

RUNNING SHORTS

Emotional benefits of running

By Niki Swearingen

There are moments in our lives that evaporate prematurely before we can inhale their essence. These occasions tend to be joyous, happy, peaceful times. There are other moments that seem as though they are unending. A single tick of the clock takes a minute, a minute an hour and an hour a day. They bear heavy weight upon our shoulders making the journey of life a treacherous uphill battle that we forcefully drag ourselves through. Anger, hurt, loss and confusion are often the culprit for such anguish.

Every one of us has had these moments. We have all asked why me and wonder what we should do. I believe one solution is to run, and yes, I do mean literally. No, not run away from the problem but to the problem.

Running has the ability to nourish emotional healing in a number of ways. Perhaps the simplest and most immediate way running liberates us of internal conflict is due to its physical nature. When we are suffering internally, take anger for example, our emotions begin to pool, simmer and boil inside us. We house this energy inside hoping time will cool our burning temperament. Being the creatures that we are, seeking immediate gratification, we have no patience for time. What do we do? Run! Running is an avenue to release this otherwise useless and destructive energy. Let your negative emotions fuel a positive physical endeavor. Hit the road; beat it out on the path. Run to the rhythm of your own anger. You will be surprised where it will take you. Maybe you are confused, you feel like your life is a tangled mess. Go wind through the trails at the nearest park. Allow your heart and mind to determine the route you take. Soon, your confusion will unravel to reveal its source. Your thoughts will become more organized and seem much more manageable. Whatever emotion that dwells inside resonates to its own beat. Lace up the shoes, head out the door, and take to the trails to your own tune. I guarantee your legs will be lighter, your steps softer and your heart happier.

Though this immediate avenue of relief that running offers is beneficial, so too are the nurturing qualities that accumulate over time. In the past five years, I have experienced this first hand. There have been events in my life that have left me hanging on to the edge of life's cliff by my fingertips. I've felt that at any moment my desperate grip may slip to send me plunging to the depths. Fortunately, God graciously gathered me to my feet and safety. Once back on solid ground, I wearily walked under a cloud of skepticism. I questioned people's motives and lost trust in others. I began to build walls around the sheath of my soul. A brick was laid for every wince of my heart. Before long, the barriers were too dense and too tall for anyone to scale. In an attempt to protect myself, I had become emotionally isolated to the point that my hurt, anger and confusion burned and boiled like never before.

Again, God showed His mercy. I was blessed with a friend who had wrestled with some of the very same hardships. We began to run with one another. At first, running and chatting about superficial rather simple subjects. As time progressed, a sense of trust was fashioned. Running acted as a chisel, slowly tearing down the protective barrier of my inner being. As the walls were being broken, the staleness of my heart drifted away as I shared my feelings. My heart, now open, gasped for breaths of fresh air soon to be flooded with new found joy and peace. Through running, both my

friend and I have scaled enormous emotional hurdles. Our friendship is a once in a lifetime relationship that began to develop with a simple running and chatting session.

Next time you find yourself engulfed by a wave of emotions, try going for a run. If need be, grab a friend, you may find yourself lightening your load through casual conversation or deep discussion. It is a peculiar phenomenon that running has the ability to open our hearts, and internally drain us of our debilitating difficulties. I don't know that anyone can truly explain it, but I am certain many can testify to the comforting qualities of running. Go Run!

Upcoming Event:

February 24-Ramp Romp 5k (College Station 10am)

February 25- Sweetheart 5k and 1 mile run/walk (Bowers Stadium, 2 pm, 1\$ entry fee)