

Love of Running? Or Exercise Dependency?

Running can be a fantastic form of exercise, providing physical, mental, and emotional benefits. Many people develop a deep love for running, finding it a source of joy, stress relief, and personal achievement. Others describe their relationship with running as 'love-hate.' You yourself may have questioned whether you have a genuine passion for running or if you are exercise dependent due to disordered eating tendencies. In this article, we'll explore key differences and provide insight on how to assess your relationship with running.

Genuine Love for Running

When you genuinely love running, it's more than just a form of exercise; it becomes an integral part of your life. Here are some signs that indicate you have a true passion for running:

1. ***Positive Emotional Connection:*** You feel a sense of intense joy, exhilaration, and satisfaction while running. It's a genuine source of happiness, and you look forward to it.
2. ***Balance in Your Life:*** Running complements your life without taking over. You can adjust your running schedule to accommodate other commitments and priorities without guilt or anxiety if and when you are unable to go or unable to run for as long as you had planned.
3. ***Enjoyment of the Journey:*** You enjoy the journey and the process of improving in your running, without the focus on weight control or body shape.
4. ***Healthy Body Image:*** Your body image is realistic and accepting. You run to stay fit and healthy, not to attain an unrealistic body ideal.
5. ***Rest and Recovery:*** You understand the importance of rest and recovery days, and you willingly take them to avoid overtraining or injury.
6. ***Social Connection:*** Running provides you with opportunities to connect with others, and you value the social aspect of group runs or races.

Exercise Dependency

Exercise dependency is when running or other forms of exercise become compulsive and driven by unhelpful motives, such as the desire to control your body's shape. Here are some signs that you may have exercise dependency:

1. ***Obsession with Weight or Appearance:*** You exercise primarily to lose weight, change your body shape, or compensate for eating, due to a preoccupation with your appearance.
2. ***Rigid Exercise Schedule:*** You find it extremely challenging to skip a workout or rest day, even when you're tired, injured, or when other commitments suffer as a result.
3. ***Negative Emotions:*** You often experience guilt, anxiety, or distress when you miss a run or can't exercise, indicating an emotional dependence on it.
4. ***Isolation:*** You may isolate yourself from social events, relationships, or even work or school, prioritizing exercise over other important life activities.
5. ***Physical or Emotional Health Issues:*** You might experience physical health problems, such as overuse injuries, as well as mental health issues like anxiety, depression, etc.

Thoughts for reflection

1. ***Motivation:*** *Reflect* on your motivations for running. If your primary motivation is overall health, enjoyment, and personal fulfillment, it is likely a genuine passion for the sport. If it's primarily about controlling your body or compensation for eating, it may be exercise dependency.
2. ***Balance:*** Assess how well you can balance running with other aspects of your life, such as work, relationships, and self-care. A healthy balance suggests a passion, while a lack of balance may indicate dependency.

3. ***Emotions:** *Pay attention* to how you feel when you can't run. If you experience intense negative emotions like anxiety or guilt, it's a sign of dependency, whereas missing a run without significant distress points to a genuine love for running.

4. ***Professional Help:** If you suspect you have exercise dependency linked to eating disorder tendencies, don't hesitate to *seek professional help* from [a therapist](#), counselor, or physician who [specializes](#) in eating disorders and mental health.

Conclusion

Understanding your relationship with running can have a huge impact on your overall well-being. Running can be a fulfilling and healthy part of your life, or it can become harmful. By recognizing the signs and seeking professional guidance when necessary, you can ensure that your love for running remains a pure, unadulterated source of joy, health, and personal fulfillment.

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