

GETOUT | Hire a Running Coach



BY J. CARRIER FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

"With those technique tweaks from my trainer, now I can go the extra mile."

I've always hated running. Sure, I love biking, hiking, skiing, skating and swimming, but ask me to sprint, and I feel like my pavement-pounding feet are beating my body to death. With warmer weather finally approaching and a few winter pounds to lose, though, I thought I'd try jogging once more. Again — the agony. Then it occurred to me (well, it actually came to my wife as I complained) that I could be doing something wrong. Maybe, she suggested, I should check in with a running coach, an expert who could analyze and improve my every step. But people just get out and run, don't they? What more could there be to it?

A lot. I found that working with a coach will teach you the not-necessarily-instinctive basics like achieving good posture and technique, as well as provide you with a personal training regimen. For those who have always thought they just weren't born to run, there'll be no more excuses. "It's so fun to encourage people and see them progress," says David R. Lynch, a coach with training group DC Fit. "There are people that can't run to the bathroom when they start, and six months later, they're in a marathon."

WHAT TO EXPECT: I met with Ken Mierke of Fitness Concepts at his fitness studio in Fairfax. I told Ken that I wanted to enter the Reston Triathlon in the fall — if I could conquer the running aspect. After watching me on a treadmill for about five minutes, Ken got to work. He concluded that I was extending my stride forward and landing on my heel — which pre-

vented me from using the shock-absorbing elastic muscles in my legs. And when the foot hits in front of the body it acts as a brake, slowing you down. Under Ken's instruction, I lifted my knees higher, landing on the balls of my feet directly beneath my body as they were still moving backward. After a few more tries (and corrections from Ken) I finally got the hang of it. I no longer had the feeling of beating myself up — and got an inkling of how one could actually enjoy running.

WHAT TO BRING: Comfortable exercise clothes and running shoes that fit properly — go to a store that specializes in them. A basic heart monitor is also suggested but not required.

COST: About \$75-\$125 for a session with a private coach; \$60-\$100 to join a running club that meets over several weeks. A good pair of shoes can cost \$110 and up.
— Matthew Graham

WHERE TO SET THE PACE

DC Fit. 202-478-1819. www.dcf.it.net. This marathon-training program commences weekly group sessions on May 7. Its 26 weeks of classes cost \$85 for new members and are meant to prepare you for the Marine Corps Marathon on October 30. In addition to supervised running, the program includes various lectures and seminars on technique and motivation.

Fitness Concepts. 8301 Arlington Blvd., Suite T3, Fairfax. 703-560-7846. www.evolutionrunning.com. Not only does this coaching center offer private, one-on-one sessions (at \$125 per hour), it also holds three- to four-hour group clinics for \$80 each. Customized monthly training schedules and metabolic testing to determine optimum performance are also available.

Start Right Fitness. 703-407-7470. www.startrightfitness.com. Coach Carla Gregor leads a \$100 13-week group class for female neophytes. The weekly sessions include guest speakers and start April 9 at Lake Accotink Park in Springfield. The goal? To compete in the July 9 Annapolis Women's Distance Festival 5K race. 10K and 10-mile training sessions are also available. (Menfolk can sign up for private coaching, which is available on a limited basis.)

Know of a great outdoors opportunity in your area? E-mail getout@washpost.com. Please include your name, city and daytime phone number.