

Motivate Me?

By Matt Russ

CTS Coach; USATF Level I Certified Coach

Motivation is something athletes are always seeking, but can be elusive to obtain. Motivation can put a lesser skilled athlete on the podium standing over his more gifted and talented peers. It is the life blood of training. Simply put motivation is how much an individual wants to achieve a goal, but sources of motivation can be as varied as athletes.

It is important to ask yourself why you are training. Is it to get physically fit, for fun, a challenge, social interaction, to build confidence, to learn a skill, or to compete and win? You may train for a combination of these reasons or for a completely different reason. What you do not want is to find yourself wondering why you are working toward a goal. Remind yourself why you train and visualize the outcome and rewards you will receive.

I often hear "I am waiting to get motivated." This implies that motivation will somehow come to a person like a divine wind. True motivation must come from within you. This is one of the reasons children who are pushed too hard by the imposed ambitions of overzealous parents often lose interest in a sport. The child has lost the internal motivation to participate (fun) and generally does not stay involved long term. People are motivated by accomplishment and the attainment of goals. Think of how motivated you are after you complete a race you have been training for. Motivation becomes hardest when your goal seems very distant. This is when you have to really keep your long-term focus and regularly remind yourself of the end reward.

One external motivating influence, however, is inspiration. We have all been inspired by someone in our lives. Lance Armstrong has inspired many to take up the sport of cycling. You may have participated in an MS 150 event because of a friend's battle with Multiple Sclerosis. Inspiration is an emotion that can cause us to aspire to greater levels of motivation. It reinforces our own personal reasons to work toward our goals.

Motivation can be fleeting. You may find the goal you are working toward is no longer enough of a reason to keep you training hard. This is why it is important to set reasonable and attainable goals that match our individual purpose to train and compete. Fatigue, stress, emotional issues, overtraining, time constraints, and injuries can all reduce our motivational levels. Often taking a day or two off to rest and refocus will help restore your training ambition. Training should add to the quality of your life, not hinder it. It is important to balance all aspects of your lifestyle and adjust your training level accordingly.

A positive mental outlook supports and enhances motivation. Avoid negative self talk; "I will never be a climber", and focus on the positive; "I am becoming a more powerful cyclist each month." Surround yourself and train with positive-minded people

who encourage and support you. Accept responsibility for yourself, and learn from your failures as well as your successes. Blaming others will get you no where.

Motivation can be complex, but if you remember why you train, look for your sources of inspiration, and keep a positive mental outlook the rest should fall into line. Realize that motivation comes from within, and from accomplishment. It is also a building process. Each goal you attain builds self esteem and confidence, giving you more motivation to accomplish your next goal.