



# MIND OVER MILES

## MANAGING STRESS AND THE LONDON MARATHON

Marathon running is a remarkable feat of physical endurance. But it's just as much a mental challenge. As you prepare for the London Marathon, remember that stress, nerves, pressure, and a rollercoaster of emotions are all perfectly normal. This guide is designed to help you navigate these mental hurdles and empower you to cross that finish line with confidence. Whether you're a runner, a supporter, a volunteer, or simply facing a big challenge in life, these tips can help you manage stress and embrace the journey.

### STRESS AND MARATHON RUNNING

It's important to recognise the signs of stress, so you can address it effectively. Stress can manifest in different ways:

- **Racing thoughts:** An inability to switch off.
- **Difficulty sleeping:** Restlessness and insomnia.
- **Tight muscles:** Tension, aches, and stiffness.
- **Irritability:** Feeling easily agitated.
- **Self-doubt:** Questioning your abilities and preparation.
- **Feeling emotional:** Mood swings and heightened sensitivity.
- **Performance worries:** Anxiety about your race time or completing the marathon.

## The #BeTheChange Approach

Awareness is a great first step, but taking action is what truly creates change. During Stress Awareness Month, we encourage you to by focusing on practical steps you can take to manage stress. Choose one small, practical action and commit to repeating it regularly. Small actions can create a big impact.

### BEFORE THE RACE

In the days and weeks leading up to the marathon, focus on what is within your control: your training, nutrition, sleep, and mental preparation.

- Choose a calming phrase to serve as your mental anchor during the race. Examples include:
  - 'One mile at a time'
  - 'I have done the work'
  - 'Breathe, settle, move'
  - 'I only need to take the next step'

### AT THE START LINE

The start line can be overwhelming. Take a moment for a 3-breath reset:

1. Inhale deeply through your nose, filling your lungs.
2. Hold for a count of three.
3. Exhale slowly through your mouth, releasing tension.

Repeat three times to calm your nerves and center yourself.

## DURING THE RACE

The marathon can feel daunting. Shrink the challenge by focusing on smaller, more manageable goals. Concentrate on:

- The next mile
- The upcoming drink station
- A recognisable landmark
- Your breath
- Your next step

## When It Gets Hard

There will be moments when the race feels incredibly tough. Respond, don't spiral.

- Slow down: Reduce your pace.
- Walk briefly: Allow yourself a short break.
- Refuel: Take an energy gel or drink.
- Breathe: Focus on steady, deep breaths.
- Check posture: Stand tall and relax your shoulders.
- Look for support: Connect with spectators or fellow runners.
- Reconnect with your reason for running: Remember why you started.

## After the Finish

Recovery is an essential part of resilience. Treat your body and mind with care:

- Rest: Get plenty of sleep.
- Eat: Replenish your energy stores with nutritious food.
- Hydrate: Drink plenty of fluids.
- Stretch gently: Ease muscle soreness.
- Speak kindly to yourself: Acknowledge your accomplishment.
- Celebrate effort, not just time: Be proud of your perseverance.
- Thank supporters: Show gratitude to those who cheered you on.

## Your Mind Over Miles Plan

Use the prompts below to create your own personal plan for managing stress and staying mentally strong:

- I feel stressed about: \_\_\_\_\_
- One small action I will take today is: \_\_\_\_\_
- Can I do it? Can I make it work? Can I keep it going?: \_\_\_\_\_
- My race-day anchor phrase is: \_\_\_\_\_
- One person I can connect with is: \_\_\_\_\_

## For Supporters

Your encouragement can make a world of difference!

- Send a message: A text or social media post can boost morale.
- Cheer by name: Personalised support is highly motivating.
- Help them stay calm: Offer reassurance and a listening ear.
- Meet them after the finish: Provide practical assistance and congratulations.
- Celebrate effort: Acknowledge their hard work and determination.

Remember, you don't need to complete the whole race in your mind before you even begin. Just start. Then take the next step.

This resource has outlined practical strategies for managing stress, both for those participating in challenging endurance events like the London Marathon, and for those supporting them. By focusing on actionable steps, positive self-talk, and the power of connection, we can all learn to approach challenges with greater resilience and mental well-being.



We provide a range of services across the UK and internationally. We are always happy to discuss how we can support you.

We look forward to supporting your wellbeing journey.

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