

Faith, Hope and Love on the Run: A 26.2 Week Journey for the Runner's Soul

***Lessons from icons and role models in the distance running world, with
positive weekly practices designed to develop body-mind-spirit resilience and
bring out your very best!***

—With Forward by “Coach Jeff” Galloway, ‘72 U.S. Olympian—

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- Bonus: RunPoems & Recovery

Forward by “Coach Jeff” Galloway:

What great inspiration! As you read about each of the amazing athletes in this book, you’ll get a sense of the energy, the dedication and the achievement that can help you get out the door for your next workout and push through barriers.

From the first run with my high school cross country team more than 60 years ago, I realized that runners inspire one another. I was overweight, with no fitness background. After the first half mile, I was exhausted and had to walk back to the start dreading the expected insults from the others—conditioned runners. But as they returned, practically every one was supportive: “Way to go new guy”, “You’re part of the team now”.

Each workout and race became a new opportunity to improve. When the effort and the weather were adverse, someone on the team unexpectedly tapped into their inner fortitude and ran his best race ever. Even though I was at the back of the pack, these performances sparked my motivation to work a bit harder—and improve. I would have never dreamed that 14 years and thousands of miles later, I would come from last place in the US Olympic Trials to 2nd to qualify for the Olympic team and then race in Munich.

But the greatest joy in my running has come from working with Mark Lane Holbert and other leaders around the world. These good people have put a lot of themselves into their running and have made running and the world better as they help spread the word that with the right training method you don’t have to hurt or be exhausted.

Mark has done a great job of telling these stories. As you learn more about the rich legacy of distance running, you will want to tell others and bring them into this amazing community. In this way you can become part of this positive and expanding culture.

I continue to enjoy and benefit from the many positive mental and physical benefits of running, experienced during my painful first week. I wish for each of you the opportunity to run as long as you wish—with years of fulfilling experiences.

Jeff Galloway

1972 US Olympian, Galloway Training Program (Run-Walk-Run) Founder

About the Author:

Dr. Mark Lane-Holbert is a USATF certified running coach and marathoner of over 25 years, who currently serves as Program Director for Tampa Galloway Training Program. He is a faculty member and research fellow at the University of South Florida, focusing on positive psychology, motivation and purpose-based practice in the field of educational psychology.

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Introduction:

All of us have so many who inspire and support us to get through just one successful training season, and as Coach Jeff always says, “there are many definitions of success”! This devotional pulls together the stories of individuals who have inspired me over the years, many of whom I’ve interviewed with The Running Anthropologist, or met while pacing or guiding marathons with Galloway Training Program and Achilles International. These featured outstanding running icons all serve or give back to the running community in diverse ways, and we are better for it! A big thanks to all my dedicated 6am training friends in Tampa Bay, and special thanks to my wife Meghan— without her none of my successes would be possible, including partnering to raise our amazing daughter who keeps us moving daily.

Special introductory note: If you check off one of these rules, you are a success:

- #1- On race day, you wake up and you are proud of your training effort and the fact that you put in your best. (i.e., If you show up with flu and wisely don’t run, you already succeeded.)
- #2- Don’t do anything that will prevent you from running again another day; If you walk more or even DNF due to heat/conditions or injury, you have also succeeded!
- #3- If you cross the finish line and don’t break rule #2, however you finish, you are a Marathoner, and again you have succeeded! -Creative Credit: Eugene “JJ” Godun.

Suggested Donation:

You’re a part of something incredible. If you find this unique devotional to be of value, please consider donating some of that value back to help those who are not yet free to run across the globe— \$10-\$20. [Achilles International](#) supports runners with disabilities across the globe in gaining access to movement, [UNICEF](#)’s children’s emergency relief fund is helping our most vulnerable children in Ukraine, Palestine, and other direly needed areas. [International Medical Relief](#) also works in many places of need, but especially now with Ukrainian refugees on the Polish border. *Think of our impact if each of us thousands strong contributed just this bit!*

What to Expect / How it Works:

- 1) You’ll find each week below is themed around an iconic athlete and their unique gifts to the running world. **Part of their story** is told to illuminate a key lesson or take-away to focus on for that week of training.
- 2) This is followed by **Practical or Mental Strength Exercises** and an opportunity for reflection on how these might apply to your own life and training.
- 3) Lastly, something extra “**For The Long Run**” such as podcast episode/multimedia is linked each week if you’d like to delve deeper. Enjoy and Happy Running!

Week 1: Meb Keflezighi - Overcome through Faith, Hope and Love

Inspirational Quote:

“Like the marathon, life can sometimes be difficult, challenging, and present obstacles. However, if you believe in your dreams and never ever give up, things will turn out for the best.” — Meb Keflezighi, 2004 Olympic silver medalist, NYC and Boston Marathon Winner

Story from His Journey:

Mebratom “Meb” Keflezighi was born in Eritrea during a tumultuous time—the country’s war for independence. His father, seeking safety and hope, embarked on an arduous journey. He walked over 200 miles, navigating through the wilderness to escape his homeland. Eventually, he made his way to Italy, where he worked tirelessly to rescue his family and eventually bring them to the United States. In 1987, Meb and his family arrived in the US as refugees. They carried with them the weight of displacement, loss, and the longing for a better life. As one of ten children, he and his family faced the challenge of finding their place in a completely new society, language, and culture.

Faith and commitment to family were their continual compass and source of strength. Then Meb discovered running, or rather running discovered Meb. As a student at Memorial Academy in San Diego, he ran a 5:10 mile—a modest beginning that would lead to remarkable achievements. He went on to win both the 1600 meters and 3200 meters at the CIF California State Championships for San Diego High School.

Meb’s journey continued at UCLA, where he received numerous All-American awards and won four NCAA championships. His victories spanned from the track and field season in the spring to the cross-country season in the fall. In 1998, the same year he graduated from UCLA, Meb became a naturalized citizen of the United States.

His faith, resilience, and determination culminated in the 2004 Athens Olympics, where he won the silver medal in the marathon—the first American man to do so since Frank

Shorter in 1976—and later in winning both the Boston and New York Marathons. Meb's victory wasn't just about running; it was a testament to hope, courage, and the pursuit of excellence.

Reflection and Take-Home Assignment:

Reflect on your own journey—whether it's overcoming adversity, seeking a new beginning, or finding your purpose. How can Meb Keflezighi's story inspire you to keep moving forward, even when the path is uncertain? Meb's story teaches us that faith, resilience, and determination can guide us through even the most challenging times. By committing to our goals and believing in our dreams, we too can navigate life's obstacles and achieve greatness. **For the Long Run, listen:** [NYRR Set the Pace Interview with MEB, "From War to Victory"](#). To learn more, visit <https://www.marathonmeb.com/>

Mental Strength Exercises:

- Resilience Run: On your next run, dedicate the time to thinking about a specific challenge you are currently facing. With each mile marker, visualize yourself overcoming it fueled by love and support of all those surrounding you (family and friends), just as Meb was during his journey from Eritrea to Italy, then to team USA and finally to the Olympic podium!
- Faith in Action: Choose an area in your life where you feel uncertain. Identify a small, actionable step you can take each day, believing this will help over time. This could involve practicing a skill, reaching out for support, or dedicating time to personal reflection/prayer. Document your progress to reflect on how your faith and perseverance are guiding you through it.
- Dealing with Doubt: To cultivate hopefulness, write down a specific goal that represents your commitment to hope, even if you doubt it at first. Talk about it with a friend or training mate. Cultivate a "daily routine" of hope!

Week 2: Patti Catalano Dillon - Be Kind to Yourself

Inspirational Quote:

"Running gave me something I gave to myself, and no one could take it away." -Patti Catalano Dillon, American Record in Marathon & 10k, Multiple WRs Holder (5m, 20K & 30K, HM)

Story from Her Journey:

Patti Catalano Dillon's running journey began on March 28, 1976, not with dreams of medals and records, but with a simple desire to seek fitness and happiness. Working at Quincy City Hospital, Patti was struck by the poise and confidence of a former schoolmate. This moment of realization sparked a transformative journey toward self-discovery and empowerment.

Patti embarked on what she called the "Be Nice to Patti Campaign," aiming to treat herself with kindness and pursue activities that brought her joy. Initially, she tried biking and swimming, but societal barriers and practical challenges pushed her to seek a more independent form of exercise. On a fateful walk past a bookstore, she discovered Dr. Ken Cooper's book "Aerobics." Inspired by the idea of burning calories through jogging, Patti decided to give running a try.

Her first run was an unconventional run around a cemetery. Clad in knee socks, Earth shoes, cutoff jeans, and heavy sweatshirts. Despite the odd attire and the concerned questioning from a police officer, Patti persevered, running seven laps around the cemetery. And she kept at it. The fitness change she observed spurred her on, but it was the euphoric feeling she experienced that truly hooked her. Running became her sanctuary, a source of strength and happiness that she had created for herself.

Patti eventually became the first American woman to break 2:30 at NYC and set the World Record in the marathon, signing one of the first professional contracts with Nike; Patti became a pioneer for women in sports, inspiring countless women to pursue their running dreams. Her journey from a novice runner to a world-record holder was driven not by external validation but by a profound 'inner desire to be her best self'. Her dedication and relentless spirit propelled her to the forefront of women's distance running. In short time, she also became the first American woman to run a 10k in under 33 minutes (American Record) and the first to break 50 minutes in the 15k. She held world records in the 5 mile, 20k, 30k, and half marathon, and won prestigious races like the Newport and Honolulu Marathons multiple times, often setting course records.

Today, Patti continues to inspire as a motivational speaker, sharing her story of resilience, empowerment, and the transformative power of running. As a member of the Mi'kmaq Tribe, she also brings pride to her Native American heritage, embodying the spirit of perseverance, investing in self-worth and breaking barriers.

Reflection and Take-Home Assignment:

Patti Catalano Dillon's journey from a novice runner to a world-record holder is a testament to the power of self-belief, determination, and the pursuit of happiness. By embracing her example, we can break barriers, set our own personal bests, and inspire others to do the same. [For the Long Run: R4R Interview with Patti](#)

Practical Exercises:

- Start Your Own Campaign: Begin a personal campaign to be kind to yourself. Identify activities that bring you joy and commit to incorporating them into your daily routine. Whether it's running, walking, reading, or spending time with loved ones, prioritize your happiness and well-being.
- Reflect: On moments in your life where you've felt empowered by your own actions. How can Patti Catalano Dillon's journey of self-discovery and breaking barriers inspire you to take charge of your own happiness and pursue your goals with determination?
- Set Personal Records: Choose a distance or activity that challenges you and set a personal record. Track your progress over time, and celebrate your achievements, no matter how small. If you enjoy the small stuff, the big stuff will come naturally. Use Patti's story as motivation to push past perceived limits and strive for your best.

Week 3: Steve Prefontaine - Power Affirmations

Inspirational Quote: "To give anything less than your best is to sacrifice the gift."

Story from His Journey:

Affectionately known as "Pre," Steve Prefontaine wasn't just a runner—he was a tempest on the track. Born on January 25, 1951, in the coastal mill town of Coos Bay, Oregon, Pre embodied the spirit of relentless pursuit. His racing style defied convention; it was aggressive, daring, and unapologetic. He didn't merely compete; he attacked the track with every fiber of his being, and spoke his dreams into reality. He affirmed himself with confidence every time he lined up.

Pre's mantra echoed through every stride: never settle for mediocrity. Believe in yourself first. Whether he faced a mile, a 5,000-meter race, or the grueling 10,000-meter grind, he pushed himself to the brink. His training sessions were punishing, his races fierce battles. He believed that every step mattered, every second counted. His relentless pursuit of excellence ignited a fire in fellow athletes and fans alike, and his words thundered across the field of competition.

In 1972, Pre donned the red, white, and blue as he represented the United States at the Munich Olympics. His fourth-place finish in the 5,000 meters left him hungry for more. He trained relentlessly, eyes fixed on the 1976 Olympics—a stage where he aimed to etch his name in gold. But fate had other plans. On May 30, 1975, tragedy struck. At the tender age of 24, Steve Prefontaine's life was abruptly cut short in a car accident near his residence in Eugene, Oregon. The news reverberated through the running community like a shockwave. Pre's legacy transcended mere records; it was a heartbeat—a rhythm that echoed in the hearts of runners worldwide.

Pre's impact extended beyond the track's oval. His celebrity and charisma fueled the 1970s "running boom", inspiring countless individuals to lace up their shoes and hit the pavement. He became more than an athlete; he was a symbol of passion, determination, and the unwavering pursuit of one's true potential.

Reflection and Take-Home Assignment:

Steve Prefontaine's legacy serves as a reminder that true greatness is achieved through unwavering dedication and personal belief in one's goals. By embracing his principle of not giving anything less than your best, consider areas in your life where you've held back or settled for less, then act! How can Steve Prefontaine's commitment and affirmations to give his all motivate us to step outside of our comfort zone? **For the Long Run:** [Daily Positive Affirmations for Runners](#), from The Running Anthropologist.

Mental Strength Exercises:

- **Push your Best:** Choose a physical or mental challenge that you've been avoiding or hesitating to tackle. Whether it's a difficult workout, a daunting project, or a personal goal, commit to giving it your absolute best effort, channeling the spirit of Pre's relentless pursuit of excellence. Write down one specific goal where you'll apply his principle of unwavering dedication.
- **Use Affirmations:** Pre was famous for a few affirmations that he repeated to himself and others as a reminder of his mindset and goals. *One of his favorites: "I can work harder than anyone else. I'm going to work so that it's a pure guts race at the end, and if it is, I am the only one who can win it."* Do you have a few affirmations you can turn to daily, when down or doubting? If not, brainstorm a

few here and keep them handy at bedside, on your bathroom mirror or even in your running shoes.

- Then track your progress: Keep a journal or log to document your journey toward your goal. Record not only your successes but also the obstacles you encounter along the way. Reflect on how Pre's dedication to giving his best inspires you to persevere through setbacks and stay focused on your objective.

Week 4: Jeff Galloway - YOU can do it!

Inspirational Quote:

"YOU can do it! There is no one definition of a runner." -Jeff Galloway, US Olympian

Story from His Journey:

Jeff Galloway, a lifetime runner, represented the United States at the 1972 Munich Olympics in the 10,000 meters. This year, the world was shocked by terrorists infiltrating the Olympic compound and killing 11 Israeli athletes and coaches, as well as a German police officer. While he didn't stand on the podium, his Olympic experience and pulling together of the international community around sport ignited a passion within him. Jeff returned to the US with a mission: to share the joy of running and movement with people of all abilities and from all backgrounds.

In pursuit of this vision, Jeff developed the groundbreaking "run-walk-run" method. Instead of pushing through pain and exhaustion, he encouraged runners to embrace strategic walk breaks during long distances. This approach not only prevented burnout but also made running accessible to a wider audience as part of the "running boom" of the 70s. Jeff's philosophy was simple: "Run until you're tired, then walk. Repeat."

His innovative method gained traction, especially among beginners, older runners, and those recovering from injuries. Jeff quickly became the most popular marathon coach in the world for beginning runners, guiding countless athletes to their first finish lines.

Reflection and Take-Home Assignment:

Watch [Jeff's Ted Talk](#). Reflect on how our efforts impact others beyond training plans, such as Jeff's infusing magic into running across the world, and our human potential. Consider your own running journey. How can Jeff Galloway's wisdom inspire you to listen to your body, find joy in movement, and embrace a balanced approach? **For the Long Run**, listen: [You can do it! Podcast](#) or find [The JG App- Magic Mile & Plans, Beeper](#)

Mental Strength Exercise:

- Run-Walk Balance: Jeff often shares that our bodies are made to make long distances and run short ones to start, but can be trained to balance this out and run longer and longer. On your next long run, experiment with incorporating longer walk breaks using Jeff Galloway's proven method. Notice how it affects your overall energy levels and enjoyment of the run, as well as recovery. Reflect on what balanced approach aligns with your goals and training needs.
- Celebrate Every Step: Throughout the week, practice gratitude for your body's ability to move and for the progress you've made in your running journey. Whether it's a short jog or a tough interval workout, acknowledge and celebrate every step you take toward your goals.
- Try it: Knowing in the end that "You can do it!", what more would you try? Write down a specific goal related to your training—whether it's incorporating walk breaks, pacing yourself, or simply celebrating magic in every step.

Jeff Galloway's legacy reminds us that running is not just about speed or endurance—it's about finding joy in movement and embracing a balanced approach that both honors our bodies and individual abilities. By listening to our bodies and celebrating every step, we can achieve our running goals while enjoying the journey along the way.

Week 5: Kathrine Switzer - Be Courageous

Inspirational Quote:

"If you're losing faith in humanity, go out and watch a marathon"

Story from Her Journey:

Katherine Switzer often uses the above quote to highlight the inspirational and uplifting nature of marathon events, where people from all walks of life come together, showcasing determination, resilience, and community spirit. In the spring of 1967, she stood at the starting line of the Boston Marathon, ready to make history. At that time, the marathon was considered an exclusively male domain. Women were deemed physically incapable of enduring the grueling 26.2-mile race. But Kathrine had other plans.

Determined and undeterred, she registered for the race using her initials—K.V. Switzer—to conceal her gender. On race day, clad in her bib number 261, Kathrine joined the sea of runners. Her presence went unnoticed until a few miles into the race when an official, Jock Semple, realized that a woman was among the competitors.

Semple, infuriated by this breach of tradition, lunged at Kathrine, attempting to forcibly remove her from the course. But Kathrine's resolve was unyielding. She evaded his grasp, kept running, and completed the marathon. Her defiance shattered stereotypes and ignited a movement.

Kathrine Switzer's act of courage resonated far beyond the finish line. By crossing that barrier, she opened doors for generations of female runners. In 1972, the Boston Marathon officially allowed women to participate. Kathrine herself continued to compete, becoming a pioneer in women's distance running.

Her legacy extended beyond races. Kathrine became an advocate for women's sports, tirelessly promoting equality and empowerment. She founded the Avon International Running Circuit, organizing women's races worldwide. Her efforts culminated in the inclusion of the women's marathon in the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics.

Reflection and Take-Home Assignment:

Kathrine Switzer's journey reminds us that breaking barriers requires determination, courage, and a willingness to take bold steps. By participating fully in life and challenging the status quo, we can create lasting change and inspire others to follow in our footsteps. **For the Long Run**, watch [The Human Race, features Switzer](#). **Long Run Listen:** [Tread Lightly Podcast](#) features two outstanding women coaches' perspectives

Mental Strength Exercises:

- Empowered Running: On your next run, think about an obstacle in your life that can push you off course. Use this time to visualize moving through or around it, just as Kathrine did when she refused to be pushed off the marathon course.
- Reflect on a fear you've faced frequently or are currently facing. How can Kathrine Switzer's example inspire you to have courage to face it? Write down a goal that involves overcoming a significant challenge, and specifically what fear is holding you back.
- Cultivate Courage: Identify a way you can be courageous and do something that scares you just a bit, inspired by Kathrine's advocacy for women's sports. Whether it's doing something you believe in, public speaking, making a commitment, supporting a local running, commit to taking one concrete action this week.

Week 6: Eliud Kipchoge - The Power of Belief

Inspirational Quote: "No human is limited."

Story from His Journey:

Eliud Kipchoge, a Kenyan long-distance runner, made history on October 12, 2019, by becoming the first person to run a recorded marathon in under two hours. Born on November 5, 1984, in Kapsisiywa, Kenya, Kipchoge grew up running barefoot to school every day, a humble beginning that laid the foundation for his extraordinary journey.

Throughout his career, Kipchoge has exemplified dedication, discipline, and an unwavering belief in the power of human potential while always attributing his success to God and his family and community, rather than himself. His training regimen is legendary, characterized by meticulous attention to detail and an unrelenting pursuit of perfection. But it is not just his physical prowess that sets him apart—it is his mindset, his unwavering belief that no human is limited.

On that historic day in Vienna, Austria, Kipchoge embarked on the INEOS 1:59 Challenge with a singular goal: to break the two-hour barrier in the marathon—a feat once deemed impossible. Surrounded by a team of pacemakers and fueled by the cheers of spectators, he pushed his body to the limit, his every stride a testament to human resilience and determination.

As he crossed the finish line in 1:59:40, Kipchoge shattered not only a world record but also the perceived limits of human potential. His achievement transcended mere athletics; it inspired millions around the globe to dream big, to defy the odds, and to believe in the boundless possibilities within each of us.

Reflection and Take-Home Assignment:

Watch Eliud's [1:59 Challenge](#) Documentary. Reflect on areas in your life where you may have imposed limitations on yourself or where others have imposed limitations on you. How can Eliud Kipchoge's mantra, "No human is limited," inspire you to break free from these constraints and reach for new heights? Write down one specific goal that challenges these limitations and outline the steps you will take to achieve it.

Practical/Mental Strength Exercises:

- **Mindset Mastery:** Throughout the week, practice cultivating a mindset of unlimited potential. When faced with doubts or setbacks, remind yourself of Kipchoge's belief that no human is limited, and that all things are possible with God, community and those we love supporting us— but perhaps short term goals will yield to something bigger we could not imagine, something even better for us. Reflect on a goal you had 10 years ago and how that has changed, perhaps

for the better. Replace self-limiting thoughts with affirmations of possibility and potential. Example: “Everything always turns out for the best when I trust and have faith, then put in the work.”

- Pushing Boundaries: Choose a physical or mental challenge that stretches your comfort zone. Whether it’s a new distance in running, a challenging project at work, or a personal goal you’ve been hesitant to pursue; commit to pushing beyond your perceived limits or seeking new perspective from other you trust, drawing inspiration from Kipchoge’s relentless pursuit of excellence. We must be humble, vulnerable and open with other in order to learn new approaches. Sometimes just saying it out loud to another is enough to shift our mindset!

Week 7: Courtney Dauwalter - Redefine Self Concept & Vision

Inspirational Quote:

"I realized I'm not sporty in the traditional sense, but I love pushing my limits and seeing what my body can do." — **Courtney Dauwalter, Multiple Ultra Marathon Record Holder**

Story from Her Journey:

Courtney Dauwalter's path to becoming one of the most formidable figures in ultra running is a story of defying expectations and discovering one's true potential. Courtney didn't see herself as particularly athletic growing up. She participated in sports but never considered herself “exceptional”. This perception began to shift as she embraced running not just as a sport but as a journey of self-discovery and endurance. She was always much more about the process and showing up as “her best self” than any particular destination/accomplishment; big wins came from this, and sometimes they didn't. For example, she was not a particular stand out in marathons, but loved the challenge and training, and continued to grow.

Dauwalter's breakthrough came as she ventured into the world of ultramarathons. Her grit and resilience quickly became apparent. In 2017, she won the Moab 240 Endurance Run, a grueling 238-mile race through the deserts, canyons, and mountains of Utah, with a staggering 10-hour lead over the second-place finisher. Her accomplishments didn't

stop there; she went on to win races like the Western States 100, UTMB (Ultra-Trail du Mont-Blanc), and the Tahoe 200, solidifying her place in ultra running history.

One of the most remarkable aspects of Courtney's journey is her approach to discomfort. Known for her ability to endure extreme conditions due to her belief in herself, she generates a unique mental toughness that allows her to push through barriers that would stop many others. This mental strength was evident when she completed the Big Dog's Backyard Ultra, running 283.33 miles over 68 hours in a last-person-standing format. Again, process goals leading to big results over time.

Courtney's story is a testament to the idea that our perceived limitations are often self-imposed. By believing in the process and changing our self concept, she has shown that extraordinary achievements are possible!

Reflection and Take-Home Assignment:

Reflect on Courtney Dauwalter's journey of discovering her true potential by pushing beyond perceived limitations. Notice how one small victory can cascade into bigger accomplishments, with a new understanding of oneself. How can her story inspire you to redefine what you believe is possible for yourself? **For the Long Run:** Listen to [Rich Roll's interview "Mindset Secrets from the World's Best Ultra Runner"](#), or [watch it here](#).

Practical/Mental Strength Exercises:

Vision of Self / Self Concept: Consider your future best self looking back on where you are now. What words of kind encouragement and affirmation would you say? How are you different? What do you have to say about your current "big challenges" and how you look back on them? Choose an activity that challenges you, such as a long hike, an extended workout, or a personal project. Focus more on "how you show up", than the numbers/goal destination. Reflect on your experience and how pushing through discomfort helped you grow.

Visualization Practice: Spend a few minutes each day visualizing yourself “as if” you were already there and showing up how you want to- overcoming challenges and achieving your process goals (daily goal of how you want to show up). Picture yourself in moments of difficulty and see yourself persevering, including some details as to how (fellowship, support group, prayer, etc.). This practice can help strengthen your mental resolve and prepare you for real-life obstacles, even if they don’t go exactly as you imagined— remain flexible and change them as you receive input and align goals with your values/beliefs.

Week 8: Des Linden - Empowering the Next Generation

Inspirational Quote:

“Be stubborn about your goals and flexible about your methods.”

Story from Her Journey:

Des Linden, an American long-distance runner, is not only known for her remarkable achievements on the roads and tracks but also for her dedication to empowering young women and making a difference in her local community. Born on July 26, 1983, in San Diego, California, Linden discovered her passion for running at a young age and quickly emerged as a standout athlete.

Throughout her career, Linden has exemplified resilience, determination, and a commitment to making a positive impact beyond her own athletic pursuits. She is also currently the master’s world record holder for the marathon, set in Chicago 2023. In addition to her impressive accolades, including winning the Boston Marathon in 2018, Linden has been a vocal advocate for female athletes and a mentor to aspiring young runners. She is also an advocate for sharing training and overcoming hardships to model resilience, and give young athletes and peers a window into her own preparation.

One of Linden’s passions is empowering young women through running. She believes in the transformative power of sport to instill confidence, resilience, and self-belief in girls and women of all ages. Through clinics, workshops, and mentorship programs, Linden works tirelessly to inspire the next generation of female athletes and leaders.

But Linden’s impact extends far beyond the track and road. She is deeply involved in her local community, using her platform and influence to give back and make a difference.

Whether it's volunteering at local schools, supporting charitable organizations, or advocating for causes close to her heart, Linden is dedicated to making her community a better place for all.

Reflection and Take-Home Assignment:

Reflect on the ways in which you can use your own passions and talents to make a positive impact in your community, particularly in empowering and uplifting young people. How can Des Linden's example of combining tenacious athletic excellence with community service inspire you to give back and make a difference? **For the Long Run:** [Des Linden & Kara Goucher talk training before the 128th Boston Marathon](#)

Practical Exercises:

- Community Engagement: Identify opportunities in your local community where you can get involved and make a difference, particularly in empowering young women through sports and mentorship. Whether it's volunteering at a local school, coaching a youth sports team, or participating in a mentorship program, commit to giving back and investing in the next generation. Write down one specific goal, and outline 2-3 steps you can take to achieve it.
- Lead by Example: Be intentional about being a positive role model and mentor to young people in your life. We learn a lesson twice when we teach it. Share your own experiences, insights, and lessons learned, and encourage them to pursue their dreams with confidence and determination. Remember Des Linden's mantra to "be stubborn about your goals and flexible about your methods," and inspire others to do the same.

Des Linden's journey reminds us that true greatness is not just about winning races but also about using our experience and influence to uplift others and make a positive impact in our communities. By following her example and combining excellence with service and mentorship, we can inspire the next generation of athletes and leaders to reach their full potential and make their unique mark on the world. You don't need to be a star to do so, just living a healthy life and "doing hard things when we don't feel like it" can benefit those around us in unpredictable ways- mentoring by setting an examples for the next generation!

Week 9: Sifan Hassan - Be Crazy with Curiosity

Inspirational Quote: "I'm just some crazy, curious person that does everything."
—Sifan Hassan, 2024 Olympic Marathon Gold Medalist, and Bronze Medalist in both 10k and 5k

Story from Her Journey:

Sifan Hassan's path to becoming an Olympic champion is a testament to the power of curiosity and perseverance. Born in Ethiopia, Sifan faced challenges early on when she was forced to flee her home as a young girl. She and her family found refuge in the Netherlands, where she began to rebuild her life. It was in her new home that she discovered running—a sport that would eventually bring her international fame.

Sifan didn't just stick to one event; her curiosity drove her to explore and excel in a range of distances, from the 1500 meters to the marathon. This diversity of experience made her a versatile and formidable competitor on the track. In the 2024 Olympics, Sifan entered the marathon event, facing not just the physical demands of the race, but also the mental challenge of competing in one of the most grueling events in the sport.

Her journey to the marathon was unconventional, marked by a spirit of experimentation and a willingness to push her limits. She didn't let the fear of failure hold her back. Instead, she embraced each race as an opportunity to learn, grow, and test the boundaries of what she could achieve. This mindset paid off when she crossed the finish line to win gold, despite the odds being stacked against her.

Sifan's story is a reminder that life, much like a marathon, is about pushing through obstacles with determination and an open mind. Her success is a result of not only her physical talent but also her relentless curiosity and willingness to step outside of her comfort zone.

Reflection and Take-Home Assignment:

Reflect on your own journey—whether it's pursuing a new challenge, exploring a different path, or stepping out of your comfort zone. How can Sifan Hassan's story inspire you to embrace your curiosity and push your limits? Write down a goal that represents a new challenge or opportunity for growth. Outline the steps you will take to explore this goal, focusing on curiosity and determination. **For the Long Run**, watch this: [Pre-Olympic Gold Interview](#) to better understand her attitude and outlook, with Citius Mag.

Mental Strength Exercise:

Curiosity Challenge: Be open and curious. On your next run or walk, dedicate the time to thinking about a new challenge you want to take on, and ask others what they think too. With each mile, you can visualize yourself stepping into unknown territory, fueled by curiosity and the desire to grow, just as Sifan did when she embraced the marathon.

Exploration in Action: Identify an area in your life where you've been hesitant to explore or take risks. Choose a small, actionable step you can take each day to push your boundaries. This could involve trying something new, learning a new skill, or taking on a challenge that excites and scares you. Document your progress in some way, and take special note of how embracing curiosity is helping you grow.

Sifan Hassan's journey teaches us that curiosity can foster resilience and can be practiced. By committing to our goals and remaining open to new possibilities, we can overcome unexpected obstacles and discover our true potential.

Week 10: Fred Lebow - Creativity

Inspirational Quote:

"The marathon is a charismatic event. It has everything. It has drama, competition, camaraderie, and heroism." —Fred Lebow, founder of modern NYC Marathon & modern big-city marathon movements across the globe

Story from His Journey:

Fred Lebow, born Fischel Lebowitz in Transylvania, immigrated to the United States with a passion for running and a visionary spirit. In 1970, he co-founded the New York City Marathon, an event that started with just 55 finishers running through Central Park. Lebow's creativity and innovative ideas transformed this modest race into one of the world's most iconic marathons, embodying the spirit of New York City itself.

Lebow's approach was unique; he saw the marathon as more than just a race. He envisioned it as a spectacle that could unite diverse communities and showcase the

city's vibrancy. In 1976, he took the bold step of expanding the marathon's course to all five boroughs, turning the event into a citywide celebration. This move not only increased the marathon's popularity but also highlighted New York's rich cultural tapestry, drawing participants and spectators from around the globe.

Lebow's creativity extended beyond the race route. He was a master of publicity and community engagement, involving local neighborhoods, schools, and businesses in the event. His efforts paid off, and the NYC Marathon grew exponentially, becoming a symbol of endurance, unity, and the human spirit.

Even after being diagnosed with brain cancer, Lebow's dedication never waned. In 1992, he completed the marathon himself, symbolizing his unwavering commitment and love for the sport. His legacy continues to inspire, as the NYC Marathon remains a testament to the power of creativity and vision in bringing people together.

Reflection and Take-Home Assignment:

Reflect on a project or goal in your life that could benefit from a more creative approach. How can Fred Lebow's innovative thinking inspire you to see new possibilities and bring people together? Write down a specific goal where you'll apply a creative and inclusive mindset, and some steps to get there. **For the Long Run**, a surprising and revealing documentary on starting the NYC Marathon: "[Run for your life](#)"

Mental Strength Exercises:

- Reflect on Impact: Take time to reflect on how your creative efforts and community involvement and friendships with others are making a difference- just by being present. Celebrate small connections, successes and friendships- stay motivated by recognizing the positive impact of running community and friends.

- Allow time for Creativity: Give yourself a few minutes Brainstorm Session- First write down a goal or question. Then., Dedicate time to brainstorm creative ideas for that project or goal— writing for 2 to 4 minutes without stopping everything that comes to mind. Don't let your pen leave the page. Let go of traditional constraints and think outside the box, let your mind wander and explore new possibilities!
- Affirmation: "I love this sport and embrace all its possibilities."

By embracing Fred Lebow's creativity and visionary spirit, you can transform your projects and goals into dynamic and inclusive experiences that inspire and unite those around you .

Week 11: Nel Rojas - The Power of Mentorship and Humility

Inspirational Quote:

"Accepting guidance with humility is a cornerstone of growth. My father's mentorship has not only shaped me as an athlete but also as a person. Family and mentors provide a foundation, and recognizing their value is essential to achieving your best." OR "Humility and openness to learning are the keys to unlocking your true potential."

Story from Her Journey:

Nel Rojas, a rising star in American marathon running, embodies the spirit of perseverance and the importance of mentorship. Growing up in Boulder, Colorado, Nel was surrounded by a family deeply rooted in the running community. Her father, Ric Rojas, was a prominent figure in the sport—a former elite runner and accomplished

coach. Despite this rich athletic heritage, Nel's path to success was paved with hard work, humility, and a willingness to learn from her mentors, especially her father.

From a young age, Nel was immersed in the world of running. Her father's achievements and coaching philosophy significantly influenced her approach to the sport. However, Nel's journey was not just about inheriting talent; it was about embracing guidance, remaining humble, and continuously striving to improve. Under her father's mentorship, Nel developed a deep understanding of the intricacies of running and the mental fortitude required to excel.

Nel's breakthrough came when she decided to fully commit to marathon running. Her father's experience and wisdom became invaluable assets as she navigated the challenges of long-distance training and competition. Ric Rojas's training methods, rooted in years of experience, provided Nel with a strong foundation. More importantly, his belief in her potential instilled a sense of confidence and determination that propelled her forward.

In 2021, Nel's hard work and dedication paid off spectacularly when she finished as the top American woman at the Boston Marathon. This achievement was a testament to her talent, but also to the strength of the mentor-mentee relationship she shared with her father. Nel's success on the world stage was a shared victory, reflecting the years of guidance, support, and mutual respect that had defined their partnership.

Beyond her athletic accomplishments, Nel is a beacon of humility and gratitude. She acknowledges the pivotal role her family and mentors have played in her journey. Her story is a powerful reminder that success is often a collective effort, built on the foundation of mentorship, hard work, and an open heart.

Reflection and Take-Home Assignment:

Reflect on 1-2 of the mentors and guides in your life. How have they shaped your journey and contributed to your growth? Consider how Nel Rojas's story can inspire you to remain humble, seek guidance, and continuously strive for improvement. Write down steps you will take to foster a learning / beginner's mindset. For the Long Run, listen: [Nel Rojas on The Morning Shakeout with Mario Fraioli](#)

Mental Strength Exercise:

- Identify a Mentor: Think about an area of your life where you seek improvement. Identify a potential mentor—someone whose experience and wisdom you

respect—and approach them for guidance. Be open to their insights and willing to learn from their experiences, even if it is something small.

- **Mentorship in Action:** This will be hard at first. Schedule regular check-ins with someone to discuss progress, challenges, and next steps. Use these sessions as opportunities to gain new perspectives, refine your approach, and stay motivated on your journey. Be open to constructive feedback, knowing they have the best at heart for you.
- **Give Back:** As you benefit from mentorship, consider how you can mentor others. Share your knowledge and experiences with those who can benefit from your guidance, fostering a cycle of continuous learning and growth in the running/walking world.

Nel Rojas continues to inspire runners of all levels with her dedication and humility. She is a living example of how embracing mentorship and remaining teachable can unlock one's true potential. Nel Rojas's journey highlights the transformative power of humility and mentorship. By embracing these values, we can unlock unexpected potential.

Week 12: Ryan Hall - Faith in Every Step

Inspirational Quote:

"I feel like my faith is the reason I run. It calms my heart and makes everything feel like it's going to be okay, regardless of the outcome."

Story from His Journey:

Ryan Hall, an American long-distance runner, is renowned not only for his exceptional athletic achievements but also for his unwavering faith and commitment to seeking God in every step. The fastest-ever American marathoner (2:04:58) and half-marathoner (59:43), Ryan Hall made his mark in elite-level track, road racing, and cross country for nearly two decades. Born on October 14, 1982, in Big Bear Lake, California, Hall discovered his love for running at a young age and quickly emerged as one of America's most promising distance runners.

In 2008, Hall represented the United States at the Beijing Olympics, where he finished an impressive tenth in the marathon—an accomplishment that solidified his status as one of the world's top distance runners. But he asserts it is not just his athletic prowess that sets him apart; it is his unwavering commitment to his beliefs. Throughout his career, Hall's Christian faith has been a guiding force, providing him with strength, peace, and perspective in the face of both triumphs and trials. Hall's approach to running is deeply rooted in his faith. He views each step as an opportunity to draw strength from God.

Whether he is training on lonely roads or competing on the world stage, Hall's faith remains steadfast, serving as a source of inspiration and motivation for himself and others.

Reflection and Take-Home Assignment:

Reflect on the role that faith plays in your own life and pursuits. How can Ryan Hall's example of running with faith and seeking purpose in every step inspire you to infuse your own endeavors with purpose and spiritual meaning? Write down one specific goal where you will incorporate faith into your journey, and outline the steps you will take.

For the Long Run, listen: [Ryan Hall's interview "How to have courage as a runner"](#)

Mental Strength Exercise:

- Prayerful Running: Take time during your runs this week to engage in prayer or meditation, before, during or after scheduled runs. Use this opportunity to quiet your mind and center your spirit as you move forward. Allow each step and breath to become a form of connection with body-mind-spirit.
- Reflective Field Notebook: Keep a field notebook handy (in phone notes or on paper) to record your thoughts during / after your runs. Note how your faith influences your running experience and how running with spiritual intentionality enriches your life both on and off the road/trail.

Ryan Hall's journey reminds us that running is not just a physical pursuit but also a spiritual journey—a means of drawing closer to our faith, purpose and unique calling.

We can infuse our running—and indeed, every aspect of our lives—with greater meaning, purpose, and higher inspiration.

Week 13: Tatyana & Hannah McFadden - Never Accept Barriers

Inspirational Quote: *"Anything is possible, and I've never lived my life by putting limits on what I can do."* — Tatyana McFadden, Champion Marathoner and Paralympian

Story from Her Journey:

Wheelchair American track and field athlete Tatyana McFadden's life is a story of triumph over adversity, marked by an unbreakable spirit and a refusal to accept barriers. Born in St. Petersburg, Russia, with spina bifida, a congenital condition that left her

paralyzed from the waist down, she spent the first years of her life in an orphanage without access to a wheelchair. At age six, Tatyana was adopted by Debbie McFadden and moved to the United States, where she was introduced to adaptive sports.

From a young age, Tatyana found freedom and expression in movement, first in swimming, then in track and field at age 7. She didn't just participate—she excelled. Over the course of her career, Tatyana has won 22 Paralympic medals, including eight golds, spanning across seven Paralympic Games. In addition to her track success, she has won the “Grand Slam of Marathons”—Boston, London, Chicago, and New York City in a single year, multiple times. She competes in the women's T54 category, a classification for track athletes who compete in a wheelchair and have no leg function.

In 2024, during her seventh Paralympic Games in Paris, Tatyana became the most winning American track and field athlete of all time—Olympian or Paralympian. Her historic achievement was marked by a silver medal win in the Women's 100 Meter and a bronze in the Mixed 4x100 Universal Relay. This victory came despite the immense challenges she has faced, including being diagnosed with a blood-clotting disorder after her 2016 Paralympic sweep, when she had won every major marathon and all of her events in Rio. Instead of accepting defeat, Tatyana focused on rebuilding her strength, saying, *“I've focused on being more confident and still believing in myself that I can do it, because I know that I can.”*

She also has her younger sister, Hannah, by her side who competed as the youngest US Paralympic T&F wheelchair athlete, and a World Championships medalist! She competed in London 2012 and Rio 2016, and currently works with Achilles International. They support one another unconditionally, as teammates and sisters. Achilles international removes barriers and finds solutions for athletes with disabilities. Their mission is simple: to transform lives!

Tatyana and Hannah's resilience in overcoming these personal and physical challenges has fueled their passion for making sports more inclusive and accessible. As a Nike athlete, Tatyana helped champion women's empowerment and expand adaptive sports for future generations through her role in the Nike Athlete Think Tank: *“What motivates me is changing the sport, to be more inclusive, to have more equality, to have more accessibility for people with disabilities who want to get involved with Paralympics or just want to get involved with youth programs or adapt to sports in general.”*

Tatyana and Hannah's remarkable career is a testament to never accepting barriers—whether physical, societal, or mental. Their story inspires us to challenge limitations and push through obstacles with perseverance, strength, and belief.

Reflection and Take-Home Assignment:

- For the Long Run: Watch [“The Achilles Spirit”](#) and explore how you might [get involved with Achilles](#): Also, this [PBS Special: 6 minutes with Tatyana](#). Reflect on a challenge in your life right now where you feel barriers are holding you back. How can Tatyana's story inspire you to see those barriers differently, or to not accept them as permanent limitations?

Practical & Mental Strength Exercises:

Choices: Consider an area of your life where you’ve faced an either/or choice related to running, fitness, or personal goals, and the barriers presented to you. How might you reframe this as both/and choice, rather than exclusive? Journal about what balance you could bring, or what support you might need or accept in order to be successful in both areas.

Unconditional Support – The Power of a Trusted Teammate: Tatyana McFadden often speaks about the strength and unconditional support she receives from her sister Hannah, who is also a Paralympian. The bond they share as sisters and teammates has been a vital source of motivation and strength for Tatyana. Reflect on the people in your life who provide you with unconditional support—those who stand by you in your pursuits, challenges, and victories. How does having someone like this in your corner help you overcome obstacles? Take time to appreciate these individuals and identify ways you can be that source of support for someone else. Write down specific ways you can work together with a "teammate" in your life to achieve your goals.

Resilience Journaling: Keep a journal where you document instances of overcoming obstacles, whether in running or everyday life. Reflect on what strategies helped you and how you felt during those moments. Use these reflections to build confidence and resilience for future challenges, using an affirmation.

By integrating these exercises into your routine, you can cultivate the same perseverance that both Hannah and Tatyana McFadden exemplify.

Week 14: Joan Benoit Samuelson - Cultivate Inner Calm

Inspirational Quote:

“Running is about finding your inner peace, and so is a life well lived.”

Story from Her Journey:

“Never accept barriers” from last week could have just as easily described Samuelson, who also displayed a consistent force of character, calm and poise, that she intentionally cultivated with practice. In the summer of 1984, the world watched as Joan Benoit Samuelson stepped onto the streets of Los Angeles for the inaugural women’s

Olympic marathon. Some doubted women belonged in the marathon, or believed their bodies could not handle such intense exertion over 26.2 miles. It's true that the distance was both daunting and exhilarating to anyone, but she proudly represented all American women in this inaugural women's marathon. Joan, with her petite frame and unwavering spirit, was about to make history.

A Rhythm Resilience: Imagine that the marathon course unfolds like a symphony. Joan's breath synchronized with her footsteps, each beat echoing her resolve. She navigated the hills, the heat, and the fatigue. Her body ached, but her spirit soared. She knew that resilience wasn't just about pushing through pain; it was about finding calm within the struggle, and acceptance of whatever the outcome, knowing she had given her best.

As Joan entered the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum, the crowd erupted. She crossed the finish line, arms raised, and claimed the gold medal. Her victory wasn't just for herself; it was for every woman who had ever laced up running shoes, every dreamer who believed in the power of persistence. She had re-defined what was possible.

Joan's victory wasn't just about crossing the finish line; it was a testament to her mental fortitude and physical strength. She had battled injuries, many setbacks and the weight of expectations. Yet, as she ran those grueling miles, she maintained a sense of inner calm and outer poise—a quiet determination and belief that carried her forward. Joan's impact also extended beyond that historic day. She has continued to inspire generations of runners, advocating for women's sports and promoting the joy of movement. Her legacy wasn't just about records; it was about finding her inner rhythm of resilience—the quiet heartbeat that sustains us through life's many marathons.

Reflection and Take-Home Assignment:

Pause and reflect on your own journey. How can Joan Benoit Samuelson's example inspire you to find inner calm amidst challenges? Write down a goal that embodies both resilience and serenity—perhaps a stride toward a life well lived and the story we tell ourselves. **For the Long Run**, listen: [“Laughter Permitted” Story of 1984 Olympics with Joan Benoit Samuelson and Julie Foudy](#)

Mental Strength Exercise:

- **Mindful Running:** On your next run, focus on your breath and the rhythm of your footsteps. Allow each stride to bring a sense of peace and calm, knowing you are right where you're meant to be, even as you work through physical challenges. Use this time to clear your mind and find inner tranquility.
- **Affirmation:** “I am right where I am meant to be. I belong here.”

- Daily Serenity Practice: Incorporate a daily practice that promotes inner peace, such as meditation, yoga, or a few minutes of deep breathing exercises. Add a gratitude list of 1-2 things/day that you are truly grateful for, and take time to notice them through a journal or note in your phone.

Joan Benoit Samuelson's journey teaches us that true resilience is about finding peace within the struggle, and knowing we too are meant to be here, a marathoner. By focusing on inner calm and determination, we can navigate life's challenges with grace and strength, achieving our goals and inspiring others along the way.

Week 15: Mario Mendoza - Building Bridges

Inspirational Quote:

"Running is more than a sport; it's a bridge to understanding. I still want to run fast and inspire others, but not without the meaningful component behind it." -**Mario Mendoza, Team USA Trail Runner of the Year & Multiple American Record Holder**

Story from His Journey:

Mario Mendoza, an award winning trail runner, embodies the spirit of community, environmental stewardship and mentorship from his roots. Raised on an avocado ranch in Cambria, California, Mario found his path to running after a knee injury ended his promising soccer career, and has since become one of the best desert and mountain runners in the world, representing Team USA at trail races, Ultras and cross country competitions. He also holds several American records. His positivity and determination led him to embrace running, eventually becoming a key figure in American trail running.

Mario's journey is not just about personal achievements; it's about lifting others. He is frequently quoted as saying that building bridges to unify people is our #1 job, and he believes this is best accomplished through coaching and passing on virtues. As a high school coach in Oregon, he mentors young athletes, particularly from disadvantaged Latino communities. A documentary film "Building Bridges" was recently made about his work over the years, which bridges life beyond track and trail, focusing on building character, resilience, and a sense of purpose among the youth he coaches.

Mario's faith has been a guiding force throughout his career. His commitment to community and stewardship is intertwined with his faith and his role as a local pastor. He views all these roles as intertwined, in sports and community service as a holistic mission to support and inspire others holistically to reach their potential. He is in turn "inspired by the majestic creation he is gifted to run through each day", the mountains and valleys and deserts of the US Southwest. He often speaks about seeing God in the

beauty of mountains and finding spiritual fulfillment in the challenges of ultra-running. This philosophy is reflected in his efforts to connect the next generation to the land, helping them navigate their paths in life while fostering a deep respect for the environment.

Reflection and Take-Home Assignment:

Watch [“100 Miles to Build a Bridge” \(Youtube Documentary\)](#). Reflect on Mario’s sources of inspiration. How can you use your skills and experiences in running to support and uplift those around you? Write down one specific goal in this area. Whether it’s mentoring a young person, participating in community service, or stewardship of the environment around us, remember that every small effort contributes to a larger impact.

Long Run, Listen: [Mario on The Morning Shakeout](#)

Practical & Mental Strength Exercise:

1. Environmental Stewardship: Take a walk or run in a local park or natural area. Use this time to reflect on the importance of preserving these spaces and consider ways you can contribute to environmental conservation efforts.
2. Dream: Be present to your own calling/vocation, and how your job or future roles might in fact somehow connect to your running life or community empowerment.

Mario Mendoza’s life is a testament to the power of using one’s talents and passions to make a positive difference in the world. **For the long run:** By embracing his approach, we can all contribute to building stronger, more supportive communities. Learn more at <https://mendozarunner.com/>

Week 16: Marko Cheseto - Hills and Valleys

Inspirational Quote:

"Running has given me a second chance. It's not about how many times you fall, but how many times you get up." — **Marko Cheseto, Champion Para Athlete and Boston Marathon record holder, double blade runner**

Story from His Journey:

Marko Cheseto's journey is a powerful testament to the strength of the human spirit. Originally from Kenya, Cheseto came to the United States on a running scholarship at the University of Alaska Anchorage. He quickly became a standout athlete, but his life took a dramatic turn in 2011 when he disappeared during a snowstorm. After being lost in the Alaskan wilderness for over 56 hours, Cheseto was found severely frostbitten, leading to the amputation of both his legs below the knee.

The physical loss was devastating, but the emotional and psychological toll was even greater. Cheseto battled severe depression and struggled to find a sense of purpose. However, with unwavering determination and support from his community, he began his journey of recovery. Fitted with prosthetic running blades, Cheseto embarked on a new chapter in his life, rediscovering his passion for running.

In 2019, Marko Cheseto achieved a remarkable feat by setting a world record for double amputees at the Boston Marathon. His resilience and positive attitude have made him a beacon of hope and inspiration for many, demonstrating that with perseverance and the right support, one can overcome even the most daunting obstacles.

Reflection and Take-Home Assignment:

Reflect on Marko Cheseto's journey from loss and depression to noticing the small joys in life and learning to appreciate his new body. Watch [Vimeo](#) on his story and his life now. How can his story inspire you to overcome your own challenges and setbacks? **For the Long Run**, listen: [Running Anthropologist interview with Marko](#)

Mental Strength Exercises:

1. Body Gratitude Journaling: This week, write down three things you are grateful for and that you have been gifted in your body. What are some of our gifts and abilities we often take for granted as able-bodied (or even disabled) runners?

2. My Challenges and Abilities: What challenges do you have that others do not see? Is there a chance to share these or gain some support from your running community, or another group? Identify someone. Share small wins, have someone you can count on to celebrate each milestone in making progress with these, no matter how small!
3. Affirmation: "I have all the tools that I need to be successful, right here."

Marko Cheseto's story reminds us that resilience is not about avoiding difficulties or necessarily having the best circumstances in life turn out in our favor, but about finding the strength to rise above life's inevitable setbacks when they arise. Let his journey inspire you to face your challenges with courage and determination.

Week 17: Mike Wardian - Embracing our Edges

Inspirational Quote:

"I'm just trying to see how far I can go, how much I can endure, and still come out smiling."
—Mike Wardian, Multiple World Record Holder in Ultras and Global Running Challenges

Story from His Journey:

Mike Wardian is an endurance runner who embodies relentless perseverance and play in adventurous spirit. Growing up in Virginia, he didn't initially have a passion for running; instead, he was a lacrosse player and went to Michigan State University on scholarship. His journey into running began almost accidentally with a marathon after college, but it quickly evolved into a lifetime pursuit! Known for his incredible versatility and resilience, Wardian has set numerous records across various distances and terrains.

He approaches challenges with a playful and holistic spirit. One of his most challenging and recent feats was completing the Quarantine Backyard Ultra in 2020, an event held during the COVID-19 pandemic. The race format involved running 4.167 miles every

hour, on the hour, until only one runner remained. Competing from his home treadmill due to quarantine restrictions, Wardian battled through sleep deprivation, physical exhaustion, and the mental strain of isolation. His relentless spirit and determination saw him complete 63 hours and 262.5 miles, earning him the title of champion in this uniquely difficult event.

Wardian's journey is marked by his ability to adapt and persevere. Whether setting records for running seven marathons on seven continents in seven days, or achieving the fastest known time for running 10 marathons in 10 days, or running across the country Forest Gump style, his achievements are a testament to his extraordinary balance of a playful and 'willingness to try' mindset.

Mike's approach to running is as much about discovery as it is about competition. He often talks about pushing his limits to see how far he can go and how much he can endure, always aiming to finish with a smile. This mindset has allowed him to balance a demanding racing schedule with a full-time job and family life, often involving his two sons in his adventures, fostering a spirit of exploration and resilience.

Reflection and Take-Home Assignment:

Reflect on a challenge in your life that seems insurmountable or right at the edge of your imagination. How can you play with it, following Mike Wardian's example of embracing the unthinkable to inspire us to take on something new? Write down a specific goal that feels daunting, and outline a few "act as if" attitudinal steps. Some help with this task from the best runners' coffee table book? Read **Epic Runs of the World** (Lonely Planet), **For the Long Run** has more inspiration him, listen to ["Fueling Performance with Play" Mike Wardian's interview w/ Rich Roll](#)

Practical & Mental Strength Exercises:

1. Set a Stretch Goal: Identify a goal that stretches your current abilities and commit to it. Break it down into manageable steps and create a timeline for achieving it. Focus on consistency in your efforts. Embrace the adaptability, adjust your plan when faced with unexpected obstacles and try to laugh at them, with others!
2. Notice Milestones: "Act as if" you are that person, act as if you can balance and play and laugh while doing it. Sometimes just going through the actions will bring the attitude change. Recognize and celebrate your progress along the way. Reflect on each milestone as a step towards achieving your ultimate goal.
3. Affirmation: "I fail at 100% of things I never try."

By adopting Mike Wardian's mindset of embracing challenges and joyful play, you can transform your approach to difficult tasks and inspire those around you with your resilience and not taking yourself too seriously (even if the challenge is serious).

Week 18: Grete Waitz - Run without Fear

Inspirational Quote: "Everyone wins the marathon. We all have the same feeling at the start- nervous, anxious, excited."

Story from Her Journey:

Grete Waitz, born in Oslo, Norway, is celebrated as one of the greatest female marathoners in history. Her journey into running began with a strong background in middle-distance running. She initially competed in events such as the 1500 meters and 3000 meters, setting national records. Yet, her Norwegian mantra was always: "hurry slowly". This means: Yes, let's put in 100% to get there, but be patient with the process.

In 1978, Grete received an invitation from race organizer Fred Lebow to participate in the New York City Marathon. Despite having never run a marathon before, she accepted the challenge. Grete's performance was nothing short of extraordinary; she not only won the race but also set a new world record with a time of 2:32:30. This stunning victory marked the beginning of her dominance in women's marathoning. Grete went on to win the New York City Marathon an unprecedented nine times, solidifying her legacy as a

pioneer in the sport. She also claimed a silver medal in the marathon at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics, the first time the event was included for women.

Grete's impact extended beyond her racing achievements. She played a crucial role in advocating for women's sports and was instrumental in promoting long-distance running for women globally. Her victories and dedication helped to break down barriers and inspire countless women to pursue their athletic dreams.

Grete's story is also one of immense personal courage. Later in life, she battled cancer with the same determination she showed on the racecourse. She remained an advocate for health and fitness until her passing in 2011. Her top tip for us? "Spend at least some of your training time (or other parts of your day) each day concentrating on what you are doing and visualizing success."

Reflection and Take-Home Assignment:

Reflect on the obstacles you face in your personal running, family or professional life, and visualize what "hurrying slowly" (or chipping away patiently each day) would entail. Take a moment to *visualize success* in those areas. What would it look like for you?

Practical Exercises:

1. Adopt the All-Weather Mindset: Challenge yourself to run in different weather conditions (safely). This will build resilience and help you understand that there's no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing, as Grete suggested. *Visualize success* in many possible race day conditions. What would it look like for you?
2. Running Read: Grete was inspired by many women before her. Read books or articles about marathon training history of someone like Grete, and learn from the experiences of other runners, connected over time to help you! Understanding

historical perspectives can provide new insights and inspire your own running journey, as it did Grete's.

3. Affirmation: *"I take risks and know 'failure' is actually just learning, a key part of my growth as a runner."*

Grete Waitz's legacy is a powerful reminder that true greatness comes from pushing oneself to take risks and inspiring others to do the same. Embrace her spirit of effort and excellence in your own life, and strive to give nothing less than your best! **After the Long Run**, Read: *"Better, Farther, Faster: How Running Changed Everything we know about Women"*, or Listen to the author first: [Maggie Martens on R4R](#)

Week 19: Billy Mills - Finding Inner Spirit

Inspirational Quote:

"Every passion has its destiny." – Billy Mills, Native American Olympian & 10K Gold Medalist

Story from His Journey:

Billy Mills, an Oglala Lakota Sioux, was born on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota. Overcoming immense personal and social challenges after being orphaned at age 12, he rose to etch his name into history with one of the most extraordinary moments in Olympic history.

At the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, Billy faced not only the fierce competition but also the physical challenge of managing his blood glucose levels as a pre-diabetic, without knowing what that was.

During the 10,000 meters race, Mills was an underdog, largely unknown and not expected to win. Throughout the race, he stayed with the leading pack, defying expectations. With less than 100 meters to go, he was outpaced and outgunned in terms of sprinting talent. However, he dug deep to find his spiritual guide indicated by his late father, the Eagle, and listened to the spirit of his father to help him tap energy he didn't know he had. He surged past the world's best runners in an astonishing sprint to claim the gold medal. His winning time was a personal best, and his victory remains one of the greatest upsets in Olympic history.

Billy Mills' triumph was not just a win for himself but a symbolic victory for Native Americans and those battling personal hardships and health concerns. His story is a testament to the power of resilience, determination, and the belief that every passion indeed has its destiny.

After his Olympic triumph, Mills dedicated his life to humanitarian efforts, promoting fitness and health among Native American youth. He co-founded the nonprofit organization Running Strong for American Indian Youth, which provides resources and support to Native communities, and has been part of the U.S. Olympic delegation every year since. His story is a powerful reminder that no matter the odds, perseverance, passion, and belief in oneself can lead to extraordinary achievements. Embrace your challenges with courage and conviction of spirit, knowing that "Every passion has its destiny".

Reflection and Take-Home Assignment:

Reflect on the personal and external challenges you face. Do you have a guiding spiritual force that you can picture as you run? How can Billy Mills' story inspire you to overcome obstacles with determination and faith in your journey? **For the Long Run:** listen to this "best podcast interview of 2024", [Billy Mills & Running: State of the Sport's Amby Barfoot and George Hirsch](#)

Practical Exercises:

1. Health Management: If managing a health condition, don't let the ego take over and try to "push through it"; rely on others, create a balanced routine that incorporates medical supervision when in doubt, proper nutrition and recovery.
2. Community Engagement: Get involved in a community activity or support group to share experiences and draw strength from others, looking to your legacy. What have your mentors and ancestors passed on to you that you would in turn like to pass on to others?

Week 20: Jesse Owens - Dedication and Discipline

Inspirational Quote:

"We all have dreams. But in order to make dreams come into reality, it takes an awful lot of determination, dedication, self-discipline, and effort." - **Jesse Owens, 1936 US Olympian and 4X Gold Medalist**

Story from His Journey:

Jesse Owens, born in 1913, faced significant racial discrimination and economic hardship throughout his early life. However, his extraordinary talent for athletics emerged during his high school years, leading him to break three world records and tie another at the 1935 Big Ten track meet—a performance still known as perhaps the greatest 45 minutes ever in sport.

However, Owens' crowning achievement came the following year at the 1936 Berlin Olympics, held under the watchful eye of Adolf Hitler, who intended the Games to demonstrate Aryan superiority. He was both humble and extremely disciplined, kindhearted and at the same time a force of nature and strength. Despite the organizers' intent, Owens turned around the entire narrative of the Olympics and even convinced his competing fellow German athletes of his God-given gifts, and a few of them became lifelong friends. Defying racially defined ideologies, Owens won four gold medals in the 100 meters, 200 meters, long jump, and 4x100 meter relay. More remarkable was his poise and ability to garner the respect of others. His remarkable success not only disproved Hitler's beliefs but also stood as a powerful statement against racial prejudice at a critical turning point in athletics history.

Owens' legacy extends far beyond his athletic prowess, thanks to his daily discipline both on and off the track. Despite his triumphs, he then faced continued racial barriers back home in the United States. He is reported to have asked himself daily how he could be of service in prayer and in community. Thanks to this self-imposed discipline and dedication, he became a lasting symbol of not just athletic excellence, but also of courage to fight against discrimination in the US and across the globe, for the betterment of humanity. He used his platform to advocate for civil rights and worked to create opportunities for future generations of athletes of color.

Reflection and Take-Home Assignment:

Reflect on this profoundly beautiful human story and a dream you have. How can Jesse Owens' story inspire you to overcome these challenges with determination and hope? Watch this 15 minutes of original footage before **The Long Run: [Jesse Owen's original footage & story by "History Channel", 1936 Olympics](#)**, Part 1 & [Part II](#)

Practical Exercise:

- Goal-Oriented Running: On your next run, dedicate a mile to brainstorming how you can be of service, or work towards a dream. Ask others, pray or reflect on this. Write down a specific goal related to your dream, then visualize overcoming obstacles as you progress through your run, just as Owens did in his life.

- Determination in Action: What things do you do that benefit those around you, just by being you? What unique gifts/talents do you sometimes shy away from?
- Stand up: Identify a way you can stand up for something you believe in, inspired by Owens' advocacy. This could involve volunteering at a race, supporting diversity initiatives, or simply educating others through your knowledge.

Jesse Owens' journey teaches us that with determination, dedication and friendships, we can turn our dreams into reality and overcome even the greatest of adversities. His legacy reminds us to stand firm in the face of prejudice and to use our successes to inspire and uplift others.

Week 21: Marc Bauman - Unsung Hero = Commitment + Community

Inspirational Quote:

"Running teaches us to keep moving forward, one step at a time, especially in the face of challenges." - **Mark Bauman, World Marathon Streak Record Holder (Boston)**

Story from His Journey:

Marc Bauman is an unsung hero who has now become a local legend in the running community, celebrated for his extraordinary commitment and resilience. In 2024, Marc set the all-time run streak world record for marathons, a feat achieved on one of the most challenging courses: the Boston Marathon at 55 consecutive finishes! His journey didn't start there...

In the state of Michigan, Marc's running career is marked by his impressive record of completing the Detroit Marathon every year since its inception. Additionally, he has an unbroken streak at the CRIM Festival of Races in Flint, Michigan, where he has participated in every event since its founding. In fact, he loved the sport so much that he started a running store to provide shoes to a community that did not have a place to get specialized running shoes. These local accomplishments are a testament to his unwavering dedication and resilience.

On the global stage, the Boston Marathon is known for its rigorous course, but Marc's determination saw him through. Each marathon he completed, from the early days at Detroit and CRIM to the record-setting race in Boston, reflects his philosophy of perseverance and being "a part of" rather than "set apart from" his fellow runners. His journey is not just about the races; it's about the relentless commitment to a goal and the ability to face and overcome obstacles, one marathon at a time.

Marc's story is an inspiration to all runners and non-runners alike. It underscores the importance of commitment, consistency, and the power of resilience. His legacy is not just the records he holds but the example he sets for anyone in the community.

Reflection and Take-Home Assignment:

Reflect on Marc Bauman's incredible journey of commitment and resilience. How can his example motivate you to pursue your goals with the same level of dedication? Write down a personal goal that you would like to do/see yourself doing for many years in the future, running or otherwise, then outline the steps you will take to achieve it, focusing on consistency and perseverance. **For the Long Run**, listen to: [Interview with Marc Bauman post-55 Boston Finishes on Running Anthropologist](#).

Practical Exercise:

1. Consistency Challenge: Commit to a daily or weekly mileage goal this year that pushes you towards your long-term objective. This could be running a certain distance, engaging in a specific workout, or dedicating time to a personal project.
2. Reflection Journal: Keep a journal where you document your progress towards your goal, and look back on this time last year, 2 years ago, etc. Reflect on the challenges you faced and how you worked towards them with others alongside (and what you give each other), drawing inspiration from Marc's journey.
3. Community Involvement: Participate in local races or community events as often as possible. Share your journey and encourage others to pursue their goals with the same resilience and commitment. Use your experience to inspire and support others in their own challenges.

Marc Bauman's story teaches us the value of perseverance and the power of setting and maintaining long-term goals, with community. By following his example, we can learn to face our own challenges with resilience and be a "part of" something bigger than ourselves, rather than "set apart from".

Week 22: Frank Shorter - Enthusiasm!

Inspirational Quote: "You have to forget your last marathon before you try another. Your mind can't know what's coming." - **Olympic Marathon Gold Medalist, 1972 & Multiple Major Marathons Champion**

Story from His Journey:

In the world of distance running, Frank Shorter is a name synonymous with the American running boom of the 1970s, as well as perseverance and strategy. He was born in Germany and believed in a strong foundation in both academics and athletics, he ran at Yale University and then went on to study law. He was tirelessly enthusiastic about life and running, and would talk about it with anyone who would listen.

The defining moment of Frank Shorter's career came in the 1972 Munich Olympics. The marathon took place in a tense atmosphere, shadowed by the tragic events of the Munich massacre. Despite the psychological pressure, Shorter maintained a remarkable focus and composure. His meticulous preparation and strategic race plan paid off as he took an early lead and maintained it throughout the race. Frank crossed the finish line with a time of 2:12:19, winning the gold medal and becoming the first American to do so in the marathon since 1908.

Frank's victory wasn't just a personal triumph; it sparked a running revolution. His subsequent successes inspired a new generation of runners and contributed to the burgeoning popularity of long-distance running. He played a pivotal role in the American running boom of the 1970s, encouraging countless individuals to take up the sport. His dedication to promoting running continued as he co-founded the Greater Boulder Boulder 10K and became a vocal advocate for a drug-free sport.

In addition to his 1972 Olympic gold medal, Frank Shorter won the silver medal in the marathon at the 1976 Montreal Olympics, and many, many American marathons and road races. He also claimed multiple national titles and victories in prestigious international races such as the Fukuoka Marathon, where he set a course record.

Reflection and Take-Home Assignment:

Frank Shorter's story is one of resilience, strategy, and a lasting impact on the sport of running. His achievements on the track and his contributions off the track have left an

indelible mark on the running community. Frank Shorter's legacy goes beyond his Olympic victories; he is a symbol of strategic enthusiasm and belief in running to uplift the soul. His contributions to the sport and winning the marathon for the USA have inspired generations of runners and promoted the growth of distance running worldwide. But most will remember him then and now for his tireless enthusiasm, and willingness to put himself out there! **Long Run:** [LetsRun's Long form interview with Frank Shorter on 1972 Olympics Gold and Training](#)

Mental Strength Exercises:

1. Enthusiasm: What are you enthusiastic about in life? How can you share it with others, or use it to help drive your next training cycle? (Frank meticulously planned his races by sharing them out loud to anyone who'd listen and didn't accept can't as an answer, he would find someone who said yes.)
2. Risk taking: How are you opening up, putting yourself out there and taking risks to be better known by others? What do you care most about? Are you sharing it with those you talk to each day? Being vulnerable is the first step to true connection, and others will naturally be enthusiastic with you.

Week 23: Lynn Jennings - Triumph in X-Training and the Trails!

Inspirational Quote:

"Cross country is the only sport where you go to the starting line with the intention of beating everybody. It's a test of will, courage, and resilience." — Lynn Jennings

Story from Her Journey:

Lynn Jennings, one of the most accomplished American XC distance runners, is celebrated for her dominance in cross country running. She loved discovering new trails, and noticed quickly how varying terrain would make her stronger in all her running. Born in the early 1960s in Princeton, New Jersey, Jennings discovered her passion for

running during her school years. Her dedication and perseverance led her to achieve remarkable success in her athletic career, culminating in becoming a three-time World Cross Country Champion.

Jennings' journey was marked by determination and cross training. Despite facing fierce competition and numerous challenges, she remained focused on her goals. Her breakthrough came in 1990 when she won her first World Cross Country Championship in Aix-les-Bains, France. This victory was followed by two more consecutive wins in 1991 and 1992, making her the first American woman to achieve such a feat.

Her success wasn't limited to cross country; Jennings also excelled on the track. She won a bronze medal in the 10,000 meters at the 1992 Barcelona Olympics, showcasing her versatility and endurance. Throughout her career, Jennings' relentless work ethic and mental toughness set her apart, inspiring countless athletes to push their limits.

Even after retiring from competitive running, Jennings continued to contribute to the sport. She became a coach and mentor, sharing her knowledge and experience with aspiring runners. Her legacy is not just in her records and medals but in the spirit of perseverance and excellence she embodied.

Reflection and Take-Home Assignment:

Reflect on the qualities of willpower, courage, and flexibility that Lynn Jennings demonstrated throughout her career. How can her journey inspire you to approach your own challenges with the same mindset?

Practical Exercises:

1. Diverse Training: Mix up your training routine with different types of running surfaces and workouts—intervals, long runs, hill repeats, and trail tempo runs. This diversity in training can build both physical and mental resilience.
2. Cross Training & Trails Experience: Cross train and do strength work a few times per week. Use sand or hills to build muscles in feet and tendons. Participate in a local cross country event or trail run. Embrace the unique challenges of the terrain and focus on your resilience and strategy throughout the race. Know that you are getting stronger!
3. Setting Intentions: Before each run or workout, set a clear intention or goal. It could be something like maintaining a positive attitude, focusing on form, or pushing through a specific segment. Reflect on this intention post-run.

For the Long Run: [Try Cross Training & Strength w/ Running with Richelle](#) 20-25 mins.

this week, Canadian Physio (also on Instagram). By incorporating these diverse terrains and exercises into your life, you can channel the resilience and determination that Lynn Jennings demonstrated. **Long Run Listen:** [Tread Lightly Podcast](#) featuring women coaches' perspective on nutrition and cross training tips.

Week 24: Paula Radcliffe- With your own Style!

Inspirational Quote: "To be your own best, to strive for your own best, is the most important thing." — **Paula Radcliffe, Former Marathon World Record Holder**

Story from Her Journey:

Paula Radcliffe is a name synonymous with determination, resilience, and an unorthodox yet highly effective running style. Born in England, Paula discovered her passion for running at a young age. Despite being diagnosed with asthma as a child, she never let it limit her ambitions. Her unique, head-bobbing running style became her trademark, a physical expression of her relentless drive and mental toughness.

Throughout her career, Paula faced numerous challenges, from injuries to disappointing performances in the Olympics. Yet, she never wavered in her commitment to running on her own terms. Her most iconic moment came in 2003, when she shattered the women's marathon world record in London with a time of 2:15:25—a record that stood for 16 years.

What set Paula apart wasn't just her physical capabilities but her ability to embrace her own style and strengths. She didn't try to conform to a conventional running form; instead, she honed what worked best for her. Paula's approach to running is a powerful reminder that success often comes from embracing what makes us unique and playing to our strengths.

Reflection and Take-Home Assignment:

Reflect on your own journey—whether it's in your career, personal life, or a passion project. How can Paula Radcliffe's story inspire you to embrace your unique style and strengths? Write down a goal that represents your commitment to being authentic and true to yourself. **For the Long Run:** [BBC Documentary on Radcliffe's WR and Life story](#)

Practical Exercises:

Self-Expression Challenge: Identify an area in your life where you've been trying to fit into someone else's mold. Choose a small, actionable step you can take each day to express your individuality and embrace your own style. This could involve making choices that reflect your true self, being bold in your decisions, or simply accepting and loving what makes you different. Document your progress this week and reflect on how embracing your uniqueness may help you grow in unexpected ways.

Authenticity Run: On your next run or workout, dedicate the time to thinking about what makes you unique. With each mile or set, focus on embracing your personal style, just as Paula Radcliffe did with her running. Celebrate what sets you apart, and use it as a source of strength.

Paula Radcliffe's journey teaches us that success is not about conforming to others' expectations but about embracing and honing our own unique style. By being true to ourselves and confident in our abilities, we can achieve greatness in our own way.

Week 25: Shalane Flanagan - Mindfully Lead by Example

Inspirational Quote:

"I've learned that the best way to inspire others is to show them what's possible." —
Shalane Flanagan, Olympic Medalist and NYC Marathon Winner

Story from Her Journey:

Shalane Flanagan is a name synonymous with excellence in American distance running. Her illustrious career includes a historic win at the 2017 New York City Marathon, making her the first American woman to win the race in 40 years. Beyond her impressive achievements on the track and road, Shalane is known for her dedication to slowing down with intentional eating and body-mind-spirit awareness, mentoring young runners and advocating for healthy living.

Flanagan's journey to the top was marked by relentless hard work and a commitment to excellence. Raised in a family that valued athletics, she quickly rose through the ranks, earning accolades in high school, college, and eventually on the professional stage. Her Olympic silver medal in the 10,000 meters at the 2008 Beijing Olympics stands as a testament to her perseverance and talent.

However, what truly sets Shalane apart has been her leadership off the track, and dedication to mindful eating and body-mind awareness, co-authoring "Run Fast, Eat Slow", and modeling a new approach to nourishing ourselves. She also has taken young athletes under her wing, emphasizing the importance of mentorship and positive body image. Through her example, she has shown that greatness is not just about personal achievements but also about lifting others up and paving the way for future generations.

Reflection and Take-Home Assignment:

Reflect on Shalane Flanagan's journey and her role as a mentor, and how she uses mindfulness to help herself and others, such as in writing and teaching about [Run Fast](#).

[Eat Slow](#). How can her commitment to leading by example inspire you to support others? **For the Long Run**, listen: "[Run Fast, Eat Slow](#)" with Shalane Flanagan

Practical Exercises:

1. Healthy Living Challenge:
 - Organize a community health initiative, such as a group run or a nutrition workshop. Use this opportunity to promote healthy living and inspire others to adopt a more active lifestyle.
2. Create a Vision Board:
 - Develop a vision board that outlines your goals, both personal and community-oriented. Include images and quotes that inspire you, and
3. Write Your Journey:
 - Start a journal documenting your journey in running and your vision for the future, 1 year out or few years from now. Share your challenges, successes, and the lessons you learn along the way. Your story can inspire others who may be facing similar challenges.

Week 26: Deena Kastor - Cultivate Positivity

Inspirational Quote:

"Running teaches us to keep moving forward, one step at a time, especially in the most painful moments." — Deena Kastor, Team USA Olympic Bronze Medalist in Marathon, 2004

Story from Her Journey:

Deena Kastor's journey to becoming one of America's most celebrated distance runners is a testament to the power of positivity and perseverance, which comes out in every interaction with her. Deena began running at a young age through the 1980s. Her dedication and talent quickly became apparent, and she went on to have a distinguished collegiate career at the University of Arkansas.

Kastor dealt with multiple injuries and setbacks throughout her career, and keeping gratitude and positivity at the forefront kept her in the game. She missed out on several big break opportunities when she was at her peak due to an injury. Her breakthrough on the international stage came at the 2004 Athens Olympics, where the hard work finally paid off and she won the bronze medal in the women's marathon. This achievement was not just a personal triumph but a historic moment for American distance running, as it marked the first Olympic marathon medal for an American woman in 20 years. Through this all she stayed positive and kept things in perspective, prioritizing health and family.

Deena's success continued as she set American records in various long-distance events, including the marathon, with a time of 2:19:36 at the 2006 London Marathon. Her career was characterized by not only her physical prowess but also her unwavering positive mindset and comebacks. In her memoir, *"Let Your Mind Run,"* Deena shares how embracing a positive outlook transformed her running and her life, helping her overcome many injuries and setbacks.

Reflection and Take-Home Assignment:

Reflect on Deena Kastor's approach to maintaining a positive mindset even during challenging times, and staying focused on process goals to recover. How can her story inspire you to keep moving forward and embrace positivity in your own setbacks? Write down one thing today to do in cultivating a positive mindset and overcoming obstacles with grace. **For the Long Run:** [Deena & Coach Andrew Kastor in Paris w/Believe the Run](#)

Practical Exercises:

1. Positivity around Injury:

- Focus on what you CAN do, and coming back stronger! Remember: All of us have been injured, it's part of distance running and training. What steps have you taken such as "strength training routine" and rest/recovery cycles to improve your comebacks? (i.e., think aquajog)
- Write down a few encouraging statements that resonate with you and repeat them each morning. For example, "I am capable of achieving my goals and will heal, I practice patience." or "Every step I invest and injury I work through brings me back stronger." This practice can help set a positive tone for your day and build mental resilience.

2. Gratitude Journaling, Process Goals:

- At the end of each day, write down three things you are grateful for, even if there are several you are frustrated with. **Use a 3:1 ratio-** 3 things of gratitude for every 1 you'd like to improve or do better! Reflecting on the

positive aspects of your day, no matter how small, can help shift your focus from challenges to blessings, fostering a more optimistic outlook.

Deena Kastor's journey reminds us that positivity, gratitude and persistence are powerful tools in overcoming obstacles. Let her story inspire you to embrace a positive mindset and take steps forward, no matter the challenges you face today.

Week 26.1, Eric Liddell & Harold Abrahams (1924 Olympians)- Finding Purpose

Inspirational Quote:

"I believe God made me for a purpose, but he also made me fast. And when I run, I feel His pleasure." -Eric Liddell

Story from His Journey:

Eric Liddell, a devout Scottish Christian, was a man who lived his faith boldly and ran after a higher purpose. In the 1924 Paris Olympics, he was favored to win the 100 meters, but his conviction led him to refuse to run in the heats held on a Sunday. Instead, he shifted his focus to the 400 meters, a distance for which he was not the favorite.

On the day of the 400 meters final, Liddell held a piece of paper given to him by an American team masseur, which read, "He that honors me I will honor." Liddell ran with a unique style, head tilted back and mouth open, embodying his mantra of running for the glory of God. Against all odds, he won the gold medal, setting a new world record in the process. Liddell's journey was marked by unwavering faith and purpose. His story teaches us that when we align our actions with our core beliefs, we find a source of strength that transcends physical limits. His legacy is not just about his Olympic gold but about the integrity and dedication he displayed in pursuing his convictions.

Harold Abrahams - Overcoming Obstacles with Allies

Story from His Journey:

Harold Abrahams ran alongside Liddell and had him as an ally, but as an English Jew, he also faced the harsh reality of prejudice throughout his athletic career, and especially as an Olympian. Despite this, he was determined to prove himself and had a higher purpose to support all those perceived to be inferior in the games. So, Abrahams

meticulously prepared for the 1924 Paris Olympics, even employing a coach, which was unconventional at the time, to optimize his performance.

In the 100 meters final, Abrahams faced formidable competitors. His intense preparation and focus paid off as he won the gold medal, becoming the first British athlete to do so in this event. His victory was not just personal; it was a triumph over the barriers of prejudice and discrimination that he had faced, and buoy to those of minority religious/ethnic identities. He exemplified how perseverance and meticulous preparation can overcome societal barriers. His success encouraged a broader acceptance and recognition of athletes from diverse backgrounds.

Reflection and Take-Home Assignment:

Reflect on your own purpose and how it shapes your actions. Consider what it means to live with a purpose beyond-the-self, and integrity. Commit to a daily practice that reminds you or reinforces your dedication to this goal. If you have not seen it yet, watch Chariots of Fire, the classic film on 1924 Olympics.

 [Chariots of Fire \(1980\) Official Trailer - Ian Holm, Ben Cross Running Movie HD](#) -

Mental Strength Exercises:

- Focused Training with Process Goals: Instead of focusing on one “end goal”, think about the process of getting there and what is most important to you. Choose an aspect of your fitness that needs improvement this week (strength, flexibility, etc.), and develop a specific training plan to address it, inspired by Abrahams' meticulous preparation. Perhaps discuss with a coach.
- Mindful Running: On one of your runs this week, dedicate your effort to a purpose larger than yourself, as Liddell did. Write down a goal that aligns with your core values and faith, and plan a step-by-step approach to achieve it. Reflect on the sense of fulfillment this brings with a friend or in a journal entry.
- Identify an intention/goal that aligns with your core values and write down 2-3 actionable steps to achieve it. Get someone in your corner to be an accountability partner, if you don't have a running coach. How can your personal convictions strengthen your journey, using a training friend or coach?
- Allies to share the load: Reflect on the challenges you face with this goal and how you might prepare to overcome them. In anything that pushes beyond our comfort zone, acknowledge with realistic honesty any barriers you might encounter. Who is your ally in overcoming these? Can you talk to them today?

By channeling the spirit of Eric Liddell and Harold Abrahams, you can run not only to achieve personal success but also to honor your values and lift up others around you looking for integrity in sports, win or lose. It is the effort or “process goals” that matter most each day.

Week 26.2: Dean Karnazes - Ancient Wisdom

Inspirational Quote:

"The human body has limitations. The human spirit is boundless." – **Dean Karnazes, multiple Marathon & Ultra Records**

Story from His Journey: *"I run because if I didn't, I'd be sluggish and glum and spend too much time on the couch. I run to breathe the fresh air. I run to explore."* -Dean Karnazes, who is often called the "Ultramarathon Man," he has made a name for himself by pushing the boundaries of human endurance. One of his most remarkable feats was his participation in the Spartathlon, a 153-mile ultramarathon in Greece that traces the legendary route of Pheidippides, the ancient Greek messenger. He draws deeply upon this history and his Greek roots in telling the story of our patron founder of marathons, the *"hipodromi"* (messenger) Pheidippides. Messengers like this were revered as guardians of democracy, and run-walk-run was the delivery method of choice across the rugged ancient world.

In 490 B.C., Pheidippides was tasked with running from Athens to Sparta to seek help in the battle against the Persians. According to legend, he completed the journey in under two days, an astonishing feat that has inspired countless runners and historians alike. The modern Spartathlon was established in 1983 to honor this ancient run and has since become one of the most challenging ultramarathons in the world.

Karnazes' participation in the Spartathlon is a testament to his incredible stamina and dedication. He completed the grueling 153-mile race through the tough mountainous terrain of Greece, experiencing both the physical and mental trials that Pheidippides might have faced centuries ago. His journey through this ultramarathon was marked by perseverance, determination, and a deep respect for the historical significance of the route. Despite the pain, exhaustion, and numerous obstacles, Karnazes pushed forward by embodying the spirit of Pheidippides. His achievement not only honored the ancient messenger but also demonstrated the limitless potential of human endurance.

Reflection and Take-Home Assignment:

Reflect on the story of Dean Karnazes and his journey through the Spartathlon. How can his example of drawing upon ancient wisdom to push through extreme challenges inspire you in your own life? Write down a goal that seems daunting. Consider wisdom such as determination and persistence that Karnazes demonstrated. **For the Long Run:** Listen to Dean discuss marathon history highlights alongside Coach Jeff Galloway, in [podcast](#) or [video cast](#).

Practical Exercise, Historical Reflection:

1. Roots: Listen to the story of Pheidippides (above), or other historical endurance feats from your own roots. Reflect on how these stories of human perseverance can inspire your own journey. By integrating these into your life, you can draw inspiration from Dean Karnazes and the legendary Pheidippides, discovering your own definition of greatness.
2. Skill Sharing Sessions: Host or find regular skill-sharing sessions with your peers or coach. These sessions/workshops can be focused on running techniques, nutrition tips, or mental strategies for endurance sports. Sharing knowledge can build a supportive and knowledgeable community, just as *hipodromi* did.

Bonus- [RunPoems! \(Link\)](#)

[Closing from the Author:](#)

As I reflect on the stories and journeys of these remarkable athletes, I am filled with admiration and hope for the future of our sport. Over my 25+ years as a running coach, marathoner, and educator, I've had the privilege of witnessing firsthand the transformative power of running, in youth and adults. To me, it's not just a sport but a metaphor for life— a journey that challenges us to overcome, persevere, and grow. The next generation of runners inspires me with their resilience, curiosity, and passion. Through my work with high school and college athletes, The Running Anthropologist

Project and as a Galloway Program Director, I've had the joy of interviewing many of these athletes, each one bringing a unique story of determination and personal triumph. Their journeys remind me that, no matter the obstacles, the human spirit is capable of incredible feats when fueled by purpose and passion. I look forward to seeing how each hope-filled runner will continue to push the boundaries of what's possible and inspire us all to keep moving forward, one step at a time. I hope you have garnered that same inspiration each day from this devotional, and until we meet on the roads, track or trails... Happy Running!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: First, a huge thanks again to my wife and daughter for allowing me the time and passion project space to do this. Special thanks to Chris and Kiki Gillespie for their weekly inspiration and faith, Team 413 dedication to building and uplifting this community over the years. Lastly, to Coach Jeff Galloway and National Training Director Chris Twiggs, for giving me the opportunity to be a part of such a great distance running movement, train others in Galloway method, pace races and meet the most wonderful people from across the globe!

More Long Run Resources to continue your journey:

- [You Can do it! Podcast](#), with JG
- [Jeff Galloway App](#)- with beeper, Magic Mile and plans/customized
- [Like the Wind Magazine](#) (like National Geographic for Runners, best running inspiration in print)
- [The Morning Shakeout with Mario Fraoili](#) (running newsletter & interviews, excellent writing)

- [Running Visualization, Meditations & Logotherapy](#) (you can also schedule 1:1 sessions, send me a message: tampaoway@gmail.com)

Still have questions? Feel free to DM me / follow on social media

www.runninganthropologist.com @RunningAnthropologist

Suggested Donation:

If you've found this unique devotional to be of value, please consider donating some of that value back to help those who are not yet free to run across the globe— perhaps what you might pay for a standard devotional, \$10-\$20. [Achilles International](#) supports runners across the globe in gaining access to movement, [UNICEF](#), helping our most vulnerable children, in Ukraine and Palestine and most direly needed areas across the globe, and [International Medical Relief](#) working in many countries, but especially now in Poland with Ukrainian refugees, where Galloway National Training Director Chris Twiggs and his wife Dr. Diana Twiggs serve regularly.

Recovery Weeks Reflection & Film: Sri Chinmoy/Sanjay Rawal

Inspirational Quote:

"World-peace can come into existence only when we are inundated with patience, hope and perseverance." —Sri Chinmoy

"Just to have showed up to the start line of a marathon, trained well and experience this event is an accomplishment. You don't need to 'finish well' or even cross the finish line to have gained a great deal from your marathon journey." - Eugene JJ Godun

Story from His Journey:

Sri Chinmoy understood that life was much bigger than himself and what he could do with running was “self-transcendent”. He was a spiritual leader and advocate for world peace, not only known for his profound teachings but also for his incredible endurance events, from marathons to most notably the Sri Chinmoy Self-Transcendence 3100 Mile Race in NYC. Founded in 1997, this race is considered the “Mount Everest of ultramarathons,” challenging participants to complete 3,100 miles within 52 days. This daunting task requires runners to average nearly 60 miles per day, circling a half-mile block in Queens, New York. He encouraged reflection and contemplation.

Sri Chinmoy’s vision for this race was rooted in his philosophy of self-transcendence, encouraging individuals to go beyond their perceived limits and connect with something beyond themselves, including their wider human community (much like the marathon does for most people). He believed that physical and spiritual endurance were intertwined, and that through persistent effort we find a form of inner peace. Through reflection, one can use that transformation to transform the world, including a belief in the sanctity of all life. We can then “right-size” problems in our life and achieve extraordinary feats alongside others.

Sanjay Rawal is a human rights advocate from New York and director of the documentary “3100: Run and Become,” who is also an accomplished marathoner himself. He attends every year and highlights how this particular race not only tests physical stamina but also serves as a profound spiritual journey (much like a marathon can for most of us). The documentary showcases how a race can inspire people worldwide, emphasizing the importance of inner growth and self-discovery through physical challenges and contemplation.

Reflection and Take-Away Assignment:

Reflect on a goal or challenge in your life that seemed insurmountable, then your marathon. [Watch “3100: Run and Become” \(Trailer link\)](#) to gain insight and motivation from those who have embraced the path of self-transcendence to accomplish a goal. How can Sri Chinmoy and Sanjay Rawal’s principles of steady patience and reflection help us move beyond ourselves? [For the Long Run Listen: Sanjay with Mario Fraoili on The Morning Shakeout](#)

Practical Exercises:

1. **Journal on a few post-marathon questions:** What lessons from finishing the marathon apply to other challenges I face? Who did I meet along this 26+ week journey that has changed me, in my training or at my marathon? How am I different now?

2. **Seek Inspiration:** You can find it anywhere during these recovery weeks. Walk easy, go slow and find good company. Be grateful.
3. **Physical Challenge:** 26.2 is enough for most of us to find that space where we have to rise above, now appreciate the work you have done. Reflect on the process of training and how you felt after the effort, and consider how this can translate into your everyday life. What body-mind-spirit challenge might be a fitting one to follow up your marathon?