



HOW TO DEAL WITH RACE-DAY NERVES

You've been training for the ITU World Triathlon Abu Dhabi for months, as well as eating all the right foods to reach peak fitness. But how do you deal with the build-up of anxiety you are feeling as the day of the race nears?

While it's natural to feel a certain amount of anxiety before a big race, it's important

to remember that you can turn that into your advantage rather than allowing it to overwhelm and negatively impact your performance.

We spoke to Dr. Pilar Lachhwani, a psychiatrist at Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi, who has these top 3 tips on how to handle race-day nerves.

Top 3 tips on how to handle race-day nerves

01

Learn to relax

Your triathlon training schedule should not only include swimming, cycling and running, but also other types of exercise in which you can learn to relax your body and mind. "Pilates and yoga are great for triathletes," says Dr. Lachhwani. "Not only are you increasing your flexibility and core strength, you are also helping to relax your mind and body. And this could be a crucial advantage on the day of your competition."

02

Take a deep breath

Learning to breathe properly is also key to helping you slay that anxiety before you get to the starting line and to keep it under control during the race. Not only does it help you to prepare for the race, but breathing exercises can boost the levels of oxygen in your blood, which will help your overall performance. "Breathing exercises are very good for helping to calm a person," says Dr. Lachhwani. "You will have to practice it over time to perfect your technique, but you can practice this anywhere by breathing through your nose and out of your mouth."

03

Total recall

Staying positive is essential to keeping you on track for an anxiety-free race. Just like the breathing exercises, it can also take time to learn how to stay positive – especially mid-race or if you've hit a wall. Dr. Lachhwani recommends that athletes use positive self-talk to help them overcome anxiety. This, she says, can be anything from remembering a positive moment in a previous race to reminding yourself that you've experienced this before and that you got through it. "It's also important to look around you," says Dr. Lachhwani. "You will see that you are not the only person struggling or dealing with anxiety."



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Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi, the UAE's leading multispecialty hospital, is a key sponsor of the ITU World Triathlon Abu Dhabi, which is being held on Yas Island on March 2 and 3.

About Pilar Lachhwani, MD

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Pilar Lachhwani, MD, is a Staff Physician in the Medical Subspecialties Institute at Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi.

Prior to joining Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi, Dr. Lachhwani worked in Cleveland, Ohio, in the US, at Applewood Centers Inc. for 11 years. While at Applewood, she built a busy practice serving the low-income population of inner-city Cleveland.

Dr. Lachhwani completed medical school in her birth country of Colombia and subsequently pursued her subspecialty training in adult and child psychiatry at the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota in the US.