

CREATE YOUR OWN SUPPORT PLAN



QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR RUNNER AND CREW TO DISCUSS BEFORE THE RACE

The purpose of this document is to help runners and support crews create a shared plan before race day. The clearer the expectations, strategies, and communication are beforehand, the less energy is wasted on misunderstandings during the race. This is not a template with “correct answers”; it is a tool to help understand the specific runner’s needs, reactions, and limits.

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1. COMMUNICATION

How does the runner want to be approached?

- Short and direct, or more encouraging?
- A lot of information or minimal information?
- Does the runner want to make decisions themselves, or receive clear recommendations?
- How does the runner function when tired?
- How does the runner react under stress?

How should the crew communicate?

- What helps?
- What makes things worse?
- Is there anything the crew should absolutely avoid saying?
- How does the runner handle humor during races?
- Is physical touch helpful?

Questions to discuss

- How can you tell the runner is mentally struggling?
- How can you tell frustration or hopelessness is building?
- What type of motivation works best?
- What kind of encouragement helps most?
- Are there mantras or phrases that work particularly well?

2. AID STATION ROUTINES

What should always be checked?

Examples:

- Energy intake
- Hydration
- Temperature
- Stomach
- Pain
- Equipment
- Pace

Questions to discuss

- What does the runner always want the crew to ask?
- How much time should be spent at aid stations?
- What should be prepared before the runner arrives?
- What should the runner immediately receive?
- How much information does the runner want?
 - distance to next station?
 - elevation gain?
 - placing?
 - cut-off margins?

3. NUTRITION AND HYDRATION

Basic plan

- How much energy per hour?
- What types of fuel work best?
- Which products will be used?
- How often should the runner eat and drink?

Questions to discuss

- What usually works late in races?
- What becomes difficult to consume?
- What are the “emergency foods”?
- Are there foods or drinks the runner absolutely does not want?
- How do you recognize low energy?
- How do you recognize low sodium?

4. STOMACH ISSUES

Previous experiences

- Nausea?
- Vomiting?
- Diarrhea?
- Constipation?
- Acid reflux?

Questions to discuss

- What usually causes problems?
- What typically helps?
- Are there medications or products that work well?
- How aggressively should the crew push calories?
- When should intake be reduced?

5. PAIN AND INJURIES

Common problem areas

- Feet?
- Knees?
- Calves?
- Hips?
- Back?
- Shoulders?

Questions to discuss

- What usually happens during long races?
- What helps?
- What should the crew watch for?
- What is considered “normal ultra pain” for this runner?
- What are warning signs?

Practical tools

- Taping?
- Massage?
- Muscle creams?
- Pain medication?
- Shoe or sock changes?

6. TEMPERATURE AND WEATHER

Questions to discuss

- Does the runner usually get too hot or too cold?
- How does it show?
- What helps?
- How does temperature affect mood and performance?

Strategies - In heat

- Cooling?
- Ice?
- Fluids?
- Pace adjustment?

Strategies - In cold conditions

- Extra clothing?
- Warm drinks?
- Movement?
- Backup plan?

7. MENTAL STRATEGY

Questions to discuss

- What happens mentally when things get difficult?
- How does the runner react to setbacks?
- What usually helps during low moments?
- What creates a sense of safety and calm?
- What triggers stress?

Important questions

- How can the crew tell something is serious?
- How can the crew tell it is “just a low point”?
- How should the runner be reminded to keep going?

8. SLEEP AND NIGHT RUNNING

Questions to discuss

- How does the runner function without sleep?
- Have hallucinations occurred before?
- When does fatigue usually hit hardest?
- Are power naps part of the plan?
- How will caffeine be used?

9. DNF OR CONTINUING

One of the most important conversations before the race

When is it reasonable to stop?

Examples:

- Injury risk
- Loss of motor control
- Dangerous overall condition
- Medical symptoms

When does the runner NOT want permission to quit?

Examples:

- Muscle pain
- Fatigue
- Low mood
- Missing time goals

Questions to discuss

- Who has the final say?
- How should the crew respond if the runner wants to quit emotionally?
- Are there situations where the crew should be firm?
- Are there situations where the crew should be cautious?

10. PRACTICAL DETAILS

Important information

- Allergies?
- Medications?
- Existing injuries?
- Food preferences?
- Sensitivities?

Questions to discuss

- What absolutely cannot be forgotten?
- What creates a feeling of safety?
- What logistical problems usually happen?
- What is the backup plan?

11. THE ROLE OF THE CREW

Questions to discuss

- What does the runner need most?
 - reassurance?
 - energy?
 - structure?
 - encouragement?
 - decision-making?
 - humor?
 - discipline?
- What stresses the crew out most?
- How should problems be communicated?
- How can both people help each other stay calm?

ADVICE FOR BOTH RUNNER AND CREW

- Problems almost always feel bigger in the middle of the race than they actually are.
- Most low points pass.
- Tired people communicate poorly.
- Clear communication saves energy.
- A good support team works with calmness and forward momentum.
- The more decisions made before the start, the easier it is to handle chaos during the race.