

# Reaching the Finish Line One Step at a Time

So here I am on the day of my first full marathon, and as I wake up and see the darkness, heavy fog and pouring rain, my desire to go for it is challenged once more! How do I run in such awful weather when I am told by other runners to enjoy the most amazing experience?

So I'm now soaked even though I have on a rain jacket and a garbage bag, just like all the other runners ... am I having fun yet? I walk, like cattle, with the masses of runners to the official start line for the chip to register my start time. Then off I go, in slow motion, because there are thousands of runners. I am amazed at the turnout and also pumped by the energy around me!

Well, the rain stops and everyone including myself begins peeling off the layers and throwing them to the side of the road! I'm feeling better now that the rain has stopped but my feet are already soaked from all the puddles. I'm staying close to a pacer bunny that has a time marked 4 hours, 55 minutes and my goal is to finish the race running beside this bunny. The pacer bunny is really just a guy holding a sign for the whole race that tells you when to run and when to walk and keeps time for you. I'm doing well because as long as I'm in front of the bunny, I will be on schedule to achieve my goal.

The race continues and I now have met a friend that is running at my pace. It is such an incredible lift to have conversation with a friend during the run. Running with someone really motivates you to keep going and also helps to pass the time!

As the kilometres start adding up, I'm now at the halfway point and my friend veers off to the half marathon finishing point. I'm alone again and thinking my body is doing pretty well when I think I might have to stop to use the port-a-potty. But I fear that if I stop running, I will never catch up to the pacer bunny that is close to me. So I continue on the run and I forget about having to go. My body actually no longer felt the urge and I was relieved I would not lose my pace.

Now I'm at 25km and still feeling strong. I was running in front of two women who were speaking French and it seemed that they were commenting on my butt. Well, in English they got my attention and said that I had some bees buzzing around it. That's because on my ride down to the race I wore my running belt in the car and accidentally leaked my Gatorade bottle down my butt!

Well I finally reach the farthest eastern point of the run in the Beaches at 30km and am surprised to see some of my friends holding up a sign for me. Moved by the support, I give them a high five and keep on running.

As I'm hitting the higher kilometres now I have people on the side of the road yelling out my name and cheering for me. I love it! It's just what I need as the time and the distance go on.

I have also carried my cell phone with me. I keep getting vibrations throughout the run and think that I have a lot of friends sending me well-wishes. And they are because my husband told our family and friends that every time my phone beeps today, a marathon fairy gets its wings to help carry me through the race. And I was so grateful to have a lot of fairies send me well-wishes!

As I continue on, I hear the bands playing as I get close to the water/Gatorade stations and look forward to the quick break.

Then I start seeing the pacer bunny getting in front of me and I'm now at 37km. The experienced runners had warned me: "At some point you will hit the wall." I never understood what the heck that meant until I experienced it myself! Ok, so let me try to describe the feeling. It's not that I'm hungry or thirsty. It's not that my breathing is laboured. It's not even the excruciating leg pain that I got during my training runs. It is actually my body just stopping! Both of my legs seize up and I lose sensation in my toes too! I feel like my legs are as heavy as lead and I can't use them to run anymore. I can walk but the running sensation is lost.

At this point, I have 5km left so I think to myself, "5km is a piece of cake in the training runs!" Well, not really, because now it turns out to be the most brutal 5km I have ever done! My body doesn't want to do it anymore and I still have the distance to go.

I remember the advice I got from a friend the day before: "Be in the now." So I try running sideways and then walking backwards to shake up my muscles to keep the mileage going, yet I am still slowing down.

Then I remember another piece of advice: "You CAN do it, so just DO it. Slow and steady will finish the race." So I continue on without the pacer bunny, very slow and steady.

I finally make it to the 500-metre mark and my three kids come onto the road, grab my hands and literally pull me the next 300 metres, saying "Keep going, Mom! You can do this ... finish the race!"

So 200 metres to go and I become the Energizer Bunny myself because the power of the crowd cheering for me and yelling out my name gives me the final push to get to the finish line!

What a relief! And what an awesome moment to get the finisher's medal put around my neck for completing the full marathon. I've done it! I've achieved my goal that I set back in May to finish a full marathon. And I would not have done it without the help of my chiropractor, massage therapist, Running Room Marathon Leaders, and friends! Thank you to all of you for your ongoing support and encouragement!

Are you ready now to achieve success with your fitness goal and want help getting to the finish line? Then please give me a call!

~ Nadia Bender

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