

How to Be a Better Runner

December 22, 2015

Scientific American:

I ran a marathon, once upon a time. (If you could call what I did “running.” It took me nearly five hours—you do the math.) Still, I did it: laced up my New Balances, pounded the pavement through five months of training, and then went ahead and finished the whole 26.2. Some folks, including my podiatrist (bunions), didn’t think I could do it. But as sports psychologists I talked to told me, physical feats are often more about *mind* than matter. Just in time for those New Year’s resolutions, here are five evidence-based tips for upping your running game—or any physical activity you choose.

#1 Set a super clear goal. Edwin Locke and Gary Latham, leaders in goal-setting theory in the 1990s, showed that the more specific your goal, the better you will perform. Hundreds of subsequent studies have confirmed this finding as gospel. So instead of aiming to be a “better runner,” the first thing you are going to want to do is pinpoint a result: add a mile to your longest distance, shave a minute off your most recent race time, or simply get out and do it a certain number of times a week.

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