

Lapping the living room: Lockdown marathoners get creative

By The Christian Science Monitor, adapted by Newsela staff on 04.17.20

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Walter Tarello, an Italian veterinarian living in Dubai, recently completed a marathon in the eighth-floor corridor of his apartment building. Photo courtesy: Walter Tarello

Normally Wojciech Machnik runs marathons outside. Marathons are 26.2 miles long. He jogs up mountains. Sometimes he runs through extreme heat.

But he experienced quite a new running challenge in March. On a Sunday morning in Warsaw, Poland, he ran around his bed for the 5,626th time. He completed a full marathon indoors. Poland is in Eastern Europe.

Governments worldwide are trying to fight the coronavirus. So they are limiting people's movements. People are being told to stay home. This will help limit the spread of the virus. This has changed the way we exercise. For many, that's meant using old home gym equipment. Some watch fitness videos online. But for some, it's brought a new challenge. They are running ever-longer distances in small spaces.

"This is literally a way to keep moving through this crisis," says Rossyle Ayuro. She is a Filipino hospital administrator in Doha, Qatar. She recently ran a marathon from her kitchen. She ran

down her hallway, out the door, to the elevator and back. She did this 1,400 times.

Restrictions Are Like An Extreme Dare

At-home marathons come with their own set of challenges. The biggest one is boredom. People who do them see positives, too. They do not get race-day jitters. They also don't have to worry about getting to the race. Or about the racecourse. For these runners, lockdown restrictions are not a limitation. They are more like an extreme dare.

"Isn't that what life is about, finding different challenges and conquering them?" says Shahieda Thungo. She is a South African ultramarathon runner. She's been running 10-kilometer loops around her postage-stamp backyard. She lives in Soweto, near Johannesburg. She ducks under her washing line on every loop. "We run marathons, we run ultras, but maybe it's only by running in tiny circles that we can really test our minds and find our breaking point."

In mid-March Thungo was at the peak of her training for the Comrades. It is the world's largest ultramarathon. It is run in South Africa each June. She was taking on weekly marathons like they were casual jogs.

And then the world around her started to shrink. As South Africa's coronavirus cases ticked upward, the president called for restrictions on how many people could gather in one place. Races were canceled. Gyms closed their doors.

Pan Shancu is a runner in China. In February, he ran 31 miles through his small apartment. Shancu slurped noodles along the way. Elisha Nochomovitz lives in the south of France. He lost his job temporarily in a restaurant. In March, he ran across his 23-foot balcony 6,000 times. That was a marathon length. A week later, he did it again.

An Ironman Triathlon At Home

On March 23, South Africa announced a 21-day lockdown. No one could leave home for anything except food or medicine.

Stuart Mann lives there, in Johannesburg. Mann has run over 240 marathon events. He saw the lockdown as an opportunity for something different.

Mann examined his choices. There was an exercise bike in his garage. He had a pool in his backyard, too. And his driveway was pretty long.

Why not try an Ironman triathlon? The Ironman triathlon consists of a 2.4-mile swim, a 112-mile bicycle ride and a marathon 26.2-mile run. It is raced in that order. By doing it he could get out his lockdown jitters. He could also raise money for a favorite education charity.

So on a recent Saturday, that's what he did. As cold rain poured, he swam 2.4 miles across his pool. Then, for 5 hours, he hit the exercise bike. Along the way, he read his 8-year-old daughter a chapter of "Harry Potter." In total, he did 112 miles. Then he ran 26.2 miles up and down his driveway. It was full of constant, sharp turns.

A Once In A Lifetime Chance

For some, running inside has helped. It keeps them thinking of something other than the sadness and uncertainty around them.

One such person is Walter Tarello. He is an Italian veterinarian. Tarello lives in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. He watched the horror in Italy unfold from afar. In March, he ran a marathon through the eighth-floor hall of his apartment building.

For Machnik, in his bedroom, he made only a few loops. Then the room began to spin.

But he was determined to finish. For two years, Machnik has been on a mission – to run 100 marathons in 100 countries in a world record time. His spins around the bed marked marathon number 98.

"This is probably my one chance in my life to do this," he says.

Quiz

- 1 Which sentence from the article states the MAIN idea of the entire article?
- (A) On a Sunday morning in Warsaw, Poland, he ran around his bed for the 5,626th time.
 - (B) Governments worldwide are trying to fight the coronavirus.
 - (C) They are running ever-longer distances in small spaces.
 - (D) For two years, Machnik has been on a mission – to run 100 marathons in 100 countries in a world record time.

- 2 A main idea of the section "Restrictions Are Like An Extreme Dare" is that runners are seeing the lockdown as an opportunity to conquer a new challenge.

Which key detail from the section supports the section's MAIN idea?

- (A) At-home marathons come with their own set of challenges. The biggest one is boredom.
- (B) "We run marathons, we run ultras, but maybe it's only by running in tiny circles that we can really test our minds and find our breaking point."
- (C) Races were canceled. Gyms closed their doors.
- (D) Shancu slurped noodles along the way.

- 3 Read the selection below from the section "Restrictions Are Like An Extreme Dare."

As South Africa's coronavirus cases ticked upward, the president called for restrictions on how many people could gather in one place.

Which word could replace "restrictions" WITHOUT changing the meaning of the sentence?

- (A) questions
- (B) freedoms
- (C) limits
- (D) ideas

- 4 Read the selection below from the section "An Ironman Triathlon At Home."

Mann examined his choices. There was an exercise bike in his garage. He had a pool in his backyard, too. And his driveway was pretty long.

What does the word "examined" mean?

- (A) made up
- (B) prepared for
- (C) gave up
- (D) looked at

Answer Key

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