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Becs Gentry: Welcome to Set the Pace, the official podcast of New York Road Runners, presented by Peloton. I'm your host and Peloton instructor, Becs Gentry. This is a special day for me because today marks my one-year anniversary as co-host of Set the Pace, partnering, of course, with the wonderful CEO of New York Road Runners, Rob Simmelkjaer, who as luck would have it can't actually be here to celebrate with me today, but I am told by our wonderful team that we apparently have a recorded message for him. So Lou, let's play that.

00:01:01

Rob Simmelkjaer: Hey, Becs, I'm sorry I can't be there this week for your anniversary show. I cannot believe it has been a year since you joined us on Set the Pace, and it has been so awesome having you as my co-host. I think about all the fun we've had together from your amazing connection to all of our runners and the great interviews we've done. So much fun talking about both of our running adventures, especially you and your unbelievably inspiring journey in the Great World Race, which I think was one of the coolest things we've really had to talk about on Set the Pace. And then, of course, there's the advice you've given me on my running and how valuable that was. I still remember how helpful your advice to me in Tokyo was in getting through that race. So bottom line is people love you, our listeners love you.

All of your students at Peloton love you. They all want to meet you. They all want to talk to you. They all love listening to you on Set the Pace because you've made such a positive impact in so many of their lives. And of course, most importantly, we love hearing all of the stories from home and about Tallulah and all the excitement with Austin and him running as well and his London adventure, and Berlin coming up later too. So the whole family is part of the podcast, and we absolutely love that. So happy anniversary. It's great to have you. I feel like I'm talking to my wife right now. Happy anniversary, honey. Just kidding. Happy anniversary on Set the Pace. It's been great having you and we will do many, many more shows together.

00:02:42

Becs Gentry: Oh, my goodness, not me crying, not me crying over that. I cannot believe it has been one year of doing this incredible podcast, and it has been, as Rob said, just wonderful with the incredible guests that we've had since I've been co-host with Rob. It's eye-opening, heart-opening in all the most wonderful ways, and I can't wait to continue to bring this brilliant podcast to you all and enjoy Miles with you. Talking of Miles, what a weekend we have just had. I'm sure a lot of you, if not all of you, tuned in on Monday to watch the 129th Boston Marathon take place. There were records broken, there were battles to be had, there were hills to be eaten up, and boy did every single runner do it in style this year. It was a beautiful day up in Boston. The sun was shining, the wind was hardly blowing.

And we had one of our previous guests, Sharon Lokedi, take the crown on the women's professional field. And we had John Korir, whose brother Wesley also in the past has won Boston Marathon. So two brothers, isn't that incredible, have both won the Boston Marathon. So congratulations to those two and to the all of the incredible runners who took part in Boston Marathon this year. You are all unicorns. But this weekend, let's talk about what's up ahead. This weekend here in beautiful New York City, we have the Maybelline Women's Half. Maybelline New York is proud to be the official title partner of the newly renamed Maybelline Women's Half, taking place on April 27th in Central Park. In partnership with New York Road Runners, this sold-out race brings together 5,000 women for 13.1 miles of empowerment, strength, and community, and represents Maybelline's continued commitment to supporting women and mental health through movement connection and their global Brave Together initiative, which provides long-term support for those facing anxiety and depression.

This year, Maybelline is once again partnering with NAMI, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, to raise awareness and funds during this powerful event. Now, running? No problem. Come out, cheer loud and stop by the race day festival at the Nuremberg Bandshell for entertainment, activities, and free Maybelline samples and giveaways. That to me sounds like exactly where I would want to be spending my Sunday if I was here in the city. So to all of the incredible women who are going to be towing the line in Central Park this weekend, this is one of my favorite races of the year. I'm actually upset that I'm not going to be here because I will be cheering Austin on in London for the London Marathon. So I want you all to channel love, community and passion for rising up together as one and supporting our friends and those in our community who are suffering with anxiety or depression right now.

So come together, run those miles and shine bright, May is Mental Health Awareness Month. So in preparation for that, and also, of course, this weekend's Maybelline Women's Half my lovely friend and Peloton instructor, Kirra Michel, will be here today to chat to us about her running journey and also lead us through a meditation specifically for all of our runners out there. Also, later in the show, New York Roadrunner member Andrew Kyle is going to share how he is celebrating his 40th birthday year. And finally, today, we have a special Med Minute with HSS. HSS's Allison Greer will be here to talk best training practices when you have multiple races on your docket, something I could have done with last year.

00:06:41

Rob Simmelkjaer: Looking for new ways to keep you moving? Step into the strongest and fastest version of you with the Peloton app, whether you're chasing a new PR or just getting started, be the runner you want to be with program designed by experts who've run the race themselves. Track your progress in real time, celebrate every win and stay motivated every mile. Learn how to transform the way you run with the Peloton Tread or Tread Plus at [onepeloton.com/race-training](https://onepeloton.com/race-training). Peloton, the official digital fitness partner of New York Road Runners.

00:07:18

Becs Gentry: Today's guest is my dear friend, Kirra Michel. Kirra is, of course, a Peloton yoga and meditation instructor whose grounded presence and powerful classes have inspired thousands. Originally from the coastal town of a Lennox Head in Australia, Kirra's childhood was filled with movement, from surfing, dancing, and gymnastics to everything outdoors. But it wasn't until she moved to New York in her twenties that she discovered the transformative power of yoga and meditation, tools that have helped her navigate burnout, perfectionism, and personal healing. Now, from the Peloton stage to Times Square and beyond, Kirra teaches with a beautiful mix of strength, softness, and soul. And she's here with me on Set the Pace today to talk about the intersection of yoga, mental health, and mindful movement for runners. Kirra, hello.

00:08:17

Kirra Michel: Ciao. Thank you so much for that intro. That was really beautiful. So thank you. And I'm so excited to be here.

00:08:22

Becs Gentry: Yay. I am so honored to have you here. I know

Rob, my co-host, is really, really down that he is missing this conversation with you.

00:08:31

Kirra Michel: I know.

00:08:34

Becs Gentry: We spend a lot of time together in the green room at Peloton, and Kirra and I are kindred souls from very different sport backgrounds, but I think our heart and soul lay in very similar places. So I've always felt such a bond of honesty with you. I feel like I can always be my complete open Becs book to Kirra, and she's like, "I get you."

00:08:56

Kirra Michel: Yep, yep, yep. Absolutely.

00:08:58

Becs Gentry: Whether it's Tim Tams or chocolate.

00:09:02

Kirra Michel: Yep, missing home. Even though our homes are different, they're similar, but...

00:09:06

Becs Gentry: Yes, exactly. So let's talk about that. Let's talk about home. Now, a lot of people who maybe don't do your Peloton classes or don't follow you yet on Instagram, may not know that your family is actually American, but you are Australian growing up, as we said in Lennox Head, Australia, and you moved to New York in your twenties. Just give us a little background there.

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Kirra Michel: Okay, so I'm actually, yeah, my dad is from New York, my mom's from Delaware, and I was born in Santa Cruz, California. So when I was three months old, my parents moved to Australia with my older brother and myself. And so I grew up, I'm an Aussie, but with very American parents. So I'm a little bit culturally confused.

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Becs Gentry: I love that, but it makes so much sense.

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Kirra Michel: Yeah, yeah. It's the best of both worlds, I think. And where I grew up was just the most gorgeous beach life, surf town, mellow place to grow up, so...

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Becs Gentry: Yeah. Wow. Even if you'd stayed in Santa Cruz, that would be also very beachy, very surf life. But now you have a little more calmness, let's say, from the Australian side of life.

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Kirra Michel: Yeah. I think California and Lennox is, they're kind of similar, just with, well back 30 plus years ago, just a lot less people than California had.

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Becs Gentry: Very true. Okay. So you moved here in your twenties. And you have openly said that it was obviously exhilarating. Moving to New York is going to be exhilarating, but it was also quite tough for you. So take us back to that time. What were you chasing? What were you trying to leave behind?

00:10:56

Kirra Michel: Yeah, so I was studying full-time and working full-time in Sydney. I was studying architecture, and I was just struggling. My mental health was struggling. I was dealing with depression with a little bit of anxiety, and I just was confused about the direction of my life. I was three and a half years into my studies and just not quite sure if this is what I wanted to do anymore. So on a whim, I finished my assignment off at 2:00 AM on a Sunday morning, closed my computer and said, "I'm done." I'm going to defer uni for a year. So deferring, as you know, is just taking a year off.

So I went to work the next day, told them I'm done. I went to uni on Monday, told them I was done. And I bought an round world ticket. So I went to Indonesia, Singapore, India, Qatar, New York. And I think a lot of people when they hear that, they're like, "Oh, she did her eat, love, pray moment." No, I was just running. I hated yoga, I hated meditation. So for all the runners out there who are like, I can't meditate, yeah, neither could, I was looking for, I think, my purpose. I was looking for something to be passionate about again. Something to give me life.

I also wanted to see how privileged I was. I wanted to go to different places and see how easy... Life is always challenging no matter where you are, but it is... I have a really nice, beautiful life. I had a nice, beautiful life, but I just couldn't find the joy inside. So I was definitely running, hoping to find something. But it turns out, no matter where you go, there you are. So the depression came with me, it followed me. And I ended up in New York. It was kind of by accident. I ended up staying here

indefinitely. And New York just kind of gave me a second to, it was so exhilarating, it was so full on, there was so much happening that I kind of just threw myself into work. I threw myself into a new life, but eventually it all caught up to me.

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Becs Gentry: Mm-hmm.

00:13:13

Kirra Michel: Yeah.

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Becs Gentry: Wow. So when you say it caught up to you, is that because you feel like you continued to utilize the same patterns of overworking yourself, heading towards that burnout, and you didn't necessarily change the way your day looked? So tell me about what a day back then looked like, and then now what does your day look like.

00:13:44

Kirra Michel: Yeah. So you're completely spot on. So I've always used work and fitness as escape mechanisms or tools just to kind of get by. It helps when you're good at the things as well. You get accolades for being good at these things, even though they're just, not just, but they can be used as tools to... avoidance tools. So back then, okay, so when I moved to New York, I was in the restaurant industry. I was working in nightclubs, which is just so against everything but... I don't drink. I'm not a big partier. So some of these things just weren't in alignment with what I really believed in. I was making money in that world and I was trying to get into, eventually, I was trying to get into the world of fitness and then in time meditation and yoga. So I was working in the evenings, and then I would finish late.

I would take the train home. And then sleep for a few hours, and then get up nice and early and start my life in the fitness world. So I was kind of working these two full-time jobs and not really sleeping, which when, by that time, taking care of myself did become a big aspect of my life. And because I was working basically these two full-time jobs, I didn't really have time to take care of myself. I didn't have time to eat healthy. I didn't have time to work out. I didn't have time to have these daily rituals and these practices that I had eventually started to implement to create a little grounding in my life. So yeah, nowadays my life looks very, very, very different, and I'm really grateful for that. But I usually get up and I meditate. Now, meditating did come in time when I moved to New York.

Life was so busy and so chaotic, and there was millions of humans around me, and I just felt this energy that I couldn't figure out how to ground. So meditation is something that I started. And I started with this sangha, this community called Dharma Punx. And there, everyone is tattooed, everyone has piercings, everyone has strange colored hair or strange haircuts. So it's just like the quirky weird people. It's like the weirdos. So we went to feel like we belonged, and there was, like I said, community, a sangha there. And I remember being there, and my teacher, he's really interested also in neuropsychology. If it wasn't for him, I don't know if I would be really into meditation because I have what's called monkey mind, where every human does, it's all over the place. We ping pong and then you add social media and technology into it, and we're just everywhere but here.

So he kind of explained meditation to me in a way that made sense. I wasn't trying to make my mind stop or still or go blank, but just becoming aware, feeling really grounded physically in my body, using my breath to help down regulate my nervous system. And then becoming more of the observer of the busy monkey mind rather than trying to make it stop. So that became a daily thing for me. And for a long period of time, it had to be, it was like this is my non-negotiable. I have to meditate every single day, and sometimes it's 20 minutes, sometimes it's 45 minutes. And even that became too restrictive for me. So now I try to meditate every day, and if I miss it, I miss it. And that's a big release for me that I didn't allow for a long time. I have meditation practices, breath work practices. I try to journal a decent amount. I have to spend some time alone. Just adding these little different practices helps so much.

00:17:46

Becs Gentry: Yeah. Oh, my gosh, that's all so interesting. And I think it is a beautiful thing to recognize that everybody has monkey mind. I love that description. I call it squirrel, like when a dog sees a squirrel, like, "Squirrel, squirrel." But you are so right, especially if you live in a metropolis, like New York, you a hundred percent suffer from this constant hamster wheel of stimulation right in front of your face. And it seems like such a wonderful journey that when you found the Dharma Punx, you found your teacher who made you feel that you're accepted into this awesome community and showed you that meditation wasn't the same for everybody. Because I think that is a stigma that has been attached to, not just meditation and yoga, but all sports, like running. It's not all the same. It's not all the same for everybody. We've had this conversation one-to-one in the past. Do you remember the first time you actually meditated

though, and you were like, " Oh, this is amazing."

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Kirra Michel: Listen, I don't know if there was like, no, there's no moment where I'm like, " Oh, that's it." It's one of those things where, I've never classified myself as a runner. I love fitness. Running has never been my thing. And so now I'm dipping my toe into it, because I realized that I need some cardio in my life and it's good for my heart. And I'm not at the stage yet where I've hit that runner's high or that steady state. I'm still struggling. But I know that I'm putting effort in and I'm doing one foot after the next, after the next, after the next, and I'm trying to focus on my breath while I'm doing this. And it's similar with meditation.

No, I don't remember the very first time that I did it because, similar to running, like I'm running even if I haven't gotten to the steady state or to the runner's high yet. So meditators are still meditating while they're sitting in there, just observing. They're watching the mind. So I don't want people to think that meditation, I'm waiting for that moment, and until I get there, I'm not there yet. I want people to realize that just sitting and being still, and I know that, I mean, I don't want to generalize everyone, but I know a lot of runners like, you like to be busy. Running is a constant thing. So that even the thought of sitting and being still can sound really scary to so many people, the way that running sounds scary to me.

So it's given yourself the grace to realize that if you're finding a little bit of stillness, even if the mind is still crazy active, that you're actually working towards, you're putting the reps in towards softening, releasing, noticing tightness in the body. Can you release in that? Can I release my jaw? Okay. My mind is really busy. Can I just sit with the busyness of my mind? We're not trying to get somewhere. There's no specific destination. We're working with what we have. And if right now we have monkey mind, cool. Let's work with monkey mind. Let's just watch it, instead of being like, " I'm not there yet." That's what I'm trying to not do with running.

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Becs Gentry: Yeah. " Where is this peace and quiet?"

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Kirra Michel: Yeah, yeah. Where's my steady state run? It's not here yet.

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Becs Gentry: Okay. You've just nailed the best analogy, and



you may have just convinced me to try meditating again, because I do not do it.

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Kirra Michel: You used to.

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Becs Gentry: I use running as my meditative state because that does quiet my mind. It really, and that took ages for me to be able to get there. Anyway, this isn't about me. Okay, so let's rewind to when you first joined Peloton after finding your way in yoga and meditation and becoming a teacher yourself, which involves spending a lot of hours of study and practice in the yoga world. You went from leading classes in quite intimate, calm studios to classes being broadcast to thousands and thousands of people around the world. Do you remember how you felt after your first live Peloton class?

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Kirra Michel: Gosh, so I deal with a lot of anxiety and a lot of nerves. I mean, listen, after it was exhilarating. It was, "Oh, my God, I did that." That's wild. And it's so strange as well because you're in a room with no one. No one. Just the cameras, eight cameras. But on the leaderboard, you know that there's hundreds of people, that thousands of people are going to take it at home. But so afterwards, I was exhilarated. Beforehand, I was so, so nervous. And again, using these practices, down regulating, breath work, finding a little bit of peace and quiet and envisioning. So using visualization meditations where I can just see myself doing the thing, doing the damn thing. And then also just trusting that I've done enough. And I think sometimes I also deal with imposter syndrome from time to time, and just trusting that I have done enough, I know enough, and trusting in myself that I could get through. Turns out, I got through it. I survived it.

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Becs Gentry: You did very well.

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Kirra Michel: Yeah. It was scary. But scary doesn't mean we don't do the thing.

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Becs Gentry: Yep, that's so true. Okay, talking of imposter syndrome, I think it's a very obvious word that goes with being a Peloton instructor, a celebrity. People do think of instructors as being celebrities. And I think we both feel

very similar sometimes of, " What? What? I enjoy what I do. I enjoy my practice, and I get to share it with other people." But can you talk about, has there ever been a time where that celebrity aspect of Peloton has clashed with the authenticity of what you practice and how you keep it real to Kirra?

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Kirra Michel: I think, yeah, I've a really hard time with that word. Similar to you, everything you just said. I'm just doing what I love to do, I'm just sharing it with people, because this is the way my heart... This is the passion that I was looking for, that helps me with my mental health is being of service to other people. So I think the thing that I struggle with the most around this, honestly, is still social media, having to present and show up and share different pieces of my life. I think that's the hardest part. And then I guess the other aspect to that is also it's still around social media. I'm very much a one-on-one person. That's kind of how I teach classes. I don't love being in big groups of people, I like one-on-one. I love to connect with people. And so people share their stories with us as instructors, how much we've helped them, what they've been through, what they've gone through, and just the screen and not being able to actually connect with people is really hard.

And this is why we do what we do. We love sharing. We love helping people get through different things, whether it is a physical practice or if it's something more emotional. And that's the gifts of being on this platform, being a Peloton instructor. It's such an honor. But there's so many people who want to share little bits and pieces of their life with us, and we don't have the capacity to give back the amount that I want to give back to each person in person. So I guess the two elements is how much of my life do I actually want to share? Because I'm not the type of person that wants to share everything. I also believe that I'm just doing what I love to do. Yeah, I have such a hard time with that word.

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Becs Gentry: Same. We're very much on the same page when it comes to this.

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Kirra Michel: Yeah, absolutely.

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Becs Gentry: I appreciate your honesty with it. Okay. Let's talk about yoga for runners, because our listeners are majority

runners here, and they are always after ways to get stronger and better themselves. So let's talk about the differences between a yoga class that is designed for runners versus a general yoga flow that you might teach. Talk me through a yoga for runners... You know I've taken them. Pretend I haven't. What would people expect from a Yoga for Runners class with you?

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Kirra Michel: Yeah, so when I'm programming a yoga for runners class, I'm trying to figure out the mechanics, what's going on in the body when you're running. I want to figure out the areas of the body that are tight that are maybe overworked. I want to figure out the areas that are underworked that need a little bit more strengthening. I like to get into the feet. I like to get into the calves, into the hips, hip flexors, the hamstrings.

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Becs Gentry: The hamstrings.

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Kirra Michel: Runners, my friends, let's get into your hammies. Want to kind of open up and loosen the quads a little bit. So there's different areas that I want to work on, the posture. And then the part that maybe runners, I don't know, some runners definitely think about it, some runners definitely don't, the breath. Yoga is really based around the breath. And so we learn in yoga that if we can control our breath, we can start to, we have a better control of the rest of our body, we can down regulate, we can soften the things that don't need to be working as hard. So I'm really figuring out what you guys need as runners in order to help your running practice. I'm a big fan of cross-training, so figuring out where your weaknesses are and working on those weaknesses. And unfortunately the weaknesses or areas that we typically don't want anything to do with because they're a little painful and it's really uncomfortable. And my thing is that if it's really painful and uncomfortable, we probably need to spend a little bit more time there.

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Becs Gentry: Absolutely.

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Kirra Michel: So those are the kind of aspects that I definitely, even the core, I mean, listeners, it's your whole body, right? But really focusing on those areas that you need to work on the most. Yoga classes in general, 9 times out of 10, we kind of hit the whole body. So I think that

every single yoga class is probably going to be helpful for runners. But a runner's class is specifically designed for you. And I'm also speaking to that and how it might relate to parts, different areas of your running. And then also, again, I don't want to overgeneralize, but a lot of the runners, I think, with Peloton, and I might be wrong, but a lot of the runners, I think, might not be yogis yet. So I also am known for some complex sequencing. So when I'm doing a Yoga for Runners class, the sequencing is very, very doable. I think a lot of people are very afraid of me and my classes.

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Becs Gentry: By that, she means that she can really cram in the moves and make you flow through them quickly, so you're sweating more than a HIIT workout.

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Kirra Michel: Mm- hmm. Exactly. Exactly. The Yoga for Runners class is not that. We're moving nice and slowly.

00:29:44

Becs Gentry: No, because you understand that we're a little tighter, and we need a little bit more time to transition through the poses and maybe a little longer to get that breath under control.

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Kirra Michel: Yeah.

00:29:56

Becs Gentry: Now, you are doing it, you get it.

00:29:56

Kirra Michel: Yeah. And again, again, again, listen, I'm so new in my running journey, you're my co-worker, and I'm like, "Great." Obviously, I'm not a running coach, but you are someone who I'm next to. And I'm like, "Wow, when will I be able to run for 10 minutes without wanting to break?" So it's like, I think, inspiration instead of intimidation. Comparison just will destroy us. So knowing that, okay, so Kirra is known for longer, harder, intense classes. I love to invert, I love to do hard things, but that's not necessarily the goal. The goal is just what is it that you need. My goal to run seven marathons, or even one marathon yet, okay? It's not my goal if I'm being honest with you, but my goal is just to take care of myself and what it is that I need. So as a type A fitness person, a lot of us, just because I'm saying it's a little slower, doesn't mean you're not doing the yoga.

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Becs Gentry: Yes. That's very important to understand as well. It's just, as you say, it takes you time to figure out how these new movements and how these new practices are going to fit into your world and into your routine. And if you rush it, then you're never going to fully understand the benefits of it, like with meditation.

00:31:22

Kirra Michel: Yeah.

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Becs Gentry: Okay. So if someone's training for a marathon, and again, this is not one of your personal goals, but you've trained people who have run marathons, how would you recommend somebody would incorporate yoga into their week for a marathon training?

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Kirra Michel: I would definitely incorporate it in not just kind of like, "Oh, I'm hurt and I should do this." So it's preventative. It's not just after the fact when your muscles are needing a little bit of support.

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Becs Gentry: Yeah, it's not just recovery.

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Kirra Michel: Exactly. Exactly. So it really depends. It's hyper individual. I think that everything is very hyper individual. But I would say two to four times a week, anywhere from, I don't know, 15 minutes to an hour long class. And yeah, I think that, again, the yoga runners classes are wonderful, and there's a handful of us on the platform who do these classes, and there's different lengths of the classes. I know that you've also had Mariana on as a guest, and she has a program on the app, which is a preparation for your marathon. So I would recommend between two to four times a week. And again, any yoga class would be good depending on your level.

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Becs Gentry: Yeah. Okay. And would that include meditation as well, or is that an additional practice?

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Kirra Michel: I mean, listen, it's again individual. You don't want to put so much on your plate ever that you are more stressed out about prepping for it than actually enjoying any

of it. But, and yes, I would definitely add in some meditation, some breath work. And you can do, I mean, if you've got all the time in the world, you can definitely add in meditation classes and breath work classes. But I would recommend doing, I don't know, a 10 minute meditation. I recommend every single day of the week. But if you have two or three or four days a week, you want to add those in, definitely do that. You could be doing visualization meditations where you are visualizing yourself competing, finishing, enjoying it, crossing the finish line, feeling as good as you can.

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Becs Gentry: Yes to that.

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Kirra Michel: Yeah, or just meditations, maybe a body scan meditation where you're going through your body and you're releasing, you're relaxing. And I would also add, find some gratitude for your body along the way. I think so often we focus on the areas that aren't working well, that might be holding us back a little bit and we forget that everything else actually works phenomenally. So as you're kind of working through a practice where you are releasing, relaxing areas of your body, just to kind of get out of that tightness, add in some gratitude.

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Becs Gentry: Oh, yes, I love that. I love the visualization for our runners to think about them crossing the finish line, getting that medal and completing the thing that they have been putting in all the time to train for. That is truly something that stands out there for me. Okay. Talking of all of this meditation, would you be open to leading us through a short meditation before we say goodbye?

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Kirra Michel: Yeah, I'd absolutely love to.

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Becs Gentry: Oh, my gosh. Okay. This is the first time I've meditated.

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Kirra Michel: How much time do I have? Oh, gosh, we've got this.

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Becs Gentry: A nice short couple of minutes just to give people the time. Whatever you think. Give people a teaser of

what they can get if they go ahead and take one of your classes.

00:34:52

Kirra Michel: Okay, great. All right. So I want everyone to find themselves in a tall, comfortable seat. If you're standing, you can definitely stand. If you are busy and you're driving, please don't shut your eyes. Do what is best for you in the area that you're in right now. But if you do have the ability to shut your eyes or softly gaze down, I'm going to recommend you to do just that. And then we're just going to start by checking in, tuning in. So begin to notice your breath. Start to breathe in and out through your nose. And see if you can elongate the exhale for an extra count or too. And when we work for longer exhales, we start to down-regulate and soften through the central nervous system. We start to communicate with the body, letting the body know that we're safe and that it can relax, it can soften.

And your next exhale, see if you can allow your shoulders to relax, to release, and just start to notice the cyclical rhythm of your breath. Start to feel into the physical sensations of the body. Notice the feet or sit bones touching the ground or the chair. Feel the spine nice and long, lengthening all the way up through to the crown of your head. So the strength of your legs, of your hips, of your core, and finding that gratitude for your body, for moving the way it does, for breathing, for holding you in a supportive place. And we'll finish with a mantra, which the mantra is a vehicle for the mind, so it's a place to hold your mind steady. And the mantra is, "I am steady and I'm strong." I am steady and I'm strong. And just check back in with how you're feeling. Again, try to soften any areas of tension or tightness. And when you're ready, slowly begin to flood your eyes open, bringing yourself back in.

00:38:22

Becs Gentry: Wow. Wow. Okay, I'm in. That was beautiful. Thank you, Kirra.

00:38:31

Kirra Michel: My pleasure.

00:38:32

Becs Gentry: Well, I hope that has inspired at least one person to feel more grounded on a daily basis. Remind people how and where they can find you.

00:38:43

Kirra Michel: Yeah, I'm on Instagram at Kirra Michel, and then

I'm on the Peloton app. They're the two places.

00:38:50

Becs Gentry: Yeah. Yes. Go get your yoga on with Kirra-

00:38:54

Kirra Michel: Please.

00:38:54

Becs Gentry: ... your breath, work, your meditation, and all of the goodness. Kirra, thank you so much for joining us today on Set the Pace. Good luck with your running journey, and thank you for keeping me grounded as a colleague at Peloton.

00:39:10

Kirra Michel: Thank you so much. Thank you so much for having me. And yeah, this was fun. I hope that if anyone has any questions, reach out to me on Instagram. We're here for you. We're your coaches. We're here to help guide you into some new unexplored territory. And thank you so much, Becs. I appreciate you.

00:39:40

Rob Simmelkjaer: New York Road Runners is a nonprofit organization with a vision to build healthier lives and stronger communities through the transformative power of running. The support of members and donors like you helps us achieve our mission to transform the health and well-being of our communities through inclusive and accessible running experiences, empowering all to achieve their potential. Learn more and contribute at [nyrr.org/donate](https://nyrr.org/donate).

00:40:06

Becs Gentry: Today's guest is Andrew Kyle, also known to many as the Bearded Marathoner. After quitting smoking in 2017, Andrew signed up for the New York City Marathon and found something he hadn't expected, a profound sense of joy, purpose, and belonging through running. Since then, he has completed 25 marathons with a goal to run 100 and one day cover all 50 states. This year, as he turns 40, Andrew is going all out on New York City. He's taking on the four New York Road Runners Five-Borough Series and the New York City Marathon, and a 100-mile ultra marathon across New York City. Just back from the 50k Diez Vista race in British Columbia as a training run for his 100-mile NYC ultra run, here's Meb with Andrew Kyle.

00:40:59

Meb: Thanks, Becs. Andrew, welcome to the Set the Pace podcast. How are you doing today?



00:41:04

Andrew Kyle: Thanks. I'm Okay. I am recovering from a long run this weekend.

00:41:11

Meb: What was that long run? Can you tell us what you did this weekend?

00:41:14

Andrew Kyle: Yeah, so I ventured up to Vancouver to race in the Diaz Vista 50k, which was in this great mountainous area. I think I climbed about 7,500 feet this weekend.

00:41:30

Meb: Incredible. That's amazing. How you feeling? How's the body feeling? And you were obviously 2017, you gave up smoking now to be able to be in nature. What was that feeling like?

00:41:43

Andrew Kyle: Yeah, it was incredible. I think it's for someone who primarily runs the streets of New York City, doing a trail run is both amazingly beautiful and equally horrifying simply because of the terrain is so not even. I think I'm really feeling it in one of my ankles and my right foot today. But I think I am hopeful that it will be a very fast recovery. It was actually a really, really good training run for this really big run because I think just being out eight and a half hours, and that was not something that I expected, but it was eight and a half hours of pure nature uneven runway trails and everything. And just a great, great experience.

00:42:39

Meb: I have never done 50k, but quite close to this 42 kilometers, which is a marathon. But can you take us back to the moment when you decided to enter the lottery for the 2018 NYC Marathon? What was going through your mind? And how did that moment set the stage for everything that came after?

00:42:56

Andrew Kyle: Yeah, that's a great question. So my closest friend from college had gotten into the New York City Marathon the year before, but she deferred it. And so she was like, "Oh, you should apply for the marathon. The lottery, it's time for the lottery." And I said, "Oh, yeah, I'll do that," because it's impossible to get in through the lottery. So I was like, "I'm never going to run a marathon."

I was a smoker for a very long time." And then I woke up that day and my credit card was charged, and I was like, "Wait, what does this mean?" And so I was like, "Oh, I guess I'm running the marathon." And so it was just this kind of moment of like, "Oh." I mean, it's fantastic. It's amazing. I'm going to get to do this with my best friend. And then just, it changed kind of my perspective on like, I had to build out a training plan, get ready for this amazing feat when I had not been running at all because I spent my time smoking cigarettes.

00:43:54

Meb: Well, these alternatives, New York City Marathon is my favorite. And you do a great job to accomplish that. But you have called running the first athletic thing that ever really stuck for you. What do you think is about running that creates that shift or that meaning?

00:44:10

Andrew Kyle: Yeah. I want to say it's really about just the experience of seeing everything around you as you're running. I worked on a lot of self-awareness training through one of my grad school programs, did meditative practice every day for month for two summers. And just kind of taking that understanding of what meditation is like and applying it and seeing how it aligns with running so much was really important for me and just really powerful. And so I think just being able to be constantly kind of in the mindset of I'm going to finish this thing I'm setting out to do something really tricky, difficult, intense. And then I think the other thing that was just really magical is the surroundings that you put yourself in. So as you're running, even when you're running through the streets of New York City, as you change your routes and you explore new places, I'm trying to run every street in Queens currently, and it's, I discover something new every single run, and bizarre, beautiful and just amazing about the city that we live in.

00:45:25

Meb: It is an amazing city. But you have spent years running mostly solo and you just recently joined the Front Runners. Can you tell us what it was like stepping into the community the first time and how that changed the experience of the sport?

00:45:41

Andrew Kyle: So running with the community has been interesting. As you said, been running solo for most of the time in my running experience. And I think there's just a lot of power in going out with a group and joining a

group, and being a part of the community has been really exciting. I did a few runs also with Woodside- Sunnyside Runners. So both of them are really, really great groups. And I think the first time I went with Front Runners, I think what was really surprising and great is just the amount of people who come. I think my first run with them was mid- January. It was extremely cold. I expected maybe five people there, and there were almost 50. And then just the routines and after the run, going out to grab food, grab drinks, the Saturday morning runs with the bagel breakfasts are just incredible. So it's been a great experience and I'm looking forward to hopefully being more in New York City to be able to join more runs because it's been difficult with a lot of travel over the past few weeks, but it's great. I'm loving it.

00:46:48

Meb: Thank you for sharing, Andrew. This is great. And the camaraderie of the sport is amazing. But before I let you go, this is a big one for you, big year, five pro races, a 100- mile ultra marathon, and you turning 40. What does this moment in your life feels like? And why mark in such an epic goal?

00:47:05

Andrew Kyle: Yeah, it's great. Part of it is really being able to say, I've been running for this long and wanting to kind of show up a little bit more in New York City. I realized a few years ago I would run a few of the Five- Borough races as one- offs, and I realized that all the medals match and that's pretty cool and amazing. And so I think just this feat of a hundred miles also feels like such a huge thing, and I'm really, really excited to experience it and just push my body to do something that I never in my life would've imagined doing until now.

00:47:47

Meb: Pretty awesome. Well, happy early 40th and have a great year.

00:47:52

Andrew Kyle: Thank you very much.

00:47:53

Becs Gentry: Thank you so much for joining us, Andrew, and for being a member of New York Road Runners. Now, onto the final part of our show, the Med Minute. This week on our Med Minute with HSS, we are joined by Allison Greer, a physical therapist at Hospital for Special Surgery, who leads their running mechanics analysis program. She's a former

collegiate runner who now helps athletes recover smarter, run stronger, and stay in motion for life. We talk about the unique needs of female runners, especially during peak race season, and how to train wisely when you've got more than one race on the calendar. Here's Meb.

00:48:29

Meb: Thanks, Becs. Allison, welcome to Set the Pace podcast. How's it going?

00:48:35

Allison Greer: Well, thank you for having me.

00:48:37

Meb: Great to have you. It is April and we are fully into race mode. Someone's got a half marathon this week and then 10k the next week. What should training be like in between training?

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Allison Greer: Well, the first step in tackling two endurance races on back-to-back weekends is creating a really intentional plan. And this plan will include which race you want to prioritize. And so for example, if that race is the first weekend, so that half marathon, then we think about the week following that as more of a recovery week, allowing us to recover as best as we can for the race on the next weekend. Alternatively, if we choose to prioritize the second race, we'll use the half marathon in that preceding weekend as a build into our training. So for example, we would use that as part of our long run for the weekend before the race as kind of building into that last week of training.

00:49:28

Meb: No, sounds great. But how about if the weather is super nice in the spring and they want to do it, what advice do you have for them?

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Allison Greer: Well, it's a challenge to run races on back-to-back weekends for certain. I think really paying close attention to your body and listening to how your body's tolerating it. So watching for any signs of injury or fatigue is certainly important. Setting appropriate expectations that it probably isn't realistic to run a PR in those two distance races, two weekends in a row. But then training just like you would and equipping yourself, hydration, fueling, all of the things that you can do to set your body up best for the challenge of completing two endurance races on back-to-back weekends.

00:50:07

Meb: Awesome. What are some of the early signs that runners might be doing too much?

00:50:13

Allison Greer: Certainly this is an important question because inevitably within a training block there are some ups and downs, and it's important to understand that this is normal. What we think of as red flags as clinicians are symptoms that are constant or progressive. So for example, when we think about performance fatigue, we'll certainly all have workouts within a training block that don't go our way, but what we're looking for here is really the inability to keep up consistently within your training plan. Or when we think about symptoms of pain. As clinicians, we look for things like swelling or the inability to run normally because of your pain as signs that we're doing too much. And then we think it's also really important to keep close tabs on your emotional health. If you're experiencing feelings of decreased motivation or decreased enthusiasm, and again, if these are constant or progressive, those are certainly signs that you might be doing too much.

00:51:03

Meb: Those are all great advice. Let's shift to with the Maybelline Women's Half coming up, I want to talk specifically about women and running. What should we be doing differently when it comes to recovering for women?

00:51:17

Allison Greer: This is an interesting question. There's some literature to support that women require decreased recovery time after endurance races compared to males, and this is because women have different body systems that can influence our ability to recover. For example, women tend to use both fat and carbohydrates for fuel during their endurance events, and this can help them recover a little bit more quickly. Also, the presence of the sex hormone estrogen may decrease muscle damage due to exercise. Regardless, it's important to have an intentional recovery plan after an endurance race. And we think of this as a very active plan.

And this can include hydration, which should include both water- and electrolyte-based substances, refueling with both carbohydrates and proteins, getting an appropriate amount of sleep and promoting movement. This might include some light stretching, walking, biking, or swimming. And I think the other thing that's important to keep in mind is that the recovery for one event is a continuous event with the preparation for the next event. And really we think of this

as a journey from the start of the race to the end of the next race. In other words, the more effective we are with our recovery, the better prepared we are for the next race.

00:52:35

Meb: Allison, I like to say pre-hab instead of rehab, but are there injuries you see more often in women runners? And what do you think that is? You might have already answered it, but can you elaborate a little bit more?

00:52:47

Allison Greer: Certainly. We definitely see different injury patterns in women versus men, and this is again because we have different body systems. One example would be a bone stress injury, and that's an overuse injury to a bone. And we certainly see these more often in women than men. Some common examples include a stress injury to the foot bones, we call those the metatarsals, the shin bone, we call the tibia, and the hip, whether that's the femoral neck or the pelvis. And there are a few differences between males and females that make them more prone to these types of injuries. One is our bone density. Women tend to have lower bone mineral density and a higher rate of bone loss. Two, we think about our hormones. Estrogen is an important hormone to help build and keep bone density. And fluctuations that women experience in estrogen can certainly impact our bone health.

And then the third, we think about nutritional deficiencies. Some really important nutrients to build and help sustain bone health are calcium and vitamin D. So as female runners, it's really important that we're paying attention to our intake of those. Another injury that we see more commonly in females are knee injuries, specifically in the front of the knee, which we call patellofemoral pain syndrome, also known as runner's knee, or pain on the outside of the knee, which is an irritation of the iliotibial or IT band. And this is often due to anatomic variances between women and men. For example, women often have wider hips relative to our height, which creates a different line of pull at our knees. We also tend to be overall weaker in comparison to our male counterparts. And these anatomic things can lead to biomechanical changes when we run. So for example, in female runners, we tend to see more rolling in of their knee as they land and absorb load. We also tend to see a stiffer knee or less knee bend as we absorb the load of running. And these biomechanical faults can result in overstress and overuse injuries.

00:54:43

Meb: Amazing information, Allison. And there's exception to the

rules, obviously. I was also have issue that I had in 2007 when my vitamin D and my calcium was very low and typically what they saw on women saw in mine. So for those of you guys that are male also, having a base is always important, whether the male or female, to be able to just kind of know who you are and be in tune with your body. So great information and keep running and stay healthy. And thank you Allison for being on the podcast.

00:55:12

Allison Greer: Thank you so much.

00:55:13

Becs Gentry: And that does it for another episode of Set the Pace. Thank you to today's guests, Kirra, Michel, Andrew Kyle, and HSS's Allison Greer. If you like this episode, please do go ahead and subscribe, rate or leave a comment for the show on whatever platform you are listening on. This not only helps us, but it helps others find out about the show too. Thanks for listening. Get those miles in, and we'll see you next week.