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To Succeed in Running, Stick to a Plan

by Mindy Solkin

The saying, "Those who fail to plan, plan to fail," is a shout-out to anyone that would like to train for a race, whether they are a beginning runner or an experienced marathoner. Preparation is the key to success and will help us create a road map to achieve our goals.

Running does not require a lot of equipment, but wearing the proper shoes is key, so purchase them at a running specialty store. The staff will be experienced in suggesting the correct shoe for each foot type and gait pattern. Always double-knot shoe laces to avoid mishaps. Wear a sports watch for accuracy; there are many styles to choose from with incredible functionality. Determine whether we need all the bells and whistles and what our budget can handle. Basic models should do the trick.

There are many 5K races in and around Philadelphia. Choose one that will allow about eight weeks of training. Aim for three days per week of running or walk/running and two days of strength training and sport-specific conditioning. Take off two days per week, because recovery is part of the training process. Start with a 20-minute session and work up to 40 minutes. Use a method called rating of perceived exertion (RPE), to determine the intensity. On a scale of one to 10, rate how hard we feel we are working. Choose a comfortable level and apply a number to it. Stay within that number, but notice the difference between running on flat ground versus hills.

Chart progress in a logbook; this can be done online or the old-fashioned way, handwritten in a journal. As we record and review our log, we're bound to look back and say that we can't believe we started with 20 minutes of walk/run and now we're about to run in a 5K race. This is the reward for setting a plan, tackling the training and crossing the finish line. No matter what the clock says, we'll be a winner.

Mindy Solkin is a professional running coach in Philadelphia and founder of The Running Center. For more information, call 267-519-9293, email CoachMindy@TheRunningCenter.com or visit TheRunningCenter.com.

Sample progress logbook for someone whose goals are to lose weight:

Week 1: Weigh self, take body measurements and note pant size.

Week 2: 20 minutes of walk/run. Breathing is labored.

Week 3: Lost two pounds.

Week 4: Walking less and running more for 30 minutes.

Week 5: Body measurements have decreased.

Week 6: Lost six pounds. Can walk/run for 40 minutes and breathing is more comfortable.

Week 7: Pants are falling off my hips.

Week 8: Lost eight pounds. Running 40 minutes (no walking). Crossed the finish line of my first 5K. Woo hoo!

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process today!
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