

# Proactive Mantras Improve Performance

How Active Mind Race Camps help runners redefine success

● Eleven miles into the Phoenix Rock 'n' Roll Half-Marathon, the words came to me: "I feel power. I feel joy."

I'd chosen this mantra three days earlier, as I lay on a yoga mat at Active at Altitude Training Center in Estes Park, Colo. Proprietor Terry Chiplin—a wiry Brit with an uncanny ability to elicit trust from perfect strangers—instructed me to choose an image and mantra to focus on when things got serious. My eyes rolled. But I obliged, choosing a time clock flashing my goal digits, and the above six-word reminder of why I run. Sure enough, just as an old hip injury began to flare, the mantra resurfaced. Two miles later I was basking in a PR.

"To start any race, without preparing mentally, is like running with the parking brake on," insists Chiplin, who founded Active Mind Race Camps to help self-doubting runners like myself release that brake.

An outgrowth of Chiplin's 5-year-old training center, the new camps use interactive discussions, lectures, guided visualizations and coached runs to help athletes identify self-sabotaging assumptions ("I suck at hills," "I'm too old to PR"), and replace them with empowering ones. They also offer practical tools for what to do mentally when nerves creep in at the start line, an old niggle resurfaces mid-course or a competitor slips by, sapping motivation.

Camps range from one-day retreats at Chiplin's picturesque 5,000 square-foot lodge to multi-day intensives hosted at race hotels prior to a marathon.

"Terry helped me to reframe failure," says Angelina Ramos, a 26-year-old former collegiate track star now working to qualify for the Olympic trials.



Terry Chiplin, right, works with a group of runners at the Active Mind Race Camp in Moraine Park, Colo.

"When I don't reach my goal, I now see it as a benchmark for what needs to change in my training rather than a signal that the goal is in my past."

Chiplin, 58, grew up running in the coastal berg of Bournemouth, England, and worked as a car salesman in his younger years. After a decade of drug addiction, he found sobriety through running and returned to school for a degree in sports science. He landed in Colorado in 2007, where he launched Active at Altitude to provide a place where everyday athletes could focus on training without workday distractions, reap the physiological benefits of altitude (at 8,100 feet), and "reconnect with their joy of running."

Today, the center hosts 18 camps per year plus workshops and private coaching. The perennial favorite is the weeklong Women's Running camps, complete with vegetarian fare, trail

running, cross-training, and lectures on diet, running form and motivation. Guest coaches include elite mountain runner Nancy Hobbs, distance phenom Melody Fairchild, Ramos and others.

Chiplin added Active Mind Race Camps this year, after repeatedly hearing the same story from camp participants. "They kept saying they would train for months and then go to a race and psychologically undo all of their physiological training," he says. Yet he saw few options for amateur runners wanting to train their minds. He hopes to fill that niche, helping athletes become active creators, rather than passive recipients of the "mental chatter" that so often frames their self-image.

"We all have this sense that we can be something more than we are," he says. "I want to empower people to perform and live closer to that potential."

—Lisa Marshall

Photos by Lauren Coulter



Chiplin will host his next local Active Mind workshop from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Sept. 1 at Active at Altitude Training Center in Estes Park, Colo. Cost is \$49 including lunch. He'll take the camp on the road Oct. 10 for a four-day pre-race intensive workshop prior to the Mount Desert Island Marathon in Bar Harbor, Maine. [www.activemindracedcamps.com](http://www.activemindracedcamps.com)