

# Comrades:

## A Psychological Perspective

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The Comrades marathon is a world renowned race that takes hours and months of physical and psychological preparation, both of which are equally important. However it often happens that athletes only focus on their physical preparation.

Here is an easy way to remember important aspects that contribute to your psychological preparation.

**C**ommitment

**O**wnership

**M**ental rehearsal

**R**emember hard work

**A**chievements

**D**iscipline

**E**mootional control

**S**elf talk

### Commitment

Commit to your goals and action them! Before you start your preparation, take time out and put your goals on paper. This could serve as a gesture of commitment to the process that you are about to engage in. Set your goals as specific, as realistic, as achievable and as measurable as possible. After completion of this process, attach dead lines to them based on the time frames you have identified for yourself. This process can keep you focused and motivated.

### Ownership

You are in control of yourself, your body, thoughts and emotions. Nobody can make it better or worse for you. It is all in your hands, therefore take responsibility for that. Be responsible for your responses to thoughts, emotions, set backs, and disappointments as well as for success, achievement, joy and the satisfaction you get from running. Take ownership for what you do and how you do it! Remember control the controllable, which is YOU, and let go of anything uncontrollable such as spectators, weather etc.

### Mental rehearsal

This is the process when you create or re-create images in your mind by using your imagination. Do this by imaging yourself running smoothly, gracefully, effortlessly and relaxed. Other examples are to imagine yourself at the finish line and the spectators cheering you on. This will have a positive impact on your motivation and determination. Further, imagine how you will cope with pain and which coping strategies you are going to use.



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### **Remember hard work**

Remember all your hard work when running your race. Especially when every bone and nerve in your body tells you to stop and the pain feels unbearable. Go through all your hours of preparation, all the sacrifices you've made and give yourself credit for that. Calculate all your hours of training and remember this amount during times that you almost feel like quitting.

### **Achievements**

Use previous achievements on days when you feel that your motivation and discipline are challenged. These achievements can be running related or achievements from your personal or working life. Reminding yourself of these achievements might also boost your confidence levels.

### **Discipline**

Preparing for the Comrades takes a lot of self-discipline. You complete long training runs while at the same time you need to cope with other daily commitments such as family, work and other personal responsibilities. This makes discipline around time management such an important issue.

### **Emotional control**

Athletes often experience a mixture of emotions during a race which range from happiness, anxiety, fatigue, anger, frustration and so on. Fatigue is the one that almost everybody can expect to experience. The focus during the race should not be on experiencing certain emotions as good and avoiding others because they are so called bad. The important thing is to recognise the emotions that you are experiencing, stay aware of them and then work out ways for yourself to stay in control.

### **Self talk**

This is the voice in your head or the message that your mind gives you whilst running. Examples of messages conducive to running: "If this was easy, everyone could complete a marathon". "In just one more hour this race will be finished and I will be relaxing, showering, eating etc". Lance Armstrong, world renowned cyclist said: "Pain is temporary, quitting lasts forever". Work out your own catch phrases or any saying that has special significance for you and repeat that during times when fatigue wants to take over and control your race.

The Comrades marathon poses a lot of physical and psychological challenges to any athlete who participates. Completing the race, achieving your goal or getting a medal are all part of the achievement but perhaps the biggest achievement of them all is in the question "what have I learnt about myself"? You have won the biggest prize or reward, if this question provides new and significant answers and helps you to develop and grow as a human being!! Good luck!