

When to contact your coach

As a coach, I dread hearing, “I didn’t want to bother you earlier, but…” or “I didn’t think it was important to tell you, but…” from my athletes. Unfortunately, if I had known about whatever incident the athlete neglected to tell me earlier, I probably would have changed the athlete’s training schedule. Here are a few scenarios, which, if they happen to you, I strongly suggest you talk to your coach. As you read these scenarios, you might think that these are obvious red flags, but keep in mind that when they are happening to you, you might not contact your coach, either.

My knee has been bothering me for a couple weeks, but I was too busy to call you, and so I just did your workouts anyway.

Sometimes injuries sneak up on you gradually. When and how they become problematic is the subject of another article, but it is up to you to know your body well enough to know when something isn’t right. And when that something isn’t right, note it in your training log, and let your coach know when it gets worse. Here’s a good example: one triathlete couldn’t finish a long training run due to sudden knee pain. Reviewing her training logs, we figured out that she had experienced similar pain, but less, on different training runs, both times after lots of breast stroke swimming. We eliminated breast stroke kicking from her swimming, and now, no knee pain.

I was laid off.

Given your situation, lay offs can be good things or bad things. One of my athletes didn’t have to go back to work right away, so with the added rest, he could handle more training volume. Others decide that they need to focus on a job search instead of training and racing, but still need the base fitness. Just because you have more time doesn’t mean that you can train more. Sometimes I suggest naps instead of extra workouts! Any change to your work situation – a move, a promotion, a change in upper management – all mean that you might have more or less time to focus on training.

I’m getting divorced/having a baby/going to my parent’s funeral/getting married.

As much as we would like to, we can’t really separate the mind from the body. So the stresses your mind experiences show up in race results, training, and even physical illness. If you are experiencing a life-changing event, talk to your coach about how it might affect your training.

I couldn’t do the workout.

If you can’t do the workout for whatever reason, contact your coach. You might think that missing your intervals by 10 seconds on the track is no big deal, but it might mean that your intervals for your other workouts might need adjusting. Or maybe the order of your workouts during the week simply needs adjusting.

My equipment isn’t working.

If your bike doesn’t work, you can’t train! Work on a solution to make sure that all your equipment is in working order. If that means calling your coach for suggestions, do it.

I feel like I’m getting sick and my resting heart rate is high. OR I’m not sleeping well. OR I’m irritable all the time and have no sense of humor.

Now it’s really time to contact your coach! All these symptoms together indicate that you are overtrained. But if you experience only one of these symptoms, it’s not clear that something is wrong. Better best let your coach know before you get too far down the path of fatigue.

My body weight is changing.

Some athletes want to lose a couple pounds, intentionally. But a large, unintentional weight loss or gain could be a symptom of other stresses on your body.

I don’t like the workouts.

If you don’t like the workouts that your coach is giving you, for whatever reason, let your coach know so he can adjust your workouts. If you don’t like the training, chances are, you won’t do it,

or you won't do it well. On the flip side, if you have a favorite workout, let your coach know that, too.

The workouts are perfect, the intervals are challenging enough, the heart rate zones are perfect, the rest interval is just enough, and I'm really happy with my fitness.

These are the words we coaches like to hear best. Share any moment of triumph, however small – climbing to the top of the hill first, implementing good strategies during a criterium, staying with cyclists who were stronger than you, outsprinting your archrival – because your coach likes to hear that you're on the right track. Getting the results that you expect from your coach? That's really good news. Share it!

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