

Dealing with pre-race nerves

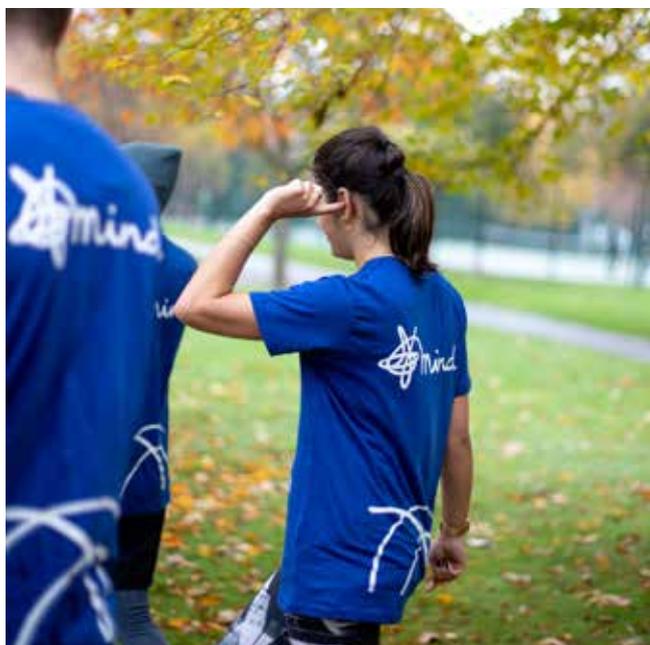


Mind's brilliant personal trainer, Kev Betts, takes you through how to manage those pre-race jitters so you can feel calm and ready for event day!

Pre-race nerves are completely normal and almost everyone experiences them at some point. How can the feelings of dread, anxiety and stress be minimised? The following top tips should help you to, as the famous poster says, 'Keep Calm and Carry On'.

Give yourself as little to worry about as possible

Have all of your kit packed and ready to go the night before. If your alarm fails to go off, you know you can run down the stairs, grab your bag and go! If all's going well, you've got time to relax, breathe deep and visualise.



Have a race plan and focus on what you can control

The weather is beyond your control, so don't worry about that. What you can do is make a plan and stick to it! Don't fly out of the blocks and get swept away with the occasion – your training has prepared you well and you should have an idea of your 'race pace'.

Make yourself familiar with the course in the week before the race

Where can you expect any supporters to be stood, if applicable?

If you are familiar with the course (including any hills!), you will have things to look forward to en route. If you can, try to run a part of it, too.

If it's on public roads, you could drive a part of it. If you know what the course looks like, you will be familiar with your surroundings.





Visualise your race - pre-race preparation isn't just physical

Sit down in the run up to the event and imagine the good, the bad and the ugly of the event. Imagine how it might feel at certain points in the race and arm yourself with methods to banish the demons.

If you know what might happen, you are half-way to ensuring you're strong enough to carry on whatever is thrown at you. Discomfort and self-doubt are part and parcel of running; being able to overcome them through mental rehearsal and preparation will push you through the barriers towards a strong finish and the joy of the finish line.

Don't do anything new on the day

If you train like you plan to run, there should be no surprises before or during the race and you'll be familiar with all aspects of the day. Eat what you always eat, drink what you always drink and wear what you always wear.

By all means, sip from a bottle of water or energy drink, but don't chug the lot – the likelihood is that it'll cause you to need a pit stop during the race! Your dry mouth isn't due to dehydration or thirst; it's due to anxiety and the adrenaline your body is preparing for when the starting gun goes 'bang'. When you're in familiar surroundings with very few 'new' things going on, you will be much more comfortable.

Take some time out

Your emotions can quite easily take charge of your mind, so you need to take some time out and breathe deep. Collect your thoughts and emotions somewhere quiet.

Have one final visualisation session and just relax – you are about to come to the end of a very long journey! Remind yourself that you've worked hard to be here and your body and mind are ready.

Have some emotional triggers ready and remind yourself why you're running. The run you're about to do will probably push you to the limit and you might want to stop, slow down or give in.

When your mind starts to challenge your desire to continue, have something powerful at the back of your mind to remind you why you're running and why you shouldn't give in.

Remind yourself that the race is your procession

It's your reward for all that training; for heading out of the door come rain or shine, light or dark. The hard work is undertaken during training, the race is the celebration! When you cross that finish line, you've achieved something incredible and you've earned every single bit of it.

All you need to do is cover the distance between the start and the finish line – go out there, run hard and enjoy it. You've done something incredible!

