

# ULTRA-TRAIL

AUSTRALIA

UTA50 - Melissa Ingram  
Post UTA recovery

When I completed the UTA50 I felt I had done as much as possible to physically prepare for the race, despite having knee surgery 13 weeks before lining up. Although I was prepared for the physical fatigue and had convinced myself that it would most likely be a bloody long walk (and it was!), I was less prepared for the emotional toll it has taken. For almost two weeks I have felt like a bear - I eat, sleep and get cranky (I am also quite teary but I'm not sure bears are prone to tears so that appears less bear like than my other behaviours at present).

Information on physical post-race recovery is available everywhere - compression garments, hydration, food, warm bath and stretching seem to be the most common and effective strategies.....but what about the emotional / mental recovery? Depending on the intensity of the race your training period may have been extensive and your focus on that one race day in the future quite narrow.

Once the race is complete, what do you do??? It's over, you now need to recover, which means no training (not necessarily complete rest but time off running varies from person to person as does the advice suggested in various forums) and finding a new goal / focus. If the event was tough and long as all ultra trail events are, then the emotional toll may well have been huge. The emotional toll starts to kick in during the race and at its completion you may well have experienced every emotion known to man, ending up at the back of the finish shute a blubbering mess of jelly legs, shortness of breath and tears (yep - that was me, although with my medal hung proudly around my neck!)

So what can we do? The obvious answer is spend quiet time recovering with loved ones who may well have not seen you on Sunday mornings for months. If you feel physically OK (and not completely terrified by getting out there again), maybe look at your next goal - but make it a few months down the track and a short or fun one just to warm back up again; meet with some friends for a light training gallop after you've given yourself sufficient rest and allowed your head time to process your recent mammoth achievement; organise dinner with your non running friends as they quite possibly feel neglected too; book a holiday for immediately after your run - great rest time; or catch up on those household tasks like gardening and painting that have been patiently awaiting your attention. Remember that you gave it your best shot and even finishing last is better than all those who are still sitting on the lounge so soak up the accolades, be proud of yourself and give your emotions some time to gently ease back into gear.