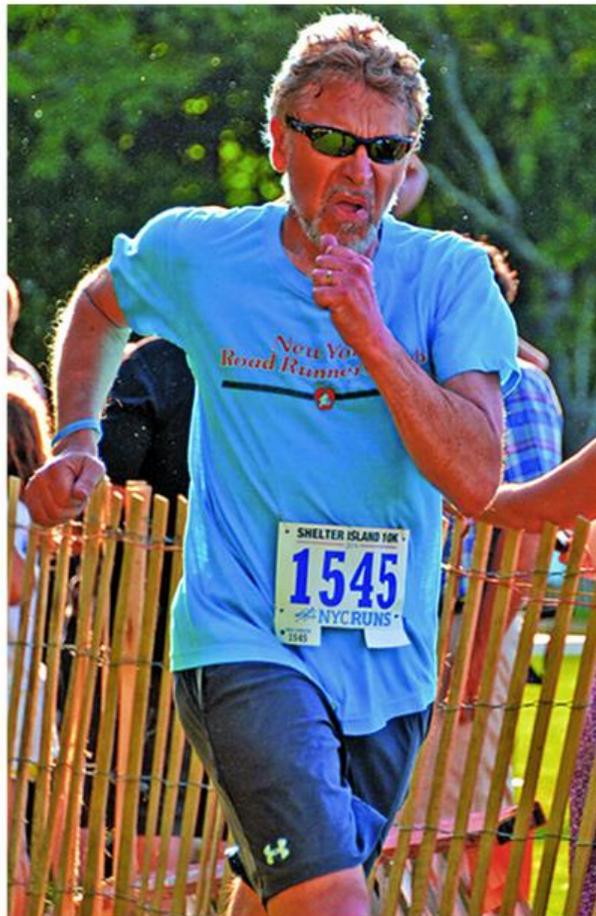


Run for your life: Taking on the challenge of the 10K

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By Richard Denning



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If just the word “exercise” brings back memories of that sadistic grade school gym teacher, then you are my audience.

If you think finishing the 36th annual 10K on June 20 and winning the New York Lottery have equal probability, then congratulations, you fit the profile. If you accept a challenge to try — just try — I guarantee you will be a winner.

This is the first in a series of columns that can help you go from “I can’t do it” to “How to do it.” These columns will provide you with the inspiration and practical tips to run the race.

The steps are simple. Each week we will provide tips on making progress to your goal. But, I'm ahead of my audience. Before we get into the mechanics, let me address the more basic question: Why? Why does anyone want to put their efforts into such a grueling task — especially if the last time you ran was in the sixth grade?

It's more important than losing five pounds, or impressing friends or winning a few bucks at the Dory. It is to live a better life. Trust me on this. Our bodies have a 70- year warranty (plus or minus based on genes or random accidents). There is no evidence that exercise increases longevity. But there is abundant evidence that exercise make all those years far more worth living.

I explain it in my own experience as energy. The days I run have more endurance, creativity and value than those I don't. My experience reflects the basic connection between "doing" and "feeling" that running provides. Humans have one distinctive physical attribute of endurance. We can literally outrun a horse because we are capable of covering more distance. And unlike most sports (golf, tennis, etc.), running does not bring the stress of competition. We are running for and with only ourselves.

So, a bit about me. For 50 years, running has been a major part of my life. I have never won a race. I have no special speed. I am certainly not an elite runner nor am I qualified as a coach. Yet I have finished every race a winner. Endurance, yes; over these years my cumulative running distance is over 25,000 miles, roughly the circumference of the earth.

Without any special skills, I have run seven marathons, countless road races and only was medivacked out of one! It amazes even me. I am addicted because of what exercise does in changing the quality of your whole life (especially the non-running part).

This series is the first step toward developing the positive addiction that running can be. I hope you accept my challenge. If you do, the June 20 10K will be the first stop on a very long journey.

Don't be intimidated by the idea of a 6 mile or 3 mile race. First, it's not a race. It's a distance. Except for an elite few who are running for time, everyone who participates is already a winner. This year, you have more than one option. Either register for the 10K (6.2 miles) or the 5K (3.1 miles) in October.

No matter what your time, I personally guarantee you will be welcome and recognized at the finish line. On the other hand, there is no runner's high. It's always tough to take that first step in every training session. For me, every morning I repeat the same series of excuses. It's too hot, too cool, looks like rain, let's run this afternoon, knowing honestly that would never happen.

Here's the first step to put some skin in the game. Like a plan to win the Super Bowl, the first step is to "want to." But, unlike the Super Bowl, here you are your own ace quarterback. Sign up for the Shelter Island 10K now. It's simple, easy and the \$40 is a contribution to the most worthy charities on the East End. Go to ShelterIslandRun.com to register

Activity this week: Register and then on the website, look in the “training tab.”
Next week: Helping you develop your individual plan. Each week thereafter, we will take on one of the barriers to success.