

Tara Zimliki was first bitten by the running bug when she was 7 years old and began joining her father on his regular runs. But it was in college after a friend challenged her to run the New Jersey Marathon that she became hooked on the distance.

"It was such a great experience — unlike anything else," says Zimliki, personal trainer and founder of Tara's Bootcamp.

After that first marathon, Zimliki decided she was going to tackle two a year, eventually running one in every state. "My goal is to do 50 by 50," she said. But it wasn't just her own competitive spirit she had in mind, she wanted to turn marathoning into a family affair. "I knew I wanted to have kids one day and thought they could travel with me and we'd find fun things to do in every state. I could run and they could visit an aquarium or my husband could take in a game."

Now, at age 30, with 16 marathons under her belt (three which she completed while pregnant, including one where she was eight months pregnant!), the marathon junkie and mother of two hopes her story inspires women — especially moms — to lace up their shoes and start running.

Zimliki believes that the benefits running delivers are unmatched. She said that running throughout her pregnancies, including on the days she gave birth, kept her strong mentally and physically, enabling her to deliver both children without the use of drugs. "Running has taught me about tolerating pain. I honestly don't think I could have made it through labor and delivery naturally without running," she said.

But an easier delivery is just one of the many perks. "Running while pregnant is a great way to prevent gestational diabetes, to stay happy and healthy and prevent postpartum depression," she said. "And now, with two small girls, running helps reduce my stress, gives me strength and really helps my patience."



started. "You have to take it gradually — it's just putting one foot in front of the other. Moms are busy but you can split up your workouts — get up early and go for a short run and finish the rest of your run later in the day. You have to remember, your health comes first. You have to take care of you — it will make you a better mother, wife, person."

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It also sends a message to her children about health and personal achievements in a more meaningful way than words alone could. "One of my daughters wants to be a trainer too. And when I run a race, my girls ask if I'm going to win a trophy; I tell them it's not about winning or losing, it's about going out there and having fun and feeling good. [My marathons] have become this big event they love to go to, where they get matching outfits and are excited to cheer me on," she said.

They also get to check out the sights along the way, just as Zimliki had hoped. Incidentally, Ohio has a wonderful marathon *and* an amazing aquarium.

Running while pregnant isn't for everyone, Zimliki noted. "You should absolutely talk to your doctor. The big thing with running while pregnant is to take it easy and watch your heart rate," she said.

Zimliki knows that many moms find running (while pregnant or not) an intimidating sport and may feel too busy to commit to it, so she offers this advice for getting