

## **At the Finish Line: Sport Psychology Consultation in a Central Park Tent**

Immediately after running a marathon, runners may experience a number of physical and emotional reactions. At the New York City marathon finish line area, tents are set up to treat any reactions that require significant medical care. In addition, some tents are available for runners, who do not need “treatment” but who may want or need time to rest and recover before they are ready to be with their families and friends. These recovery tents, which are called “family tents,” contain many cots, and are equipped to treat minor medical conditions. The professional staff includes volunteers who are nurses, podiatrists, athletic trainers, massage therapists, chiropractors, or medical students.

In such a setting, sport psychology practitioners can provide important services by offering consultation to the staff and brief contact interventions to the runners. These services can include small group meetings with the staff to describe what to listen and look for regarding runners’ thoughts and emotions that might warrant a consultation with the sport psychologist. In addition, the consultant may assist other professionals in their direct services to runners, by providing psychological support to both the runners and the practitioners. This support includes a solution-focused mindset, is limited to here-and-now functioning, and often consists of cognitive restructuring.

Direct intervention with a runner starts with the athlete’s definition of the problem, builds on what is presented, stays focused on present options, and attempts to create a shift in the athlete’s perception of the situation. Some examples of the consultation experience will be presented. These include working with staff members who felt insecure and uneasy, and with runners who were frightened, discouraged, angry, or depressed