MY LATE START AT AGE 74

By Ellin Grossman

PART I: GETTING STARTED

I should amend this to read: Running 74-90. It could be any age, the age that you decide to walk or run. First you must decide that you want to get fit, get in shape, and become active. In my case, it was a gradual realization that I needed to take some positive steps for better health and appearance. Don't discount looks. This is a powerful motivator.

I retired from my university teaching job at age 65, spent the next 10 years focused on my family and my young grandchildren, and then at 74 looked at myself—and my life style—with a critical eye. I had done Pilates for many years—so I was flexible and reasonably strong—but I had gained about 15 pounds and was, essentially, inactive. My knees were very swollen (from inflammatory arthritis), my blood pressure and my cholesterol levels were high, and I was inactive. I had never run, never played ball sports, and did not have a clear idea of what to do, not even what I would like to do or could do. Running never crossed my mind. It had never been an option for me, growing up in New York City, attending a public high school. Running? It was never in my consciousness; girls didn't run. Remember that this was before the running and fitness revolutions of the late 1960s and 1970s changed the way we looked at sport—and particularly of girls and women.

By luck or good fortune, I started working out at a local gym with a personal trainer, David Segal. After a year of walking and weights, he invited me to run the length of the gym, a distance of 25 yards. Wow! That was fun. Could I do this again? I was ready for a new challenge. That is how I began to run. It was running as a reward for consistent strength training, regular walking, rest/recovery days and thoughtful, energizing eating. Running can be a casual activity or it can be goal-centered. In my own case, I like having a goal, or rather, goals of the way to fitness, better looks, endurance, and speed. Now I am on the st those extra 15 pounds. My blood pressure plummeted and remained in the low normal range, my cholesterol level also fell to low normal. Most people think that I look much younger than my actual age.

I am on the verge of turning 80. It's scary, worse than Halloween. What will happen? It's a page in my logbook, I like to think, and I expect to run a PR (personal record) in my next 5K race (3.1 miles). This week my coach said I had a breakthrough run—and I'm counting on running faster. Along with running and eating (better and more frequently) I lo

WHENEVER YOU DECIDE TO GET STRONGER, FITTER AND LOOK BETTER.… FIND A COACH!

Inquire at your local gym and talk to fitness instructors to see if you are compatible. If you want to run, be sure that your coach will transition you to running (in addition to a strength and fitness program).

WALK, THEN RUN

Get your doctor's approval before starting a running program.

Be sure that you can comfortably walk before your run. A common objective is to walk 10,000 steps a day as a prelude to running. That's roughly the equivalent of 5 miles, counting all the steps you take in an average day plus whatever walking you add for exercise. Buy a pedometer to count your steps. Choose the least expensive pedometer because you will certainly break it. It will work for a while and then you will either drop it, killing its mechanism or drown it in the bathroom. One trick to add steps to your day is to choose the parking spot farthest—not closest—from the target grocery or other store. I still do that from force of habit. Walk up stairs

Start by running short distances at a slow pace. You may want to try the RUN/WALK method, in which you run for a short distance (lamppost to lamppost, for example) and then run the same distance. You could also run by time, say, run for two minutes and walk for 3 minutes. This increases your heart rate while also allowing for recovery. As you become stronger and increase your fitness, run more and walk less. Running can be a casual activity or it can become goal-centered. In my own case, I enjoy having a goal that I work to meet, even though the progress may be slow. I never appreciated the challenge of running faster by 60 seconds over 3.1 miles. I thought that this would be easy to do. Not so!

MY 5-YEAR PROGRESS REPORT

For me, and to my surprise, running proved to be a good fit. It took alI my courage to race in a crowded field of almost all younger runners. I persisted, and have completed 55 races in the past 5 years, almost all 5K (3.1 miles) distance. I frequently win or place in my age category (sometimes a challenge to do when the highest age group is 60 years and over). I have a wall full of ribbons, trophies, plaques and cups, and I love every one of them, as a record of what I have accomplished. I learned what All-American means and qualified through USA Track & Field and National Masters News, in long distance running in 2011, 2012 and 2013. I also earned the Phidippides Award for Outstanding Performance and Endurance in Long Distance Award (gold in 2011, silver in 2012—2013 is not over). If you are interested in reading about older runners (in general over 40 years), subscribe to National Masters News.

READ FOR INSPIRATION AND KNOWLEDGE

Read about running in running magazines and books for fun, inspiration, knowledge and history (see Reading About Running)Keep a record of your walks, runs and exercises to chart your progress. There are a number of print or online logbooks that help you organize and track your progress. Over time you can see how temperature, humidity, sleep, nutrition and hydration affect your runs. The best running gift I received from my coach was a running journal. Once you begin, you will want to continue to track your running and strength. This is in effect a training book—a dated record of my running activities and how I felt during that training (or racing) run.

My coach gave me my first running log (Run Log: Diary and Guide for the Runner, by Tim Houts – McGraw Hill). I had no idea at the time what it was all about; now I appreciate the value. You do not need to share your training book with anyone; feel free to be brutally honest. The training log is for YOU and for your improvement!

Many "older" runners ran in high school, college or beyond. They have the advantage of "muscle memory" which is a big help, and cannot be duplicated. On the other hand, they may also have the disadvantage of past injuries that re-emerge as sore knees, ankles or shins, and of less than ideal form. I had never run on a track until a few years ago; now it's my absolutely favorite place to train. I love the fact that it is a known distance and I can compare my times. Sometimes I regret that I don't have those early track memories that many runners have. At the same time, I appreciate how vivid these recent running events are to me.

RUNNING AS AN OLDER RUNNER

If you start as an older runner, you will probably run with younger runners. They may be 20 or 30 years younger. Embrace the idea, it's much more fun as long as you understand and accept the fact that they have an age advantage (which could be modified by age-grading). The fact of the matter is that men run faster than women, and younger runners are faster than older runners, with some notable exceptions. Work on the principle that I hear from my coach, to be the very best that you can be.

Before you start a running program, find a good coach who can guide you, teach you proper running form, and help you with a strength program as well as your running. He or she can also guide you in good eating. You will be very happy that you have an experiences, unbiased coach watching you progress without injury. Don't try a do-it-yourself running program. Virtually all elite, professional runners, who know a great deal more than beginners, have coaches; if they need coaching, certainly you do.

PART 2: RUNNING FUNDAMENTALS FOR RUNNERS OF ALL LEVELS

CONSIDER YOUR WEIGHT AND BODY FAT

This is a good time to monitor and adjust your weight. Running alone does not automatically lead to weight loss, which is what most of us desire. A rough estimate is that you burn 100 calories for each mile run, which seems unfair (too little) to anyone running to lose weight. If weight loss is a goal, you will need to monitor what you eat. Try an online APP such as LoseIt, which I follow, to chart calories, nutrients, percentages of protein, carbs and fat, as well as calories expended in exercise. This is an easy and efficient way to track your food intake and calories expended for the day, week or over a longer time period. As you exercise, you will tend to gain muscle and lose fat (muscle weighs more than fat so you may see a slight initial weight gain).

HYDRATION

This is a challenge but necessary. Lots of water! Take your weight in pounds, divide in half to arrive at your approximate water goal in ounces for the day. It's a high number but absolutely necessary, particularly on hot humid days. Don't try to tank up on water the day before a race, instead start 3 or 4 days earlier to hydrate properly. On days when you sweat a lot, and expend high energy, consider replacing some of the lost water and electrolytes with a sports drink.

(Note: you will find that if you do not hydrate properly you will look more wrinkly than usual. In addition to keeping your running body well primed, water keeps your skin smoother. Furthermore, if you run hard when dehydrated, you may experience muscle cramps in your calves or legs after running. This is a very painful learning experience)

ON EATING (SEE PART 3 FOR A MEAL PLAN)

I eat three meals a day plus a mid-morning snack, and afternoon snack, and an after dinner snack! There may be an additional recovery snack after a run of 45 minutes – 1 hour. Following a formula, we calculated my maintenance calories (approximately 115 pounds and 1500 calories). I follow an amazing meal plan written by my coach — see PART III MEAL PLANS. It's easy to follow, flexible, satisfying and energizing. Lots of interesting and tasty foods and combinations included. DO NOT EAT A BIG MEAL the night before racing. Instead, ease up on eating for at least a day or two prior to racing so that your digestive tract is not too full! It is a necessary challenge to eat enough to keep energized but not too full, and hydrate enough – but not too much.

REST DAYS ARE ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL. At first I resisted the idea of rest days (why give up a run that made me feel good?). Eventually I accepted the idea that I needed rest days, and could

enjoy them, usually after 2 or 3 days of challenging running. You will need rest days to stay energized and uninjured. This equates to 1-2 rest days per week. I have not had any problems or injuries in 5 years of running.

PHYSICIAN'S OK

Visit your doctor before you begin walking or running for an official approval. Your doctor will check your heart, blood pressure, blood count, weight, knees, legs, feet and the rest of you. Don't skip this step.

WEIGHT TRAINING AND STRETCHING

Running involves your whole body, arms and shoulders, your core muscles plus legs, hips, knees, ankles and feet. It seems counter-intuitive when you are told to strengthen your arms in order to run fast—but it's true! Your arms propel you forward and increase your leg turnover. If you haven't used weights and machines to increase your strength, resolve to do so—with proper instruction. In my opinion, this is not a do-it-yourself casual activity. It's important to do this correctly and not get hurt in the process—your coach will guide you.

RUN SAFELY

I always wear an identification bracelet when I run alone (see ROAD ID). This gives my name, city, address, phone number, and two emergency contacts. If you have particular medical problems, order your ID tag with medical information.

I do not run with music although many runners do. I want to be able to hear approaching runners, bicycles, baby strollers, hostile dogs, cars, as well as stalkers or potential pickpockets. Even a "safe" neighborhood is not always safe.

RUNNING SHOES

You need good shoes that fit! You may have to try numerous brands and models to solve this fundamental requirement! Be sure to find the best specialty running store in your neighborhood and get properly fitted. There are many choices of shoe brands around, and each model is updated frequently. A good running store will let you try several shoes for comparison, and go for a short run in the store or on the street. They usually have a generous return policy. It's impossible to judge the fit from the way the shoes look. Be open to the gorgeous current color combinations that are available but concentrate on fit , comfort and function.

SPEED WORK ON THE TRACK (ADVANCED)

As you advance in your running experience, and you are lucky enough to run on a track, you may need track shoes, those lightweight flat shoes with impressive spikes on the bottom. Try them on and you become Wonder Woman! You can fly, no matter your actual age!

RUNNING CLOTHES

I must confess that I buy more running clothes than regular clothes these days. But don't forget that you must occasionally dress for activities other than running. For running: think shorts, tights, socks, sports bras, shirts, jackets—there's an enormous selection out there, light weight technical fabrics that dry fast, and keep you dry, cool or warm, depending on the season and the temperature. The array of bright or dark color schemes with zingy color combinations is motivating! Take the time to try them out! Men, also: don't forget that the new fabrics keep you cool in summer and warm in winter. You can also look snappy. Treat yourself to new running shoes or an outfit as you progress! I believe that you ran faster if you are comfortable and feel and look your best. On cold runs, add gloves and a cap to retain body warmth.

Take a look at Lululemon clothes, a relatively new Canadian based company, offering stylish, comfortable running clothes, as well as standbys like Nike, Adidas, etc. Avoid heavy cotton shirts and baggy shorts that weigh you down and look dated.

RACING

After you are comfortable running, you may benefit from racing. I had to gather my courage to race with hundreds, even thousands of runners, virtually all years or decades younger than me. I resolved to run against my own prior performance or against master's age standards.

Most communities today offer a variety of races or fun runs. For me, the ideal distance has been the 5K (3.1 miles). It's long enough to be a challenge, require fitness and endurance, but short enough to finish. I now have in mind the Mile race, a classic but often neglected distance.

I found that just getting to the start line is a challenge in itself. You must be organized, look for an appropriate race, find the location, scout the race course, sign up (often you can register online in advance), pay the entrance fee (usually $20 to $30) and pick up your race packet on the designated day at the listed place (typically at a local running store). Start a notebook and stay organized. The packet contains parking directions, often the race route, a race number with safety pins to attach it to your shirt, and an electronic timing chip, generally attached to the reverse side of your race number. If you are being timed, the chip will register the exact time that you cross the start line and the finish line, and will calculate your chip time (minutes, seconds, and fractions of seconds that you ran between the start and finish lines). If it is a large race with hundreds or even thousands of

runners, there is often a significant difference between the times that different runners cross the start line.

You will become sensitized to the difference in minutes and seconds if you are trying for a PR (personal record) or comparing yourself with other runners in your age group. You may be the only runner over 60, or 65, or 70. Do not let this age barrier discourage you. Run your best!

WARM UP AND COOL DOWN

You would not think that this is a controversial subject but it is! Passions run high between the Warm Up followers and the faction that believes in minimal or no warm up before and after running. I follow my coach's substantial warm up routine. I know from experience that it takes me considerably more time to warm up than runners 15 or 20 years younger. Without warming up, I do not have enough air and lungpower to keep me running fast. Before hard running, I jog ½ mile and follow a stretching routine, run with high knees and then strides (short distances at a good speed). The cool down routine incorporates ¼ mile jog minimum. I believe warm ups and cool downs have kept me running injury free and it's like brushing your teeth in the morning—just do it, don't think.

After you run, you should shower, change, and have a snack such as chocolate milk or a banana. If you are at a race, eat up and stay around for the awards ceremony. A cold drink, a banana, and a bagel with cream cheese taste their best after racing. If you win an award, enjoy your coffee mug or ribbon, and start your collection. This really is fun.

For information on Masters Athletics, contact National Masters News

www.nationalmastersnews.com

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You can find the standards for races of different lengths for men and women, in 5-year brackets from age 40 and up (in certain events, age 30 and up). You can then determine your relative ranking.

For example, the USATF Road Running Standard of Excellence for Women Age 75-79 is 38:38. At 80 the Standard becomes 43:05—a huge difference. Also, the Gold Phidippides Award for 70-79 requires 16 points (or 16 5K races). At 80+ years, only 8 points are required (e.g. 8 5K races—exactly half the number required below 80).

I have finished approximately 53 5K races with a PR of 37:46.32. I am trying for 37:45 or better this year!

To keep an online accurate record of your races, log on to

http://athlinks.com

then follow the prompts.

For identification tags: www.RoadID.com

SAMPLE RUNNING WORKOUTS

Some of the running workouts I often complete are: run 3 miles (approx.); run 4 miles; run the distance alternating fast running with jog segments etc. I follow my coach's overall schedule. On my own, I would not know how to balance long, short, intense, easy, hill, track, speed and other factors, plus modifying them for heat, humidity, cold, rain, wind and other conditions in a rational and productive way. I could come up with some sort of scheme but I am not objective enough or experienced enough to do it so that it would achieve the results I want. I probably would not even know exactly what results I should attempt.

What am I trying to achieve? Should I aim to speed up by seconds or minutes? What value should I assign to 1 second or to10 seconds? Virtually none, and yet I am looking for an improvement of 1 second right now, to beat my current best time for the 5K. (This is not to deny that, in my heart, I am looking to run 1 minute and not 1 second faster). How to achieve that? Here's where I need an unbiased coach.

BREAK-THROUGH DAYS!

You never know when this will happen. This week at a track workout I felt stronger and faster, without any particular reason. I just felt it. And yet…my coach also saw something…he said I was running, NOT PLODDING (the absolute worst criticism). Maybe I am getting there, wherever there is and how fast…

Running is a living process and I'm still living, still running.

I do my best to RUN, not plod.

PART 3: MEAL PLANS

by David Segal

Here are ideas for meals, based on eating Breakfast, Mid- morning snack, Lunch, Afternoon snack, Dinner and Snack. Eating this way, your exercise and running will be fueled – and you will never become ravenously hungry. The trick is to eat the appropriate amount of food– spaced throughout your day. Make 1 selection from each group, such as breakfast—NOT all the selections. There is a separate listing of Eating Suggestions after Strenuous Exercise such as Spinning or 45-60 Minute Run. Eating this way, you will find that you are never hungry, that you can reach—and maintain—your goal weight, and that you are properly fueled for your runs.

Along with the Meal Plan, you should calculate the number of calories you need simply to live (see the following formula). You need a certain amount of calories to live and to maintain your body weight. Strenuous exercise demands additional calories. You will certainly lose weight with running; however, weight loss will be greater if you appreciate that 80% of weight loss takes place in the preparation and selection of the foods that you eat!

You should record calories consumed daily using an APP such as LOSE IT, which not only counts your calories and records your exercise expenditures, but also provides a breakdown of your daily percentages of CARBOHYDRATES, FATS and PROTEINS, as well as your goal weight and progress toward that goal.

After a few weeks of using LOSE IT, you will have your favorite exercises in your profile, along with your preferred foods and meals, and keeping track will be quite simple. You will be able to compare your food intake, exercise calories consumed, and weight from week to week. In this way you can track your progress over weeks and months.

How to Calculate Your Daily Calorie Requirements and Consumption

- How many calories a day do I need to consume to maintain my weight?
- If I exercise how does that affect that number?
- If I want to lose weight how should I adjust the daily caloric intake?
- Basic premise: to maintain weight, calories in should equal calories consumed.
- To gain weight I should eat more than my Active Metabolic Rate (AMR) —- what's that? See below
- To lose weight I should somehow use more calories than my AMR — by running, walking, working out with my nice trainer at the gym or elsewhere!

To do the necessary calculations you will need:

- Your weight in pounds
- Your age
- Height in inches
- Your sex

First of all we need to calculate your BMR (Basal Metabolic Rate); these are the calories your body burns for you just to stay alive. Here's the formula for females:

- BMR = 655 + (4.3 x Weight) + (4.7 x 78)?

Next we need to factor in your lifestyle by calculating your AM (Activity Modifier). If you exercise pretty much 4-5 days a week your AM is 1.40 (for females).

Don't get too excited about this number; just accept it as we will be using it in our final formula.

Finally we will calculate your AMR (Active Metabolic Rate).

Your AMR represents the calories you need to consume daily to maintain your current weight. Don't forget in my third sentence above I indicate that you can alter this total calorie consumption to either lose weight or gain weight by eating less and exercising more, or eating more and exercising less.

- AMR = total (BMR) X (AM)

  = calories/day

Note that this number does not reflect extraordinary exercise such as running 3 miles, walking 10,000 steps (approximately 2.5 miles), or riding the elliptical trainer for 45 minutes.

A very rough rule of thumb is that you will use approximately 95 – 130 calories per mile or for every 15 minutes on the elliptical if your weight is between 110lb and 140lb.

If you do any of these exercises you should ADD their caloric value to your daily calorie total. Your resulting number will tell you how many calories you still need to eat to meet your daily goal for either weight loss or weight gain.

These calculations are NOT as difficult as they appear IF you use the calculator on you iPhone or smartphone to help with the arithmetic. Please take the time to go through the 18.

AFTER you have gone through the calculations, you can do a rough check by using an online calorie calculator such as the following:

www.mayoclinic.com

Calorie Calculator

There are many tools on the internet that explain these concepts. Do a Google search. Download the free application called Lose It.

After you initially set up the app you can populate the program with your specific daily food consumption and exercise regimen. It can become your conscience and daily eating record.

BREAKFAST — Select ONE

- Irish Oatmeal (such as McCann's instant Irish oatmeal made with whole grain oats; NO sugar): ½ cup cooked oatmeal with banana, strawberries, blueberries
- Drink: hot tea, low fat chocolate milk, small fresh squeezed Orange juice
- ½ cup of low fat cottage cheese or 0% or low fat yogurt with same fruit as above and choice of drink
- 2 boiled eggs, English muffin or whole grain bread (cut into toast fingers)

- 4-6 oz. vegetable juice, ¾ cup of egg substitute, with spinach, onions and 1 oz. reduced fat cheese such as Laughing Cow Light flavor French Onion or Garlic & Herb (35 calories per wedge)

MID MORNING SNACK—SELECT ONE

- 1 part-skim mozzarella cheese stick
- 2 slices of turkey breast wrapped in a lettuce leaf with non-fat mayo, strips of red bell pepper
- 1 celery stick with a wedge of Laughing Cow cheese + one whole grain cracker
- ½ grapefruit and ½ cup of 2% low fat cottage cheese

LUNCH—SELECT ONE

- One slice whole wheat bread or English muffin,3 oz. turkey breast, veggies to nibble—tomato, celery, carrots, lettuce
- 4 oz. cooked shrimp with a mountain of salad greens and veggies. 1 TBSP low fat dressing. A 100- calorie cup of low fat yogurt
- Chef's salad with 1 oz. ham, turkey, low fat cheese on mixed greens
- 4 ozs. grilled 96% fat free hamburger or 4 ozs of tuna with a large tossed salad and mixed veggies + low fat salad dressing
- 4 ozs. chopped or sliced chicken on salad greens with low fat dressing. Choice of fresh fruit

AFTERNOON SNACK—SELECT ONE

- ½ cup low fat cottage cheese with chopped tomatoes and cucumbers
- 3 oz. Hummus (store bought) to dip with mixed veggies
- Up to 10 cherry tomatoes or 10 slices of cucumber with ½ cup low fat cottage cheese
- 2 slices of turkey breast (see morning snack)

DINNER – SELECT ONE

- Choice of 4 ozs. steak (trim the fat), chicken, or 4 ozs tilapia, salmon, tuna or other white fish with
  Steamed broccoli, 3 ozs. Yams (sweet potatoes) OR brown rice OR mashed cooked cauliflower (great substitute for potatoes or rice), grilled tomato
- Salad with any of the above dinner entrees plus choice of veggies

SNACK/DESSERT—SELECT ONE

- ½ cup part-skim Ricotta cheese, ¼ tsp vanilla extract or coffee flavoring
- 100 calorie non fat dessert
- ½ cup low fat vanilla or chocolate pudding
- 5 dates
- 2 ozs. walnuts

OTHER CHOICES

You can also put together meals with almost any amount of the following CARBS:
Apples, oranges, pears, peaches, berries, bananas, pineapple.
These should be fresh fruit NOT canned because of the added sugar
Ok veggies are any of those mentioned above plus eggplant
Other good carbs in moderation include Cereals (sugar free), pasta, beans, and energy bars
Protein sources include anything mentioned earlier plus peanut butter (in moderation), seeds, protein bars, low fat chocolate milk

Please note that these are just a few random ideas to help you in your meal planning

EATING SUGGESTIONS AFTER STRENUOUS EXERCISE

(Such as spinning or 45-60 min run)

Goal is to eat high glycemic foods that digest quickly—ideally within 35-40 minutes after exercise

Amount of carbs to fat is 1 – 1 ½ grams per kilo. For an approximate idea take weight in pounds and divide by 2.2 and multiply resulting number by 1 – 1.5. Add some protein, as suggested in following food ideas:

SELECT ONE

- Non-fat Greek yogurt with fruit
- Banana with 1 TBS of almond or nut butter
- 8 ozs. low fat chocolate milk
- whole wheat sandwich with (canned) tuna in water
- whole wheat English muffin with sliced turkey and hummus
- Protein shake (22 grams) with a banana: include 8 ozs. of water with protein

THANKS TO….

My coach, David Segal, a sprinter and Olympic bronze medalist, who competed for Great Britain in the 1960s. Fortunately for me, he then came to the US and ran for Furman University, before embarking on a business career. After he retired, he became a personal trainer at The Next Level Fitness in Houston. That is how I met him, and became a runner.

My husband, Robert G. Grossman, MD, who drives me to all my races. He is also my race photographer.

READ ABOUT RUNNING

FICTION

- The Other Kingdom by Victor Price Written 1962; c 1964 Breakaway Books, New York City, 1996
- Once A Runner: a novel by John L. Parker, Jr. Scribner c 1978, 1990
- Again to Carthage by John L. Parker, Jr. Scribner, copyright 2007
- The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner By Alan Sillitoe Vintage Books 2010 c 1959
- The Runner's Literary Companion: Great Stories and Poems about Running Edited by Garth
- Battista, A Penguin Book
- The Quotable Runner: Great Moments of Wisdom, Inspiration, and Humor Edited by Mark Will-Weber Breakaway Books Revised 2001

NON-FICTION

- Bowerman and The Men of Oregon: The Story of Oregon's Legendary Coach and Nike's Co
- Founder By Kenny Moore c c 2006
- The Four-Minute Mile by Roger Bannister c 1955 50th Anniversary Edition, Lyons Press
- The Principles of Running: Practical Lessons from My First 100,000 Miles By Amby Burfoot
- Rodale, St. Martin's Press, 1999
- Why We Run: A Natural History by Bernd Heinrich Ecco Paperbook , 2002

MAGAZINES

- Runner's World
- Women's Running
- Running Times