

Brain's tolerance for pain may decide how far we push ourselves

By Ian McMahan, Outside

If you've ever experienced that sensation of powering up the last hill of a long run—when your legs feel like cement and your lungs are heaving, you've probably wondered how much your body can actually take. Could you dig deeper, even when your legs are telling you to stop?

Your own stopping point may have as much to do with your tolerance for suffering as physiological strength. We are accustomed to thinking that our limits are physical and that the way to get stronger is by pushing harder and going longer.

But the brain's tolerance for pain may play a significant role in how far one can push into that dark place.

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