

What Motivates You?

By JESSIE DIGGINS

What is the driving force that motivates you to do what you do? In other words, WHY do you ski? Or run, bike, swim, (insert your sport of choice).

No, really. Think about it. It's a much harder question than it sounds.

In our team meeting we were asked this question. We had already shared our goals for the year, then we started figuring out how to help each other on a daily basis. This was a great question to ask, because if you know what motivates someone, you can figure out how to encourage them, and help them reach those goals.

I opened my mouth, ready to give my answer, and then realized I needed to think a little longer. I know what doesn't motivate me, but what IS it that enables me to get out in the rain and go training, to push hard during intervals even when nobody is around, and the coaches won't know whether I finished my set or not?

Some skiers are motivated by medals, others get out the door in pursuit of a fit body or a rush of adrenaline. Many are inspired to achieve a personal best, while others are out to beat everyone else. One person might be inspired by a challenge, another by setting new records. It all depends on what works for you!

For example, medals don't motivate me. If I'm doing hard intervals and a coach yells out, "Do you want that Gold?!!" That does nothing for me. But last spring when we were doing hard double poling intervals and one of my big goals was to make the team sprint team at Worlds, my coach, Matt Whitcomb, yelled out, "Think about what team you want to be on!" and I somehow found another gear I didn't know I had.

My parents still tease me by saying, "I do it mine-self," which was my favorite saying as a toddler. I always wanted to do everything by myself. Somewhere in my infant mind I was all about being a strong, independent woman. Thank you so very much, Dad and Mom.

The mere offer of help from someone was an insult, a challenge, and a suggestion that I wasn't capable of doing it. So even if it was ridiculous, I would do it all by myself. So, I guess you could say I was motivated by the

idea of being self sufficient and strong.

These days I'm motivated by something else. I'm driven by the idea of doing something really, really hard, and pushing myself past my previous threshold. I like going after challenging intervals and races and knowing most people in the world can't, or won't, push themselves to that elusive edge.

I'm motivated by that feeling you get when you know you couldn't have given anything more, and win, lose or draw, you found your limits and then found the will

to push past them. So when the going gets tough in a race, I just think "How do I want to feel when I'm standing on the finish line? Will I be proud of what I'm doing right now?"

This works well for me in training. But it can also be dangerous, because I have the tendency to over-train in search of that elusive "runner's high". It's important for me to recognize this and designate workouts where I can turn lose and ones where I will keep it dialed in tight.

I did a workout last summer which was designed to let me find that feeling, really dig deep and see what I found there. It was a simple setup: a four minute, L4 intervals (so 5km-10km race pace) where I started from the same spot every time and marked the finish spot on my first interval. I then proceeded to keep doing intervals until I couldn't make it to that same finishing point anymore.

That was a brutal workout. And here's why; I could stop anytime I

wanted to.

I could dog it and pretend to get tired when the pain became too much, when it got hard to breath and hard to haul myself up the hill one more time.

Nobody would know but me. But I wanted to know I truly gave it everything, so even when I was on my hands and knees dry heaving after four minutes, I'd get up and keep going, pushing harder. My coach would look at me and say, "You done?" and I'd say, "Just one more".

I don't remember how many intervals I ended up doing, and it doesn't matter, because the point was, I did way more than I thought I was capable of doing. I only did that workout once last summer, because it's



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extremely expensive in terms of physical and mental energy and it would be easy to over train if I did it often. But it made me feel tough, powerful and intimidating, and it let me tap into that feeling that motivates me and gets me fired up.

So think about it, and figure out what it is that gets you out the door every day. Knowing that is important, and sharing it with people you trust is important, too. If they know what your goals are and what gets you fired up about achieving your goals, then they can help you take that next step forward!

— *Jessie Diggins, of Afton, MN, is a member of the U. S. Ski Team and one of the best female racers in the U. S. She is a member of the SMST2 Team. She won the first-ever gold medal for cross-country in the Team Sprint at the 2013 World Championships with Kikkan Randall. She won individual silver at the 2015 World Championships in the 10km skate.*