

## Do Something Different

Will Rogers said "if you find yourself in a hole, stop digging".

If you keep doing things the same way you keep getting the same results.

If you are running to achieve a personal record, then training needs to be different than in the past; otherwise expect to achieve the previous record.

It is important to remember that sometimes doing things the same way makes sense, because getting the same results is desirable. For example if your goal with running/jogging is to de-stress and get away to facilitate creative moments, and if you know 60 minutes of slow running interspersed with short walks works, stay with it.

However, many individuals want something better. They want to reach a higher potential in terms of running a faster time or farther distance. Running the same course, the same weekly mileage, at the same pace, and the same effort will get the same results. Therefore, to get different results requires doing things differently.

For some veteran runners it can be quite difficult to change well established habits. The first step is to recognize that there are times when things need to be done differently. It requires a conscious decision to disrupt the current patterns and habits.

Clarify what you want to achieve. There are many training parameters which can be changed such as; distance run, weekly mileage, number of running days per week, running intensity, level of perceived exertion, number of races, running form, type of running (long slow distance, speed work, fartlek, tempo runs, threshold runs, pace work, time trials, and hills). Other training parameters which can be added or eliminated might include; stretching exercise, resistance exercise, plyometric drills or other types of training.

The challenge is which parameter(s) to change. This is where the advice of an expert, coach, or personal fitness trainer can be of assistance. An advisor can help prioritize which things to do differently and change the things which will get the biggest bang for the buck. A physical therapist can perform a musculoskeletal screening examination to find specific muscle weaknesses or muscle tightness which can be addressed with remedial exercise programs.

Once a list of behaviors or parameters you desire to change is identified, share the list with a significant other. Making public statements about your expectations can provide motivation. Friendly reminders can help maintain discipline and focus as training progresses. When developing strategies, it is wise to review previous attempts, what got in way and how can you better avoid mistakes.

The fun part is creating the specific tactics or training drills which are different. The following are some examples of training drills which, perhaps, are different.

Count the number of times the right foot hits the ground in a 200 meter run. Try to run 200 meters with a longer stride, and less strides. Try to run 200 meters with the right foot hitting the ground less frequently than before. Of course it is important to hold correct running form and avoid heel strike and land on the whole foot (mid-foot strike).

Instead of choosing to run a specific distance, choose to run at a specific level of perceived exertion for as long you can regardless of the distance. Run at 65% of your maximum heart rate for as long as your can and strive to avoid going higher than 65%. Run with a group, and imitate bike racers doing a team time trial, alternating taking the lead.

Develop a strategy to loose a pound or two. The benefit of carrying one less pound over a 26 mile race is significant.

Turn off the TV at night, go to bed earlier, get up earlier. Record TV shows so you can fast forward thru the advertisements and use the time that previously would have been spent watching TV advertisements training.

Practice associative thinking when running, focusing on feeling the subtle physical cues your body provides, so that you can run closer to the edge of your anaerobic threshold. Practice positive mental imagery when training or even driving car when commuting.

Training harder is not always the best answer. Reflect on what are the most important things to work on and train smarter not harder.

“Unless you try to do something beyond what you have already mastered, you will never grow.” Ralph Waldo Emerson