

## The Four Week Countdown: Success Step #3

### Success Step #3: Get Support.

You need it. In my doctoral dissertation on more than 100 women national- and world-class runners, 100% said support was essential.

How do you identify it? What is support, actually? It's a word like "happiness" – hard to define in general terms and yet easy to picture examples of.

I asked these questions of the Suburban Striders of Weston, MA ([www.suburbanstriders.com](http://www.suburbanstriders.com)), a women's running club that's growing because of the support women find there.

"Support looks like the smiling, encouraging faces and clapping when I am sprinting on the track," said member Trish Richardson.

"A coach who gives an individual plan with cross training (aqua) workouts and who then follows up on it" is support to Jeanne Guerin, a Strider who's been healing a hamstring injury. A massage therapist also helps with her injury.

Member Sharon Yogel said support looks like her running buddy Hilda Chow, a member with whom she shares long runs. "We talk and the time flies by. The relationship was formed in our running group because we have a similar pace."

What else does support look like? Hot pink (or black) running skirts. Quite a few members ordered them. "They will make our group stand out in the crowd," said Yogel. "We will easily find each other at events and feel the group support instantly."

How do we summarize this collage of comments so that you can better identify sources of support? There's...

- Technical support -- information related to physical or mental training. Technical support may come from a coach, personal trainer, other runners, or a psychologist.
- Medical support provided by physical therapists, chiropractors, acupuncturists, massage therapists, etc. Few runners negotiate running careers without injuries or setbacks.
- Emotional support. It's the least specific of the three, the most all-encompassing (including the hot pink skirts, unless we establish "fashion support"), and the hardest to find.

So... what does emotional support look like? It's essentially any behavior that's in your best interests. It may look like any of these:

1. listening to you (about anything)
2. encouragement
3. a ride to a race
4. letting you adjust your work schedule to training
5. babysitting your kids
6. doing the wash (he *can* figure it out)

It comes from anyone who wishes you well. Elite athletes say that critical emotional support can come from virtually anyone, including people who may know nothing about your sport. Sometimes that's even better.

While emotional support may come from a coach or a teammate or a running friend, you may find it in a spouse, neighbor, parent, child, – or a pet, an important source of emotional support for one Olympian. *Yes, the doggie was!*

So you see the importance of various types of support and its unique sources. Now you need to make your own map. What do you need? Make a list. Who do you think could provide it? You'll probably need to ask straight out. People aren't mind readers.

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