RUNNING: SPORT OR WAY OF LIFE?

**by Kelly Hashway**

You flip through the channels for the fourth time and realize that once again there’s nothing on television that grabs you. Not a problem! Throw on some running shoes and comfortable clothes

and go for a run.

One of the coolest things about the sport of running is that you don’t need expensive equipment. All you need is a good pair of running shoes and a safe environment. But just because you don’t need much equipment don’t be fooled into thinking the sport of running is easy. No one wakes up and decides to run a marathon without training. Running requires discipline, perseverance, and concentration. It’s a sport that’s good for your body and mind.

Running strengthens your heart, lungs, and muscles. It develops coordination and makes you more aware of your body. Running also gives you energy by increasing your oxygen intake, and it improves your immune system so you don’t get sick as easily. It can even help you stay more focused in school because exercise helps you to think more clearly.

How do you get involved in the sport if you don’t know much about it? Most schools offer cross country and track programs, but there are also running clubs open to all ages. A simple Internet search can help you find some in your area. The programs show you how running can offer competition or just be for fun. They also teach runners to set realistic goals and take care of their bodies.

Runners have great respect for each other because they know how difficult the sport can be. If you go to a race, you’ll see people cheering for *all* the runners, from the first place finisher to the last place finisher. Running isn’t always about how fast you are or how far you’re going. It’s about getting out there and doing it. Participation is more important than competition, and effort is recognized over talent. If you’re looking for more than just a sport, running may be the perfect choice for you.

Dear Mom and Dad,

Have you ever wanted something so bad you were willing to give up Christmas for it? Well I have that feeling about getting a cell phone. I know I have asked for this many times before, but this time is different. Now I’m older and I am able to take care of things much better.

A cell phone can help keep me safe. Sometimes I have to wait for you to pick me up from soccer practice when almost everyone else is gone. Even though I stay on school property, strangers drive through the parking lot and it sometimes scares me. If I had a cell phone, I could call someone if I felt threatened by a stranger.

Another reason I need a cell phone, is to help me a better student. Cell phones aren’t just for texting and games. They are also good tools. I would use apps like the dictionary, encyclopedia and flash cards to help me with my homework. Even though I think it would be good to use it at school, I won’t because it is against the rules.

You might have been worried that I would get in trouble with my cell phone, but I’ve already thought about that. I will turn it off while I’m at school. When I’m at home, I will do my homework first and then use my phone to play only a few games to relax. I will also use an app called *Get Moving* to help me find outside activities.

I think you can see how important having a cell phone would be for me. I know you want me to be safe and to be the best student I can be, so it is really a no-brainer. And I know you worry about how much they cost, but cell phones are cheaper than they’ve ever been and I’ll help pay for some it with my birthday money.

Sincerely,

Your son,

Mark