



MARCH: IT'S OKAY TO PLAY

To most people, the term “fun run” is the perfect oxymoron. This post is my attempt to prove otherwise but it's going to take some tweaks to the way we approach training and also to the mental games we play with ourselves. So, here's how I go about combining “run” with “fun”.

Tweak Technique | If all I think about when I'm running are the facts that my thighs are chaffing, my knees are aching and I'm out of breath, I won't discover any joy in running until I finally finish that run (and probably not until I give up the sport entirely!). So, instead, I adopt the same approach that any parent of a two-year-old knows well: distraction.

The perfect distraction from the pain of running is to focus on technique. Think about standing tall, running with quicker and shorter steps, and avoiding too much side-to-side or twisting motions. Not only does this take your mind off the pain but it also provides a possible solution for the source of much of that pain. E.g. Knee pain amongst runners is strongly correlated with over-striding.

Change Gears | Running at the same speed is boring! If you owned a Ferrari, would you drive it round all day in second gear? No. So treat your body like the Ferrari that it really is and take it through its full range of gears.

Add some variety into your running training by going slow and easy some days, and then hard and fast other days. This might mean 1km intervals, fartlek runs (time-based intervals over mixed terrain), tempo runs (sustained blocks of faster runs), strides (short, fast controlled bursts of running of 5 to 40 seconds each), hill repetitions and races.

Easy Days | You should only have one run a week, maybe two at a stretch, that you feel a little apprehensive toward because of its distance or intensity. The majority of your runs should be within your fitness level and leave you feeling pumped and energised.

I also like to include one or two runs each week that are very easy. You finish feeling like you just broke a sweat, could have done WAY more, but chose not to because you wanted to lock away some positive associations toward running in your subconscious.

Seek Out Scenery | With running you can cover three or four times the ground you might cover when walking. So the potential to absorb incredible vistas is enormous.

So, during your marathon build up, plan out runs you're going to do that will take you to new scenic spots around Wellington (try Pencarrow, Belmont Regional Park, Red Rocks, Skyline Track, Rimutaka Rail Trail) and New Zealand (try Rotorua Redwoods and Blue Lake, Tongariro Crossing, Te Mata Peak, Abel Tasman, Queenstown Lakeside trails, everywhere around Wanaka, Rangitoto Island, around and over Mount Maunganui).

Take Company | Good company can make almost any discomfort bearable. Seek out a running group (e.g. join our TempoFit Sunday runs and weekday workouts), find running buddies, train up your four-legged friend, and/or download your favourite audio book, podcast or album.

Smile | This might come across very Tony Robbins-esque but I'm a big believer that what we do with our bodies dramatically affects our moods and feelings. So let's try a little experiment right where you are.

Put on a big old friendly smile. Do it. A massive, ear-to-ear, cheesy grin. Do you now suddenly feel better about reading this long-winded post?

It's exactly the same with running. If we spend every stride grimacing and frowning we're just telling our subconscious that what we're doing is horrible and painful. Instead, the next time you're out running, try the following at the start, middle and end: Stand up straight, hold your head high, breathe deep and smile. You'll feel better. Guarantee it.