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There's an old expression that you run the first half of a marathon with your body and the 2nd half with your mind. In a lot of ways, life during Covid has similarities to an athletic endurance event in that it's pushing many of us way past our normal comfort levels. Instead of our physical boundaries that are being tested and strained, we're now getting into long range mental mileage territory with the daily stress and constant uncertainty that the last 9 months have brought on.

If you live here in PA, today kicks off the start of another state-mandated set of closures and restrictions to all the places we have come to expect in the Covid era. According to the guidelines, entertainment, shopping, restaurants, and youth sports are all impacted until at least January 4th. The fact that it's the Holiday season adds extra psychological weight to this announcement and can easily stir up feelings of loss and lead you into negative conversations about the 2020 'Covid Cancelled Christmas'. No question about it, this has been a rough year like no other in our lifetime and this latest news may feel like the final 'come on, are you kidding me!?' straw. It's exactly at this point when we can benefit from flexing our mental muscle of perseverance and grit.

Try taking a page out of the endurance athletes' playbook and use a mindset strategy that takes the finish line out of the equation. When you're at mile 19 of a 26-mile race and starting to feel like you may not make it, the last thing you want to do is dwell on the fact that you have 7 more miles. Instead, you're setting small achievable goals on your very short term horizon to create these micro-successes on your way to the finish line. For the marathon runner that may mean concentrating on making it to the next water table or the yellow parked car they see in the far distance. For life in Covid, dwelling too much on when

vaccines will be available or whether you will be able to go on vacation next summer can make the finish line seem overwhelmingly far off in the distance. Give this a try instead: direct your focus to set some small goals and priorities over the next few weeks that are both meaningful and achievable.

Here's an easy example...make a top 20 list of people you have been meaning to reach out to over the past few months but have not yet gotten around to. Make that list and call, text, or email all of them 20 within 14 days with some season's greetings. Or better yet, put pen to paper and send them a handwritten note! (Anyone in your life would love to receive a personal mailed note from you, it's a forgotten art!)

If you give yourself 15 minutes of contemplation you could probably come up with a list of ideas of what you would like to concentrate on over the coming months...aside from the news! Life in 2020 is full of uncertainty, we can't do much about that. What we can do is build our mental muscles by directing our focus and attention to all of the things within our control. While you're busy focusing on making the days in front of you the best ever the Covid finish line will keep getting closer!