

Heidi
Hatch

Lucky Thirteen



By Heidi Hatch
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Thirteen years ago, I ran a marathon. Thirteen years ago, I was also a newlywed; I had all the time in the world and youth on my side. Thirteen years, two kids and a full-time job later, I've decided to celebrate me again by running a half marathon. The training is taking precious time out of my hectic days, so while you may think this new plan of mine is selfish, I'm here to tell you it's not. I'm running a half marathon not just for myself, but also for my family. It's easy to lose sight of yourself when you're busy trying to be the best mom, the best wife, the best employee, the best Sunday school teacher or whatever it is that you do each day. The truth is, if you don't take care of yourself, it's tough to take care

of others. That's why I'm celebrating all that has happened over the past 13 years with a 13-mile run; I owe it to myself and to my family.

I'm not looking to be a supermodel or fit into the jeans I wore 13 years ago. I just want to feel good. Since I ran a marathon way back when, I liked to think of myself as a regular exerciser. The truth is, though, lately "regular" meant once a week or sometimes once every two weeks. That may explain why my clothes are a little snug these days and why there's rarely a picture of myself I don't delete off of our family camera. It's easier to blame a bad angle or an unfortunate outfit for my displeasure, rather than blaming a lack of regular exercise for my slow disappearance from the family scrapbook.

My main excuse for this inactivity was that I'm almost always exhausted. The truth is, I work hard all day but I'm mentally rather than physically spent. Using this as an excuse is not good for me, and I know it better than anyone—almost daily I tell viewers on the morning news about studies that show how exercise can make you feel better, live longer and have more energy. However, like most women, I would work in regular exercise for a while and then get too "busy" to squeeze it in; there was always a reason why there wasn't time.

This time, I'm out of excuses. I'm running the Disney Princess half marathon on March 7, and to ensure that my excuses don't get in the way of accomplishing my goals, I paid the \$120 fee up-front, and I am telling everyone I know about my plans. Let me tell you—it's still

not easy. Even now, I have a ton of excuses of why I can't exercise and why I've earned myself a little "mommy muffin top." My favorite excuse is to blame my hypothyroidism; next on the excuse list is the hernia I had for four years, which I can't use now because I had surgery to fix it. After the surgery, my excuse was exhaustion. However, that was the old me—the new me runs whether I like it or not.

Day one of my endeavor was back in November. It was a crazy, busy day—just back from a vacation, with kids to be picked up from school and shuttled to violin lessons. However, since I promised myself that I'd start on my birthday, I forced myself to be active in some way. The effort was minimal; I went for a 20-minute walk. It wasn't much, but it was a start. The next day, I ran two miles. The good news: I ran two miles when I only told myself I only had to run one. The bad news: it took 27 minutes, nearly 10 minutes longer than it would have taken me to run that distance 13 years ago.

As I write this, I'm making progress. I now run three miles during the week and four on Saturdays. By the time you read this I should be up to a solid six miles. While I'm doing this, you'll probably be mulling over your own New Year's resolution. It may even be to start exercising, cut calories and finally lose those few extra pounds that crept up on you over the past few years.

If I may, let me encourage you to forget about the drastic weight loss goals and lists of foods you can't eat. Instead, make a resolution about feeling good—feeling like the "you" that you like best. Don't worry, if you are committed to making positive healthy lifestyle changes, the weight will follow; looking good will be the added bonus.

My goal, I'll admit, is a bit drastic. Going from nothing to a half-marathon is a big deal, but that's what I needed. Your change might not have to be as extreme, but I knew I needed something radical to kick-start what I should have done a long time ago. I probably won't keep up running at this pace forever, but I will keep running. As for your goals, only you will know what's necessary to start you on the path to feeling your best.

Personally, I'm already feeling better mentally and physically. The scale has barely budged, but I feel happier and I'm getting close to that "runner's high" you hear about—you know, the euphoria you feel when your brain stops focusing on the physical act of running. I'm also relishing the power I feel from getting closer to accomplishing my goal.

I'll report back on the remainder of my experience after the race. In the meantime, wish me luck, and I'll do the same for you.

Happy New Year, from my little family to yours.

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