My Tuesday Night Running Ritual

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I look forward to Tuesday nights; every Tuesday night, I escape work as fast as possible, head to my apartment, throw on my shorts, lace up my shoes, and bike as quickly as I can to the Lower East Side. When I arrive, I meet up with the other members of New York's urban running crew, Orchard Street Runners.

There are all kinds of people here. Engineers and artists, extroverts and introverts, novices and founders. No matter who we are or what our background is, we gather every week for our shared love.

Running.

So after the chit-chat, we all head outside at 8:00 PM and start that night's route. The first mile is always as a group, but once the first stretch comes up, we all find our own pace. Our own rhythm. Our own movement.

This is when I start my own challenge. My pace for the night. My personal Tuesday night ritual. For each time I run, I always go back to why I began running. It's my way of fighting and battling through my HIV.

I was diagnosed in college and this is when running became my sanctuary. Another mile is another year. Another lap is another day. Another step is another breath.

This mindset is with me every Tuesday night. When I'm chasing the leading pacer off the Red Hook Piers, I'm chasing my goals I have yet to achieve. When I'm dodging cars and people on 34th St., I'm dodging the obstacles that have come my way. When I'm encompassed with the noise and chaos of the train passing by on the Manhattan Bridge, I'm encompassed with the noise and chaos living with HIV has put me through.

But somehow, every Tuesday night, I make it to the finish line.

After each run, we celebrate our accomplishments with $4 margaritas at the bar down the street. We talk about races that are coming up, laugh at ridiculous stories, and one or two of us may dance around by the end of the night.

It's during this time, no matter what our run was like or what we're going through at that particular moment, we support each other by eating, having a few drinks, and laughing the night away.

It’s times like these that I realize I can make it to my own finish line.

Daniel Szymczyk is the Founder and CEO of The HIV League, a nonprofit dedicated to empower the HIV Community through scholarship, wellness, and education. The HIV League’s first event is a SoulCycle Charity Ride in NYC, where all the funds are going to the only national scholarship for students living with HIV.

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