

THE LONG GAME

Lucja Leonard takes a closer look at some of the key components in successfully completing a big challenge.

The adrenalin is pumping through your veins; you've just finished a race and along comes that little thought – could I run even further. Whether it's stepping up from a 5k to a 10k or a half to a marathon or even dreaming of the ultimate distance of an ultra that thought has planted a seed. It may have seemed impossible as you cross the finish line with your muscles burning and breathing heavily. You swear you are never going to do this again; but somehow you make that decision to up your distance. That's the easy part, but what do you need to do differently when you do take this step?

Run Happy

All the training in the world won't help you don't have the right mindset. It has to stay fun otherwise the likelihood of giving up before you get to your goal is all too easy, so smile and think positive thoughts while keeping that end goal in sight. My favourite way to 'runhappy' is to head out without a plan to run a different route and see something new and beautiful with a good friend by my side and no watch/Garmin/app in sight!

Failing to plan, is planning to fail

Each day you wake up you have a plan, you are off to work, taking the kids to

school, doing a bit of DIY; whatever it is you do, you have a plan. You need to know where you are going before you can plan how to get there. This applies to life in general so why would this be any different for your training plan? Where are you now and where do you want to go will determine how you get there. Looking at distances run, it's the norm to aim to increase your weekly mileage or individual long run by no more than 10%, going too hard too soon could result in injury or a total loss of motivation. Invest in your long run, but don't go too long, most runners don't train to their full race

5 mental tricks for when the going gets tough:



1. Think of a happy place! Think positive thoughts, whether a happy memory or envisaging how good you're going to feel crossing that finish line.



2. Get chatting – if you are able to talk to a fellow runner it can help take your mind off the task at hand and the miles will just tick away under your feet.



3. Listen to music or a podcast – I normally run with no music but sometimes it's nice to spark things up with some tunes to get me pumped!



4. Play a game – use points of reference as your carrot e.g. I'll just run to the next set of lights then I'll have a sip of water or get to the next checkpoint and I can eat something or when I crest the hill I can have a 30 second walk break.



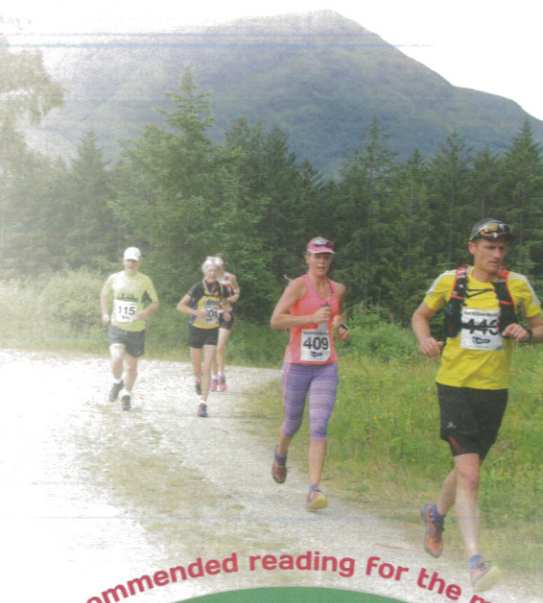
5. Trust your instincts - listen to your body! Do you need to take on more food or water, how is your heart rate, are you going too fast or too slow? Know when to stop.

Recommended reading for the mind:

The Chimp Paradox:

The mind management programme to help you achieve success, confidence & happiness. Recommended by Sir Chris Hoy.

By Prof Steve Peters



distance especially if you are training for marathons and beyond as it takes so long to recover fully.

Train to the terrain you are planning to tackle. If you are going to be running a flat road race then the bulk of your training should be on flat roads, with some hill work to build strength. Conversely I'm being inspired by some amazing runners and their targeted training ahead of UTMB (Ultra Trail Mont Blanc) this year. Danny Kendall

(@kendall_danny) headed over to Chamonix to train in the Alps, and Daniel Rowland (@dwrowland) is living and training in the Swiss Alps to fulfil his dreams of being a professional ultra-marathon runner. I am constantly amazed by Emelie Forsberg (@tinaemelie); she lives and trains in the Alps running in the summer and skiing in the winter; even in the most gruelling of races you never catch her without a smile on her face.

One key tip is - get strong! To run longer distances you are going to need more all over body strength to deal with the extra demands you are placing on your body. Build a strong core and overall muscle strength to ensure your posture will stay strong and you will be less prone to injury. This can be anything from yoga, BodyPump, Crossfit or quite simply an 'at home' routine of squats, burpees, lunges and planks.



Your Plan



Reality

Recovery and Rest

The best of training in my book is rest and recovery! It should be treated with the same importance in your plan as the physical training. Your muscles, body and mind need and absolutely deserve a rest too. If you don't get enough R&R your body becomes susceptible to illness and injury so give this top priority. Work out what works for you, for me I ensure I have 1 or 2 days off each week, by this I mean totally 'off' not 'active recovery' a phrase some people are all too fond of using, if you are active you aren't recovering! My routine after a tough run/race is the same each time; recovery drink within the first half hour (my faves are chocolate milk or if I am racing I am a big fan of For Goodness Shakes recovery drinks to rebuild and repair my muscles), eat something/anything but preferably high in protein, get in the shower or a lovely warm bath to relax and I get

into my compression tights and enjoy a lay down with my feet up for a while ensuring I get plenty of good quality sleep as well.

You are what you eat

Your body is a machine and needs to be fuelled as such. What foods you eat and when you eat them can massively affect not only your performance but also your recovery. Try to eat plenty of real food rather than processed foods in day to day life and while you are out training or racing. I go for a balanced healthy diet with everything in moderation, including the odd cake or takeaway meal and I really notice a difference when I'm having a 'naughty' week with too much processed food (& alcohol) and feel really sluggish on my runs, which kicks me back into gear to eat better. As you up your sessions to

longer than 90 minutes you will need to fuel your body on the run or you will 'hit the wall' or 'bonk' when you run out of energy. Try not to rely too heavily on gels and energy drinks and opt for more real foods with slow release energy foods such as oats, bananas, beans, pulses and bread products.

There is no magic formula to running further and no quick answers, but as long as you focus on consistency and only moving up when you are ready and comfortable the journey to running further will be a fun and safe one. Train hard, race easy!



Lucja is inspired by her hero Emelie Forsberg (left) particularly her positive approach