

Fitness

How to overcome mental barriers

Edgar Tham

Fatigue, boredom in training, mistakes, and the lack of progress are common challenges faced by runners of all levels. These issues do not just pop up on race day, but they can also manifest in training. Research points to a few tricks that athletes can use to overcome these mental barriers.

BE ONE WITH NATURE

A recent study concluded that runners who ran with sunshine, trees and flower beds felt happier. Running with nature can help improve your mood, leaving you more excited and refreshed.

To enjoy your next race to the fullest, take in the greenery of our garden city. For example, if you are running at the Standard Chartered Singapore Marathon, look out for pretty or unique flowers, plants and trees as you make your way to The Float @ Marina Bay.

Training indoors, battling the rainy season or is the weather not working in your favour? Watching a video tour of a garden or park while working out in the gym can give you a similar positivity boost.

PSYCH UP WITH MUSIC (AND VIDEO)

Running with earbuds or headphones can help you do better too. Researchers found that athletes who ran with their choice of entertainment had more positive attitudes and performance.

Having considered the benefits, some may ask: "What type of music should I listen to?" The answer lies in the tempo. Fast-paced music gets one pumped up and running faster, while slow-paced music relaxes. However, if listening to music is not allowed during your race, grooving to your personal hits during your warm-up could also help get you in the right emotional state and ready for your race.

Running on a treadmill but not a big music junkie? Streaming a show or movie can bring similar benefits.

The next time you are looking to achieve a new personal best or cover a longer distance while training, try setting up your playlist or your favourite show before you start. Caution: Be careful and remain fully alert when training on the treadmill. Safety first!

HONE YOUR MENTAL MUSCLE

Training your mind helps train your body too. Research with world-class athletes points to mental



toughness as pivotal to peak performance. Athletes who are calm, focused and confident are better prepared, and more likely, to overcome race challenges and mistakes.

To train like a champion marathoner, have your own race plan and rehearse it both physically (through training) and mentally (by going through the race over and over again in your mind).

To design your own race plan, study the race route and consider how you will run and motivate yourself during the race. How should I start? When would I pick up my pace? What are some potential challenges (e.g. uphill, fatigue) and how can I cope with them?

Anticipate the times you may "hit the wall" and prepare yourself with possible workarounds (e.g. keep your mind on your running form, adjust your breathing).

FIND YOUR RUNNING TRIBE

Athletes with stronger support networks tackle stress and challenge

better. Research also shows that the stress-support relationship works in two ways.

One, we seek out others when stressed. Gather your own tribe – trusted people you can turn to for love and support. Share with them about the difficulties you face, and celebrate small wins too.

Two, supporting others helps lower their stress levels and yours too. Keep your stress levels healthy by lending a helping hand to support your running buddy, particularly when the going gets tough.

The next time you hit a plateau during training or need an extra boost during the race, lean on your family and friends or consult a mental toughness coach for support.

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Sport & performance psychologist Edgar Tham (left), sharing with ONEathlete Benjamin Quek on how to hone his mental muscle and toughness ahead of his half-marathon at SCSCM 2018. PHOTO: RUNONE

#RunWithMok








A training plan to help you transition from the ST Run to the Dec 9 Singapore Marathon with two-time SEA Games gold medallist and ONEathlete Mok Ying Ren. His marathon personal best is 2:26:07.



STANDARD CHARTERED SINGAPORE MARATHON 2018

Week 26: Nov 26 - Dec 2

Visit runone.co to #askmok your burning questions.

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
 Easy 30min	 Easy 10min warm-up 12min hard Easy 10min cool-down (Total 32min)	 REST	 Easy 40min	 REST	 Easy 50min	 REST



EASY RUN

• **Purpose:** To build the aerobic running system, training your heart and muscles to adapt to the distance gradually.
• **How:** Be able to have a conversation during the run. If alone, try reciting the Singapore Pledge. You should be able to do this comfortably.



WORKOUT

• **Purpose:** To introduce intensity to train different energy systems.
• **How:** Pacing by feel is key. Start at a comfortable effort so that you can still finish the last set strong.



REST

• **Purpose:** Rest allows the body to get stronger.
• **How:** Spend this day completing other tasks in your life. Let running take a back seat.