

Why I Run...

I am grateful for the research that was done so that my mom could be here for all my milestones.

May 7, 2019 By [Damon Runyon Cancer Research Foundation](#)

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On my 14th birthday, my parents sat my brother and me down and let us know that my mom had cancer — non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma to be exact. At the time, I didn't know what that was.

All I did know was that our lives really were not the same after that. As much as my mom wanted life to go on as usual, it was difficult. Our lives really revolved around the disease for years.

My mom underwent intense chemotherapy, followed by an autologous stem cell transplant. She went into remission, but the cancer came back. She went through more intense chemotherapy, followed by two allogeneic stem cell transplants from two very generous anonymous donors. Up until that point, I had dreamed about being a teacher, like my mom. After seeing everything she went through, I decided I didn't want anyone else to have to go through that. I wanted to help people and find a cure for cancer.

Now, seventeen years after her initial diagnosis and twelve years after her final transplant, she is cancer-free. But her experience had a profound effect on me.

After receiving my PhD, I learned that I was the recipient of the Damon Runyon-Sohn Pediatric Cancer Fellowship Award. This award gives me the funding and freedom to make a greater impact with my research. My work focuses on finding better treatments and cures for a rare and aggressive type of pediatric leukemia.

I am grateful for the research that was done so that my mom could be here for all my milestones. My family and I know firsthand the benefits of funding for cancer research, which is why I am running in this year's Runyon 5K at Yankee Stadium on May 11. 100% of the money raised goes to scientists like me, to fund all areas of innovative cancer research. I hope you'll consider joining or sponsoring me or one of the other teams running in this year's event.

There's still time to [sign up for the Runyon5K](#) or you can [donate to Marissa's fundraiser directly](#).

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