

## Fitness Profile

## An enduring will

## Woman with MS is ready for today's New York Marathon.

Eileen Friedman looks at life as a collection of defining moments.

Like the moment, almost five years ago, when she was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. And the moment, following a long spell of heavy-heartedness, that she met a woman who became her trainer, running partner and friend.

Months later, Friedman finished her first half marathon. Proudly waiting for her medal, she met a man who had no legs who had finished in a wheelchair.

From such moments come perspective. And for Friedman, a renewed vow that MS will never own her.

Today, Friedman will run the New York Marathon.

The wife and mother of two teenagers is running her first marathon through the Achilles Track Club, an international non-profit organization that supports long-distance runners with disabilities. Her trainer and friend, Carmen Kartiganer, will run as her guide.

Before MS, Friedman was a casual runner and avid tennis player. Her brother was diagnosed with the same disease 10 years ago.

"Every year, my whole family used to do the 6-mile charity walk for the National Multiple Sclerosis Society. When I got diagnosed, there was a long quiet stage. . . . I stopped running. I stopped living passionately."

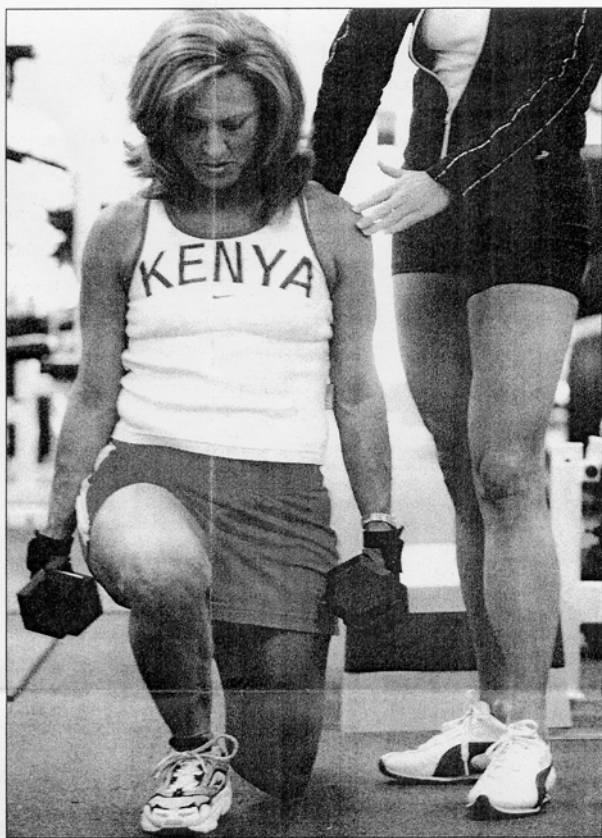
Two years ago, Friedman started walking again, at the MS event. Kartiganer pushed her to work harder. She started running 5K and 10K races for the first time. In February, she ran her first half marathon in Miami. In April, she started training for the New York Marathon.

She continues to fight an "uphill struggle" with sporadic MS attacks that radiate pain through her left arm and body and leave her tired and weak. She occasionally gets numb feet or a weak arm.

**Why are you running a marathon?**  
For me, it's a celebration of life. A celebration of the things that I know I can do. Don't tell me what I can't do, only what I can. You can run, walk, you can go slow. There's no running police. You don't have to kill yourself. It's very individual. You just need to be able to endure. Endure to the end.

**Does MS restrict your training?**  
You know your own signs. You don't over-fatigue yourself. I run in the shade. I wear hats that are insulated with lining to keep me cool. They say heat is not a great thing, although I've never been affected by heat. Exercise is wonderful for MS. There are people with MS who climb mountains and race cars and scuba dive and run marathons. MS is different in every

single person.  
**What is your training routine?**  
During the week, we run between five and nine miles, three times a week. We do a long run on the weekend. A few weeks ago, we ran 23 miles. We also weight train four days a week. After an Achilles' injury in June, I stopped running and started road biking. Around August, I started running a half mile a few days a week, then a mile, slowly building up. By end of August, I was at 10 to 12 miles. My gait has changed, I can't run as fast. But there's no pain and that's huge.  
**Do you have days when it's difficult to run? How do you keep going?**  
I've had bad days, absolutely. Sometimes when I run, my right foot gets numb. Sometimes I've had to walk. If there's pain, I stop. But I always regroup. Nothing is life shattering. Nothing in life altering. At one point, the doctor said, 'This may not be your marathon. You may not be able to do this.' I thought to myself, 'They didn't see the man in the wheelchair with no legs. They don't know what's in my heart.' I was going to heal, regroup and catch up.  
**What about weight training?**  
Weight training is very important to running. It makes me a leaner, stronger athlete. It's important to have that muscle strength. Because of the



**STRENGTH IN NUMBERS:** Eileen Friedman works out with her friend and trainer Carmen Kartiganer at Body Solutions in Plantation. Staff photo/Andres Gonzalez

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**What about weight training?**  
Weight training is very important to running. It makes me a leaner, stronger athlete. It's important to have that muscle strength. Because of the

muscles I've developed, it makes my legs a lot stronger so I can push harder. And you certainly use your arms. It makes me stronger in every single thing I do.

**Do you have a special diet?**

I make great efforts to eat well and take care of myself. I eat a lot of lean proteins, a lot of fish. A lot of complex carbs. A lot of fruits and vegetables. Green leafy vegetables are very important. And I'm constantly hydrating with water. I don't believe in the word diet. I just make healthy choices. I've become the best label reader around.

**What is your marathon goal?**

My goal was to run in less than four hours. My goals have changed. Rather than not run at all, I'm going to run a whole lot slower. I'm just happy to complete. Completing this marathon will be the biggest blessing of my life, aside from having my children.

— KATHLEEN KERNICKY

Know someone who is a profile in fitness? E-mail [kvarma@sunsentinel.com](mailto:kvarma@sunsentinel.com). Or call 954-356-4719 and leave a recorded message. Include the name, city and daytime phone number, plus a brief description of how this person stays fit.