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## Running 101: Taking it one step at a time

Sandra Diamond Fox, Contributing Writer  
Published: 06:15 p.m., Monday, June 28, 2010

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1 of 4

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The Ridgefield Racy Ladies go for a run at Ballard Park in Ridgefield on Wednesday, June 16, 2010. From left, Deb Povinelli, Jacque Lang, Lisa Haden, Noreen Papa, Megan Searfoss, Sue Fleming and Kristen Hoban. They're all from Ridgefield. Photo: Lisa Weir / The News-Times Freelance



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Just don't stop. Just don't stop.

I can run all day. I can run all night.

The faster you run, the faster you're done.

No matter what words you use, all runners need a mantra to help get them through a race, or even through a run, explained [Megan Searfoss](#) of Ridgefield, a 15-year runner

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and four-time Ironman triathlete.

"A mantra repeated over and over during your run will inspire you to work harder or just keep you running," she said.

Searfoss is owner and race director of Run Like a Mother, a three-year-old company that sponsors an annual Mother's Day race in Ridgefield. Run Like a Mother teaches women how to incorporate running into their lifestyle.

Aside from having a running mantra, Searfoss has more advice for first-time runners, one of which is not to be afraid that they can't run.

"We all ran when we were children so we know how to do it," Searfoss said. "We tend to get too overwhelmed by thinking we have to hold our body a certain way when we run.

"It's more important to get out and moving than to worry about how to move," she said.

Searfoss is a mother of three who runs regularly with a group of women who call themselves "The Ridgefield Racy Ladies."

Right before beginning a run, a big mistake many people make is to do static stretching, which is bending down and touching one's toes without first warming up the body, said Eugene Zeitler, chiropractor and owner of Ridgefield/Newtown Performance Chiropractic.

"Static stretching increases injury rate because it neurologically inhibits muscles and decreases their elasticity," he said. "The joints become less stable and

you will lose power."

Instead, Zeitler recommends doing a 3- to 5-minute light jog and dynamic range-of-motion stretches such as rotating the knees from side to side, doing repetitive pelvic tilts, and swinging the legs back and forth while standing in one place.

"These exercises will increase blood flow to the tissues, heat the muscles up, increase power output and improve performance," said Zeitler, who has worked at multiple Ironman triathlons.

According to Searfoss, the worst thing new runners should do is to attempt to run without stopping.

"If you go out and try and run a mile as fast as you can, you will get defeated and set yourself up for failure," Searfoss said.

She explained that the best way to begin a running program is to incorporate walking into the runs. Using a watch with a timer, run for one minute, and walk for three.

Then the following week, increase the running time, while decreasing the walking time.



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Strive to run for 30 minutes, three days a week.

The walk-run training plan was developed by Searfoss's coach, [Eric Hodska](#) of Monroe, an amateur triathlete who has competed in the Hawaii Ironman triathlon eight times.

In regard to proper breathing techniques, Searfoss said comfort is a priority.

"Regardless of whether you're a nose or a mouth breather, you should be able to have a conversation while you are running," she said. "If you can't, it means you're trying too hard."

When running outside, staying hydrated is essential.

"If it's warm out and you will be running for over an hour, make sure to have water or a sports drink with you," she said.

After signing up for a race, find out what drink will be offered on the race course, and then train using that drink.

"Never try anything new on race day since you won't know if it agrees with your body," Searfoss said.

Runners should not forget that running involves the whole body, so strength training should be incorporated into their fitness routine.

"Your joints are only as strong as the muscles around them," she said. Exercises that help running include squats, lunges, crunches and planks.

Searfoss encourages all new runners to set a goal and stick to it.

"You should find a race and enter it. This way, you will have made a commitment to yourself," she said.

Runners shouldn't just aim to get to the finish line, she said.

"Choose a time you want to finish in, and strive to meet it, and then you have a number to try and beat at your next race," she said.

"Too often people say they're happy just to finish a race, but the only way we can grow as humans is to push ourselves."

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