


Aditya, these are great questions and I am glad you asked. I'm never one to shy away from answering questions deeply if it can be. I'll use this opportunity to organize thoughts and feelings I intrinsically have built for running.

Some Thoughts on Running

There is a perception of running that it is done to lose weight, to be part of a holistic workout routine as cardio, or to be done as part of training for a sport. In these cases, I find that the mentality towards cardio is forced and unloved, a common attitude toward homework, chores, or work. These attitudes are unsustainable in my opinion and can blind one to a greater sense of enjoyment.

Running is a lifestyle. It's a hobby - an activity that is enjoyable and brings fulfillment - to me and it can be for everyone too. We are built to run biologically. There are numerous arguments for this: our bipedal walking gait, the structure of our torso with our neck enabling us to run without turning our heads, the skin and perspirant system keeping us cool, our feet with the arch as natural springs, and toes like secondary hands to grip and feel surfaces of all kinds. These are largely taken from a really famous Ted Talk and that you probably have seen before:

 [Are athletes really getting faster, better, stronger? | David Epstein](#) .

So what? Well can you imagine a bird choosing to walk (or hop) instead of flying to get somewhere? What about the depression whales and dolphins develop from not being able to swim large distances as they are stuck in a small tank of water in an aquarium? Using a car in the water instead of on the road? A part, a piece of technology, and structures of nature have a specific purpose in its existence. By extension of this analogy, humans not running seem kind of odd then. (But real critical thinking would also attempt to classify animals with what they are built for and ask how many animals live according to their design, but for my narrative we ignore this.) Could we be limiting ourselves to a greater form of existence by not partaking in the strengths of our design? Those who run also lead healthier lifestyles and look the part too.

I have also begun to think about what progress means in society. Technology doesn't always equate to better life outcomes. Consequences like pollution, overpopulation, and "brainrot" have infiltrated the public consciousness in divisive and stressful ways. In first world populations of the largest economies: the United States, Japan, and South Korea, suicide rates have been increasing with stagnant birthrates speaking to a large mental health crises. Here, unfulfillment with status linked to role have manifested into general unhappiness. Exercise is

prescribed by doctors who believe in holistic health and fills in the gaps that the modern society has created for us.

But why do *I personally run*? For one I believe in everything above, but there are two big reasons: health and feelings. Running is an undeniably healthy activity, cheap, and social. The running scene in Aurora-Naperville is great and there are plenty of trails to choose from. The dangers of running from its impact on joints to excessive strain on the heart can be navigated by being mindful of gait/strike, learning about limits, and understanding how to run properly. We sit so much during our day that my hip flexors, calves, and feet are actually kind of deformed. I hope to take back control of my kinematics by running.

I am incredibly familiar with home but I also love to explore. Running has shown a new side of home for me. Places that I would only reach by car now I can by foot. Places like the mall, Marianos, Jewel Osco, Meijer, Chipotle, Garden Fresh Market, AMC Showplace, are some places that people drive to. I also have seen so many new places that can only be accessed by foot and have enjoyed beautiful nature preserves that show me the native landscape of my home. Running changes my thought patterns. I think about things differently and its rapid fire. I figure out things and my thoughts are just productive. That in itself is worth it.

There are a lot of reasons to run. But simply put, running is another activity to do as part of the day. I feel closer to my community and it has given me inspiration. Running has made me grow as a young adult. A reddit thread put it nicely: "In the grand scheme of things, 3 months of running is nothing. Even if it's everyday. Running is a lifestyle choice; it's everyday well into the 40s, 50s, 60s. So focus on injury prevention and think about the long term."

And for some personal history, I started running in spring 2022 when my lack of success in academics, career, and social life have left me struggling with my identity. Throughout college, I grew to love to walk and run around campus. I have explored every inch of not just campus but greater Champaign *and* Urbana. But it isn't until recently where I have been running **consistently**. But still, running has always been about running itself - the process of it: from feeling invincible and unleashing my energy to trying to keep it together and "one more step" when I'm painfully out of breath. The runner's high is real and running in the suburbs where I'm outnumbered by cars 100:1 strums my pride a bit.

Freedom, expression, control, achievement, exploration are some of the things I think about that describe running. But there are things that are beyond running. Running just happens to be the physical vessel of the abstract goals I have and plays a role in creating balance.

Michael Huang