

Ep #144: How to Get Back On Track After a Pandemic Break



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Jill Angie

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For those of you who are delaying taking that very first run because you think, “Oh, it’s going to be so hard, or I’m going to be slower than before and then I’ll have to be mad at myself,” I know that there are some of you listening that are right in that brain space. Here’s what I have to tell you.

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.

Hello my rebel friends. How are you? Have you signed up for The Rebel Run Virtual Race yet? I hope so. Because we are raising money to support the Northern Illinois Food Bank to help feed those folks who have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. People who are out of work and struggling to buy groceries, every dollar that we donate turns into eight dollars worth of food for a hungry family.

So you get a race medal for running a race, someone else gets the benefit of not having to worry about where their next meal is coming from. It’s a win-win. So you can sign up for the race at notyouraveragerunner.com/rebelrun, or click the link in the show notes.

Okay, so what are we going to talk about today? Something that is on a lot of your minds right now, and that is how to start running again after taking a pandemic break. And I think I’ve covered how to stop running again after a break on the podcast in the past, but first of all, it’s a topic worth discussing again and it’s also - I think there’s a lot more people right now that have kind of taken a break and have this sort of story about the pandemic being the reason.

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And so I really, really want to address that and make sure that you get back to where you want to be and that you can do it with compassion for yourself and feeling really good about it. So whether you took time off on purpose because of the pandemic, everything started, races were canceled and you said, “You know what, this is what I’m going to do, this is why I’m doing it, I’m not going to run for two months,” or whatever you decided.

So if that’s the reason you took it off or because you kind of woke up one morning and said, “What the fuck just happened? It’s been a month since I’ve worn my running shoes.” Because I know there’s a few of you, that’s happened to you as well, that you just kind of - it seems like you blinked and suddenly it had been a month or six weeks since you’ve gone running and you’re like, what just happened?

And then of course there’s everything in between. There’s also been a bunch of you who every single day you’ve said, “Alright, today’s the day. I’m going to get back at it,” and then by the end of the day, you didn’t go running and you’re beating yourself up about it.

So the first thing I want you to do is please stop beating the crap out of yourself for not running. Whatever the reason it is that you haven’t been doing it for the past two months or six weeks or even four weeks, even if you had no reason whatsoever, even if you tried to get your ass out of bed every damn day for the last eight weeks and failed, please stop the mean things you’re saying to yourself.

Like, “I’m so disappointed in myself. Once again, I let myself down. I have no excuse. I just can’t get my shit together. What’s wrong with me? I had all this extra time and I didn’t use it. I’m so far behind. I’ve lost so much ground. I have to start all over again. I suck.” Stop saying those things to yourself. Stop it right now.

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And by the way, if you're listening to this and you're like, "This doesn't apply to me because I've been running just like I planned through this whole pandemic, I've got it covered," listen sister, I am pretty sure that there's something else in your life that you've had a similar issue with, that you've thought, "I really need to do this thing and I'm struggling to get it done," or I don't know what it is.

Maybe it's drinking your water every day or maybe it's cleaning up your house or whatever it is. If there's something that you usually do and then you stopped doing it during the pandemic and you're beating yourself up about it, thinking that you've just totally fallen off the wagon or that you've got no motivation or no commitment, whatever it is, please stop the beatings.

Because nobody wins when you talk smack to yourself like that. Have you ever motivated yourself that way? Really think this through. When you say to yourself, "Ugh, you are such a quitter, you should be ashamed of yourself," you don't feel motivated or excited or determined or anything. You feel ashamed, embarrassed, and guilty.

And when you feel those emotions, you are sure as hell not going to go running or do whatever it is that you're trying to get yourself to do. No, you're going to wallow and hide, and then you've taken even more time off. So think about if you have teenagers or children of any age, has nagging them ever worked?

Has berating them ever worked to get them up and doing whatever it is you want to do or you want them to do? Not really. I mean, nagging works eventually, but it ruins the relationship that you have with that person. So think about saying all this crappy stuff to yourself, you're basically nagging yourself, you're berating yourself, you are ruining your relationship with yourself.

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How are you ever going to trust yourself to feel compassionate when you say these shitty things? So please, stop yelling at yourself. Stop nagging, berating. It is not working. It's really not working. You know it, I know it. It is making you feel worse. You've tried it. You've tried the nagging and the yelling and the saying mean things. That doesn't work. Let's try something different.

So you can stop living in the past, like right now, what's done is done. You cannot change what you did yesterday, last week, last month. You can, however, lace up your shoes today and do something. Now, for those of you who are delaying taking that very first run because you think, "Oh, it's going to be so hard, or I'm going to be slower than before and then I'll have to be mad at myself," I know that there are some of you listening that are right in that brain space. Here's what I have to tell you.

Sitting on your ass will not make it better. Let me repeat that. The longer you wait to get started, the more difficult it is going to be. So what you need to do, my friend, is decide right now that you are not going to make up some bullshit story about your pace or your fitness when you get started again.

So you will not be able to do as much. That is okay. That is normal. You have not failed yourself. Stop telling yourself that shitty story. You're still a runner. You're just a runner who took a fucking break. So dial it down a notch.

I know the level of frustration and inner mean girl stuff that goes on in our heads when we believe that we have failed, when we believe we've done something wrong, when we believe that we've lost all of this ground and it's just the worst thing ever. So please, stop the beatings. Give yourself a moment.

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And let's talk about how to start running again. We've covered why you stopped, which is - the answer to that of course is it doesn't matter. You stopped, you're starting again, and now let's talk about how to make that happen in a positive way.

So if you stopped running the moment your race was canceled, you've been inactive for maybe eight weeks or a month. I want you to start out nice and easy. Distance wise, keep it short. Maybe two miles. And I want you running at a very relaxed, comfortable pace. Maybe even scale back your intervals a little bit so that your running time is less than it may have been when you stopped running.

Definitely no sprints right now, for at least the first week. No hard effort. Just keep it nice and easy and relaxed. Make sure that you do a very good solid walking warmup before you do that first run interval. If you can throw some dynamic stretches in there, even better.

And like I said earlier, you will most likely have lost some fitness if you've been away from it for a few weeks. So please, err on the side of caution. Plan to do maybe 25% to 50% of what you normally do for that first run back. And if that feels too easy, awesome, you can do more the next time.

But if it feels just right or even a bit challenging, your muscles are going to thank you the next day. Nobody has ever said, "Oh, I really wish I pushed myself too hard yesterday so that I could suffer today." You can always do more on the next run, but scale it back so that you don't wake up the next day super uncomfortable.

You know when you overdo it on a strength workout and you can't walk for a week straight? That does not feel good. So I want you to do yourself a favor, take it super easy on your first run out of the gate. Then you can start

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dialing it up the next time, and you will be back to your old self in no time. I promise.

Your muscles will remember. And it may be a few weeks before you're back to your old pace, and that's okay. The expectation that you should start up right where you were two months ago is just flawed thinking. You want to be there because you don't want to think to yourself, "Oh, I wasted all this time."

So you don't have to think that you wasted any time. You took two months off, a month off, whatever it is, you were doing other things. You were choosing other things instead, and maybe that was work, maybe that was homeschooling your kid, maybe that was family. Maybe it was Netflix. It's all good.

So just start back up nice and easy. You will get your old fitness level back way quicker than you think. Alright, next, I want you to be very aware of the ongoing social distancing rules in your area. Because just because some restrictions have been lifted, like here in New Jersey, we are now able to go to all of our state and county parks again.

But that doesn't mean you're just going to jump right back into your old running group like nothing happened. The virus is still out there. It's still contagious. It's not like the government said, "Okay, everything's fine, the virus is not contagious."

So avoid running in groups. Avoid running side by side with people that you don't live with. Take hand sanitizer with you. Wash your hands often. Do not share water bottles or chapstick or anything else that's around the face. If you wipe your face with a towel, don't hand it to somebody else and say, "Here, you want to use my towel?"

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If you're running on a treadmill, disinfect it vigorously and thoroughly both before and after you run. And the other thing is you're going to be out there running and you're going to see people doing things differently than you might be doing them.

You're going to see people who are running with face masks. You are going to see people who you think are running too close together. Whatever it is, you're going to have opinions about those other people. I want you to know you cannot control what other people do.

So going in your brain to, "Oh my god, look what they're doing, they're so wrong, this is stupid, they're ruining everything," stop, take a moment. Because when you think all those negative thoughts about what other people are doing, you don't feel so good yourself.

Their activities are none of your business. Yeah, they might get sick. That's their problem. Not yours. Stay in your own fucking lane mentally and physically. If you're uncomfortable running around other people, stay away from them. Got it? Good.

Alright, now finally, at some point, we will have in-person races again. It might not be for a few months, but it will happen. But you do not have to wait until that happens to start running again. You can train without a race on the horizon.

I have said this a bunch of times on the podcast. But if your only motivation to run is to finish a race, you're screwed if suddenly that race is canceled. And a lot of you are screwed now because you're confused and you think the only way that you can stick with running is if you have a race to motivate you. That is a lie. That's a thought error. Faulty thinking.

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You actually run for lots of other reasons. If a race was the only reason you ran, you really would be struggling to stay motivated. Well, you definitely are now. But you do run for lots of other reasons, so now is the time to figure out what they are.

Like the sheer joy of movement, or maybe you run because you love how you feel afterwards, you like setting a great example for your kids, you like feeling stronger in your body, you like the fact that you can go up and down stairs without feeling completely out of breath because you're a runner. You like to run off the crazy or you like sticking it to that jackass at work who said, "But you don't look like a runner."

So you have a lot of reasons for running that have nothing to do with racing and getting a medal, so I want you to use this time to fall in love with running for running's sake. Be a beginner all over again. I mean, you kind of have to a little bit if you've been away from it for a couple months.

Physically, you're maybe closer to being a beginner than you have been in the past, but mentally, I'm serious about this, let yourself start from the beginning without judgment. Experience the delight of having no expectations other than finding out what you can do and being excited every time you reach a new level.

So with no requirements, no training plan, just get out there and run. Play. See what your body is capable of. It is really fun. And this might be a great time to experiment. Like hey, if you normally run with music, see what it's like to run without music. See what it's like to run without headphones at all.

Or if you normally think like, "I got to push myself really, really hard," see what it's like to just run and relax. Just run without a watch. Run without tracking every single step of elevation and every single split and lap and

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everything. Just go out there and run and rediscover what you loved about it in the first place. This is a great time for that.

Alright my friends, I love you. Stay safe. Register for The Rebel Run Virtual Race to support the Northern Illinois Food Bank and get your ass out there and run. Okay, 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 to join. I'd love to be a part of your journey.