

INTERVIEW WITH LISA LEONARD – 2019 LONDON MARATHON



a division of Richmond Fellowship

Congratulations on getting a place on the London Marathon and thank you again for choosing to support RF-DVIP.

1. What in the world motivates a person to run long distance?

I have absolutely no idea! I was a very reluctant runner. When I did my year of crazy obstacle courses, there wasn't a lot of running involved, and when there was I would always moan. My friends nicknamed me 'Mona Lisa'!

Maybe it was a subconscious plan. When my court case was delayed by a year, I realised that the new date would coincide with the results of the London marathon public ballot. It felt like the marathon could be a benchmark for moving on with my life and I just knew I would get a place. The court case had become such a large part of my life and I knew I would need something big to focus on.

2. Have you run a marathon before?

No, but I have done two half marathons. I did a trial one last year which I absolutely hated! It was so hilly! I also did the Worthing half marathon as part of my current training and that was much better.

3. What do you find to be the most rewarding thing about running?

I feel more positive after running. It gives me headspace and I find it therapeutic. It also keeps me fit.

4. Describe the training process for a marathon. How are you preparing –both mentally and physically?

For me, the most important thing is getting out of the door and going running. I then make up my route as I go along. Whilst I'm mainly doing my own thing, I do follow a Facebook London Marathon training group page which reassures me that I'm doing the same as others. Each week I do three runs: two short ones (8 miles) and one long run. I'm now up to 14 miles and I aim to get up to 21 miles. I have a good meal the night before each run and I'm working out what I'll need regarding water and gels to keep me going on the day.

Mentally, I make sure I get lots of rest. I've also got an amazing support group, many of whom are marathon runners. I have a Facebook messenger group as well and receive lots of lovely messages which spur me on. I do some runs with friends too.

5. What has been the most surprising thing to you about marathon training?

How much I'm enjoying it! I was actually smiling during the Worthing half marathon!

6. What kinds of things do you think about as you run?

My mind wanders. I make up my running routes, think about my children, and choose what I'm going to eat. Sometimes, I visualise completing the London marathon and think about my future goals. I also listen to music on some runs and I've been recommended audio books for my longer runs.

7. What is your main goal on race day?

To finish! I hope to keep going as best possible and to avoid too many walking stops.

8. Why did you choose to fundraise for RF-DVIP?

I decided to use the marathon as an opportunity to provide closure for myself on my past relationship and the abuse and to raise money for a charity to benefit others. I was torn between choosing a domestic violence charity or mental health as both of these have been close to my heart recently. So when I heard that DVIP had merged with a mental health charity it felt like fate to fundraise for RF-DVIP.

9. Your story on your fundraising page is really powerful. What motivated you to share your story in this way?

It was a hard decision to share my story on my fundraising page. At the same time, it was surprisingly easy to write once I'd made up my mind to do so. It's been therapeutic to put it all on paper. I was tired of feeling ashamed of what happened to me and it also helped me to move on. I was also aware that some friends and family members knew parts of my story but not the whole one so it was a way of getting across my story in my own way and making something positive out of the situation.

10. What is your message to other domestic abuse survivors?

It is so important to know that there is a way out and there is so much support out there to help you find your courage and move on. You're a lot stronger than you think you are and you will find yourself again. There's definitely a way forward and it feels so good to be you again.

11. And finally, what's the first thing you're going to do after the marathon?

Take my trainers off, ring my children and eat!

You can read Lisa's story and support her here:
<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/lisa-hearns>