Every morning, New York native and fitness fanatic Marisa Boasa wakes up and begins her day as any other athlete does.

She eats a healthy breakfast, part of a clean nutrition plan balanced in protein, fat and carbohydrates; completes a series of intensive mobility warm-ups, where she physically and mentally prepares for the day ahead; and laces up her shoes for a long-distance run, as she trains for her multiple yearly foot races around the country.

Driven by a deep passion for health and overall well-being, she is your typical athlete — in all aspects but one.

Marisa has multiple sclerosis.

Her diagnosis came in August 2018, after she began to feel some different limitations to her mobility while training for the Philadelphia Marathon. The diagnosis also came with a daunting prognosis: “You’ll never run again.”

For many, this would have been a stopping point. For Marisa, it was a challenge.

What followed was a strategic rehabilitation plan coupled with a firm promise to herself and to others, a promise “to stay mobile and not stop.”

“It’s not easy. However, the answer is always no if you don’t ask, and in my case, it means asking for help. Having a strong network and circle of people who support me is in many ways the figurative harness to get me through some of the most difficult days. Fortunately for me, I also believe in a positive outlook, and that plays a crucial role in what I am trying to achieve.”
Seeking out treatment at the Mandell Center for Multiple Sclerosis at Mount Sinai Rehabilitation Hospital, part of Trinity Health of New England, she was placed on a strict regimen of care and treatment, which involves periodic assessments to identify areas of concern and a plan to begin working toward mobility benchmarks mutually established by her and her physical therapist.

“Consistency is the most important part of any form of rehabilitation,” she said. “Be consistent with therapy, medications as needed, eating well, exercise and sleep.”

Just over a year later, Marisa ran the very race that she was training for when she first learned about her condition, participating in the 2019 Philadelphia Marathon last November.

But she didn’t stop there.

Since her diagnosis, she has put on her runner's bib seven times, practicing the advice she gives to others facing conditions similar to hers: “Keep moving, mentally and physically.”

She continued, “Often times we stand in our own way, and it’s easier to quit, but no one ever feels a level of accomplishment when they quit.”

A symbol of overcoming seemingly insurmountable odds, Marisa decided to create Fight for Mobility, a grassroots initiative and platform through which she focuses on inspiring others. She is also working with congressional leadership to introduce a bill by the same name that advocates for certain accommodations provided during foot races for those with varying physically abilities.

Marisa is not a traditional athlete, but it is her unconventional athleticism that inspires those living with a disability and even those that are not to keep going.

And it is from her inspiring story we learn that having a disability does not mean stop.

It means go. It means move.

It means fight.

Stay updated on Marisa’s journey to recovery and follow her on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter.

Learn more about the #powerofmedicalrehab by visiting this page on AMRPA’s website.