**Sports Massage Therapist Tessa Glover Interviews First Time Marathon Runner and client, Claire Green.**

**So Claire, What made you decide to run the London Marathon?**

Running the marathon has been part of a running inspired journey. Two years ago I was not a runner. I had dodgy hips, creaky knees and weak ankles, I was still carrying baby weight, was struggling to keep up with two young children, was feeling unhealthy and lacked confidence. I signed up for a beginners running course, missed the first session but had a go on my own at the homework - two 8 minute runs. My first run consisted of me running for 3 minutes then sitting on the pavement and sobbing. I thought I was going to have a heart attack. I figured I was in over my head and tried to quit but the awesome coaches at Dulwich Park Runners (DPR) said I couldn’t quit until I had met them and run with them. Which I did, 7 weeks later I ran my first 5 miles. A year later I ran my first half and entered the ballot for the London Marathon.

**Why did you choose the Red Cross as the charity to run for?**

When my Dad was diagnosed with terminal lung cancer, we were told he didn’t have long to live. Tests were done and when the results came back we were told there was nothing that could be done. My dad was in hospital and wanted to go home. For this to happen there was a list of things that needed to happen. As we waited for these to be sorted he started to deteriorate, we were informed that if this continued they wouldn’t release him. By late evening things seemed impossible, one nurse suggested calling the Red Cross to see if they could help. Not only did they loan us a bed but they organised the fire alarms, oxygen tanks and picked my dad up in one of their ambulances. He was home, he spent the next day with friends and family, he was happy. He died the next day.

**How you found your training mentally and physically?**

Lots of fun. Lots of hard work. I was late getting my place so with only 12 weeks to go I had to get myself strong enough and fit enough to run 26.2 miles, Eek! I met with lots of amazing people, getting all the advise I could and putting together a plan. After a week of being ill I threw myself into training. An ever increasing running schedule, daily strengthening exercises, Pilates twice a week, Sports massage every fortnight and daily foam rolling.  It was manic but certainly stopped any panic setting in.

Some weeks were easy, others were horrible. Longer runs seemed easier to manage mentally whereas shorter run began to feel like marathons themselves. My legs got tired, everything started aching but my head was positive. Saying that, it wasn’t until my 18 mile run was complete that I believed I could do it.

Tapering is like marmite. I had looked forward to tapering for several weeks but once it started I hated it. I had a 3 week taper: Week 1 was full of too much excited yet nervous energy. Week 2 was even harder, I felt lost, sluggish and didn’t know what to do with my time. Week 3 was emotional, I was happy, scared, frightened, terrified, lost, panicky, excited, giggly, tearful and in denial within moments of each other.

**What was your diet like and did your body change?**

My diet has been the hardest thing to get to grips with. As the runs got longer I lost my appetite, I knew I had to eat but it felt like I was forcing myself to do it. It felt wrong, I tried to make sure I was eating the right stuff - lots of carbs before long runs and lots of protein after.

Despite all this in the first few weeks of training I actually put weight on but looked more toned and felt much better. I haven’t lost weight at all but my clothes fit me differently and I have a gap now between my thighs! :)

**Tell me about the race itself ...**

Awesome, overwhelming, exhausting, exciting, long!

It took 23 minutes to cross the start line, then it was loud, I couldn’t stop smiling, the miles were a blur of people. The Cutty Sark was magnificent as always but rounding the corner to see the glory of Tower bridge just before half way was my highlight. I felt good, strong and happy. The highway was full of familiar faces but at 16 miles I hit my mental wall, 26 still felt along way a way. Mentally I decided by 17 miles I was going to be fine. Then I met mile 18! Miles 18 to 22 were so hard. My legs hurt, the route became a concrete jungle and the supporters sparse - I wanted to stop and just cry.

I popped on my regular running tunes, found my smile and battled through the next few miles. I knew there would be friendly faces starting to appearing around mile 21, and by 22 that inner voice chirped up - “You can run 4 miles.” I knew then I could finish. My whole body burned but I the love for the run was back.

I think every runner looks forward to the glorious run down the mall... but for me, I got crazy, I talked to my legs a lot. And then there were signs counting down every 200m (I guess to encourage you?) but i felt like they were laughing at me. 200m is a really long way when you have just done 26miles!

**How did you feel when you crossed the line?**

I sobbed. My whole body hurt, I felt slightly dizzy and unstable but so happy, relieved and proud. And totally in love with London.

**Would you do it again?**

I would have signed up for 2018 there and then if it had been an option.

**What dos and don’ts you’d have for anyone thinking about running a marathon...**

**DON'T**

**Panic!** Be flexible and accept things might not always go to plan :)

**Try anything new on Race Day**Practice everything: clothes, footwear, food, gels, snacks and starting nerves (build other races into your training!)

**Ever underestimate**how much people (even those who think your crazy!) will get behind you and pull you through your training.

**DO
Believe in yourself!**

For me, the biggest part of marathon training was overcoming the doubts. Every ache and pain became a doubt, every hard run became a doubt, I lost my appetite as the training increased and it became a doubt and every time I thought about running 26.2 miles I had a doubt.

**Get yourself a support team.**For me it was as much help as I could get! Work out what and who you need and make a plan. I had a running coach - Susan Smith (DPR), got advice from a strength and conditioning coach - Jack Lynch, started twice weekly pilates with Matthew at the Pilates Education (West Norwood Therapies), saw Tessa for regular Sports Massage at West Norwood Therapies and had the massive support of my running club, family and friends.

**Get a roller**. It will become your new evil best friend. (And possibly a tennis ball too!)

**Be Kind to Yourself.**

Epsom salt baths became a favourite, as did the occasional naughty day off everything!

**Fight to stay positive.**