

Voices in My Head



(l-r) Yoga instructor Diane Thayer, physical therapist Janet Delong, the author, running coach Margie Kobow, and personal trainer Walter Kyles. Photo by Rodney Margison

People claim it's a bad thing to hear voices in your head. I'm not so sure. I don't know about you, but I know that when I come to a busy street, I still hear my mom's voice urging me to look both ways before I cross. That seems like a good thing to me.

In a similar way, the many health and wellness professionals I've come to know over the years have worked their way into my head. In stressful moments, I hear my yoga teacher, Diane Thayer, peacefully invoking Thich Nhat Hanh's "Breathing in, I know I am breathing in. Breathing out, I know I am breathing out," and I slow down and listen to my breath.

One of the hardest things I've overcome has been my poor posture. Several years ago I went to physical therapy for a running injury and met Janet Delong. Instead of focusing on my injured calf, Janet pointed out my postural issues, which, to be honest, were probably the source of the running injury. At first I fought her, stating, "I take yoga—I can't have bad posture!" Thankfully, she just laughed at me. It took some time, but the "Eureka!" moment came when I finally figured out how to stand up straight, walk, and let my arms swing naturally—all at the same time. Janet is in my head, too. Slouching, I catch myself, and stand or sit up tall, knowing how much better I'll feel for doing so.

For multiple reasons, I don't run anymore, and I miss it. My running coach, Margie Kobow, has played a significant role in my fitness journey. Margie insists it isn't how fast or how far you go—what's important is that you keep putting one foot in front of the other. That's something I remind myself of frequently—and not just in physical situations. I find it to be pretty good advice any time the going gets tough.

One of the reasons I quit running was due to illness, but I'm recovering now. I give a lot of credit to my trainer, Walter Kyles. Walter works with me as I struggle with joint and muscle pain, adapting my workouts to accommodate whatever is happening on any particular day. Thinking of his sunny smile and words of encouragement keep me going throughout the week until our next session.

These are the voices in my head—voices that tell me to breathe, to sit and stand up straight, to keep going, to believe in myself. Like the voice from my childhood that keeps me safe when I cross the street, these voices remind me to take care of myself. I don't think they're anything to worry about.

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