



# Coach-Athlete Q&A

A look at some coach-replies to common questions by topic.

**Q:** After running the Raleigh Marathon, I sent you some post-race thoughts, one of which involved nervousness before the race. He said you've done a lot of reading on this subject and that you might have some advice.

I'm pretty sure it was nerves, but maybe I don't understand all the mental aspects involved here. I remember being worried about having the dreadful kind of race I had in San Diego. My breathing seemed labored for the first few miles (as in San Diego), which made me worry even more, which probably kept my breathing labored, etc. .... "vicious circle".

BW

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**A:** The pre-race anxiety is mostly likely the cause of negative thinking about the **outcome**. If you were associating the experience in San Diego, you were most likely re-living some of the negative thoughts associated with that race. Because of those emotions, the physiological effect could have been elevated heart rate, dry mouth, increase respiration, etc.

**This is the toughest part to get athletes to recognize. TRAIN, TRAIN, TRAIN is what most think, but the psychological aspects of competing can play an important part of performance as well. Most people get used to the "pre-race" nerves through experience, and the "been there done it" approach.**

Some folks use the temporary "reality distraction" method (i.e.. singing, listening to music, talking to friends, etc..) or even the ritualistic approach (same process every time).

In each of the cases, what your doing is trying to minimize the effects of negative thoughts by directing your focus on other things. What works for one person may cause negative thoughts for another.

The key is to practice the "positive thoughts" during training and when it's time to race it will be more natural. It's ok to have some negative thoughts prior or during an event. But to quickly recognize the negative talk and replace it with a practiced positive image is the real skill.

Example:

Neg thought: "I don't feel good, I am going to have a bad race just like San Diego"

Pos. thought: "San Diego wasn't my best race, but I have done the right work to be prepared for today". "This is just like training, I am ready, I can do it!!"

Remember to practice these positive thoughts every time you train to make it second nature.