

WHY I'M NOT RUNNING THE MARATHON

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The big day is here. The Mumbai marathon is tomorrow. And as always, I'm not running.

Normally, that should not even be a statement worth writing (or reading). But somewhere along the way the idea has been formed, that anyone who is a 'fitness buff' or a 'health fanatic' or simply is in good shape, should be running the marathon.

Various fitness groups that I'm part of consist of a lot of people who run the marathon. And I get asked time and time again, why I'm not running. The thing is, I have become a decent sprinter off late - I have increased speed (as I've gained strength), and have also upped my stamina.

So I'm fit, I'm into fitness, I am a decent runner, I enjoy getting up early and exercising (twice a week at least) and I clearly love relay races ...

So, why am I not running the marathon?

Because I don't believe we as humans were born to run. We were born to walk yes, to sprint once in a while yes, to play yes, and to lift heavy things yes. But running at >75% of max heart rate for a prolonged period of time? It's not evolutionary, nor is it natural or healthy or even really sensible. I remember when I first read 'The Two Towers' - the second book of the 'Lord of the Rings' series. I wasn't even primal then but I remember very distinctly a few things that struck me odd. In the first part of the book, the story focuses on Legolas, Gimli and Aragorn, going in search of the two hobbits - Merry and Pippin who were carried off by Orcs.

In most of the first half of the book, the former three characters were running.

Get this ... they ran for days and days and days in pursue of the captors. I remember finding this odd. I thought to myself: but that's impossible, how can they run so much? I did not find the concept of elves, dwarfs, men that lived for 300 years, hobbits, orcs, or even Gollum odd. That fit very well in my head that craves for fantasy fiction. The running however refused to sit well.

So I guess I always thought about running in some way unnatural, so when I got into primal living, cutting out of cardio from my life was the easiest transition of them all.

I think a lot of us look at fitness, weight loss, and good health in isolation, thinking this diet will help me lose weight, and that exercise made her lose weight so I should try it. But if you look at it from an evolutionary point of view, the current levels of cardio for fitness are extremely irrational. **In the past 40 years of so, running or doing cardio at these levels has led to a generations of extremely un fit over weight, cellulite induced, skinny fat people with heart disease and poor immunity.**

Think back of the millions of years where humans walked and walked while foraging for food, ran at max speed and climbed a tree when escaping a predator, or chased an animal for dinner, played or slept in their free time and lifted heavy things as physical work. Sustained level of cardio for prolonged periods of time didn't exist till very recently.

Most people today look at those who run 21 kms as the epitome of fitness, a rather incredible but

useless skill to possess I'd say. (Sorry if I'm upsetting a few of you) For what good is it for survival? What good is it in daily life? Survival requires being able to sprint at maximum speed for short burst to be able to escape from whatever situation you've got into. Daily life requires energy, strength to heave and shift and lift sometimes, vitality, freedom from aches and pains, good immunity, and exuberance, all of it that sustained cardio actually negates.

The point is it's good to know that competitive sports are not necessarily good for you. The reason why people play them is because they're fun. Similarly, if you enjoy running and competing in a marathon, who am I to tell you to stop? If you enjoy it, if you enjoy the thrill of crossing that finish line, if the end is worth the means, then go for it. Just don't think it's good for you, or that you're fit. In most probability you're not really as fit as you think you are. (I might start moderating comments on this blog after this post).

To run a marathon, you fuel your system with nutritionally bereft carbs (pasta anyone?) and sugar, and burn it off by running, and repeat this senseless life sapping cycle again. No thank you, I am not doing that to my body.

I'm not getting into the science because I can't do better than these folks in the links below. These posts below have the science, the research, and basic explanations.

Here goes:

[A case against chronic cardio](#)

[Chronic cardio](#)

[some good research links](#)

[Cardio and heart disease](#)

[Still not born to run](#)

[Did humans evolve to be long distance runners?](#)

I also want to clarify that this post is not intended to crush anyone's competitive ambitions. If you are a serious competitor I can totally understand the need to run. **If however you are (like most) running the marathon because you think its healthy and want to be lean and fit, if you want to live a long, robust, active, and happy life there are far more effective and balanced ways out there.** Walk a lot, sprint once a week, do short intense sessions of heavy lifting twice a week, play with the kids and the dogs, get out in the sun and sleep a ton.

Lead a well-balanced life and don't waste your time and good health on cardio.

Thanks for reading. Please let me know if you have another point of view.

