race where you tire but come back strong with a second wind. “Remind yourself of the solid training runs you’ve done,” she says, “and tell yourself, ‘I’m trained, rested, and ready to do my best.’” Take 10 slow, deep breaths right before the race starts to ease your anxiety. Once the race begins, your fears will melt away.

WISDOM: “Having a true faith is the most difficult thing in the world.” —Steve Prefontaine

Getting lost or hurt on trail runs

FIX: PLAN AHEAD

YOUR PARANOIA PROBABLY STEMS FROM news accounts of runners or hikers who spend the night in the woods after getting hurt on remote trails. (That self-amputation movie *127 Hours* didn’t help.) Taking a few simple measures will make this rare scenario even less likely. “First, map your route before you leave the house,” says Justin Walk, a Denver trail runner and a coach for Colorado Athletic Clubs. “Web sites and mobile apps like AllTrails.com and EveryTrail.com make it easy. Back-track if you think you took a wrong turn—GPS on-course tracking can help with this—so that you don’t make matters worse.” Carrying a cell phone and not running solo are also advisable.

Twisting an ankle is less likely if you improve your on-the-run balance. Twice a week, reach slowly to touch your left toe while balancing on your left leg, repeat 10 times, then switch legs. To avoid falling, take shorter strides and keep your eyes fixed five feet ahead to spot roots and rocks so you can adjust your footfall.

WISDOM: “March on, and fear not the thorns, or the sharp stones on life’s path.” —Kahlil Gibran



