



Why We Run



Rosa Loedel takes the lead in this collaborative article on running, followed closely by François Caya, Basilio Valdehuesa and Alex Ginzburg. But clearly, running for them has little to do with winning....

Rosa Loedel, Animal Health Information Officer, World Animal Health Information and Analysis Department (WAHIAD)

Sports and being outdoors has always played a fun and special role in my life. When I was younger, I loved cross country running, athletics, taekwondo and above all, gymnastics. Gymnastics became my main competitive sport, training 5-7 days a week, spending my evenings and weekends in the sports centre and travelling to competitions at the weekends representing Scotland and Great Britain. But it was so much more than just 'gymnastics' or a 'sport'. It was my community, my friends, my fun, my hard work, my own little family. So much trust, respect, motivation and friendship was built between gymnasts and coaches. Gymnastics taught me to be disciplined, committed, work hard and above all to see what you could achieve when you put your mind and body to it, all whilst being surrounded by encouraging and like-minded teammates! Gymnastics was my life for many years growing up, and I wouldn't change that in a heartbeat. Even through tough moments of countless conditioning sessions, bad days in the gym or high pressure in competitions. Looking back at my days as a gymnast, I can truly attribute a lot of my attitude, discipline, teamwork, strong friendships, enjoyment and love for running to that.

Fast forward, either running chose me or I chose running...but running has now naturally become that 'thing', that 'sport', that 'community', those 'friendships' that form a huge part of my life, and I can't imagine it any other way. To me, running is unique as it can be both personal and collective. On a personal level, running allows me to disconnect, to de-compress, to create, to dream, to experience nature, to feel empowered and resilient, and to feel grateful for every stride.

'Collectively, running brings community, teamwork, shared passions, motivation, and special friendships'.



Whenever I have had to integrate into a new setting, whether that was in Scotland, Colorado Rocky Mountains and now Paris, running has played such a special role. Running has allowed me to explore a new city/area and quickly familiarise myself with it. Running has given me headspace, new goals, objectives and projects. But most importantly, it has created friendships, community and memories.



Roads, trails, or cross country, I run because I love it. I look forward to long runs at weekends with friends and quick miles on a weekday morning before work. I love seeing people find the joy in running. I love talking about running. I love the friends I have made through running. I love that people of all ages, experience, levels, and backgrounds can connect through running.

Running has shown me that anything is possible with the right recipe of passion, enjoyment, hard work, consistency, encouraging and inspiring friends/teammates and determination. We each create our own limits and our dreams – dreams that we can turn into reality.

Entering local races with fellow runners (of all levels) and work teammates was another way to enjoy the running community and get a bit competitive: it quickly becomes both exciting and addictive. Seeing your weekly mileage and interval sessions pay off during a 5km run or a marathon is rewarding!

Since moving to Paris in summer 2022, my only bedroom decoration seems to be race numbers and colourful finisher medals, as well as a good running shoe rotation for all those different surfaces and sessions. So far in 2023 I completed my first season of cross country in France and ran in both the Paris half and full marathons, achieving some new personal records and placing in the top 1.5% of all female runners, which is encouraging to see!



François Caya, Chief of Staff, Directorate General

I have always tried to keep myself physically active and running has been a big part of my life. Back when I was travelling a lot for work, running became the easiest sport to practice. You can run anytime and anywhere – you just need running shoes and light running gear, which are easy to pack in between work suits! Running not only gives me energy but, most importantly, it allows me to disconnect. More recently, I decided to give myself running objectives and challenge myself by participating in races. That is how I ended up running the Paris half-marathon last year and the Ecotrail Paris 30km run this year. I will not divulge my results in this article because, in the end, it is not that important! The most important thing about running is enjoying the journey and giving intention to your steps, like every step in life!



Basilio Valdehuesa, Regional Communications Officer, Regional Representation for Asia & the Pacific

In the past, I always thought that running was purely about losing weight, and secondarily, being fit. It can be a painful and difficult practice to keep up with, especially at the beginning, when 3 to 5 kilometres seem like an eternity. But like so many physically challenging activities, over time and with consistency, the pain fades and benefits come into focus.

I was surprised to discover many benefits I did not know about. Everyone expects to achieve weight loss and resulting physical fitness from regular running. But after a while you realise that these are not the only, nor even the greatest benefits. You also come to love:

- the time away from your phone and digital notifications, as it is difficult to look at those and run at the same time (or at least I don't advise it!).
- an almost spiritual, meditative focus on how you feel, when making the effort to take one step at a time and keep pace, with any work- or life-related dilemmas troubling you at that moment fading away.
- when running outdoors (recommended!), the ability to tour unknown locales, and the constant stimulation of your surroundings, especially when away from home.
- the 'excuse' to take a break from day-to-day life for a positive and important goal.

The COVID-19 pandemic and an unfortunate bout of infection slowed down my enthusiasm for running. However, replacing it with gym sessions (supposedly better for weight loss) only reminded me of how much I miss it. It's time to return to the running trail!

Alex Ginzburg, Receptionist, General Services Unit

I used to run to get away
From the rat race and the fray
To leave behind the ghost of living
That bitter place of cold and grey.

I used to run just to catch up
With the ideas in my brain
To drain all the dramatic static
To see the sun after the rain.

But I do not run anymore
Neither to hide nor to seek
I run to feel the magic moment
When body and soul start to speak.

And on this topic, here is [a fabulously uplifting song](#) by a famous French artist, Ben Mazué.

We sincerely thank Rosa, François, Basilio and Alex for writing this article for *In-house Times*.

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