Talking Yourself Out of Exhaustion: The Effects of Self-Talk on Endurance Performance

You have reserves of strength you know not of:

The traditional view of physical exhaustion is that your muscles let your brain know when they are out of fuel. Yet medical studies have repeatedly shown that even when subjects report themselves “exhausted,” fuel remains in the muscle. What gives? Recent research (Medicine and Science in Sports & Exercise, Oct 2013) suggest that “running out of energy” is much more subjective, much more of two way street than previously thought. To a certain degree, your brain tells your muscles when to shut down rather than the other way around.

This feedback loop is known as the psychobiological model and research shows that your mental attitude in the form of positive self talk can have a significant effect upon your endurance levels. To be effective, the self talk should be “consistent and systematic”. Phrases as simple as “You are doing well” or “I’m feeling good” if repeated steadily and persistently, impacted performance. However, irregular use had no discernible effect upon performance. (The New York Times, "Keep Telling Yourself, ‘This Workout Feels Good’" (November 6, 2013)

Closing quotes:

"We all have voices in our heads which talk to us on an almost constant basis. Our voices give us messages continually, and what they say to us affects us.” — Juliene Berk


"Every waking moments we talk to ourselves about the things we experience. Our self-talk, the thoughts we communicate to ourselves, in turn control the way we feel and act.” — John Lembo