Mental Training and Racing:

*Tips from Skirt Sports talk “Winning, Whining and Wine”*

I crossed the finish line completely out of breath, satisfied that I had given everything I had and held off the person behind me who had been on my tail for the last 100 yards.  As I ran over to my husband and 2½ year old daughter, I realized she was in tears.  She had been waiting for me, a few yards from the finish line, to give me a celebratory high five. However, as I approached her, I heard the sound of footsteps from the runner behind me. Instinctively, I kicked it into high gear and sprinted to the finish line, and missed my daughter’s outstretched hand. When I went back to see her, my heart sunk as I saw her tears and I knew that I had disappointed her. My daughter and I went back to the finish line and ran through hand in hand. As we crossed the line together, the satisfaction in my daughter’s smile far outweighed any personal race accomplishments. It was then that I felt like a winner.

What does it mean to win for you? In this blog, we will go through the ways you can be a winner in every race, how to overcome self-doubt and other mental struggles (whining) and how to celebrate your accomplishments (wine).

**Winning:**how to be a winner in every race

What does winning look like to you?  Let’s check out the ABC’s of winning and explore some possibilities.

A: ***Attitude***.  Wouldn’t you love to cross the finish line feeling like a winner, having had the time of your life even if you had cramps, an unforgiving wedgie and were 10 minutes short of your goal time?  You’re probably thinking, “Sure I would, but do you expect me to be superwoman?  Don’t you know I am human- and female?  Now please!”  Ah, you have found me out.  I actually do think you can be super woman and still be genuine and down to earth. Following this article will transform your expectations, give you a positive outlook regardless of the situation and leave you full of eager anticipation, instead of apprehension, for your next race.

B: ***Body***:  Physical goals challenge our body and allow us to measure progress in a tangible way.  What is the one caveat about physical goals?  They hinge on cooperation of both your body and the unpredictable environment.  Make these goals flexible and if things don’t go your way, let go of it.

C: ***Camaraderie***: Who said racing was an individual sport?  Put yourself out there! Join a team, find a buddy, or send a memo to wear a Skirt Sport outfit on race day.  Say good luck to the person next to you at the starting line, cheer for others, or bring your friends and family. By developing a support system, even when your attitude and body are feeling less than ideal, your friends are there to lean on.

**Whining**: how to stay positive when things get tough

It’s hot, you’re tired, wounded with blisters and chafing.  That gravel spot on the side of the road is looking as cozy as a pillow top bed.  If unprepared, your attitude can easily turn you into a damsel in distress.  The time to think about a response to difficult situations is before the race.  The devil on my shoulder used to visit me at the race start, tempting me to succumb to doubts and fears, telling me that my legs would fail me and stop mid race and that I would be left motionless.

The only way around this pitfall is to fight it proactively with these two steps:

1) Defuse it: Play the **"**If so, then what?**"**game with your devil**.** *"If I stopped, then what?  Well, people would pass me, then dusk would fall, I would get thirsty as the aid stations packed up, and then my husband would have to find me and take me home.  Tomorrow, then, would be another day and life would go on.  Does this fear really deserve the attention I am giving it?”*

2) Counter it: There is power in having a mantra- a meditative phrase that brings focus, clarity and inspiration.  My mantra is *“steady and strong.” "Instead of stopping, I will be steady and strong."* What is yours?  Don’t start your race without it.

**Wine**: Don’t forget to celebrate!!

Buy a new skirt, have a BBQ, share your accomplishments with others, or sign up for another race.  Most importantly, remember that fitness in itself is a celebration of physical vitality and all the benefits it brings to our life and health.  Acknowledge your efforts, let training and racing be a way you give back to yourself when life requires so much giving.  How will you celebrate?

Through adopting a well rounded perspective on racing, developing community, and abandoning limiting thoughts we can truly embrace the spirit of racing.  Enable your superwoman inside to come out through practicing these techniques and incorporating them into your life!

For more on Positive Thinking, see my recent blog on “The habit of Optimism” http://heidismithcoaching.com/blog.html