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Runaway: Why I Keep Running

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(“Tomorrow’s Voices Today“ is a new series curated by poet and educator Mike Sonksen.)

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Everybody has some type of escape from reality. It could be drugs, alcohol, or music. This escape is something that gets rid of the stress from their lives. This stress reliever distracts the individual and allows them to feel better, even if it’s temporarily. This escape from reality makes the person feel as if they are in a whole different world. A world where their mind is clear and empty from negative emotions. A clear mind means a much clearer vision. This clearer vision allows them to open their eyes and discover what they were too blind to see. Being able to see can help the individual view issues from reality differently. Doing so could possibly be the discovery of solutions for the problem. My escape from reality is not similar to drugs or alcohol, where one is literally in another planet and separated from the person they truly are. Instead, my escape — my stress reliever — comes from running. Running whether it is on the track, the course, or just anywhere. I run to release the unnecessary stress that is not needed. Running gives me a better view of my life. With this escape, unlike being on drugs, I am still me, but a better version of me.

Being a runner involves determination, hard work, pain, losses, wins, improvement, and being physically and mentally fit. There will be a plethora of pain, especially in the beginning. I started running in my sophomore year, during the Spring 2015 track season. Running just a lap or two was at first difficult. It hurt. I honestly wanted to cry and quit. One may believe that a runner just runs and that’s all, but there is so much more to it.

In running, there is a technique. There’s technique with the way an athlete runs and how they will run their event. One does not simply run; there is a particular body form and a strategy in their race.

I Never Gave Up

Accepting that there will be wins and losses is another thought a runner must keep in mind. Despite how amazing a runner is, they will face days where defeat will occur. It’ll hurt and it’ll try to bring the runner down. A defeat is an experience to learn from. It will give the runner a chance to get up and work even harder which can result in a win later. There have been days, both during last year and this year, where when I lost, I felt terrible and wanted to give up. Last year I lost all my meets. It affected me so much considering it was my first year of running. As for this year, I lost my two of most important meets, but I was able to win the rest. The major similarity between those two years though, was I never gave up.

There will also be people on the opposing team and/or people on your team who will doubt and underestimate you. These people will always be present. The main rule is to never give in to what they have to say. The best way to handle this is to not respond and continue working hard. Doing this will prove those who tried to underestimate you wrong. It always feel amazing doing this. There have been countless times where several coaches and athletes on my team or the other team have tried to tell their teammate/runner to defeat me during a race. Knowing the feeling of regret I will receive if I allow them to do so, I never allow it to occur despite how painful it feels.

On the starting line of my 800 meter race during this year's Track and Field League Finals, one of my competitor's coaches yelled to his runner, "DEFEAT HER," purposely allowing me to hear it. Only three runners were allowed to move onto the next round, CIF Preliminaries, and that girl and I had a good chance at getting that third spot. Instead of giving that coach the eye, I decided to relax and focus on my race. Fortunately, I got third place and proved that coach wrong.

Trying your best is significant. If a runner runs their race with half their heart into it, the chances of feeling that they tried their best is slim. Whether you feel like you cannot defeat some of your competitors or you are in complete pain but still able to push — put your full 100% into it. The same goes for hesitating to make a pass in the race. If a runner feels or knows they can pass up a runner, they must go for it otherwise they will regret it. A runner will beat themselves up if they knew they could have put more into it but did not.

Improving My Personal Best

Improvement, improving your personal best over time is a sight to see. Witnessing your growth not only makes you feel great, but gives motivation to continue working hard to improve even more. Knowing my personal best in my 800 meter race last year was 2:54 and ending this season with 2:31 is astonishing. Who knew taking off 23 seconds was possible?

All the goals I have for running along with those I have accomplished has allowed me to realize that if a person truly wants something and truly works for it, it is possible to achieve it. The size of the goal does not matter, but what does matter is the amount of work and what it takes to accomplish it. Most of the keys a runner must keep in mind that I described above can also be compared to life itself. For instance, keeping in mind there will be wins and losses is similar to ups and downs in life. It is up to the person whether or not they want to stand up and continue fighting on. People who attempt to drag you down constantly being present in the sport also occurs. No matter how much one tries to avoid their existence, they will always be there but it is up to them if they want to give in or respond to those individuals with success.

The More I Run, The More I Learn

As for giving your 100% without hesitations, that applies to an individual's whole life span. Living with fear and hesitations will result to pure regret. Nobody wants that, so it is important that you live freely despite what people have to say. Life is short and no one needs to spend it with what ifs. This is why I keep running.

Running is my escape. In a way I runaway from everything and everyone that takes my concentration off what is important to me along with the negativity that wraps around my mind. Joining my school's Cross Country team and Track and Field team has not only given me a chance to witness what my priorities are, but also taught me what a runner must know about running. Those two running sports allowed me to learn more knowledge about myself and running itself within these two years than I had in my entire life up to that point. This is why I keep running.

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