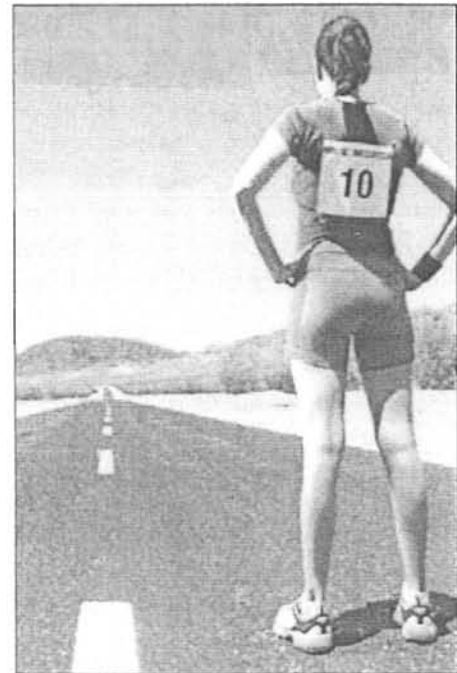


# Motivation for the Long Run

by **Jennifer Fields** Jul 28th 2009 1:00PM

If you're training for one of the top fall marathons – Twin Cities, D.C., Philadelphia, Chicago, New York (which I'm running on November 1) or San Francisco to name a few – then by now you're probably embarking on, or deep into, those weekly long training runs. And while it seems like summer with its warm temperatures and sunny days would provide a little extra motivation to hit the road, I find myself focused on dreading the early-morning slog in the heat and humidity. It can't be good to have lost my mojo so early in the training game, but I know I'm not alone. I regularly whine along with two coworkers who are also training for the NYC marathon. Our grumblings range from boredom to how much all this running cuts into our social lives (read: early bedtimes and dry happy hours).

I spoke with Bill Pierce, chair of the health and exercise science department at Furman University, co-author of "Runner's World Run Less, Run Faster" and co-founder of the Furman Institute of Running and Scientific Training (FIRST). He's finished 35 marathons and eyeing number 36 this year, so I figure if anyone can give a runner a little pep talk, he's the man for the job. Here's what he had to say about staying motivated to go the distance:



*Photo: Getty Images*

- **Think about your long runs as what's going to enable you to [run the marathon].** Tell yourself, "It's hot and humid, but I'm going to be strong." This is laying the foundation for what I want to do.
- **Remember you'll run faster when the temperature drops.** It will be much easier and you'll be faster just because it's cooler.
- **In those last miles of your run, visualize yourself at miles 22, 23 and 24** and imagine the feeling of finishing the race. This really excites me and this strategy will also help you on marathon day because you'll have finishing the race imprinted in your mind.
- **If you're sore and achy, look at your training plan.** Ask yourself, 'Is this mental or is this physical?' Ask yourself if you're overtraining: Are you irritable? Are you not sleeping? Is your morning pulse higher than usual? If 10 minutes into your run you've adjusted and fine, it's probably mental. But if you're ready to sit on the curb, you might need some time off.
- **Break the long runs into different segments.** Using a 20-mile run as an example, one week focus on running the first five miles easy, the middle 10 at an upbeat pace, and the last five easy. Another week run the first 10 easy and try to run the second 10 faster (upbeat). There are multiple ways to segment the long run. This helps to keep you focused and makes the long run easier because you are focused on the segment instead of the entire distance.
- **With training friends, run the first half together.** Stop to drink and then do a chase for the second half. That means, the slowest person will start first and then each person will start at different intervals based on your predicted time for running the second half. I like this because you are focused on the chase, either keeping your friends from catching you or trying to catch them, depending on where you started. Again, it causes you to focus on running and not being intimidated or overwhelmed with the long distance.

**What's your strategy for staying motivated for the long haul?**