

Anna Flynn

Runner Up

Running. It seems like the most simple of tasks: putting one foot in front of the other a little bit faster than normal. To most people it is that simple, but to me it is much more than that. To me running is what helps me manage the hardest struggle I face every day which is acute anxiety. I have struggled with anxiety since I was a sophomore in high school, which was at the same time that my competitive running was blossoming. Although I attributed a lot of the anxiety that I was experiencing as coming from running, I now realize that it was in fact my escape from the turmoil I was experiencing. I have learned that much of my anxiety comes from being overwhelmed at the speed of current society. However, running has not only allowed me to keep up with it quite literally but it has also allowed my mind to keep up with it by letting the multitude of thoughts to exit my mind.

One of the biggest components of my anxiety is the self-doubt that comes along with it. I very often question my abilities to be able to complete the task at hand. Running has given me the confidence to know that I can accomplish anything if I just put my mind to it and don't let irrational fear get in the way. It was the confidence that I needed to excel but wasn't going to get from other areas of my life. This is a lesson that I think is extremely crucial for any female athlete to learn because they can then apply it to the male-dominated world that exists outside of our sport.

Although in running you are many often times knocked down, the sport teaches you to get back up and keep going. That is a lesson that can be applied to many real life situations and is

why I have developed into the person I am today. I attribute all of my recent academic success to this lesson. I have been knocked down plenty of times in my life, but thanks to this sport I have been able to stand right back up and face the world and what it is going to throw at me as a much stronger person.

So running, thank you for the lessons you have taught me and in turn for the person that you have helped me become. Running isn't always as easy as it appears to be, just like life. But, if you stick with it and enjoy it, it will bring you tons of happiness and instill a level of confidence to allow you to face life as it has for me. I have been told by people to “run like the wind” and when I do, I feel as free as the wind.

Running has changed my life like nothing else has. It is a blessing that will allow me to be strong as a travel on this complicated journey, called life.