

# Western Region Ambulatory DEIB Council NYC Marathon Spotlight



## Dr. Luis Barraza

Luis Barraza is triple-board certified in Internal Medicine, Obesity Medicine and Gastroenterology.

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### What inspired you to participate in the marathon?

There are several factors that inspired me to run the marathon. I got into running during my GI fellowship as a form of stress relief. I started to enjoy the benefits of running but it wasn't until my friends encouraged me to sign up for the marathon that it entered my thought process. I became curious about my physical limits and then set the goal to run a full marathon. For various reasons, it took me a few years to get serious about that goal, and in that time, I met several patients with various gastrointestinal conditions that were avid runners aiming to run the marathon. This inspired me a great deal and was the last push I needed to actually carry through with my goal and I am so glad that I did.

### Please detail your best run ever.

Many of my long runs took place over the summer on Fire Island. I truly enjoyed the training process because each Sunday I would see a totally new area of Fire Island until I got to my first 18 mile run when I reached the Fire Island Lighthouse. I recall seeing it bouncing up and down in the distance and then before I knew it, it was right in front of me. The sight was so breathtaking and beautiful that it stopped me in my tracks. I took some time to explore the grounds before I turned around to finish the second half of my run. Aside from the marathon itself, this was my best run ever.

### What are your thoughts whilst running and how do you feel when you look at the side-lines of all the spectators cheering you on?

It is on long runs that I find the most clarity. I am able to see things from different angles and reach new levels of understanding on things ranging from personal matters to patient care to how I am physically feeling. During my training runs I often envisioned what crossing the marathon finish line would be like. During the run itself, seeing all the cheering spectators filled me with joy and happiness – everyone seemed to be in great spirits and all that energy fueled me throughout the entire run. I even found myself speeding up during the louder sections of spectators but then I had to pull back and maintain my pace. Lastly, I loved seeing everyone representing their cultures in various ways and I found all the little kids' high-fives so fun too!

### Your next marathon/race and/or potential running goal for 2024.

I haven't committed to my next marathon just yet, but I'd like to use running and marathons to visit other parts of the world such as Berlin and Tokyo. I am also considering signing up for a half Ironman.

### Three words that describe your running.

Meditative.

Invigorating.

Transformative.



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### A favorite health quote:

*"The greatest wealth is health." – Virgil*

I'm not big on health quotes but I like this one because I'm a firm believer in being grateful for whatever we have and not taking things for granted, especially our health.

### Are you a morning or evening runner in preparation for a marathon.

For most of the summer, I was waking up early and getting my runs in during the week before my workday started, which I enjoyed very much. As the weather got colder and the mornings were darker, I found it harder to maintain that schedule and I started running in the afternoon/evening. My weekend runs were always in the late morning/early afternoon.

### Special diet in preparation of your marathon.

As I often counsel my patients, I loosely followed a Mediterranean diet which is high in fiber, grains, healthy fats and lean proteins.

### Your go to snack when off your training?

I snacked a lot on blueberries and almonds. My weakness is Twizzlers or any gummy candy.

### Describe your typical night before the marathon.

The day before the marathon I did a short "shake out" run to loosen my muscles followed by stretching. My overall goal that day was to rest and hydrate. That night, I had an early dinner consisting of a salad and pasta and was in bed by 8PM.

### Does running contribute to your work-life balance?

Running in general and training for the marathon is definitely something that helps me destress and contributes to my work life balance. It is also nice that some of my closest friends also run, which lets us socialize while training.

### What encouraging words would you like to leave your future potential marathon runners/

Preparing for a marathon takes a lot of time and sacrifice, however through that process I noticed a transformation in my body and mind. I gradually found enjoyment in the training process and started to see the race itself as the product of all my work; that's when I started to get excited! I would say that even though it seemed overwhelming in the beginning and there were times when I questioned whether I could actually finish the race, crossing the finish line has been one of my greatest accomplishments all made possible by sticking to the training program and trusting the process.

