



Learn to Run the BOSTON MARATHON in 3 years?

by Wanjira Njenga, CMT, RYT, RCRT

BEFORE



A few years ago at the breakfast table, my husband, Tony asked me what my long-term goal for the next year was going to be. I told him that I would climb Mount Kilimanjaro. He paused from munching on his toast, stopped sipping his coffee, put on his business coach hat and commented: “That’s not a smart goal darling.” After he had wiped the egg off his face he explained that SMART is an acronym used in goal setting:

- **Specific**
- **Measurable**
- **Attainable or Achievable**
- **Relevant**
- **Time bounded**

My goal, he explained, satisfied the SMART but not the T. I immediately amended the goal to read, “I am going to climb Mount Kilimanjaro before the end of 2004.” But, in my heart, I knew that I was not going to climb Kilimanjaro just for the sake of climbing a mountain. I needed a purpose. After asking around for information on Mount Kilimanjaro, most of my friends assured me that it was too big a goal and that I was out of my mind. By January 2004, I was beginning to despair, when a friend emailed me to tell me that she had met someone who was looking for people to climb Mt. Kilimanjaro to help raise awareness of the AIDS/HIV epidemic in Africa and to also raise funds for AIDS orphans.

I enthusiastically joined the group and



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immediately realized that I needed to get in shape and this required training. So I started working out in the local YMCA. I was amazed at how much fun and health benefits I derived from the training. I lost a total of 20 pounds and felt so much healthier. After Kilimanjaro, I decided to look for another fitness goal, and as the saying goes: when the student is ready, the teacher will appear. Well, my teacher appeared in the form of the Running Room.

At the beginning of June 2005 I was asked to offer massages at a shoe test drive at the Pointe Claire Running Room. I had so much fun watching the runners coming back from their runs...obviously with what I now know is the “runner’s high.” I wanted to feel the same, and have a goal that could push me to do more physically. I spoke to the manager, Debbie, and boy, can that girl sell you a program!

I started training with the running room Pointe Claire in June 2005 in the learn-to-run program. At that point in my life, I had put on so much weight that I hardly recognized myself in the mirror. Growing up, I was not a chubby child, and even in university, I was very slender. When I moved to Canada in the 1990s, like most new immigrants I started packing on the

pounds. Although I had lost 20 pounds getting ready for Kilimanjaro, I still had 40 pounds to go, considering my 5’3” frame.

I was hooked! I started out with the learn-to-run training program. Now, you need to understand, although I come from Kenya, a country that has produced many elite runners, I am nowhere near being an athlete, let alone an elite one. I was never interested in sports as a child growing up in Kenya.

The first two weeks of the learn-to-run training program were brutal. The first two minutes seemed like an eternity. The day the leader in the LTR training program announced that in the next session we were going to run for three minutes without stopping; I was tempted to stay at home! I had never run for three minutes. Could I fake an injury at this early stage! I was severely tempted! But that little voice called conscience would not let me quit. So, I stuck with the program, went on to do two 5K training programs, two 10Ks, two half marathons, two marathons—the first one in Ottawa, and the second one, Albany with a PR 3:45:49 as my Boston qualifier. In April 2008, I ran Boston, and then went on to run Albany again in October 2008. I am gearing up to run Boston again in April 2010.

I could not have done it without the great leadership and encouragement from the staff at the Running Room Pointe-Claire, and especially the help that was provided by Debbie Elvidge, the manager.

It has been, and is, a wonderful journey. Now 60 pounds lighter, I can finally say I know what a runner’s high feels like. I like running!

A meaningful goal is a dream with a deadline! ❖

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