

Marathon Mom

Making time for myself pays off in a big way

I did it! I finished the Disney Princess Half Marathon. I didn't break any land speed records, but I kept on running and finished with a smile on my face and a tear in my eye—thrilled to have accomplished my goal and overwhelmed by the hard work and dedication that it took to get there. Running a half marathon was not an easy endeavor. If you are a regular reader, you know that I set out to accomplish this goal as a way to get back in shape and take care of myself, and in turn, give my family a healthier, happier mom. It was 13 miles for 13 years of marriage and 13 years since I'd run my first marathon.

My training began as a gift to myself on my birthday in November 2009. I started out slow, first running half a mile, then a mile and then three. Unfortunately, by the time I reached four miles I was hit with several winter bugs that ended up causing a lung infection. At this point, it would have been easy to quit. I would have had a good excuse. With six weeks of training wiped out by my illness and only six weeks to go until the marathon, it would be nearly impossible to get in all of the miles I would need to prepare for the big day. In the end though, I knew that by quitting, I would only be disappointing myself. So, I laced up my shoes and kept on running.

During the week, I trained whenever I could, squeezing in a few miles after work before having to pick up the kids up from school and start on their homework. The time was never magically there—I had to make it happen. As many moms know, there's always an errand or housework that can be used as an excuse for not having the time to exercise. However, with some careful planning and a supportive husband, I was able to carve out some time during each day to run.

On my own, I would run two to five miles. On Saturdays, my girlfriends would meet me for our increasingly longer runs. I never could keep up with them for more than a few miles, but knowing that they were there cheering me on was a huge mental boost. You hear it time and time again that having an exercise buddy is one of the best secrets to success, and I am here to tell you that it is true. My girlfriends were a big part of my success, keeping me on track with my training

and getting me out of bed on mornings that I would much rather have been sleeping in. Although our schedules did not allow for us to run together daily, we kept in constant contact about our training, using one another's accomplishments to push ourselves even farther.

After the race was over, I got a shiny medal around my neck, and while that felt pretty good, the biggest rewards came long before that moment. I remember a day when my husband gave me a hug and joked that there seemed to be less of me there—that was enough to keep me going for a few more miles! The next victory was the day I pulled on my favorite pair of jeans and was able to pair them with a T-shirt without having to go through everything in my closet to find one that would hide my muffin top! At the doctor's office, not hearing the click of the weights going up to the next rung was music to my ears.

In the end, running hasn't just improved the way I see myself but the way I see my life. It gives me a chance to clear my head and rid myself of the day's stress. Now that the half marathon is over, my goal is to keep on going. I haven't decided yet if I'll do another half marathon six months or a year from now—and I should tell you, I'm tempted to give it another try just to see if I can clock a better finish time. Another part of me wants to take it up a notch and try a new challenge, like a mini triathlon.



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