

SMILE to Redefine Victory

Julie Moss

When I step up to the start line of any race I think back to all the miles I've logged in preparation and I draw confidence from knowing I'm as well prepared as I can be. I envision a race that will be a reflection of all my efforts and quite possibly become a new PR. I think about how it will feel to race with strength and purpose, and I see myself running gracefully "in the zone", part of "the Flow."

But there are those races that no matter how well you've prepared for them, they can slip away from you and you'll find yourself way outside the zone and the only flow you'll feel is one pushing directly against you. When the gun goes off there may be moments when it feels like your strength is fading, and then there will be times when everything goes wrong and your run for glory turns into a race for survival. What do you do when you have a momentary slip or when your dream race turns into a nightmare?

You **SMILE**.

SMILE is an acronym that I have developed over the past 30 years of racing and one I've come to rely on to redefine any race challenge into a victory.

S: Slow down, Shorten your stride, and Shut off the negative voice.

M: Maximize what you can do.

I: Improvise, Imagine, and Innovate.

L: Lean into the pain, Let go of the expectation.

E: Embrace where you are, be in the moment.

There is evidence that smiling reduces recovery time and lowers heart rate. Smiling has been shown to release endorphins and serotonin. This can certainly be a benefit while running, especially in moments of stress. That's the science, but the psychology of smiling keeps you engaged in a positive way, however briefly, and tricks your body into thinking you don't hate what you're doing.

"Sometimes your joy is the source of your smile, but sometimes your smile can be the source of your joy." ~Thich Nhat Hanh