

Preparing for the Race

You've made the last entry in your training log, picked up your race packet and made arrangements to get to the starting line. That's it, right? All that's left to do is run the race. Not quite...mindfulness techniques like visualization can help get your brain and your body on the same page before the big event. Recent science suggests that running well may be more mental than physical. It's important to train your brain just like you would train your body. Leading up to a big race, I like to do a few things to keep my head clear and focused on the task at hand. You can visualize your race easily if you already know the course. Go through each mile in your head, and go through all the "feels" during the run. How are you feeling halfway through? How will you react when your body wants to start shutting things down? Studies show that by projecting ourselves into these future states and replicating the brain patterns we're likely to experience, we can better prepare our body to respond the way we want it to when it actually happens. If you don't know what the course looks like ahead of time, you can go back and visualize one of your long training runs or tough hill workouts. I've had my best performances during seasons that I haven't been in the best shape, and that's because my stress levels were very, very low. My brain knew what I needed to accomplish, and the body obliged. Putting the "icing on the cake" shouldn't be a tough workout to test your fitness levels, but should instead be a conversation with yourself about how you want to approach the race.