

Congratulations on starting the Couch to 5K training plan and preparing to run/walk the CAT Running 5K benefitting MEOW on April 20th! Just remember, the goal is to make this fundraiser fun! Here are some tips to get started and how to make it fun.

- You do not need to buy anything to do the Couch to 5K training plan.
 - Grab a pair of sneakers that you have that are appropriate for walking (no high heels please!).
 - Put on a pair of sweatpants or wear jeans, khakis or whatever feels comfortable to walk and run in the current weather outside that day.
 - Add a sweatshirt, shirt, jacket, rain jacket or whatever feels comfortable when moving and works for the weather (we are PNWers, we go out in the rain!).
 - Wear a hat or gloves if you wish to keep warm.
 - Use your smartphone, any watch, stopwatch or timer to track your minutes walking and running. It does not have to be exact, so anything that will give you an idea of how long you have walked and run, particularly when trading off between each, will work. You could even count if you wish (one one thousand, two one thousand, etc.).
- The first step: Recognize that just getting out the door and getting started on day one may feel difficult. To borrow a motto from Nike, Just Do It! Don't worry about what other people think because really, they likely are secretly impressed and cheering for you. If not, then they don't know how great walking and running are for people, so their opinions don't matter in this area. Running is one of the best things a person can do for health.
- This plan starts out with walking only the first two weeks to get your body used to moving. It may feel tough at first, but soon it will feel so good, particularly when you are done. And by the way, you are burning calories, so feel free to give yourself a little treat at the end!
- And if you want to walk only during this training plan and walk the 5K, that is wonderful. Follow this training plan and substitute "walk" every time you see "run." You still will gain big benefits from following the plan and getting fresh air and exercise.
- We highly recommend doing some dynamic warmups before you go out on training days. This will loosen your muscles and joints a bit, making walking and running feel more fluid. There is a link to some good dynamic warmups at the bottom of the Couch to 5K plan.
- Running may seem intimidating, but we all did that when we were kids, and it was fun and easy. The addition of running to this plan (week 3) starts with alternating one minute of walking then one minute of running. Running doesn't need to be and should not be fast during this plan. Just move a little quicker than you were walking. The real difference between walking and running is with running both feet come off the ground at one time, it has nothing to do with speed. Enjoy the feeling, remember when you were a kid chasing and being chased by other kids at recess. Tag, you are it.
- As you get further into the plan you may want to run a bit faster or maybe you don't. Either choice is fine, you are out in the fresh air getting exercise, which is good for you and will make you feel better. The more you train the better you will feel at the same pace or if you choose, the easier it is to run a little faster. The choice is yours!
- If you love the training, feel good and you want more, do some easy walking on the rest days.
- Find a friend to train with you. This friend can live by you, and you can easily meet. Or you can meet part way between you two. Or you can call/Facetime with each other while training, so you are doing it together virtually. Or just text/email/call after you complete your training for the day letting your friend know what you did and ask that they do the same. Motivate each other, it makes it more fun.

- If you have a dog (or a neighbor will let you borrow their dog) take them with you (the dog, not your neighbor), he/she will love getting out there starting to train and it is so fun to walk & run with a furry companion. Be aware, most cats would have no interest in this activity, even if we allowed them outside. But they will happily share in your post training hot cocoa treat, taking a lick or two of that well deserved whipped cream topping!
- On days you are not walking or running, consider doing some yoga exercises for runners. It will increase your core strength and flexibility and keep your body in training mode. There is a link at the bottom of the Couch to 5K plan for some good yoga exercises for runners. Cats (and dogs) are yoga experts and may want to join you and show you exactly how to do it. That is great, it makes it more fun (and challenging, don't squish them when they get in the middle of the exercising).
- Join our Facebook Couch to 5K group to connect with others in training, share funny stories, successes, and challenges, and encourage and be encouraged.

Remember, by taking on this challenge, you are doing something amazing for yourself and MEOW and the more you find enjoyment in it, the better the experience will be. Now let's get out there and start moving!