

Mindset of a Marathon Runner

Interview by Gill Dear - Yahoo!7

Marathons. What drives someone to run 42kms? Why put yourself through the pain? And how do you push through it? Annie Crawford is a marathon runner and Director of Can Too, a non-profit program matching fitness with charity. I caught up with her to find out how she does it - and why.



Run

Annie, you're running your 3rd marathon this weekend – impressive! Why would anyone want to run 42kms – isn't it just 4 hours of pain followed by a week of more pain?

It does seem like a crazy thing to do, doesn't it? However there is something fantastic about pushing yourself beyond your normal comfort zone. Training for a marathon and then actually running one is as much about the mental as the physical. I love the pattern of the journey. I love the fact that every Friday night I feel a bit scared and nervous about my long Saturday run. Then Saturday morning comes and I go out and run a few more kilometers than last week and I feel the elation of achieving my new goal. I am on a high all day. I feel tired but happy. I have stretched myself again and I have succeeded. It makes you feel good about yourself.

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Working together

It is also easier because I run with Can Too and there is a sense that we are all in this together. We are all nervous and scared together and then we all run further than we have ever run and we support each other on. You can't imagine how great we feel when we have all finished the last long run. It is 35kms!! At the start we are all freaking out. We all know how we all feel and we are in it together. Then we run together, feel tired together, feel like we can't take another step together, and yet we do – we achieve the goal we never thought we could achieve and we do it together. It such a fantastic feeling of camaraderie. You are doing something you never believed you could do - how good is that? The bond that is created with these people is huge. In 20 weeks you become such good friends; know more about these people than you need to know - their family, their work, their likes and dislikes - you even discuss your bowel habits together! You fast track a relationship because you are all on an incredible journey.



Annie Crawford

People in Can Too run marathons for so many different reasons. Most do it because they have a secret desire to achieve, but they don't know how to make their dream come true. Many Can Tooers start out as total non-runners and many start doing the 9k. Once they have achieved their first goal they get the bug to achieve more. They start to believe maybe they could run a half marathon and they do. They have loved the thrill of the journey and have loved the highs and lows of training. They have loved what they learnt about themselves and their team mates. They thrive on the camaraderie of the Can Too Team. They get addicted to the journey and want to push themselves further with the buddies they have come so far with, so they decide to join the ultimate team - the marathon team!!! They get hooked. At the same time they are giving something back to the community through raising money for Cure Cancer and Research.

Most of our people, as in the general community, have been touched by cancer but our people – even more intimately. Some have had cancer themselves, or are watching family members die of cancer right now. They feel by doing Can Too and funding research they are turning a negative into a positive. They are running for more than themselves and they feel good about this. Most people are innately good. They want to do something positive and yet don't always know how to direct their energies. Running a marathon with Can Too provides much more than just the run – it gives them a sense of belonging and being part of a greater good. How amazing is that - they get hooked on both journeys.

I've heard that the marathon doesn't really start til the 35km mark – those last 7kms are a killer. Is this true? How do you push on when your body is screaming?

You are totally correct - the last 7 kms are the real killer. However, you know that when you start the marathon so you tell yourself that from the start. You say to yourself "I am not even thinking about the first 35ks – that is just a training run. All I need to do is run 7kms. Anybody can do that!". Getting through the race is all mental – your body is screaming at you to stop so your self talk has to be incredibly positive. It doesn't matter how you are feeling you just need to keep your positive mantra going.

Personally I tell myself how lucky I am to be out here running when there are people I know you would do anything to be physically healthy. I think of my brother in law who had an incurable disease that meant he was trapped in his own body and confined to a wheel chair. He can't run – he can't walk and he would envy me my discomfort. I say to myself "You are so lucky. You love running. You are feeling good".

Think positive

I also think of the people who are going through chemotherapy – that is a far bigger battle than running a marathon. I say to myself "SUCK IT UP – you are lucky". I also draw on my past experiences. I had three children without pain relieving drugs. Running a marathon is nothing compared to that pain!

I also make myself dismiss any negative thoughts. I tell myself how good I feel, I tell myself "you can do this, you have done the work, you will be fine". I tell myself that discomfort is temporary.

When I am running with other Can Tooers, I talk them through what I am doing. I talk about how to get up a hill by biting the hill off in chunks. I look at my posture and do body checks about how I am running. I focus on my arms then go through my body to check "Am I relaxed? Am I running with good form?". Helping other people up this hill takes my mind off myself.

I know that attitude is contagious and that I need to stay positive so that I can share this positivity with others. This will help them. I like to encourage and congratulate people that are struggling on the run. It makes me feel good if I can help people to stay focused, stay positive and stay brave. They can do it - I know they can, they know they can and they will triumph.

[Can anyone run a marathon? Check out Part II of our interview with Annie](#)

[What explains the recent fitness/charity fad?](#)

GOODLUCK to Annie and all the 'Can-Tooer's who are running in the [Blackmores Sydney Running Festival](#)! To sign up for a Can Too Running or Swimming program, and to help find a cure for Cancer, visit cantoo.org.au