

## Run for TC Essay

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Running, the pounding of feet on pavement, a racing heartbeat and the finish line waiting up ahead; these are the things that come to mind when thinking of running. Running is said to be an individual sport, which in all technicalities, it is. However, running affects so much more than just the individual person. Whole communities can be influenced by this simple sport. Running can bring people together, raise awareness and help many to aspire for a healthier, active lifestyle.

When most people think of running, they think of burning calories and losing weight, the physical benefits. Some people use running just to free their minds of the stress of reality, the mental benefits. What everybody forgets though is the social benefits! The physical challenges of running can bring even the most unlikely of friends together. When people are out there running, striving for their goals, and enduring the stresses of running, they do not have time to think about a person as deeply as some usually would. They don't stop to wonder how much money they have, or where they live, or how "popular" they are. They just know that this person is going through at least some of the same stresses that they themselves are going through and that they are going through them together.

Everyone has heard of the Susan G Komen foundation and how each year they put on walks and races in order to bring out thousands of people working together for the cure. This is just one example of how running helps raise awareness. Each year, just here in this small city of Kingsport, around 4,500 people come out to run/ walk the Susan G Komen race for the cure. An entry fee of \$20-\$30 each is far from pocket change that is raised for this great cause. When these thousands of runners and walkers all line up wearing their pink shirts (or "in honor of" or "in memory of" shirts) and run through the local neighborhoods, people line the streets to watch them race to the cure and honor those who have suffered. Running is not just about speed or time, individual goals or medals; it is about people trying to help themselves and their community.

What does it mean to help themselves and their community? If running cannot find the cure to cancer, it cannot solve the debt problem, and it cannot give people houses and jobs back, what can it do? Running can create a domino effect. When one part of a person's life is healthy they realize how good it makes them feel. This, in turn, can lead to a person eating healthier foods with less fats and grease, or taking up more activities like biking or swimming. Sometimes it just causes a mere boost in confidence that can help in other parts of life. Sometimes it doesn't just affect one person. Family members notice the way running has changed the person's outlook on life, how it gives them more energy, and then they start to run. Then those family members' friends notice it in them. Health and happiness is contagious and is spread through one person making a difference in themselves and sharing it with the world around them. Whether they run

3 miles or a marathon, it is all the same. Running gets people off their couches and outside in the sunlight and can inspire even the most un-athletic people to make changes in their lifestyles.

Running is not easy. It is not going to make someone skinny and healthy in one day. It is challenging and on some days people may question why they even run in the first place. Why should they put their bodies through stress and risk of injury? They may then answer themselves by saying “so I can eat ice cream and cookies” or “so I have more energy as I get older”. Just remember, running is never something you have to endure alone. Running may be an individual sport with individual scores, but you never see a one person race. There will always be someone in the community who understands and respects the challenges of this sport. The pains may seem overwhelming but the long term affects on the individual and the community far outweighs them. Running brings unlikely friends together, raises awareness, and influences people all throughout the community to lead healthier, active lives. What other sport can do that? That is right, none.