

## What does it take to get out of your comfort zone?

By Ravi Bhanot

Take a challenge to find out. My friends challenged that I would not be able to do the New York Marathon so it was a gauntlet I felt I had to take up.

Is there a challenge you could take up? The first thoughts are of pain rather than pleasure for most. This is understandable as most of us are driven by fear... fear of the unknown, the pain of rejection or embarrassment for doing something we had said we would do.

The secret I think is to visualize what you want to achieve. See yourself crossing the finishing line-keep very much in your mind in practice runs and on the marathon day itself. You need to have a big enough why too! Find your reasons why you would want to run compelling-raising for charity could be one reason, feeling you are making a difference, feeling of accomplishing a lifelong goal or a feeling of significance, love or attachment with people you are running with or for could be other reasons. When you hit the 'wall' or pain barrier these reasons will help you pull through.

Believe that you can do it. Belief comes from your confidence that you can do it. Confidence and faith are inter-twinned. Achieving smaller goals until the larger ones are achieved gives confidence and from this faith is built. 26 miles seems a long distance but then did not your first step too when you were a toddler or when you fell the first time you were learning to ride a bike!. As the old saying goes the 'walk of a hundred miles starts with the first'.



Until three years ago 6 miles seemed a long distance. So I took the challenge of doing the British 10k run with one weeks practice. It was tough. I was at the end out of breath, aching and tired. But I did it! This gave me faith that I could do a greater run but there was something I was missing.... The techniques and skill required for the challenge. When I did the BUPA run in 2007 I managed the 10k run at a faster speed and did not feel as tired but could I possibly dream of a 26 mile run?

I had often heard that to get to the next level you need a coach or mentor. A coach is someone who can give you inspiration and a mentor is one who has done a marathon before and can give you tips as to achieve this feat. Fortunately I found two people who turned out both to be my coaches and mentors. Both young men, Shameek and Shaunak, were less than half my age but in knowledge in running knew more than twice I knew.

The first thing mentors tell you is a 'good workman has the right tools'. So off I went to a Runners shop and had my running video-analyzed on a treadmill. Apparently when I run my feet rolls in and forward more than most people's. For this I had to compensate through the shoes I was running with. So I bought a good pair of running shoes. I was told that I need runners sweat top and shorts. These were practical for runners as they controlled sweat better than ordinary clothes. This I found in time was good advice. I bought a *Timex* pedometer too. This device uses pre-determined stride lengths and the number of strides one takes to work out the distance you have covered. It also tells you how fast you are running and for how long. You place this device tagged to your shorts. The device is useful to keep you motivated (sometimes demotivated me too-when I realized how slow I was or how many more miles were still left) when you see the miles you have already run. I realized when I was running with this device that the more informed you are (just like in anything in life) the more intelligent guesses you can make. You can plan your runs better and you soon appreciate distances better too. After spending £170 in the shop I was ready to run ...well at least out of the shop... feeling lighter in the pocket than I had expected.

They say the winning is in the planning so we worked out a scheduled plan for running. This was based on the advice given by *Get Kids*

*Going.* How am I going to find so much time for practicing was my first thought. Further research was showing that early morning long runs can leave the immune system compromised and make you more susceptible to infections as saliva that protects membranes against airborne bacteria is less available and running between 4pm to 7pm is the ideal time for running as the body is the most receptive with respect to body temperature, muscle strength and flexibility.

Considering I don't get home till 7pm would I be able to cope was a thought that crossed my mind.

You have to balance around family life work life and leisure time if you want a happy family is an old recipe I was thought from a young age. Having my son run with me helped getting this balance!

I was told taking your carbohydrates is important as it is the glycogen stored in your liver and muscles that fuels our running and as we cannot store much of this so we have to take plenty of it regularly. Eating fast acting carbohydrates such as bananas are great for quick spurts of energy but can cause energy to be turned to fat if it is not utilized. The warning was go easy on them and eat slower acting carbs such as pastas and potatoes. On the day of the run do not eat solid food –you can get a stomach pain or stitches-eat easy to digest high Glycemic Index foods such as bananas or high carb. Sodium containing drinks like *Lucozade Sport*.

If at these times your diet may be more carbs. rather than meat or fish you may be missing out on iron, zinc or omega 3 oils. It is worth taking a supplement of vitamins, minerals and protein capsules such as *Coolherbals* or *Boots* ones.

Your intake of fruits and vegetables may be good but with extra strain on the body it's a good insurance to take a supplement-as you never know what you may be missing.

My experience was that you have to listen to your body but keep shut the little voice in your head that puts you down or negates your positive intentions. If you can't keep to your planned runs don't beat yourself up...if your mind is not set forget the finish line you would be lucky to reach the starting line.

Warming up exercises is vital as is cooling down and stretching exercises. The advice I would give to anyone but particularly to the over 40's is take care of your knees. Massage with a good Oil such as *Coolherbals Gym Oil* which will lubricate the moving joints and improve the

circulation prior to running. Use the oil to ease tired legs after the race and use it in your bath to relax in the evening after the run. You will find your tiredness goes away faster as toxins are released from the lymphatic system. Remember the lymphatic system has no pump pushing the toxins and lactic acid out-massage will help!

I massaged my legs and knees before and after my first run but what I found was that my first pain was not in my legs but in my hands! Since it had been a cold evening I had clenched my fists whilst running-not a good idea as circulation in the hands had not been good.

I found breathing through the mouth more efficient than through the nose and taking constant mineral water or even better isotonic drink (to prevent a drop of sodium) breaks were helpful. Other than keeping your thoughts whilst running on things positive-music through an i-pod or thinking things internally (like saying a mantra) or of external thoughts such as the feeling of finishing the race.

What happens if you still feel you cannot carry on running then walk it or take a short rest? Remember the winning is in completing the run and not necessarily in finishing the world champion!

*Ravi,*  
*Its Jane here from Get Kids Going!... well done at the NYC Marathon.. you were an absolute star! Thank you also for your wonderful support and kindness.. you are marvelous.*

*All love*  
*Jane*  
*Get Kids Going*

 **About our charity : Get Kids Going!**

Get Kids Going! helps disabled children take part in sport by providing specialist sports wheelchairs, sports grants and year round support. They can then compete in marathons, triathlons, tennis, athletics, skiing, rugby, basketball etc. With your help, many could become Paralympics champions and world record holders.  
*Charity Registration No 1063471*