

The Runner's Definition of Courage
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For some reason, when the weather heats up, we runners find ourselves questioning our abilities to run even the shortest distance. Forget about the "competition" that toes the line at a race; heat and humidity are the true arch rivals of many runners, yours truly included. Give me snow and cold any day. Humidity? Forget it. Unfortunately, weather-related issues aren't the only source of heartache for runners, some of us have issues with running certain distances, dealing with injuries, or juggling all of life's obligations in addition to our favorite past time. It takes a lot of motivation, a lot of persuasion and a lot of courage to make out the door.

Courage? We think of courage as the strength we need to harness as we deal with a horrendous situation. We think of the Cowardly Lion in the Wizard of Oz. But running? According to Merriam-Webster, the definition of courage is the mental or moral strength to venture, persevere, and withstand danger, fear, or difficulty. I think this is an important concept to think about as it applies to running.

In many articles pertaining to running, I've come across lines like "having the courage to start," or "having the courage to push it during a race." Sure, it takes a lot of courage to start something new or to push ourselves out of our comfort zone. In thinking about it, we all start new things every day that take us out of our comfort zone: a new diet, a new training program, a new job, etc. Yes, it takes courage to start something new. I know how scary it can be to start a new running program as I see the worry on the faces of my runners when a new No Boundaries program starts. But, to me, starting is kind of the easy part. But what happens when we have a bad run? What do we do when our lungs hurt and our legs shake and we can't finish a run the way we'd like? Should we quit? Hang up our running shoes for good? That's where the real courage comes.

The important thing to come to terms with is that we all have bad runs. We all have bad days in running, just like we do in life. When I'm feeling particularly venerable as a runner, this quote by author Mary Anne Radmacher always comes to mind: "Courage doesn't always roar. Sometimes courage is the quiet voice at the end of the day saying, 'I will try again tomorrow.'" This quote should be tattooed on every runner's brain. We beat ourselves up endlessly for a bad run, whether we didn't run as long or as hard as we wanted or for the countless other reasons for having a bad run. But the beauty of our sport is that there is always another run around the corner, another race on the horizon, another goal to work toward.

We have to listen to that quiet voice telling us that tomorrow is another day. We have to be courageous enough to leave that bad run behind us and look to the road ahead. It takes courage to lace up those shoes again and give it yet another try, knowing full well we may not have a good day.

Be courageous as you run in the face of your own personal running rivals, both physical and mental. You are stronger than you think and for every bad run, there's always another good one just waiting for you. You just have to find the courage and go for it 😊

Happy running!

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