

Saskia's Marathon!



26 year old Saskia has PoTS and Vasovagal Syncope, but that didn't stop her from running the 2018 Virgin Money London Marathon to raise funds for STARS completing the 26.2 miles in just 5 hours 36 minutes. So far, her Virgin Money Giving page has over £5,300! What a fantastic achievement! Here, Saskia answers our questions and gives a brief rundown post marathon.

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How did you feel after the run?

After the run I felt a wave of relief and then started to cry. When I found my mum I could see the relief in her eyes as she had been so terrified of receiving a call that she was all to used to in which she would hear that I was unconscious somewhere along the course. I realised when I saw her just how much worry I had put her through and also how proud I was that on the day that I had managed to be stronger than before and achieve a goal I never dreamed would be achievable. Also, I was really happy because all I wanted was a flapjack and proceeded to find my best friend who had made a whole box of them! So flapjacks kept the legs moving at the end!

Why did you choose to run for STARS?

I will always choose to support STARS, when I felt lost and alone with misdiagnosis and confusing medical terms the ability to have a charity like STARS that gave me some clarity and understanding in a difficult time was essential in making me accept a chronic condition. I want anyone else who is in my position to not have to struggle alone with coping and I believe STARS can help that. Supporting charities is incredibly important, but supporting one that you know influenced your ability to be happy and healthy is essential.

What advice would you give to anyone with your condition who wants to take up running?

During the marathon I found my condition and the symptoms of my condition were very challenging. It wasn't a comfortable run and especially with the heat, so firstly anyone with the condition should be aware that a marathon is a difficult undertaking and you have to be incredibly controlled and sensible. However, I would say that the training process and building up distance and time slowly over the weeks was a great joy and also I really felt like I was training my body to get used to the

continuous exercise. One trick I found helpful was to drink a big bottle of water and electrolytes the night before a run, I found this was a helpful trick to keeping the blood pressure steady when you first start running and it meant you could balance yourself a bit smoother. I also learnt that if you are feeling "off" before a scheduled run then you have to listen to your body, if symptoms were showing I would ask my boyfriend nicely and make him come with me for a quick walk or even a slow one if I really wasn't well. This was just to keep myself mentally going so I knew I could at least walk the distance if necessary!

Do you have any messages for your supporters?

For all supporters who were there on the day or donated to the charity, I am endlessly grateful. With the heat on the day there were a couple of times where I thought I was crazy and stupid for even attempting to run a marathon, but then I would see someone cheering me on or think of every single person who had donated and it would push me to the next mile. I learnt quickly to lie to myself and say I only had to run 1 more mile (about 25 times over!)

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Thank you, Saskia for such a wonderful effort in not only raising much needed funds for STARS, but for pushing yourself and proving that your condition has not stopped you from achieving your goals! You have inspired so many!