

Not The Best Start To The Year!

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Instead of waiting till the beginning of the year to reset after injury, I got back at it in late October. By the time January 1st came along, I was in a very good place. Lots of base mileage done and I'd focused a lot on leg strength, core, balance, and stability. My goal of a first sub 3-hour marathon at the end of May was looking very, very achievable. Then, after a couple of days into the new year, I felt a bit run down and had a heavy cold. By a week into the year, I had covid which floored me for three days and left me very lethargic. Then after covid, I had flu-like symptoms but was covid-negative. I felt ok for a day and thought that was all over and done with. Not the case. I began to feel even worse with a mix of cold, flu, covid symptoms and needed time off work in bed.

Fast forward to the middle of February and I still have a deep, painful cough, a recurring sore head, and I feel completely knackered most of the time. By my estimate I've completely lost all my running gains from last year so, in total, my training through November and December, plus the time lost from the start of January till now has all been cancelled out. That's 3.5 months down the drain!

The marathon I'd planned to run (Edinburgh on Sunday, May 26th), is now no longer an option. I could somehow drag myself up to a level where I could get through it but I wouldn't do myself justice. It would be a slog fest! So now I'm pondering what new target to set for myself. The initial plan was marathon training for the first 5 months of the year and then transitioning to hybrid training with lots of strength work for the upper body whilst maintaining a solid running schedule but not racing. I could aim for the Rannoch Marathon on Saturday, October 12th, but that's a long, long way away. At least it's an option.

As I type this I'm so tired and feel very yuck! I'm always planning for what to do next but my motivation and desire right now just aren't there. The weekend is just about here so it might be an idea to try and 'wake up my system' by getting out for an easy run tomorrow (Saturday) to see how it feels. Hiding at home hoping I'll just get better doesn't seem to be doing the trick!

See below for a few things you could do to help recover from a post-illness running slump.

1. **Start slow:** Begin with low-intensity exercises and gradually increase the intensity as your strength and stamina improve. This will help prevent overexertion.
2. **Set realistic goals:** Establish achievable short-term goals to gradually build your fitness level. This can be as simple as increasing your daily step count or completing a short workout.
3. **Choose low-impact activities:** Opt for exercises that are gentle on your body, such as walking, swimming, or cycling. These activities can help rebuild your strength without putting too much strain on your joints.
4. **Enjoy the Outdoors:** Take advantage of the healing power of nature. Whether it's a leisurely walk in the park, a hike in the woods, or simply sitting in a garden, spending time outdoors can provide a refreshing change of scenery and boost your mood. Fresh air and sunlight can have positive effects on your overall well-being, contributing to a sense of rejuvenation after illness. This outdoor time can also serve as a gentle introduction to more active pursuits as you gradually regain your strength.
5. **Prioritize rest and recovery:** Adequate rest is essential for recovery. Ensure you are getting enough sleep and allow your body to recover between workouts.
6. **Listen to your body:** Pay attention to any signs of fatigue or discomfort. If you experience pain or exhaustion, take a break and reassess your routine.

7. **Include flexibility exercises:** Incorporate stretching and flexibility exercises to improve joint mobility and reduce the risk of injury.
8. **Stay hydrated and eat well:** Proper nutrition is key to rebuilding your strength. Ensure you're consuming a balanced diet with a focus on nutrient-dense foods.
9. **Join a supportive community:** Consider joining a fitness group or class to stay motivated and surrounded by like-minded individuals who can offer support and encouragement.
10. **Track your progress:** Keep a record of your workouts and celebrate small achievements. This can help boost your motivation and provide a sense of accomplishment.

Remember, everyone's recovery journey is unique, so it's essential to tailor these suggestions to your specific situation. If in doubt, consult with a healthcare and/or fitness professional for personalized guidance.