

My heart rate is climbing, my legs are heavy and my arms move reluctantly as my body awkwardly tries to rally together to create a systematic rhythm to the beats of the music playing in my ears. As one song ends and the next begins, my mind repeats the mantra “The first mile is your warm-up.”

I love running. It is my outlet. My runs are usually early in the morning when no one else is around. The only signs of life are the morning birds sweeping down to catch the waking insects as they rise from the dew sprinkled grass. Because of the quiet stillness, I can hear my body engage in the experience. My feet pound on the pavement, my rapid breathing becomes heavy, and after the first mile, my legs and arms rhythmically move to the songs playing on my iPod.

I love running. It is my escape. As my body moves, my mind creates the scenes. Leaping off the curb making sure my foot has a soft landing, I suddenly become the lead dancer in a Broadway musical. Moving flawlessly across the stage, I pour my energy into the dance moves and the audience roars with excitement and awe. When the song ends, so does my stage production and I know that I am closer to the end of my run.

I love running. It is my oasis. Softer sounds enter my mind, and I leave the stage and enter my garden feeling the quiet solace of the morning. There is no loneliness, only the

I love running. It is my selfishness. I do not worry about my daughters. I do not think about the many papers I have to grade. I do not concern myself with bills. All I do is let myself think of me. My rhythm, my star performance, my solitude. For 45 minutes, three times a week I do what I love.

Sue Cochran