

## Ep #141: Recovering from Injury



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Jill Angie**

## Ep #141: Recovering from Injury

Most runners will have an injury at some point during their running career, and how you handle it can often mean the difference between full recovery and a kind of continual nagging situation that you always have to worry about, and you know what that's like.

Welcome to *The Not Your Average Runner Podcast*. If you're a woman who has never felt athletic but you still dream about becoming a runner, you are in the right place. I'm Jill Angie, a certified running and life coach and I teach women how to start running, feel confident, and change their lives, and now I want to help you.

Hey rebels. What is up? What is new and exciting in your life right now? Because you know what, just because the whole world is under a stay-at-home order does not mean there can't be new and exciting shit going on. You might be planning a wedding or expecting a new baby or a grandbaby. You might even have a new job.

Someone in the Run Your Best Life community a couple weeks ago applied for a new job and got it right in the middle of a pandemic. So there's lots of really good stuff happening right now. And one thing that I have noticed is how much more I enjoy being outside right now.

Without traffic everywhere, I can hear so much more of the natural world. It is awesome. The other night, I was out for a walk and I probably went 10 minutes without seeing a car, and at one point, I walked by this pond near my home and the peepers were so loud it was deafening.

I've just never ever heard them that loud before, and also, I was listening to the Invisibilia podcast the other day, which is an awesome podcast, and they were talking about these toads that all sort of croak in unison and so what happens is because they're all croaking at the exact same time in

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unison, it sounds like they're much bigger and more badass than these little toads.

They sound like this really big animal. And so when planes fly over the ponds where these toads live, this disrupts their harmony, they get out of sync, and then birds are able to kind of dive down and sort of pick them off because suddenly they don't sound as menacing. And it can take like, 30 minutes for them to get back into their rhythm.

And then until they do, they're actually at greater risk of being eaten. And so the ponds where these toads live that happen to live or lie underneath a routine flight path actually have lower populations of these toads. But now that traffic and flights are so greatly reduced, there's less disruption and there are some wildlife populations that are bouncing back.

It's really incredible and awesome. And I realized the other day - this is probably not a popular opinion, but I kind of like the way things are right now. Quiet, uncomplicated, I get to see - people in my neighborhood go outside now. They go outside and do three dimensional things, instead of like, just holing up inside their houses.

And for sure, I'm going to be happy when we can safely go to the movies again and maybe go out to dinner, but I really like right now how deliberate people are when they're out in public because we're all very cognizant of trying to stay six feet away from everybody else. And so there's more eye contact, there's more waving, there's more politeness.

Everybody isn't rushing to get to the front of the line in the grocery store. There's just this kind of calmness and quiet everywhere that is really soothing and amazing. And I know we need to reopen things and we need to get people back on the roads and going to work and earning money and visiting family and going to school. All those things. I know that.

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But I would be lying if I said I'm not going to kind of miss the way things are right now. I'm actually reading a book right now called Antifragile, which is all about how chaos and turmoil and stress make us stronger, and that's in fact, how we evolve. And it's not just how we evolve from an evolutionary perspective, from a biological perspective, but it's how organizations evolve as well and populations and so forth.

And it's really interesting and it's shifting my perspective a lot. This disease is stressing all of our systems as humans. All of our societal systems. And we are going to have to evolve how things are done. I mean, for sure, in the United States. And honestly, I'm a little excited. I'm very curious and I'm a little bit excited to just see how things shake out, how things settle out, and what good comes out of this pandemic, because I know there's going to be a lot of it.

So anyway, we're actually not here to talk about frogs or evolution or what books I'm reading today. Today, I want to talk about how to manage recovery from an injury. And this is both physically - physical recovery and mental recovery.

And this is a topic that one of our Not Your Average Runner ambassadors actually suggested. Her name is Bethany Smith. So Bethany, thank you very much for suggesting this. I thought it was a great topic. And I have had a few people reach out and say, "Hey, can we do an episode that isn't devoted to COVID?"

I did talk about it a little bit in the beginning, but the rest of this, we're just going to talk about injuries. So most runners will have an injury at some point during their running career. And how you handle it can often mean the difference between full recovery and a kind of continual nagging situation that you always have to worry about, and you know what that's like, right?

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So on the physical side, it's very important to get to a sports doctor as soon as you realize something is going on. A lot of injuries can actually be dealt with very quickly and easily through a fast diagnosis and treatment plan that you follow. But most people drag it out a long time. They want to wait to see if it goes away on its own, or if a few extra stretches will fix it.

That's one of the most common questions I get. "I have a lot of pain in my knee every time I run. Is there a stretch I can do to fix it?" No, there is not a stretch. You need to get to a sports doctor, get a diagnosis, and get a prescription for a treatment plan.

If something hurts you when you run, it is probably not going to go away on its own. So the first thing you need to do is be honest with yourself about that. I mean, for sure, sometimes a new pair of shoes can help. There are times when a new pair of shoes is the right answer, or working a little bit on your running form is the right answer. For sure, give that a try.

But if that pain is slowly getting worse over time, or at least not getting better, please go see a sports medicine doctor. If you think you have a sprain or a stress fracture or that pain in your heel won't go away, or that tightness in your knee or whatever it is, please go see a sports medicine doctor.

Get a diagnosis early and get on top of your treatment. And speaking of your treatment, if you get a prescription for physical therapy, go to all of the appointments and do all of the homework. Do not half-ass it. You are only hurting yourself and delaying your recovery.

Physical therapy is important. This is how we fix most injuries. And a lot of the times, runners end up in physical therapy because they're not really paying enough attention to their strength training. And you will notice physical therapy is basically strength training with a personal trainer that also doubles as a masochistic massage therapist.

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Yes, it hurts, but that pain of the PT massages and the discomfort of the strength training exercises that you do in physical therapy is the path to being injury-free, and the path to remaining injury-free. So go through your PT and then continue strength training.

I can't tell you how many times people have come to me and said, "Well, I had knee problems. I went to physical therapy and after three months, my knee was fine so I started running again." And I'm like, "Oh, did you continue with physical therapy?" "Well no, my knee was fine but now it hurts again."

Yes, because strength training is something you need to do regularly. Now, if you can't get to physical therapy, either you can't afford it or there's not one nearby you or whatever it is, you absolutely must get a set of home exercises and really do them. Because again, skipping them only delays your recovery.

But if you have any ability to get to physical therapy with an in-person therapist, that is the gold standard. So please, please, do that. Now, I want you to follow your doctor's instructions to the letter. Your physical therapist's instructions and your doctor's instructions.

If she says don't run for six weeks, don't fucking run for six weeks. Yes, it sucks that you got hurt, but it is going to suck way more if you can't fix it because you keep running before you're cleared to run. So please, follow the instructions.

And when the doc clears you to run again, please start slowly. Yes, I know it's like, four weeks to your first half marathon and you haven't run in three weeks and you're terrified you're not going to finish. If you jump right back into your training plan where you left off, if you do too much too soon, you will also not finish that race because you are going to re-injure yourself.

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You need to ease back in, consult with your running coach for help on how to adapt. I can assure you, if you expect to be able to do exactly what you were doing before the injury, you are going to be disappointed. So you need to adapt your training plan and ease back in.

Don't push yourself too far and get re-injured and then end up missing your race. So again, follow the fucking instructions that you're given. It's that simple. The tricky part is not the physical piece. That's very simple. Just get a diagnosis and do what you're told.

The tricky part is when you're not running, your brain is going to go to some places, my friends. It will have opinions like this is the worst thing ever, or I will never run again. And you know what happens when you start thinking thoughts like that. What happens? You feel discouraged, depressed, sad, frustrated, and how do you show up for yourself when you have those emotions?

Well, usually what happens is we find excuses not to do physical therapy, or we stop taking care of our nutrition, or we say, "Well, if I can't run, I don't want to do anything." And then a few months go by and nothing is fixed. You know you've been there. I've been there. We've all been there. So managing your mind during an injury is just as important as doing your physical therapy.

So the first thing I want you to notice is if you are catastrophizing. Like, being dramatic about it. Talking to yourself like this injury is destroying your life. It is not. It's an injury, for fuck sake. It happens to everyone. So take some time. First thing you need to do is take some time to write out the circumstances of your injury as factually as possible. Just the facts.

No opinions, no adjectives, no adverbs, no descriptors. Something like, "The doctor told me I have bursitis in my left hip and it will take four to six weeks of physical therapy before I can start running again." Those are

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facts. Now, opinions are, “I have bursitis in my left hip and my entire race season is shot.” That’s an opinion.

So go with just the facts. After you have the facts straight, then you can do a thought download about it. All of your opinions and your assessments and your drama and your catastrophizing. My entire race season is destroyed, this is the worst thing ever, I worked so hard, all that work for nothing.

What do you make the circumstances mean about you, about your running, your future? What are you worried about? What are you scared of? What are you mad about? Just get it all out. Get all of it out of your brain and onto paper.

And again, those thoughts are going to make you feel some sort of way. Maybe pissed off or discouraged or disappointed. And when you feel that way, when you have those emotions in your body, you do not show up as your best self, and your recovery is impacted.

So you have to reframe those thoughts if you want to recover from your injury. If you don’t want to recover, then go ahead, keep thinking those thoughts. That’s totally fine. They’re not going to feel good, they’re not going to help you get better, but if you don’t want to get better, who cares, right?

But if you do want to get better, those thoughts have got to be reframed because they will hold you back. Believing that your injury is a terrible tragedy, believing that thought is not helping you. There is no upside to thinking that thought. You have got to just delete it from your brain.

Believing, “Oh, my whole race season is shot,” again, there is no upside to thinking that thought. There is no upside to believing that. You got to delete that from your brain. Putting any kind of mental energy to thinking those

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thoughts makes you feel really upset and frustrated, and you don't show up for yourself like that.

So focus instead on what you can do right now. And maybe that is just to use crutches and keep your leg elevated. Or maybe you're allowed to aqua jog. Maybe you're allowed to go to spin class. Maybe you can still do Pilates or strength training or whatever.

Look for solutions instead of problems. This is always going to help you. Your brain is not so bright. It just follows instructions. If you look for problems, you will find a million of them. If you look for solutions, same thing. You will find a million solutions.

And also, look for evidence of progress instead of failure. I personally like to keep an injury tracker to document everything I do when I'm in recovery. Every workout, every physical therapy session, every massage, every doctor's appointment, my pain levels, what I'm capable of doing, new exercises that I've learned.

Putting that all down on paper forces you to look at the facts and not just go by your thoughts and emotions, which are always going to be faulty. Data helps you make better decisions, and data can help you manage your thinking. If it feels like you're not making progress, you can look at your recovery tracker and say, "Oh actually, a month ago I was at a pain level of seven and now I'm at a three." Or, "Three weeks ago I could only do three squats pain free and look, now, I can do 20."

And if you're not making progress, again, your tracker will show you that, and then you can bring it to your doctor or your physical therapist and say, "Hey, what else can we do? This isn't working. I'm not getting any better. What else can we do to get me recovered?" So I really think that injury recovery is 80% mental and 20% actually doing recovery things.

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So many of us rely on running to help manage our emotions, which is awesome. It's a great way to kind of clear your mind and just sort of lower those stress feelings in your body. But what happens if you don't manage your emotions, what you're thinking, or if you're not good at that, then when running is off the table for a while, you have to work twice as hard to manage your mind so you don't spend the recovery months complaining and whining and feeling awful. That is no fun. Not for you, definitely not for the people around you.

So next time you are injured, I want you to work through the process I just outlined. Define the circumstances, make sure you can see them for what they are, which is neutral. An injury is neutral. It's not a terrible thing, it's not an awesome thing. It just is.

You make it terrible with your thinking, and that is great news because you can bring it back to neutral with your thinking as well, and then get busy making plans and collecting data as you move forward. Got it? Okay my friends, I love you. Stay safe and get your ass out there and run. I will see you in the next episode.

Oh, and one last thing. If you enjoyed listening to this episode, you have to check out the Rebel Runner Roadmap. It's a 30-day online program that will teach you exactly how to start running, stick with it, and become the runner you've always wanted to be. Head on over to [rebelrunnerroadmap.com](http://rebelrunnerroadmap.com) to join. I'd love to be a part of your journey.