



Walk to Run
Village Corners Shopping Center
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TRAINING SMARTER with a Coach

by Lynn Gray

Why hire a running coach? What differentiates one running coach from another? A good coach is one who is professionally certified, has been in the sport of running for many years and experienced the many mental and physical aspects of both walkers and runners. A running coach can make the vision of the “finish line” into a reality for both the up and coming novice walker and the vintage runner. A coach will guide inexperienced runners to perform at their optimal physical, cardiovascular and mental level. Every sport has abundant learning curves such as form, technique, muscular necessities, agility requirements and many more factors which dictate success for the individual pursuing their full potential. The sport of distance walking or running is not exempt. A coach can help both walkers and runners stay motivated while guiding them with a gradual progression of miles to avoid injuries and not overwhelm them with a higher workload than their body is capable of. High performing runners require a coach to bring them to their highest potential, thus helping the participant reach his or her personal best in a given event.

So what kind of running coaches are we talking about? The kind of coach which will help you train **SMARTER for a lifetime of fitness**. Impact sports such as running does not allow for many form errors due to the repeated miles required in distance events. Both beginners and experienced runners now have countless opportunities which tempt them into doing a 5k, half marathon or marathon distance within a set amount of months. Experienced runners now expect improved time performances each year. Many will go through countless internet searches, books, and quick fixes and mixes of printed schedules in search of “the one” magic formula. A coach can cut through years of mixed training and give a more direct route to the finish line. Below are aspects of what can be expected by a certified walk to run coach for beginners, intermediate, and advanced levels.

S M A R T E R

S Specific goal – The client presents their walk or run goal both in distance and time and a coach can give you a daily plan to progress toward that end. Inclusive are specific strength exercises and agility exercises which enhance forward movement and prevent injuries. A gradual daily schedule targets the time goal and progressively, yet gradually develops duration, so muscular adaptation is had.

M Measurable – The coach will require a benchmark of time per mile each month depending on one’s aerobic ability; and will establish effort level pacing so an actual prediction of time can be forecast for the goal distance. Progress is largely measured by time taken for a given distance, perceived effort level, and actual accrued time per mile.



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A Attainable –The coach can be more objective in telling the client if the time and goal distant event is realistic given the time allotted for training. Aerobic capacity, correct form plus technique, and developed walking/running muscles are examples of a few key fitness markers which give the coach and client evidence of the attainability of the goal.

R Relationship - The professional relationship between the coach and the client becomes increasingly advantageous since all forms of progress can be noted. The client has a sounding board to express training concerns such as injuries, breathing difficulties, race performances, etc. A coach can resolve those and other issues which come up. Most goal related training schedules last over three months such that physiological and cardiovascular improvements will necessitate a continual “tweaking” of training and conditioning workouts. The continuity established by having one coach will help greatly in making steadfast progress to reach the fitness goal desired.

T Time – The time it takes to develop all energy, physical, and aerobic systems for an event distance goal will vary from client to client. The coach can contour a plan to fit the amount of days and time one has available to initiate and complete their workouts. Most running programs go in training phases and there again, the coach will assist and plan the timing of where each progressive training phase should begin and end.

E Easy – Easy does it every time. Most participants if left to their own devices frequently leave out days and time of easy, recovery running or walking. Fast walking and/or running day after day during a weekly cycle will create burnout and can result in overuse injuries. The coach will advise the client to not only put recovery such as slow jogging or walking into the workout; but will integrate recovery days with complimentary easy cross train days such as yoga, easy biking, or swimming. In each case the legs get a rest from impact and the participant comes back stronger and rested for the next training session. A special note for those over forty years old; the “easy” running or walking days should be around three per week since as we get older recovery from the impact takes a bit longer.

R Remain focused – There will be times during a fitness plan/schedule whereby the client may begin to miss workouts. The focus of the goal weakens and the participant may even stop the program or begin modifying the given plan. A coach will keep you motivated and have a remarkable influence on helping you stay with the plan. Running demands together with day to day life requirements can create increased mental stress on the body which may be already physically stressed. This is the time when the coach can modify your schedule and help bridge the “give in/give up” feeling, and put you on a more realistic plan which redirects your focus back to the fitness goal originally set.



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There you have it. Training **S M A R T E R** goes a long way in providing success for individuals seeking long term and/or lifetime fitness goals. In sum, one does not have to go it alone and can become quite proficient in the sport of distance running or walking by being “coached” by a professional coach.

About Lynn Gray

From RRCA Running Coach Lynn Gray; coached for over 20 years and self-coached for another 20 or more years, age group winner over 30 years, 11 Boston marathons, etc. oh...with 93 marathons completed. Author of: *Fit and Faster and Cardio Walking for Weight Loss* - Owner of Take...The First Step Training Studio, and President of Take...The First Step Club

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