

## Training for Life: An MIT Student<sup>1</sup>'s Quest for Wellness through Running

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MIT's Department of Athletics Physical Education and Recreation (DAPER) states that a core component of its mission to students is to promote "wellness by fostering an environment that values and practices healthy lifestyles, and encourages personal growth and enjoyment, through physical and social activities."

Prakriti Paul '15 was searching for that experience.

Looking to get in shape and get into the routine of an overall healthier lifestyle, she joined MIT Physical Education's course on running and jogging, taught by track & field coach Nick Davis.

"[Coach Davis] made running fun! I enjoyed the class so much that I took it again the following quarter," said Paul. "Even when I completed my PE requirement, I continued to run, having integrated it into my daily schedule by the time I completed two quarters of his class."

For many people, finding pleasure in running is no small task. You start to feel the burn before you even hit the dreaded "runner's wall". All of a sudden your legs turn to concrete and you slip into a psychological battle with that inner voice urging you to stop. "Coach Davis did the impossible for me: he got me to buy my first pair of running shoes and actually enjoy running!"

As she built strength and stamina of body Paul also found herself doing the same for her mind, becoming more and more empowered with every lap on the track. "As cliché as this may sound," Paul said, "my ability to overcome my athletic inadequacies in running improved my self-confidence and convinced me that I could achieve anything I put my mind to." Davis remembers Paul's evolution throughout the quarter. "I could see the pride and sense of accomplishment she felt after completing each workout."

After finishing the course Paul had gone from being unable to run more than a few minutes to completing a 5K (3.1 miles).

Even now as a Ph.D. student at CalTech, Paul has maintained her momentum from college and still runs regularly. "Running regularly has helped me develop a more healthy and balanced lifestyle. It's also a great stress reliever - something that I will certainly bring with me in graduate school and for the rest of my life."

Months after Paul completed the course she ran into Davis on campus. Paul told him that she was now running at least two miles three or four times a week. Davis was thrilled to know his course had a lasting impact. "She said she was feeling great and that the running class changed her life. To me, that's what MIT PE is all about."