



Sheth's rules for the run

→ Don't run for at least 5 days before the big run. Your legs need rest.

→ Detox yourself, don't drink the night before



→ Eat something before the run, ideally a banana.



→ Good shoes are critical. But don't wear a pair of new shoes. Warm up well before the run.



→ Eat a pasta dinner the night before. Load up on carbs

→ Don't scramble to keep pace at the beginning with those around you. Run at your own pace.

→ It's all in the head. If you tell yourself you can, you will.

Running the course

Ravi K Sheth, Managing Director of Great Eastern Shipping, on marathons and fitness.

Veena Venugopal

There is a secret that marathon runners keep from others. Especially from those who are all agog about the accomplishment in finishing a run. The secret? It's not all that hard to finish a course. Ravi K Sheth, Managing Director, Great Eastern Shipping (India) is a consistent half-marathon runner and tries to share this secret. And much to his amazement, very

few believe him. "People always tell me, 'Wow, you ran 21 kilometers? I would never be able to do that.' And I tell them, they can. Unless you have a heart condition or a medical ailment there is no reason you cannot run 21 kilometers," he says.

Sheth started running in 2005, when he was 44. He used to play squash before that. He began to find it claustrophobic and impossible to play in the summer.

One evening, his brother-in-law who was training with Savio, a trainer, asked Sheth whether he would like to join them. He did. And ran for two or three kilometers the next morning. That was August 2005. In January 2006, he ran his first half marathon. Since then he has run in Mumbai, Delhi and Pondicherry.

Sheth is part of a Mumbai-based group that runs three times a week. The longest runs are on Sundays. Age, Sheth affirms, is not an issue. "We have people who are 57 and 60 and they are fitter than I am. Injuries can happen but the probability of that is much less than other sport. In squash, you will have a problem with your back and knees. You start and stop abruptly, bending and twisting. But you are upright when you run. As long as you warm up before and cool down after a run, you should be okay," he says.

Running in a group is different. One, it motivates you to wake up. When the alarm goes off on Sunday, your strongest instinct is to switch it off and go back to sleep. But when there are people waiting for you, it forces you to get up. Second, you can run with a couple of people who help maintain your speed or "give you speed." Runners build natural rhythms with others and this helps during the run. "Ours is a fun group. On Sundays, after the run we sit around and chat or head out for breakfast. It's exercise and social activity," Sheth says.

The first time Sheth ran the half marathon it was reported in his company's in-house magazine. That led to interest among his employees. Sheth then appointed Savio as the trainer for the company. He trains people at Worli Sea face round the year. "People who are approaching 60 participate," he says. His ambition is now to run the half marathon in 2013 within 2 hours and 10 minutes.

Sheth sees running as a great stress buster and an activity that makes him energetic and enthusiastic. "When you run, it's you, your iPod and the road. It gives you time to think. And you feel a high at the end. It's like a drug," he says.

It's a high that a lot of people are discovering. At 5:45 on a Sunday morning, there is apparently no parking space to be found in Nariman Point. It's filled with runners' cars. **B**

When you run, it's you, your iPod and the road. It gives you time to think and clear your mind.

DR SHYAM BHAT, PSYCHIATRIST, INTEGRATIVE MEDICINE SPECIALIST

BEHIND THE MASK

Play your part. But remember who you are.

The great psychoanalyst Carl Jung used the term 'persona' to describe the social mask that every individual wears—the face that we present to others.

Although we aspire to be authentic, society is such that each individual has to learn to modulate their thoughts.

And to be healthy and happy, this persona should not be fake but an expression of your own true nature.

A persona that is too far removed from the real self results in unhappiness.

Sarita, for example, is a reserved person. But, at work, she has adopted a gregarious and extroverted attitude because she believes it will help her progress in the company. While it might serve a purpose in the short term, this persona will eventually drain her.

Consider the case of Kartik. He has a great career and loves his work, although his wife complains that he is a workaholic who rarely spends any time with his family. Over the years, unbeknownst to him, Kartik has lost sight of who he really is. He finds it difficult to spend time with his family because he is unable to relax. The problem is that Kartik does not know who he really is. Unfortunately, a lot of high achievers become so identified with that role that their persona becomes a prison.



One might argue that as long as Kartik is successful, there is no need for him to let go of this persona. But, cracks appear—he might be transferred, the demands may change or he might retire. If this happens, Kartik will feel confused. When a person overly identifies with their persona, then that role suffocates them.

But if they see that their role at work is only a facet of a much larger self, they will experience freedom. By spending some time in quiet reflection, they will find joy, creativity, resilience, and happiness.

Work well. Play your part. But never forget who you really are.