

Meet Martin Yelling

Jantastic founder, husband of Olympic runner Liz Yelling and father of three, Martin Yelling found 30 minutes in his very busy schedule to talk us through his commitment to personal development, the apopular podcast Marathon Talk and his motivation for setting up Jantastic.



You're obviously a man with many strings to his physical activity bow, how would you best describe yourself?

The most accurate description would probably be that I'm a physical activity advocate or influencer. I try to do things that share the value of being healthy and active. I'm a presenter, writer, coach and organiser! Right now I'm focussed more around big projects aimed at getting people interested and engaged with physical activity.

You've got more than one academic achievement to your name, with a sports science degree and a PhD to name only two. Why did you feel it was important to continue your personal development?

Being active is a real passion. When I was young, I wasn't sure what to do, but knew I loved inspiring others to be active. I was doing sport and my school career advisers suggested teaching. So I qualified as a teacher and taught! After a few years I realised that it wasn't quite for me, so I went back to studying and completed a PhD and a Post Doc in policy making and effective learning in education around physical activity. Over 20 years ago we were facing

the same issues with children and physical activity that we're facing now. Despite what we might read we still have some way to go in helping the next generation become rounded, active, healthy young people and adults.

You started the hugely popular Marathon Talk Podcast (www.marathontalk.com) back in 2010 and after 5 years it's still going strong. What has been the podcasts' biggest challenges and successes in that time?

We're probably facing our biggest challenge right now. Commercially it can be difficult to sustain because we don't place traditional forms of advertising, like in magazines, so it's difficult to get the broader exposure. It's a challenge, but we have an amazing community of people we like to feel we're reaching and impacting on a regular basis.

We started the podcast for runners and to help people be active and improve. Runners tended listened to music while training but little else. So from that to having over three million downloads now is incredible. I love the fact that we've been able to build such a positive community of

supportive people. We have been criticised for our 'relentless positivity' in the past! We are 265 episodes down and each week we interview not only experts in the running world but people from the comedy and entertainment industries. It's a great resource.

A couple of years ago, you set up Jantastic (www.jantastic.me). Tell us how that came about and why.

The primary reason for starting Jantastic was to help make exercise habitual. We wanted to help people to make it a regular part of their week, so it becomes less of a chore and more of a positive lifestyle choice. It initially came about as a tool to help runners training for a spring event, like their first 10k or marathon. Jantastic is about behaviour change, that's why it's 90 days long. We understand it's difficult, but if you really want deep and meaningful change, sticking to it for 2 weeks doesn't work. We want to provide the framework and support to make that journey more reachable.

The key is that levels of engagement for each person are self-set, so it's not us telling you to do it because the more I tell you to

do something, the less likely you are to do it. This helps remove the barriers to participation. It's all about setting a personal, relevant and appropriate activity challenge and doing it on your terms in your own time.

With all your work and personal commitments, how do you still find time to keep active?

You have to walk the talk. It's all well and good talking about the benefits and value of being active, but if I don't do it myself I soon realise the benefits I have obtained leave me fairly rapidly. There are days when it's hard to find the drive, but I always feel better almost immediately from doing it. As you get older it becomes more important. I enjoy the time I have outdoors, the psychological benefits, the space and the environment. With me and Liz, it's all about negotiation and compromise. We have three children so we need to work to find time in the day. It doesn't have to be a long time, find that 40min window. I used to think I needed a long time but I can do 30mins now and get the same brilliant benefits. We prioritise, take it seriously and find creative solutions.