

She's got the beat, for the Tufts 10k

By Esther Baird

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BEVERLY, MASS. -

If you are reading this column in the newspaper, then the date is Oct. 9. Four days from now I'll be running 6.2 miles in the Tufts Health Plan 10k. Or not. If you are reading this column online and that date has come and gone then at least we will know if I made it or if I perished somewhere down there in the Back Bay.

As I type this I'm fully aware that I've not run 6.2 miles in, oh, about, let's see, call it 10 years. Three miles I can do. Three miles is a solid, healthy run that fits nicely into the allotted 30 minutes I have to workout before someone, somewhere, needs a Mommy or a Cook or a Chauffeur. But 6.2 miles is, well, a lot more running.

So, I haven't quite worked out how I will run the remaining 3.2 miles, but I have two motivational strategies currently in play. The first is a free membership to my favorite gym Below Beverly. Haven't heard of it? That might be because Below Beverly is located in my basement. It has great childcare: I, the mother, am still bodily in the house, free snacks and drinks — also known as our groceries — and an ambience that is highly motivational — it's a dark, damp, cellar that inspires an efficient workout in order to make a fast exit.

Below Beverly has a 50-plus-year-old aerodyne bike, some free weights with a bench, and my newest pride and joy: A treadmill. Not that Below Beverly sprung for a treadmill — they aren't that sort of gym, the sort that spends money. Actually the treadmill came via an appliance swap with our neighbors. We traded our extra dishwasher for their unused treadmill. It was the perfect swap since our dishwasher was the exact size that our neighbors needed and their treadmill was, well, huge and pretty much the wrong right size for us.

No biggie. I rationalized away the size problem — Below Beverly can't afford to be picky. My husband picked nevertheless. "Our basement isn't high enough. You won't be able to run without bumping your head."

I saw his point. Our basement does have a low ceiling covered in either ancient insulation or wires and nails from the floor above. But I measured and concluded, after numerous tests involving running in place and even skipping a bit, that I'd clear the ceiling by about two inches.

"Which is plenty of room — it's not like I care if my ponytail brushes up against the insulation — I do shower after I workout."

I even thought that if we positioned the treadmill so that it lined up between two rafters, my 6-foot-5-inch husband could use it — as long as he didn't skip.

The swap was great. My neighbors had clean dishes, and Below Beverly had a treadmill. The treadmill fit perfectly. For me. My husband refused to even consider running with his head between two exposed rafters — dodging the innards of our house was more of a workout than he was looking for. But I'm OK with the occasional swish of insulation in my hair and have been working out at Below Beverly ever since, at least in 30-minute, three mile, increments.

My second motivational strategy is Podrunner. Podrunner is adrenaline set to music. It's a free podcast meant for runners and is the equivalent of someone yelling in your ear "Go, Run, Go, Run, GO, GO, GO!" The idea is that by running to a consistent beat you will be so enthused by the music, so wrapped up in your own rhythmic world, that you will look at your watch and say, "Well look at that! I just ran 6.2 miles — who knew!?"

I suspect running purists might eschew Podrunner. Perhaps even our own senior editor here at the Beverly Citizen who has told me that running in horrendous weather is the only way to appreciate running in lovely weather. How very Zen. But I require a bit more to get me moving and Podrunner does the trick.

So that's it. Those are my two strategies to help me come Columbus Day. You may have noticed that neither has actually inspired me to run a full 6.2 miles. And I don't suppose either of them will magically whisk me through the air to the finish line. But what's three extra miles among friends, among readers?

Yeah, I don't know either — guess we'll find out in four days.

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Late editor's note: She made it!