



# Make time for you

After a long day putting your children, job and partner first, it can seem tricky to put your feet up, let alone go for a run. But a running mum can make for a happier mum, as **Dominique Brady** discovers



PERFORMANCE

**B**efore you had children you could go for a run as soon as the idea popped into your head. Add on one, two or several bundles of joy and suddenly there is an unlimited to-do list. Exercise is often the first thing to get scrapped when life throws you numerous balls to juggle. That extra half an hour could be better spent tidying, playing with the children or getting things ready for the week ahead?

## TAKE TIME OUT

Not necessarily, as Louise Graham, a licensed running coach and mum of two explains: "When you're a mum you have to fit in so many things. Running is a way of doing something just for you."

Instead of feeling guilty, Louise insists that it's better for you and your family if you go for that run. "No matter how you feel when you go out, whether tired or stressed, you will always feel better when you get back, and you won't regret having gone for a run. The feel-good factor will spill over in how you relate to your family."

Having time to yourself can sometimes be the only thing keeping you sane. "We're not robots and we all need our downtime, to think through things or not think at all," says Amanda Alexander, an acclaimed life coach for professional mums. As Amanda summarises being a mum is a marathon not a sprint; it's not about trying to be perfect all the time. And ironically meeting your needs can also make you a cheerier, healthier and more inspiring mum.

## FINDING A GAP

The first step is to decide that running is something that's important to you. The next,

is to actually fit it into your life. Louise recommends a two-fold approach to organisation and spontaneity to maximise your training.

"I sit down every Sunday and find gaps in my schedule where I plan to go running. Then I try to stick to those times I have planned. The other great thing is that running can be unplanned. If your partner gets home early from work one night, you can head out for a 20-minute run while they are unwinding."

Attending a running club or class also is a great way to help you to arrange regular childcare. Louise organises a beginner's running class for mums, *mumswhorun*. "The structured nature of a class helps your partner and family appreciate you are running, and it helps you to stick with it," she says. Another good idea is to run regularly with a friend or book onto a race for added motivation.

The key thing is to find the pattern that works best for you. Some women might run before their children wake up, others might run during their lunchtime or plan to go out two evenings a week. Only you will know what works best for your family. And as with everything in life, communication is crucial. "Chat with your partner, or your friends or family, and get their support. Tell them when you want to go, and why it's important to you," explains Amanda.

## SUPERMUM

For children or teenagers, watching their parents compete in races is awe-inspiring. As a regular runner, Amanda recently competed in her first triathlon and her eldest son's reaction has been a real boost.

"My eight-year-old son is so proud of me and he even wants to take up a children's triathlon," she says with evident pride. Amanda tells me they now go for a run together, once a week: "It's great to spend one-on-one time with him away from my younger child and it really makes him feel special – it's also becomes a fartlek session for me as he's faster!"

Running isn't just good for you and your health, it's also great for your children to see how important exercise is, to have a good role model, and it can be a great way to bond with older teenagers. But forget about them – when you hit the road it's all about you – for 20 minutes at least.

Contact our experts:

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Louise, [www.mumswhorun.com](http://www.mumswhorun.com).

## LADIES PRODUCT OF THE MONTH

Joanna Hall, one of the UK's leading Diet and Movement Specialists has launched her own apparel range in conjunction with ZOCCA, the premium quality, active clothing brand. The style is relaxed and in neutral colours and is perfect to wear before or after a run, or to laid back classes. The zip, roll neck fleece with arms in mushroom and black, has reflective strips and handy pockets and costs, £50, and the high waist, black tracksuit bottoms, cost £38.

