

Beyond the Office: Jim Shoopack Runs Over Depression



Twelve years ago, Ashford University Online Instructor [Jim Shoopack](#) was diagnosed with clinical depression. While his doctors believed it stemmed from an existing seizure disorder, the depression appeared to come out of nowhere and quickly began to impact Jim's life. For about 100 days, the black cloud lingered, resulting in major depression with many of the typical symptoms, including feelings of sadness, worthlessness, and diminished interest in most activities. It was the worst time of his life. Rather than succumb to the depression, Jim began looking for ways to combat it.

Through his research, Jim quickly found that exercise was an antidote for depression. This knowledge inspired Jim to start walking. Then he began jogging. Lo and behold, shortly thereafter, Jim was registered for his first 5K, which has now evolved into completing a handful of marathons each year. "Because the depression lasted 100 days, I want to get those days back and complete 100 marathons in my lifetime," said Jim.

According to Jim, it's the endorphin rush created from exercise that combats depression. Endorphins are chemicals released by your body when you exercise and they interact with receptors in your brain that reduce the perception of pain. They also trigger positive feelings in your body, also known as the "runner's high." "When I am finished running a marathon, I feel accomplished and it's a really great feeling," said Jim.



Jim Shoopack and his cheering section

Conquering this dark period in his life motivated Jim to begin a personal crusade to help others overcome depression, raise awareness and funds for non-profit organizations working toward improving the lives of people suffering from mental illness, and remove the social stigma associated with the disorder.

“I have always had an issue with the stigma associated with mental illness – it is simply unacceptable.” Jim has presented to numerous audiences and engaged in several events as part of his efforts. He is currently working with an activist group at a university in Pennsylvania to help keep its counseling center open. “I know how important this center is to students. No school is ever going to eliminate its physical health facility, so why should mental health be any different?”

He added, “This experience has taught me to prioritize and see things from a different perspective. I was given a second chance at life, and I plan on honoring God, my family, friends, and community with this second opportunity.”

To learn more about Jim’s efforts, [click here](#).