

This Mother Can Run

MAY - JUNE 2012

“Above all, what I hope all moms understand is that we are truly amazing and especially because we are mothers, we have the ability to help nurture our children to live their lives without setting limits or settling for anything less than the best of their abilities because we lead by example.”

Amy Palmiero-Winters, PAGE 8



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This Mother Can Run

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Time Has a Way of Showing Us What REALLY Matters

I am a Midwest girl who lives in beautiful sunny California. My family is all back East. I live in a beautiful location with beautiful people. I have formed beautiful friendships that are like my family away from home. I love having the ability to communicate with my friends and family (near and far) using the computer. However, sometimes I find that I become dependent upon social media, the computer, and online resources. I fail to really connect with what is right in front of me - my loud children fighting (literally) for my attention.

"I fail to really connect with what is right in front of me - my loud children fighting (literally) for my attention."

This past week I made a conscious choice to unplug and be in the moment. I still checked email and Facebook. However, when my children were awake and needing Mommy I shut down the computer and was present with my family/friends... life.

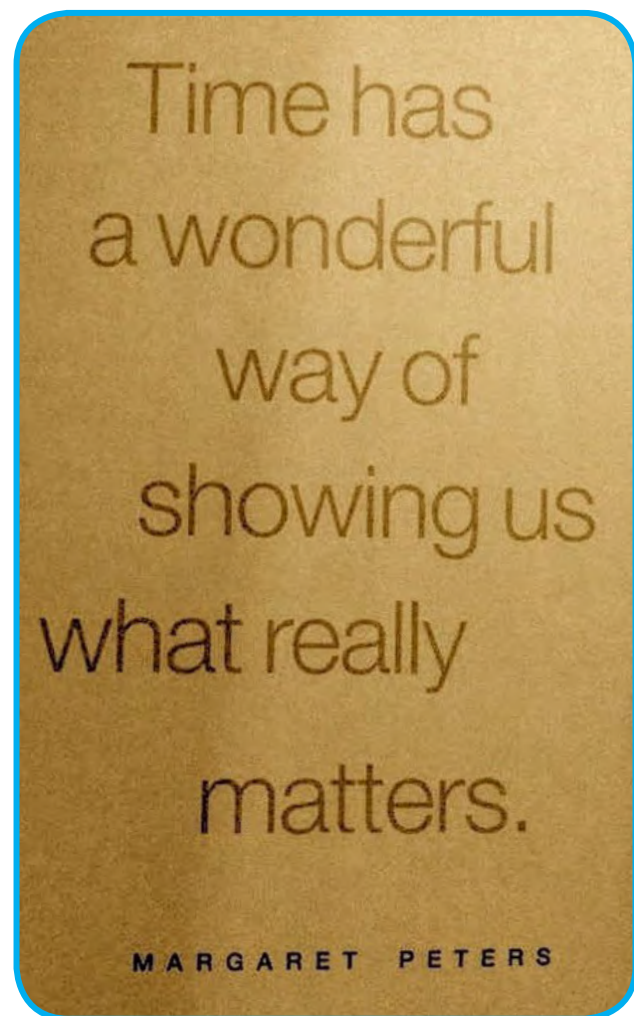
This is something I have really been trying to work on ... for MONTHS (no joke). It is still a struggle for me. I have found that what works for me is to do my computer work when the house is quiet (sleeping, rest time, or busy playing independently). When I do find myself on the computer longer than I should and my kids are fighting with each other... I now take it as my cue to get off the computer and live life.

I am a huge advocate for the quote, **"You make time for what is important to you."** I want to live out loud that my family, faith,

friends and fitness are more important to me than my online commitments and checking email. Because... time has a way of showing us what really matters!

Living life away from the computer is freeing! Fantastic! Fun! And I need to remember to do it more often!

Continuing on with my goals this year... I have added one small healthy change to my daily routine. So far in 2012, I have made 13 healthy changes and have continued those changes the following week(s). I have made a commitment to eat a healthy breakfast upon waking (every day), drink more water (atleast half my body weight in ounces), take a daily multivitamin, eat more fiber (atleast 25g) , record my food in a food journal increase my protein ,eat five square meals a day, moving more, breathing deep ,get my



sweat on, add strength training, working on my core strength and last week's goal to unplug.

This week my healthy change focus will be:

Sleep More!! (Shoot for 7-8 hours of sleep a night)

As I type this I am trying not to laugh out loud. What am I thinking? I am a tired Mom to three little boys: 1 who is determined to sleep with me on me each night, 1 who sleep shouts each night, 1 who wakes before the sun THINKS of rising!! Yet, I know that if I commit to going to bed early... and doing my best (within my control) to get my sleep... it will all be worth it!

Baby steps. One small change at a time!

“When I do find myself on the computer longer than I should and my kids are fighting with each other... I now take it as my cue to get off the computer and live life.”

Rachel is married to her college sweetheart and a running mom to three little boys. She blogs at RunningRachel.com where she shares her running adventures through life. She enjoys talking about her faith, family, fitness, food, and always fun! Rachel is a FitFluent Ambassador and is active on facebook at www.facebook.com/RunningRachelBlog and twitter at <https://twitter.com/#!/runningrachel>. She proudly claims to not have it all together and is a work in progress.



“I made a conscious choice to unplug and be in the moment.”

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RUN WITH YOUR KIDS, Not Away From Them

Running with your children can be either a happy, fulfilling experience or a Mom's worst nightmare. If you are up for being creative and also training new workouts habits, you can totally figure out how to manage running and mothering. Here are a few thoughts on running with your kids, managing home-based workouts, and empowering kids to join the fun.

For ages six and younger: A lot will depend on the maturity and activity level of your children but give it all a try!

Try running on a local track or greenway and letting your child ride his or her bike and keep you company. Pack a saddle bag with treats, so you can stop every 10-15 minutes and praise them or break up the duration of the workout. Sport beans, "sharkies", or gels are a fun reward and kids think they are super fuel!

If you let them ride ahead, set clear boundaries about how often they should circle back for you. And try once every five minutes to race them for 30 seconds. It's good for your turnover and also good for them to "beat you" during the workout.



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"And try once every five minutes to race them for 30 seconds."
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“Keep things super positive throughout workouts and figure out what rewards or praise resonate with your child.”

For elementary-middle school kids:

Your options begin to expand as your kids get older. If you raise them to think that working out is a normal part of your routine together, things become much easier. Choose a schedule and stick to it, even if only once a week. With this age group, you may choose to warm up or cool down with your kids and to keep your main set to yourself. Or do a dynamic warm up at home with hand walks, planks, and yoga moves alongside them. You can then circle back for them after you complete your main set and cool down together. Another idea is to try the track, letting them run every other lap with you or bringing their bike. Keep things super positive throughout workouts and figure out what rewards or praise resonate with your child. Finally, the classic game of red light/green light works well with this age if you run together. Let them call the shots and work your turnover and accelerations.

For older middle school children:

In these “tween” or pre-teen years, you will surely encounter more resistance to sharing workouts. A great way to combat this is to keep workouts together very consistent. You may even use a rewards system of special parent-child time, a treat, or an old-fashioned chart with stars for completed

workouts. Kids this age experience rapid growth spurts, leaving them somewhat uncoordinated or awkward in their bodies. Workouts can be a way to keep them feeling good and to promote self-esteem despite these changes. Give them workout options that include track, hill repeats racing each other, dog walking or jogging, or running to a local favorite place for a treat with friends. Kids this age love the social part of working out, so reach out to their friends as well.

If all else fails, get yourself up with the sun and run before your kids are even awake. Keep running in your life, and figure out ways to share it whenever you can. Raise your children to call themselves runners, and you are in for years of fun and fitness together.

For more information about parent-child workouts, contact stacey@tristacey.com or view the workout sheet idea posted in the next issue of This Mother Can Run. More fun to come!

“Workouts can be a way to keep them feeling good and to promote self-esteem despite these changes.”

Stacey Richardson is a professional triathlete, owner of TRlstacey coaching, and mother of two children, ages 12 and 9. She coaches wellness, fitness for parents and children, and multisport coaching from beginner to elites. As a Jill of all trades, she has figured out how to train with her children and shares some tips for you to workout with yours.



A SECOND CHANCE

Amy Palmiero-Winters holds world records in track events; she has won gold medals and run many ultramarathons. She has done all of this while running on a prosthetic leg, working full time and being a single mom. You would think that all of these accomplishments would be her point of pride, but all of those accolades pale in comparison to being a mom. Amy's biggest challenge is also her biggest reward – her children. And don't we all feel this way? No matter who we are and what we do, our children are our first job. In this article, Amy brings to light how she manages to fit in her 100+ miles per week, work, and caring for her two children whom she loves more than anything. At This Mother Can Run, we would like to wish Amy and all of you mothers out there a Happy Mother's Day! And to all the single mothers like Amy, we'd like to wish you a Happy Father's Day too because you often fill that void for your kids.

Q: Tell us about the events that led to you being a below the knee amputee.

A: When I grew up we had dirt bikes and bikes that we rode all the time. So when I was in college, I had the summer off. I was riding a motorcycle, and car pulled in front of me and pinned my leg between the bike and the car.



All I could think was, “How am I going to run without a leg?” I refused to let the doctors amputate it. They tried to save it through surgeries. Finally after some time, I knew it had to be removed. That was the beginning of a whole new life for me.

Q: How long was it after the accident until you were able to run again?

A: It was a few years before I could run again. At one point I got a bone infection, and they had to take more of the leg off. It was a mess!

Q: I read that even before your leg was amputated, you ran a marathon on your damaged left leg. What drove you to attempt this feat?

A: It was a milestone run for me. I needed to do it to get to that next step in my life. After that race, I knew I needed to have my leg amputated.

Q: In 1993 before the accident, your

marathon time was 3:16. In 2006 it was 3:04 with one leg. Did you ever imagine that you would go well beyond where you ever were before the amputation took place?

A: Before the first marathon I never ran more than 6 miles. One day a friend asked if I'd like to do a marathon. I agreed, but my friend thought I'd never make it through. I outran my friend with a time of 3:24. A few weeks later I ran another marathon in 3:16 and qualified for Boston! So, to contribute my improved marathon time to running with a prosthetic leg is unfair. 3:04 was not beyond my ability. In '93 I was just starting out. I had the potential inside me. I'm better now because we don't always get another chance. It gave me something I didn't have before. I took my running talent for granted before. Now I don't. What happened made the difference. Now I always try my best. When I struggle I ask myself what's the matter? If I think I'm tired, I remind myself that it's just a feeling. I talk myself down. We shouldn't limit ourselves.

Q: What prosthetic company do you use, and what is it like running with one? Do you get blisters, bone spurs or any other irritations from using one?

A: I work for and use A Step Ahead for my prosthetic. I've dealt with blisters on my feet, lost toe nails, all the excruciating pain you can have in your feet, and it in no way compares with the pain I experience with running on a prosthetic. It is carbon fiber connected to your leg, and your leg is not meant to bear all your weight. There is no cushion/padding on the bones, the nerves are closer to the surface, and when you sweat, the friction tears the skin. But I love running. It makes me happy. I get through it. I come home,

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“Just like anything that is thrown at you.
It's only as hard as you make it.”

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and I get to be a mom. I remember one time coming home after surgery and having my daughter climb up on my back as I crawled to the kitchen to retrieve what it was that she needed. We do what we have to do to get things done.

Q: You have run marathons, triathlons, Ironmans, and ultramarathons. Which event is your favorite and why?

A: I love ultramarathons the most. Just when you think you've reached your limit in the ultra, you dig down deep and then go farther. It's like at work when I was helping an 11 year old girl doing ice climbing, she was mad, tearing up, and wanted to give up. I asked her to take just 4 more steps for me. It took her a while, but she did it, and she was mad at me when she finished, but I gave her something no one could take away from her. I helped her dig deep and take something away from that situation. Doing ultramarathons helps me reach others too. It helps people see that even when you think you've reached your limit, you still have a little more left to give. Sometimes it's about something bigger than you too. Being on a team and knowing that I'm competing for the team encourages me. In Badwater, the first 5 hours

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**"All of us make excuses.
If it's something you
really want to do, you'll
make it happen."**

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of the run were great, then for the next 5, I was throwing up. Being able to come back and finish felt great! The ultra teaches you about yourself and your strengths.

Q: How old are your children? What lessons do you hope they will gain from you and your experiences as a physically challenged athlete?

A: My son, Carson, is 8 and Madilynn is 7. I never see myself as a physically challenged athlete. I am a mom, and I don't want them to see me as disabled or physically challenged. Everyone has something wrong with them. Mine is obvious. We all have challenges. Things happen to us we can't change. I just hope my kids will do their best and try their best always. We may not all get



a second chance like I did. I don't want them to take for granted what they've been given. I want them to give their best, be their best for that day. We are all different on the outside, but we're the same on the inside. I never want them to treat somebody badly, and I want them to know that nothing is impossible.

Q: You are a single mom, and you also work at A Step Ahead. What are the challenges of being a single mom? How do you manage your family, training and work?

A: It is what it is. Just like anything that is thrown at you. It's only as hard as you make it. I just try to do the best that I can as a mom and at work. I recognize that I have my life, and my kids have their focus and goals. I don't want to give everything

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**"When I train for Badwater (which is
135 miles in Death Valley), I run on the
treadmill under the heat lamps. The
treadmill gets up to 160 degrees."**

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up, but it's their time to shine and grow too. It's a fine balance. Sometimes the kids ask me, "Why can't you pick us up from school like the other moms?" It's a choice I have to make. Would I like things to be different? Sure, but I do the best that I can. As for my training, it all depends on the race I'm doing.

I'm training for an adventure race in 2 weeks. So I do Cross Fit at 4AM, run, and go to work. I use Cross Fit to offset my speed and hill workouts as well as tempo runs because it is extremely intense. When I start to weaken, Cross Fit keeps me strong because it strengthens muscles I forget about. Also at work I'm training Israeli soldiers who have been injured and lost limbs, so I get to train all day right beside them. I help them see that the possibilities are endless for them. I run with them while they ride. We practice stopping, taking off, and turning around. My daily mileage varies. Sometimes it's 20 miles, 30 miles or even 70 miles. When I train for Badwater (which is 135 miles in Death Valley), I run on the treadmill under the heat lamps. The treadmill gets up to 160 degrees. It's good for my prosthetic to adjust to the heat. Of course I wouldn't be able to do any of this without my best friend, Stacey, who helps with my kids. I've known her since high school track, and our families are friends. She is the Godmother to my kids. I go out for a long run, and they all bike out to a spot along my route to bring me support things. She takes them to the park, and then they see me on the way back home.

Q: What do you say to other single moms who say that they don't have time to fit in workouts because they have kids or they can't work around their kids' schedules?

A: All of us make excuses. If it's something you really want to do, you'll make

"Crossing the finish line is tough, but being a good mom is the most important thing to me."

"I have taken on some of the most challenging races in the world, done so many things that no one has ever done nor thought possible, set dozens of world records, crossed the finish line miles ahead of others, but at the end of the day, I'm just a mom...no different than anyone else."

Photo courtesy of Heidi Gutman Studio 336



it happen. With my kids we run where we need to go. If their soccer game is 4 miles away, we'll run, bike or go in the jogger. We need to set great examples for our kids. Our job as parents is to help build a healthy foundation for them. Of course when we go out for runs we stop at the park and play, get ice cream, or do something else. I try to be creative and put in the extra effort. Sometimes we go on a little adventure with our backpacks and stop for a picnic. You have to figure out your priorities. Why not give that example to your children? Fitness is such a good foundation for our kids. Above all, what I hope all moms understand is that we are truly amazing and especially because we are mothers, we have the ability to help nurture our children to live their lives without setting limits or settling for anything less than the best of their abilities because we lead by example. I absolutely love my children and would not be the athlete I am without them.

Q: As a single mother, do you ever feel like you have to be both a mother and a father to your children? If so, in what ways?

A: I guess. I'm well rounded and give them all that. I won't touch salamanders and worms, but I'm willing to use a towel to put the worm on the fish hook. I do wish their dad was around more, but we visit him often. We try to do it all because that's how I grew up. Dad had us help fix the car and fix stuff in the house. I try to give them a bit of everything.

"Running kept me going. It still does."

Q: What challenge in your life are you most proud of getting through?

A: I haven't gotten through it, but being a good mom is my biggest challenge. It's an every day challenge. I always want to do the best at what I do. Crossing the finish line is tough, but being a good mom is the most important thing to me. I have taken on some of the most challenging races in the world, done so many things that no one has ever done nor thought possible, set dozens of world records, crossed the finish line miles ahead of others, but at the end of the day, I'm just a mom...no different than anyone else. Being a successful runner doesn't compare to what my kids think of me. I'm also pretty proud of my foundation: Amy's One Step Ahead Foundation www.onestepaheadfoundation.org. It helps kids who pull away from athletic aspects in their lives. I give them activities to do like ski, camp, and triathlons. It helps their self confidence. When they do these activities they are building self confidence that no one can take away from them.

Q: What motivates you to run?

A: My children motivate me, but I'm also motivated by being able to help other people. I believe things happen for a reason. I can help someone else overcome something they think is impossible, whether it's another leg amputee or a woman who wants to lose her last 5 pounds. We are limitless if we choose to be!

Q: What originally inspired you to run?

A: My dad was always coming up with things to do. He took me to my first race when I was 8 years old. Running made me happy. I soon realized that if I had a bad day, I would run. Running kept me going. It still does.

Name: Amy Palmiero-Winters

Q: Average miles per run
12-40 miles

Q: Where do you usually run?
X treadmill
X outside

Q: Favorite running song and the artist/band

"When You're Gone" by The Cranberries, "Ordinary Miracle" by Sarah McLachlan. These songs are for my children and Godson. When I hit the wall whether it is the 1st or 20th time, I hear these songs and see their faces, and know I can dig deeper and do better for that day. To me, being the best mother I can is the most important. I'm not perfect, but I try my best to show my children that everyday is a gift. I draw from their strength. "Not Afraid" by Eminem This song might not make sense to someone else but for me it makes perfect sense in where I have been, to where I am now, and to where I am going and to what I will achieve. It gives me a sense of strength in the words and simple fact that I am not afraid to challenge myself and what I am capable of!

Q: Favorite time of day to run

Anytime! 1AM, 5AM, noon...Anytime is a good time to run!

Q: How do you prefer to train?

- X alone
- with a partner
- in a group

Q: Most scenic place you've ever run

Seattle, Washington at a Northface Race in the woods and Death Valley in the Badwater Race...it's 135 miles untouched by man. Even the air you breathe is different there. It's the toughest and most beautiful race.

Q: What do you do while running?

- X listen to music
- watch TV
- talk
- X think
- other

(songs make me think of life, my kids & people in my life)

Q: Favorite running gadget or gear

iPod shuffle (I have 5 - in long runs I bring 2 or 3 to change out when one of them dies), Nike Air Max, and Lululemon attire

Q: Why did you start running?

- to get in shape
- to get back to pre-pregnancy weight
- for fun
- for sport
- X other

It made me feel good. It's what I loved to do. It helped me feel confident and still does.

Q: Favorite race distance

- X 5K
- X 10K
- X 1/2 marathon
- X marathon
- X ultramarathon

(I love all distances for different reasons. The 5K and 10K is great for speed. The 1/2 and marathons are a challenge, and in the ultramarathon the first 5 hours are miserable, but once I get in 40 miles I start to get into a groove. It takes me past a marathon to totally relax.)

SINGLE MAMA ON THE RUN

Raising two children in a single parent household is tough. And, training for marathons on top of my parental schedule, makes my life exponentially more complex. When I'm with my kids, I try to be WITH my kids. When I'm not, I try to plan all of my time with friends, coaching, running errands, attending appointments, cleaning and running. The schedule requires a lot of planning. But it is also so rewarding for both parts of my life.

“When I'm with my kids, I try to be WITH my kids.”

Think you can't train for your first 5K because you have your little munchkins at home? Last year, during my time of transition, I was able to adjust to my new parental schedule while taking on a coaching business and running sixteen half marathons and one full marathon.

How did I do it? Even if you aren't a single parent, chances are you keep a very busy schedule. You can use any of these tips to maximize your time with your family and your time training.

1) Have a Schedule – I have my kids 50% of the time and try to plan all of my long runs and most of my running around my parental schedule. I physically write my training runs and schedule down on my calendar. I treat these runs as appointments. I wear my workout gear to the grocery store or appointments, so that I can make my running “appointment” when my schedule calls for it. I can drop the groceries off at home and head right back out the door.

2) On the go – Have a gym bag packed at all times (even if you don't belong to the gym). Make sure it stores a fresh change of running clothes, shoes,

“Last year, during my time of transition, I was able to adjust to my new parental schedule while taking on a coaching business and running sixteen half marathons and one full marathon.”



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"I can drop the groceries off at home and head right back out the door."

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stop watch, energy bars, and a water bottle. You can keep it in your vehicle or bring it to work. You'll always be ready to run.

3) Fit it in When You Can – This goes for parents with one or two parents in a household. You can always multitask. Run while your daughter is at dance class. Take your little one to the pharmacy with the jogging stroller. Run a few laps around the soccer field. Schedule short family runs to a local park. Run to the park, let the kids play and then run home. You can invite other families in your neighborhood to join you too. A mile here and a mile there really do add up.

4) Running Dates – Take time to catch up with friends or your significant other on foot. Schedule "active dates" where you meet at a local trail or park and catch up while you log a few miles. Schedule weekly or monthly dates and switch-up the location. Some of my best get-togethers and conversations have been over runs on the local trails.

5) A Support System is There for a Reason – Lean on friends and family when you need to. Use the babysitting services at your local gym when you need a few extra hands. Exchange babysitting and play dates with neighbors and friends.

6) Don't beat yourself up – Even if you miss a workout or two, remember that you are not a superhero. If you missed a workout, chances are that you still got in several others that week. Life happens. Enjoy it.

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Jamie Edge is a single mommy of two who started running in 2005. Being very goal-oriented, she set a goal to run twelve half marathons in 2011. Shortly after she set her goal, she was confronted with a divorce and thought that she would need to set more "realistic" goals for herself during a time of transition. But, she decided to recommit herself and use running as therapy and to occupy her time. By the end of the year, she ran sixteen of her twelve half marathons and one full marathon. The same year, she also started a coaching business and helped 50 other people train for their first 5K. You can check out her blog, Running Diva Mom (www.runningdivamom.com) or the Running Diva Facebook Page (<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Running-Diva-Mom/148863891815074?ref=ts>).

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Miss a Key Run? No Biggie!

As much as I thought running during pregnancy was difficult, running with a baby in the house has proven much worse. Ada has hit the 4-month/19-week sleep regression thing... HARD. She woke up 6 (SIX!) times last night. It's definitely impacting my waking hours since it's been over a week of such interrupted sleep. Double workout days are on hold for the moment. Getting in one is hard enough.

I was scheduled to run 15 miles total this weekend -- 4 on Saturday, 11 on Sunday. I ran zero.

Confession: Taking unscheduled days off from my training plan used to freak me out. But when life gets in the way -- and it certainly has -- my years of racing experience have taught me that it's no biggie. Missing a few days is not only fine, but can also be beneficial.

What can I do to get back on track? Honestly, I don't need to do anything. If I don't make a regular habit of missing important runs, I can skip these miles and not look back. But there are a few ways I like to make up for them regardless.

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“Double workout days are on hold for the moment.”

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#1: Keep cool about it. First and foremost, I do not allow these blips to get me down. I need the rest -- and might possibly need more. I've taken a long, hard look at my goals with my upcoming half marathon. I initially wanted to finish in under 1:50, but think finishing at all would be fine in my book. It's my first post-pregnancy half. And this isn't the first interruption to my training plan. There's no reason I need to attempt to break the sound barrier.

#2: Take care of myself. On those off days, I didn't just lay on the couch and eat cookies. (I did my share of that, though.) I ate well. I tried my best to get some sleep. And I used those extra hours when I would have been running to do something for myself. In this event, I read a book. It was glorious.

Here's a workout-specific thing I usually do when I miss a key run:

#3: Shift those miles around. After three days off, I may feel tired . . . but my legs are feeling fresh. I've decided to toss out Saturday's 4 miler entirely, but swap today's easy run with some distance. It's definitely not 11, but 8 would be a win in my book.

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“Missing a few days is not only fine, but can also be beneficial.”

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Even better? If you have OFF days free, you can move your important workouts to them with little problem. After all, you already took a few days OFF, you don't necessarily need one more.

Some considerations if you want to take this approach:

- You may want to modify your other runs of the week to accommodate the most important run. The way I think about it is there are usually a few key workouts per week. A long run, speed work, and sometimes another tempo-ish one, too. If you had to, you could strip your week down to these key runs and cut out the easy, junk miles. How to choose? If you're targeting distance, your most quality runs are the long ones. If you're targeting speed, the track workouts and other speed play are crucial.
- Since plans typically give you one type of each quality workout a week, you'll want to try and shift the missed run so it doesn't fall in line too close to the next one of the same sort. That's a good way to get injured or burned out again. (For example, if you missed your Sunday long run, I'd recommend not waiting past Wednesday to fit it in before the next one.)

"After three days off, I may feel tired . . .
but my legs are feeling fresh."



Ashley blogs with her husband Stephen over at (never home)maker (<http://www.neverhomemaker.com>) and Writing Chapter Three (<http://www.writingchapterthree.com>). Their 5-month-old daughter Ada makes many appearances on both sites and, much to their delight, has recently started laughing, rolling over, and almost-crawling. When they aren't running in races or doing doorway pull-ups, Ashley and Stephen enjoy cooking and baking vegetarian/vegan foods, fixing up their 70+ year-old house, and coming up with new ways to live with less.



ASK THE PT

My father-in-law who is an ex-Marine, fought in the Vietnam War, and worked as a police officer for 30 years in the toughest streets of Detroit as a drug and narcotics officer, always shares stories of his wild adventures and experiences. The phrase that most often comes up in conversation when reliving these stories is, "watch your back", and with good reason. In these stories if you do not watch your back it could mean your life.

When I say "watch your back" I am using it as an obvious figure of speech but I am just as serious for all runners to watch a sometimes neglected part of their bodies - their backs. Did you know that the treatment of back pain is a 3.2 billion dollar industry in America according to some recent studies done by the American Medical Association? 3.2 billion. That is a lot of money spent on your back. In fact, it has recently become the #1 related medical problem in the United States. Hard to believe, but the typical American will have an average of 2 back problems in his or her adult life.

For athletes and runners it is especially important to prevent these problems before they even become an issue. The last thing you want to do is have a nagging back injury prevent you from doing the running you love. The problem is most people, runners alike, do not pay attention to their backs until something is wrong. Then it is too late, because activity will have ceased. Here are some quick and easy tips to make sure that you are always watching your back.

1. Stretch - The #1 most important thing you can do to prevent a back injury. Stretching loosens up muscles before an activity and helps muscles recover after a physical activity. It is important to stretch all muscles in preparation for running. Muscles such as your hamstrings (back of your thigh), quadriceps (front

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of thigh), piriformis (butt muscles), and iliopsoas (front of your hips) are vital to achieving good back health.

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2. Strengthen your core and back muscles - I know of no better way to prevent further injury than to make sure your back muscles are strengthened. Pay special attention to your abdominals. There is some truth to achieving that all elusive 6-pack that runners and athletes strive for. Having strong abdominal muscles acts as a protection for the back so the back does not have to work as hard. Specific abdominal muscles such as the rectus abdominis (6-pack muscles) and transverse abdominis (deep 6-pack muscles) are especially important.

3. Do specific back exercises - I would not leave all of you runners hanging without some quick examples of simple exercises that you can perform in your daily routine that will help your overall back health.

Pelvic tilts-Lay on your back and practice flattening your back against your bed or surface that you are laying on. This motion is generated by the hips.

When you are flattening your back, hold for a count of 5 and try 3 sets of 10.

Transverse Abdominis Draw-This exercise is so simple when done properly. The simplest cue I can give is to draw your belly button up to your chest, hold for a count of 5 and then relax. You can do this laying down, standing up or even walking around.

4. Hydrate properly - This can never be underestimated especially in runners. Your body is primarily made up of water and your spine which is the anchor to your skeletal structure is no different. Those discs in between your vertebrae need to stay hydrated as well to insure maximal health. Note: While all of these fun, hidden sugary drinks like Gatorade and others are great to allegedly “restore electrolytes” to the system, nothing beats good old fashioned water in my book. Remember water is H₂O - 2 atoms of hydrogen, one of oxygen. All natural, always. Gatorade is not. Just my opinion, but you make the call for yourself.

As we get into the summer months, running outside is going to be the norm. Enjoy the beautiful outdoors when you can. Make sure when you go out for your next run whether it is 1 mile or 10 that you take some necessary precautions to make sure your back as well as the rest of your body is in optimum health.

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Eric Tomei is a physical therapist who has been in orthopedic practice for 10 years. He currently works in Rochester, MI as a staff physical therapist and truly enjoys shaping the health of all his patients. He has a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology, a Bachelor's Degree in Health Sciences and a Masters Degree in Physical Therapy from Oakland University. His passions include: Real estate investing, physical fitness, and volunteering for various charities in the metro Detroit area.



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“Keep your dreams alive. Understand to achieve anything requires faith and belief in yourself, vision, hardwork, determination, and dedication. Remember all things are possible for those who believe.”

- Gail Devers

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This Mother Can Run