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Grounded

A distance runner copes with injury

by Erin Quinn

I KNEW SOMETHING WAS WRONG. I was running down from Skytop Tower in the middle of a snowstorm with only animal tracks along the trail. There was an arctic wind blowing. I had done the challenging part. I had run almost nine miles uphill in the snow, breaking trail as I lumbered up. Now I could coast all the way back down to the Testimonial Gatehouse in the fresh powder, the wind making the pine boughs rise and fall, the splashes of color from red cardinals darting in and out of the trees. An arctic wind was blowing.

This was my happy place --a quiet, blustery, white-encapsulated day with no one else on the trails.

I felt my hip lock up. Or was it my leg? All I knew was that the pain in my upper left hip and leg was so intense that it became hard for me to run.

I tried to lean more on my right leg and change the way my foot was striking the ground. I stopped at one of the mountain gazebos, snow-covered and tried to stretch my hamstring and to manipulate my hip in different directions to get it un-stuck. Nothing worked. I ran another half-mile or mile, and the throbbing built. It was five degrees above zero, and the snow was swirling. An eight-mile walk ahead of me, I was wearing running tights and a thin shell of a jacket with light gloves and a beanie.

I kept hobbling, almost peg-legging down the mountain.

Here's what the running brain does. It makes you think that if you can just go a little further, everything will right itself. When I went uphill it didn't hurt as much so I even began to find trails that went back uphill. But going back up only meant that I had further to go back down.

My gait changed to something that was slow and contorted. I had no other choice but somehow to limp back to the car.



Erin recuperated from her injury.

Deep rest

Finally back home, I was in so much pain that I was swallowing NSAIDs like Skittles and having to two-step it up and down stairs—good leg, bad leg, pause. Good leg, bad leg, pause.

I went to see my favorite physical therapist. An endurance athlete himself, he

is quirky and funny. His dog tries to get up on the examination table with you.

He had never told me to stop running. He might have suggested I scale it back and incorporate different stretches and strengthening exercises, but he had never just said, “you have to stop running for x amount of time.”

He believed my injury was a torn muscle. He said that I should "do nothing you do not have to do for three weeks."

I wasn't a fan of that answer. But at that point I couldn't walk normally. Fine,

I thought, fine. Two weeks was not the end of the world. I could just settle into resting. Deep rest.

I limped around for two weeks. Once I could manage a semi-normal walk, off

I went, dragging my daughter with me. At one point it was so cold that she said she couldn't feel her fingers or her toes. I was annoyed. Really? Why didn't you layer up more? Double those socks, wear

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“Mom,” she said, exasperated. “Just because you can’t run doesn’t mean I have to walk with you in sub-zero temperatures for hours at a time!”

Very true. Sobering statement. We drove back home. I begged her to put on some warmer clothes, which she did, and we headed back out.

Do what you can

When I went back, my PT asked me to move this way and that way on one leg and then the other, “You need to get an MRI,” he told me. “I think this could be a stress fracture. I’m not certain, but after three weeks this should be much better if it was a muscle tear.” Thankfully, we live in a region where your PT and your sports ortho are both endurance athletes.” Not only was I in capable hands, but I was under the care of two people who did what I do and understood how hard it



was to not do the thing that we do.

“The narrative you’re giving me and the way this is presenting sounds like stress fracture,” said the sports ortho doc. “I had the exact same story where

I was doing hill repeats on Lenape and I could run up with no pain, but the minute I started going down? Crippling pain. Turned out to be sacral stress fracture.”

Insert some screaming in my head right here. “I can’t have a stress fracture,” I thought. “That will take weeks and months to heal, and I have a really big, really long race that will require me putting a lot of miles in that running bank. There’s no time for a stress fracture.”

I went home and did what any injured runner would do, I started Googling ‘stress fractures,’ and then added more words like ‘running,’ ‘female runners’ and ‘recovery time.’ I didn’t like any of the answers. So I went to Redditt. There are so many non-professionals, anecdotal opinions on Redditt that there were moments that I was certain I would require surgery with rods in my leg. The next moment I was sure I had some form of rare but aggressive bone cancer.

I walked. I wrote in my journal. I did situps and pushups and eventually found my way back to the free YouTube workout sensation, Chloe Ting. The music crept me out and I had pandemic flashbacks.

At least I was on a mat doing something.

Do what you can, I told myself. I knew I wasn’t going to go to a gym. I went to work lifting some old dumbbells I found and tried to devise a makeshift exercise routine to strengthen parts of my body that running could not.



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Hudson Valley Health

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EDITOR & PUBLISHER: Geddy Sveikauskas

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER: Genia Wickwire

ADVERTISING: Lynn Coraza, Pam Courselle,
Elizabeth Jackson, Tobi Watson,
Jenny Bella

PRODUCTION MANAGER: Joe Morgan

PRODUCTION: Diane Congello-Brandes,
Josh Gilligan

CIRCULATION: Dominic Labate

COVER: photo by Erin Quinn

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Ulster Publishing (est. 1972) is a Hudson Valley media company with its office at 322 Wall Street in Kingston. For more info on upcoming special sections, including how to place an ad, call (845) 334-8200, fax (845) 334-8202 or e-mail info@hudsonvalleyone.com.



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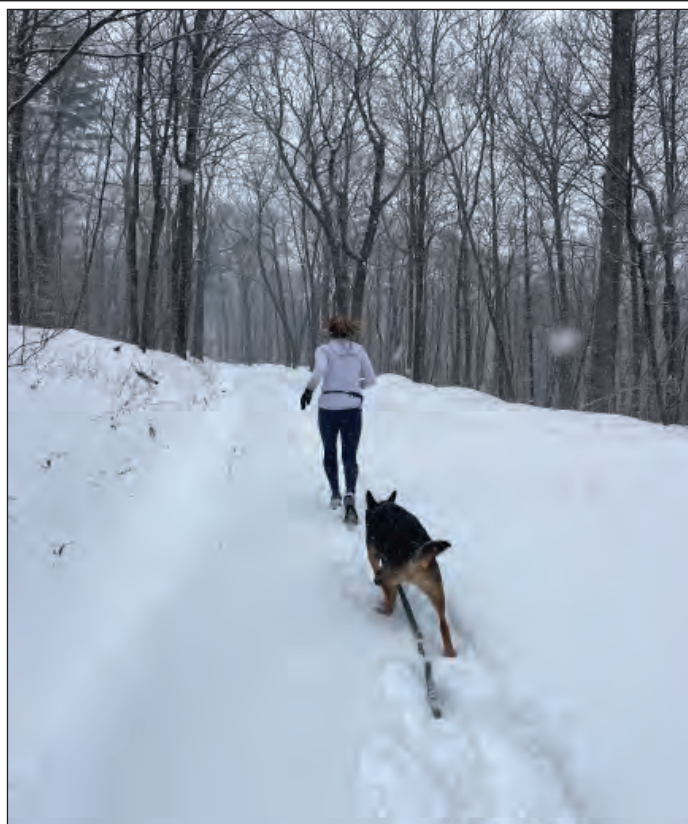
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ERIN QUINN

Snowy trail markers.



Erin running despite the snow.

A dark, isolating place

Because I couldn't run, I found more time to walk with friends. I spotted a snowy owl and several hawks. I took pictures of snow-covered cattails and old barn windows. I observed water that pooled and froze in staccato patterns.

When I sat in the waiting room to get the MRI, I remembered being a young college student -- injured and barely able to walk. In the basement trainers' room I saw football players, track runners, basketball stars and experienced gymnasts riding stationary bikes, being wrapped up in ice, lifting small weights or lying on a heating pad. It was the dark world

of athletics. It was the injured list.

It became my world.

Being injured is a dark, isolating place. Often neither the injury nor the path to recovery is clear-cut -- an endurance event that forces us to grow or not. I thought of how all the inspirational personalities in the distance-running world convey the message to push through the discomfort, embrace the suck, and accept that all the hurt is going to be worth it. I loved all those messages and used them when I ran a 100-mile race or a 250-mile race.

This time was more challenging. There were no cheerleaders or cowbells or Instagram reels about sitting on the bench

or the view from the sidelines. It was just me, a technician and a receptionist.

The MRI showed a femoral stress fracture. The DXA scan showed healthy bones. My doctor gave me a hug and told me what my recovery time would look like.

One step at a time

"I don't like to call them overuse injuries," my sports doc said, "because it implies you're doing something wrong. You're not doing anything wrong; you're just using your body to do something you love."

"We'll get back there," I said to the receptionist. "...one step at a time."

Yesterday, I was able to start my return-to-run program after twelve weeks of no-running, one minute of easy jogging and five minutes of walking. For me, it meant the world.

I'm sure there will be more fits and starts on this journey, but the added perspective gained from sitting on a cold rock in the valley will only make each step up the mountain that much more rewarding. I wouldn't choose this route, but it's the one that I'm on. As my mom always says, "Do the best you can with what you have."

Right now, I can walk. For a minute there, I could run.

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Go with the flow

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The mind and body benefits of tai chi

by Violet Snow

TAI CHI CAN provide multiple health benefits for people of all ages. It cultivates a sense of flow and calmness that feels amazing or as instructor Martha Cheo puts it, “I like how I feel when I do it and how I feel afterwards: like I’ve had a cup of coffee and a glass of wine, without the side effects. I have energy, and I’m relaxed.”

You probably know what tai chi is, but just in case this popular form of exercise has escaped your attention, here is a description:

Tai chi is a sequence of prescribed movements, flowing through a series of postures, usually performed very slowly and without stopping. Its more formal name, *t'ai chi ch'uan* (sometimes spelled *taijiquan*), is often translated as “supreme ultimate fist,” reflecting its origin as a martial art. This aspect of tai chi can be expressed with a partner in “push hands” practice, after the student has experience

with the basic form.

According to legend, tai chi was developed by a Taoist monk in China after

observing a fight between a crane and a snake. The small, coiling movements of the snake confronted the large, spreading





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movements of the crane, resulting in a stalemate. The movements of the animals express the contrast between such concepts as soft and hard, slow and fast, corresponding to the Taoist ideas of yin and yang, the balanced opposites that tai chi embodies.

“Tai chi helps you not just relax the mind but tap into something greater than yourself.”

Although the legend dates from the 13th century, documented lineages trace back to the 17th century. The most popular branch, at least in the U.S., is the Yang style. Professor Cheng Man Ching, who taught in this country, pared the Yang “long form” down from 108 movements (most of them repeated several times within the form) to 37 movements. Other teachers devised further variations,

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including the 24-point Yang form and a sequence called Tai Chi for Arthritis, based in the Sun tradition.

Because the forms require frequent shifts of weight from one foot to the other, the practice tends to enhance balance. When performed with proper alignment, the suppleness and strength of joints can be improved. *Prevention* magazine describes studies that report positive changes, from reduction in musculoskeletal pain to weight loss and better sleep.

Other benefits are psychological and spiritual. "It's not just about you moving," said Cheo, who teaches the Yang long form, as well as some adaptations, in Stone Ridge and New Paltz. "It's about you connecting with the energy around you, the sky, the earth, part of a larger whole, physically and spiritually. It's also a way to connect with people."

In a tai chi class, as students learn the



specific postures and transitions, they move in unison to practice the form. In this situation, said Cheo, "Tai chi helps you not just relax the mind but tap into

something greater than yourself. You're contributing your energy and focus to a larger group, becoming part of a larger force working together."

Another virtue of tai chi is that between classes, it can be practiced solo. No special uniform is required, no partner, no big studio, just a level surface of about five feet by five feet, either indoors or out. Once one has learned the sequence of postures of a specific form, it becomes possible to delve into deeper principles underlying the practice.

For Harriet Iles, who teaches the Cheng Man Ching short form in Woodstock, the essence of tai chi is learning to reduce effort until the *chi*, similar to what

When performed with proper alignment, the suppleness and strength of joints can be improved.

Westerners call "energy," flows naturally through the body. "People find it hard to learn something by not doing anything," she said. "But as we practice, eventually we find that the less we do, the better." Iles is one of several local tai chi instructors who studied with Lou Kleinsmith in the Woodstock area in the 1970s. Kleinsmith had been a direct student of Cheng Man Ching. "What Lou taught, and what I'm trying to teach," she said, "is that the *chi* moves through the body, but if we're not in the proper posture, it's blocked. I call myself the micro teacher. It's important to be lined up. If you get the alignment



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right, you can feel the energy. It doesn't happen right away, but eventually it happens all the time."

Having practiced tai chi for five decades, she finds its principles manifest in her daily life in myriads of ways. "When I lift something, I can carry heavy things if I make them part of my body. When I get out of the car with my arms full of groceries, I can close the car door by striking it with my heel—that's fun. In crowds, you can move with a lot of awareness through groups of people." She described an interaction with a martial artist who listened to her talking about her class and then decided to demonstrate his own skills. "He was kicking and chopping. I let him get close to me, and then I got out of way. He fell down and gave himself a bloody nose."

On the subject of "not trying," Iles elaborated, "We get in our own way. When we're trying, we create tension. We're not relaxed. The concept of relaxation is different from what we think it is. It's a state of readiness without effort."

An online search for tai chi in your area will yield a plethora of instructors and courses.

Many local libraries intermittently offer tai chi series that are open to beginners, as does the YMCA in Kingston.

The Ulster County Office for the Aging features classes in Tai Chi for Arthritis, which is specifically designed for elders. Simpler to learn than other forms, it focuses specifically on opening the joints for better mobility, as well as enhancing balance to prevent falls. It can be done seated in a chair. See <https://www.ulstercountyny.gov/Departments/Aging>.

Many people who have studied tai chi in the past can easily blend into an intermediate to advanced class like the one Iles leads in the winter at Mountain View Studio in Woodstock. (Peter Fein, who also trained with Kleinsmith, teaches the class in the warmer months.) Although beginners are welcome, the learning curve is steep. See the website at <https://www.mtnviewstudio.com/>.

Cheo offers classes for all levels, but the long form might be an intimidating place to start if you've never taken tai chi before. She also teaches a simplified Left-Right Balanced Form. Classes are held at the Marbletown Multi-Arts Kiva in Stone Ridge and Living Seed Yoga Center in New Paltz. She can be reached at mcheo@hvc.rr.com or 845-372-4148.

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Beyond the gym

Where to play indoor sports in the Hudson Valley

By Cloey Callahan

WHEN COLD WEATHER and limited daylight put outdoor plans on pause, staying active does not have to mean another lap around the gym floor. Across the Hudson Valley, a growing number of facilities offer dedicated spaces to actually play. Activities such as tennis, pickleball, climbing, skating, swimming and pickup basketball can all be played indoors in local facilities throughout the Hudson Valley.

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“The YMCA offers a welcoming environment for everyone, and it’s truly a privilege to serve such a diverse com-

munity, rich in history and culture,” said Heidi Kirschner, CEO/President, YMCA of Kingston and Ulster County. “Staying active year-round, even through the winter months, is key to maintaining good health. For young athletes, it helps keep them sharp; for older athletes, it helps maintain fitness and vitality.”

Before or after your activity, stop by the Winter Farmers Market in the YMCA lobby. Right now, they are offering free basketball clinics for youth of all skill lev-



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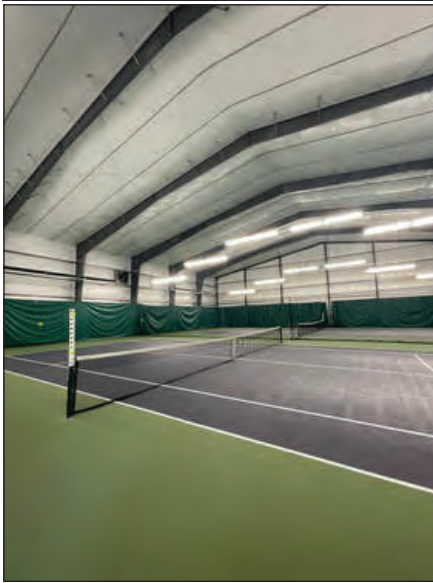


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Courts at Break Point Tennis.

can try bouldering, top rope climbing and lead climbing, depending on your experience level. This gym also offers climbing classes for adults and youth who want to learn the basics or advance their climbing knowledge.

“What really sets us apart from a standard gym is that climbing is interactive

and constantly changing,” said Megan Mantione, general manager and marketing director. “The walls are reset regularly, so there’s always something

new to climb.”

Their route setting team puts fresh climbs on the walls two days per week. For beginners, the most popular options

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are a staff-belay appointment or bouldering on a day pass. If you're looking for a community aspect, check out their monthly climbing meetups including an adaptive climbing night, ladies+ meetup and an LGBTQIA+ meetup.

"Those events give people an easy, low-pressure way to try climbing, meet

others, and stay connected throughout the winter season," said Mantione.

Hudson Valley Swim

Hopewell Junction / Various

Swimming isn't just for summer. In fact, it's an excellent way to stay active during the winter months. It provides a



Kiwanis Ice Arena in Saugerties.

full-body workout and is a low-impact exercise. That's why finding a gym with a pool can make a huge difference. Hudson Valley Swim offers robust swim lesson programs for all ages starting at four months through adult.

"We offer clinics for students who want to or are currently on competitive teams," said Jeff Gartner, President & CEO of Hudson Valley Swim. We also offer private lessons including adaptive lessons for those with special needs such as anxiety issues, physical issues, and those at various degrees of the spectrum."

Students participate in a results-driven class that helps them gain confidence and skill in the water faster and more refined than a typical lesson program. It's differ-

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ent from being just any winter activity, but instead one that can be potentially life saving if you're learning swimming safety.

Break Point Tennis & Pickleball
Kingston

During the winter months, this hot spot provides a consistent place for people to stay active through scheduled programs, especially group lessons, to create routine, accountability and connection when outdoor activity is limited. With a primary focus on indoor tennis group lessons, folks can participate in private instruction, clinics, leagues and supervised match play.

"We serve a wide range of players, including beginners, returning players, experienced competitors, juniors, families, and adults looking for a structured and enjoyable way to stay active," said Shawn Holzmann, owner and director.

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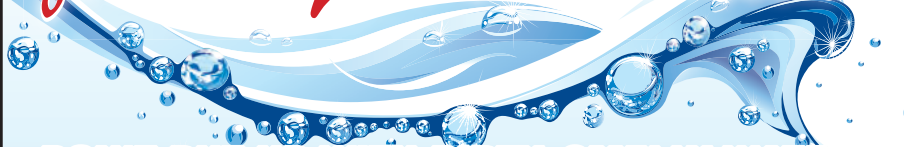
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ers can download their app to reserve a court. Winter is one of their busiest seasons, especially for group lessons.

“It is an ideal time for people to try group instruction and establish an active routine for the season,” said Holzmann.

Kiwanis Ice Arena

Saugerties

Time to get your skates on. This rink has several public sessions, inviting folks to come out and get on the ice. Come at night for cosmic skate on Fridays and Saturdays to enjoy a light show. Also available are times for sticks and pucks, where hockey skaters of any age are welcome to work on their shooting, skating and stick handling. If you’re looking to try something new, figure skaters can go to a freestyle session and hockey skaters can go to a drop-in hockey session.

The rink also has a pro shop, where you can find skate laces, hockey tape, blade covers and more, and a unique boutique consignment shop, which carries a variety of skating supplies and apparel for children and adults. Skate repairs and sharpening is also available.

Mustangs Bouldering

Kingston

This is an indoor bouldering gym that has shorter walls with padded floors and no ropes. It’s designed so both beginners and experienced climbers can start climbing immediately. The entire gym is reset every four weeks, with approximately 25% of the climbs replaced weekly.

“During the winter, the gym offers a reliable way to stay active when outdoor options are limited,” said Steve Bittner, co-owner. “People use the space in different ways — some come in for a focused workout, others to learn a new skill, and many because it’s a social place to move, work, and spend time.”

Offering a large coworking cafe area with over 30 seats, couches for lounging, and space to settle in makes it a great place to do work and exercise in between. “That’s not something you find at a standard gym,” said Bittner. It also does offer fitness equipment too, for when visitors want to get in a regular workout.

“People are often surprised by how approachable and social the environment is,” said Bittner. “Even visitors who arrive alone frequently find themselves talking with others, sharing tips, or taking breaks together.”

"PERSONALLY SPEAKING: A COMMUNITY RETROSPECTIVE"

Join us in the Steinberg Room on Saturday, March 7th as we host an opening reception for our March exhibit from 2 to 4PM. Registration is optional. The exhibit will be up for the month of March.



"Personally Speaking" was a weekly series of newspaper profiles written by Mala Hoffman published from 2001 to 2006 by the New Paltz Times (the Herald in its first year). The profiles featured "local residents and businesspeople who are involved in community, regional and national events and issues." The exhibit is "an opportunity to share these once again with the community."

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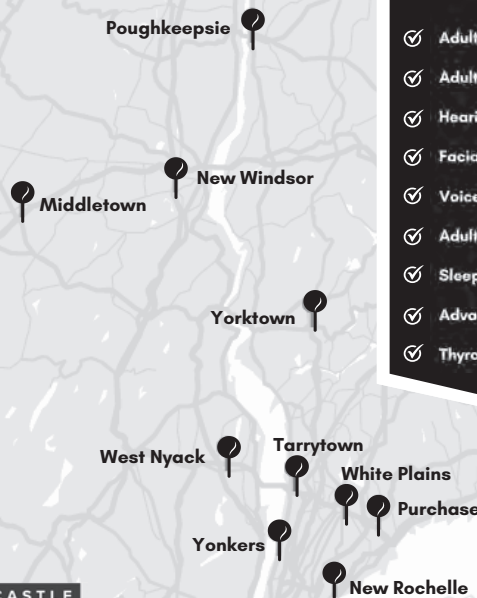
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