

'THE FINISH LINE IS JUST THE BEGINNING OF A WHOLE NEW RACE'

For some of you who ran last Sunday this will be music to your ears, to others, not so much. Don't panic, I'm not advising you to lace up for another race just yet, but what I am saying is that the end of the race does not necessarily mean the end of your running adventure. You have made it this far, reached your goal of 10k and this can be the beginning of a wonderful running journey. If this running business is for you, and it can be quite addictive, you are probably now wondering where to go from here.

BE PROUD

Start by being proud of your achievement. Regardless of the type of race you ran last weekend, whether it went according to plan or there were a couple of hiccups along the way, be proud of your progress, no matter how slight it may appear to you.

Think of day one of the programme and the improvements you have made. Many of us run races that we have spent weeks and months training for; hours of hard work and focus has been invested in mentally and physically preparing for this and very often we forget to spend even a few minutes enjoying it. Feel proud, proud that you tried, proud that you did your very best. Nobody can take the feeling of that last stride across the finish line away from you — so savour it for as long as you like.

NUGGETS OF KNOWLEDGE

Take time to reflect on what went well, what didn't work and what can be improved on in your next run. Taking away a couple of nuggets of knowledge will help you grow from the experience and become a better, more confident runner. Even if you had a great run there are always things to learn.

Running, as I've said before, is a metaphor for life: learn from the past, move on with no regrets and work towards the future.

GET BACK ON THE WAGON

Hopefully you took a couple of days off after the race on Sunday, and if you haven't please do so now. Your body needs to recover and

WITH A 10K PROUDLY TUCKED UNDER YOUR BELT, YOU'RE ONLY JUST A FEW STRIDES INTO A FANTASTIC RUNNING ADVENTURE, WRITES LIZ COSTIGAN

repair itself, otherwise you risk injury. A day a mile is often recommended, so it will take about six days to fully recover from a 10k/6.2-mile run. This doesn't mean you cannot exercise at all. For those of you who have been resting and allowing your body a well-deserved break, gradually introduce your body back to exercise over the next day or two.

Do some light cross training if you feel up to it. Try something other than running as this encourages you to use muscles that have not been used recently. Yoga is a great choice as it encourages stretching, flexibility and relaxation. It is gentle on the body and more importantly, non-competitive, so there is no pressure physically or mentally. It is important to listen to your body. We all recover at a different pace, so take the time you need.

MOTIVATION

Over the past couple of weeks you have had a goal to work towards, which, as you know, is a great way to stay focused and motivated.

You may notice that without that race date, you aren't as consistent with your training. This is okay to an extent; you must keep the

enjoyment in running and too much focus on races can be draining. Plus, you can't be at the top of your game all year round. That's why there are seasons, to prepare and recover.

That said, I'd advise signing up for something a few weeks or months down the line. It can help you stay on the straight and narrow. There are so many races to choose from all over Ireland, so pick one, sign up and this will help to ensure you don't lose your mojo. If another race seems like too much to commit to right now, you could join a running club. Motivation is easier and more fun in a group.

Give yourself every chance of holding on to this 10k distance that you have worked so hard to achieve. Congratulations on your success, and remember: "Run when you can, walk when you have to, crawl if you must, just never give up" — Dean Karnazes.

SEE THE RESULTS AND FACES FROM THE RACE ON www.fitmagazine.ie/events

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