

Ep #151: More Race Cancellations and a Rant



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Jill Angie

[The Not Your Average Runner Podcast](#) with Jill Angie

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I keep seeing people, and it's mostly women, it's all women to be honest, feeling bad because they're running up a hill or running on a local trail and a stranger said something to them like, "Hey, you're doing great," or, "Keep it up."

And there have been quite a few memes going around saying, and I'm paraphrasing here, you shouldn't encourage fat people when they are exercising because it's insulting to them. You shouldn't say nice things to fat people when they are out running because you're insulting them. Buckle up, rebels, because this is going to be a rant.

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. So this is a crazy time to be a runner right now. The Boston Marathon is canceled for 2020. The New York City Marathon is canceled for 2020. The Berlin Marathon is canceled. Every single Ragnar race since March is canceled. Just gone.

Not to mention, tons of other less-known events. And I'm sure there will be many more following suit in the next month or so. The whole landscape of the running world has changed drastically in just 90 days. It's kind of a big deal.

And I think when all of this started, we thought it was just sort of temporary, right? Like, oh, in a couple months everything will be back to normal. Well unfortunately, that is not how viruses work. It is going to keep spreading

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until there is a vaccine, and yes, we can slow it down with social distancing and masks and all of that stuff.

But without a vaccine, everyone is still kind of at risk of catching it at some point. And a vaccine might happen this year if we're lucky, but realistically, probably not until 2021. So that means it might be another six months to a year before our race calendars get back to normal.

And honestly, who knows what normal is actually going to look like when that happens. So a lot of my clients are grieving the loss of their race season, and I totally get it. Signing up for all of those races is fun. It is exciting, especially if some of them are destination races or bucket list trips and adventures and achievements, right?

It's exciting and when you imagine yourself crossing the finish line, you feel just so, just excited. I can't think of a better word than that. And then boom, they're all one by one, they're all sort of going by the wayside and of course, they're all going to be deferred to next year. It's not like you won't ever get to run that race.

But still, it's not how we saw 2020 happening. And really, none of us signed up to have a virus hijack our year. To have vacations canceled. I mean, hell, I had to cancel my entire wedding. I have opinions about that. But really, those are very small losses compared to all of the people who have died, to all of the small businesses that had to close their doors permanently, that have been sort of victims of the virus.

There has been a lot of loss for sure. So I don't know, complaining about missing a few races seems insignificant and petty, right? Actually, I don't think so. When you've put your heart and soul into something and it ends up not happening, it's very normal to feel disappointed.

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It does not make you a monster to wish that your race wasn't canceled even though people are dying. It is not a competition to see who can have the worst experience. If you are sad because you wish your race wasn't canceled, be sad. It's a totally appropriate reaction.

Here is what I suggest though. Make sure that you are clear on your thinking. There is a big difference between being disappointed that your epic Disney trip was canceled or postponed. Maybe moping around for a few days and then getting back to your regular routine and making plans for next year.

There's a big difference between that and saying, "Fuck it," and just giving up on everything because it's so unfair that a stupid virus destroyed your year. That kind of drama, that kind of thinking is not going to serve you. It is going to keep you stuck in a temper tantrum, probably keep you from running, and generally make things worse.

I get it. It is not fair that COVID-19 happened. It's not fair at all. But again, life, not so much with the fair in general. There are, however, some positives. And this isn't a whole Pollyanna make lemonade out of lemons or whatever the saying is.

COVID happened, it's not fair, but you get to choose how you move forward. So here are some positives. I was sort of brainstorming for myself this week when my Ragnar trail event was canceled and I thought, "Really? Another one?" And I'm not disputing that it was the right or wrong decision.

I think canceling these events is the right decision. I absolutely was not super excited about going camping with hundreds of other strangers for 48 hours, cohabitating with them, and trying to figure out how to keep myself from catching this virus.

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So I get it. But I also was disappointed. So I did a little bit of journaling for myself. Came up with some positives out of this that I want to share with you. So the first thing is this means I can take the next few months to focus hard on cross training and strength training.

And I mean, for me, it seems like I'm always training for some sort of running event. I've always got some sort of running event on the horizon and now there's literally nothing on my calendar. I have not registered for a single race.

Well, I take that back. I've got one next March. I've got the half marathon, my half marathon from this past March that was canceled. But for all intents and purposes, for the rest of 2020, nothing on the calendar. So for me, it's time to hop on the bike and switch gears. See what I did there? Pretty good, huh?

Switch gears for a while to give my running muscles a break. And now is a great time to set non-running goals. Finally going all in doing an unassisted pull-up or doing some longer hikes, or going on a bike trip, or who knows, there's always those things that we say, "Oh, I'll start on that when I'm done with all these races."

Well guess what, now is the time. Okay, the second thing I came up with was any races that actually do go on as planned are going to be a pretty limited experience. Our whole Ragnar team agreed. All 32 of us, that we would so much rather do the race in 2021 and get the full unadulterated sweaty, sleep deprived, mask-free experience, rather than having to worry about masks and extra hand washing and not getting too close to anybody and all of that stuff.

And seriously, when you are camping with several hundred strangers for 48 hours, all of the precautions to keep us safe from COVID-19 would really have put a damper on things. First of all, there's no running water in the

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camp, so we would have just been like, going through so much hand sanitizer.

And you're in Porta-Potties all weekend long, and so good lord, all of the surfaces that you have to touch that everybody else has touched before you. And wearing a mask when you really just want to relax at the campsite and just eat and drink and laugh and have fun without something over your face.

So all those precautions really would have kind of reduced the experience that we were signed up for. So we decided we would much rather wait until next year so we can do it right. Nobody signed up for COVID but it's here, so the plus is alright, we are getting a chance to actually have the full experience instead of having sort of a lesser experience this year.

Now, the third thing I came up with is it's really important for any athlete to take breaks from hard training. And sometimes we get so caught up in signing up for all the fun races out there, and you know who you are. Every time you turn around you're like, well that one looks like fun and that one looks like fun, and next thing you know, you've got something going on every weekend.

We sign up for them, we're overcommitted, we end up suffering, either with injuries or burnout or just literally not having time to do anything other than running. So I've decided to think of this year as an enforced training break. For me, that means I'm going to focus on rest, on self-care, maybe attending to some of those nagging injuries that keep sort of dogging me.

I've got a weird thing going on with my left foot. I don't know what the hell that is. I'm like, alright, now is the time to maybe figure that out. And again, Andy and I just bought a Peloton which turned out the monthly payment to be cheaper than the gym, so we're saving money by buying this bike.

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And I'm excited to see where that takes me. So that enforced break is so important. So now you have a good excuse to say I'm going to stop signing up for all the races and actually rest a little bit. And honestly, with all that's going on right now, for a lot of you, it's not going to be easy to get in the necessary long-distance training that you need.

If your half marathon or your marathon's been canceled and you live in a highly populated area, long distance training and social distancing might not work so well for you. So I think that's sort of a gift. Consider it a gift or a freebie or just a legit chance for a do over.

Now, I know, I know how it feels. It's frustrating, right? When your dreams are postponed and you're thinking it's not fair, this was supposed to be my year, this is all out of my control. I get it. So here's what I want you to do. I want you to give yourself a moment, give yourself a hot minute to throw a total pity party.

Go all in. Party hats, champagne, fancy sandwiches with the crusts cut off. Whatever it is. Invite some of your running friends who are in the same boat. Maybe you do it over Zoom or FaceTime. Maybe not in person. But just wallow it up. Go all in and just cry it out and really have your moment of kicking and screaming and just allowing yourself to feel the disappointment.

Then I want you to make a decision you're done with that. You're done with the pity party and move on. Just decide, hey, I cannot fix COVID, I cannot resurrect all my canceled races, but I can do a lot of stuff still. You can still keep training, by the way, for your race.

You can make the decision that you're going to run your distance that you've been training for on or near the original date, do it as a virtual event. A lot of these races that have been canceled are allowing you to defer to next year and do this year as a virtual event. Totally an option.

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You can also choose to take a break or shift gears. Seriously, there are no wrong answers here. So with very few in person races happening for the foreseeable future, you can do whatever the fuck you want. Isn't that kind of fun? I think it is. I think it's awesome.

When my last race canceled, I was kind of like, wow, my 2020 just became a blank slate for me to create whatever I want over the next six months. I am not locked into anything, I can just really dig in, decide what I want and create what I want.

So for me, I'm going to take a two-month break from running. So basically, July and August, I'm going to go hard on that new Peloton because it arrives in less than a week. July 6th. So excited. Indoor cycling, by the way, is a great way to build leg strength and it's fun. It's very fun. I'm in love with the Peloton app.

So it's something that in the past I haven't done a lot of because I'm always fucking running. The last time I was cycling a lot was, I want to say was 2014. Is that possible? No, even earlier. It might have been 2012. God, it's almost 10 years.

I was kind of hadn't done my first half marathon yet so all of my races were pretty short, didn't require a ton of time for training, and so I was playing around that summer with - let's see. I had started doing triathlons at that point.

But anyway, my friend Abby and I were both getting into cycling and we decided we wanted to do a trip to Tuscany where we would ride from Tuscan town to Tuscan town and just eat a lot of pasta and gelato and drink a lot of wine, and that's exactly what we did.

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And that was the most fun summer, doing lots of cycling training for that. Tuscany is a very hilly area. We had to do a lot of hill training. And really, so it's been since then, I haven't done a lot of cycling and I kind of miss it.

So, I'm excited to dive into the bike and I've got the Peloton to train when it's super-hot out. I've got my own bike, which I can actually – I love my bike. I can ride that outside. And I wouldn't have bought a Peloton if it wasn't for COVID.

I'd still be paying for that crazy-expensive gym membership, which was twice as much as the bike payment, and I rarely use it because it's a 10-minute drive away and I'm super-lazy about that. Running outside is just way more convenient.

So, I wouldn't have been pushed out of my comfort zone if it wasn't for COVID. Like, think of it that way. Like, wow, COVID has pushed me out of my comfort zone because now I'm not doing all of my races. What else can I discover?

So, I am looking at this break in the race season as an opportunity rather than a big disappointment. Now, yes, the alternate reality where I got to do the Love Run and the Philly's 5K and the Wisconsin Trail Ragnar and all of the other stuff I had planned for this summer. That would have been awesome; totally amazing.

But this, this is good too. This is just a different kind of awesome. So, I encourage you to look at this current situation with fresh eyes, after your pity party is over, ask yourself, where is the opportunity here? What can I do with this time? What are some things I've been wanting to work on but I couldn't because I was putting all of my time and effort into running?

And I think those are important questions for you to answer for yourself. And so, take a moment and really, really think it through. Have the pity party. I get it. And then, what can you do with this time? Where is the opportunity here?

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Alright, there is one more thing I want to touch on today. This is going to be the unpopular opinion section of the podcast today. But I have seen – I don't know why. It's a lot lately. The past month, I have seen all these posts around Facebook and Instagram recently that, they kind of touched a nerve with me, I'll be honest. I have things to say about them. Of course, I do.

You know, when I was a kid, I used to get in trouble constantly for talking too much. The teacher made me stand in the corner, stand in the hall, stand in front of the chalkboard and write 100 times, "I will not talk in class." She and he – I had both female and male teachers – they would move my desk. They would write home to my mom about it. Nothing worked. Nothing worked. I have opinions on everything and I just don't shut up. And I used to be embarrassed about it. And now, I'm like, "Nope. I think it's my superpower."

Anyway, so I keep seeing people – and it's mostly women. It's all women, to be honest – feeling bad because they're running up a hill or running on a local trail and a stranger said something to them like, "Hey, you're doing great," or, "Keep it up."

And there have been quite a few memes going around saying, and I'm paraphrasing here, "You shouldn't encourage fat people when they are exercising because it's insulting to them. You shouldn't say nice things to fat people when they are out running because you're insulting them."

Buckle up, rebels, because this is going to be a rant. So, here is the thing. Someone saying to you, "Hey, you're doing great," or, "Keep up the great work," or whatever it is, it's not insulting, okay. They just said words to you. It's just someone saying words. And you are ascribing meaning to those words that makes you feel insulted, okay.

The words are neutral. You get to decide what you make them mean. You're making it mean that this stranger is being condescending. And when you think that, you feel terrible. You feel mad, insulted, maybe a little embarrassed. And when you scowl and you pout and you post on

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Instagram and you feel righteously indignant because how dare someone say something nice to you without your permission?

Really take that in. Stranger says, “You’re doing great.” And you’re like, “How dare you say something nice to me without my permission?” Because what you’re really saying is, oh, you believe that person thinks I’m fat and thinks I need extra help, or they feel sorry for me, or they feel superior to me.

You don’t know what the fuck that person thinks. All they did was say, “Hey, great job.” And you’re like, “No, how dare you?” So, please, take a moment. Stop going to this place where you’re wasting a shit ton of energy being mad at a stranger for saying something encouraging to you.

Like, really, it doesn’t even make sense. I mean, hey, if they said something like, “Good job, fatty, keep it up and maybe you’ll stop being such a lard-ass,” then yes, I’m all in. Be pissed, flip them off, whatever you want. But some random stranger who sees you running, gives you a thumbs up or a high-five or wishes you well, why do you want to believe that person is being condescending or insulting?

There is no upside to believing that. The only person who suffers is you because you’re mad. There is this person who is legit trying to cheer you on and you’re mad about it. Now, I get it. When you are self-conscious about your size, you assume everyone else is looking at you through that lens and feeling sorry for you or feeling disgusted by you or just having opinions about your body.

And you know what, some of them are. Let’s be honest. You might not look like what the average person thinks of when they think about a runner. There are a lot of folks in the world who don’t understand fat runners. They are just sincerely confused. They see a fat person running and they’re like, “Oh that person must be trying to lose weight.”

And then they say, like, “Hey, great job.” And you’re like, “I don’t need your help, stranger. How dare you talk to me? How dare you be rude to me?”

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They're not being rue. They're just saying words, okay. But when you're self-conscious about your size – and maybe you're really not self-conscious about your size, but you're still assuming everyone else is looking at you as a fat person, you run around with your guard up.

You're looking for a fight. You're just waiting for someone to tell you, "You're going to ruin your knees," right? Or give you all their weight loss advice. You're just waiting for that so you can lay into them with all your righteous fury.

There is another way, my friends. Take a deep breath and remember, not everybody is as enlightened as you when it comes to plus-sized athleticism. They may never have seen a fat person working out. That does not make them rude. It makes them confused.

And you can gently educate them or you can just say "Hey, thanks," and keep on going. And if all this person said was, "Hey, great job, you're killing it. Way to go." Maybe you just assume they're actually thinking what they said. Or maybe they're thinking, "Damn, she's awesome, I wish I could do that."

Let's stop assuming that everyone who speaks to us has judgmental negative thoughts about us in their head. Because they don't. Most of the time, it is you judging yourself, putting it on someone else.

You do not know what these people are thinking. You're just making up the most logical conclusion based on your own personal biases and experiences, okay. That person could be thinking, "Wow, she's working so hard and I'm really impressed."

They could also be thinking, "Wow, she is way too fat to be running." You don't know. And I mean, it could be, "Damn, she's going to ruin her knees." Or, "Damn, I wish I had the courage to do that." You just don't know. And frankly, it's none of your fucking business, okay.

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A stranger giving you a high-five or an attaboy is not some kind of rude, insensitive monster. Give people the benefit of the doubt, for fuck's sake. And by the way, lots of fat runners, myself included, like to get a thumbs up or a, "Way to go," from other people. It feels good.

At least to me, it feels good when somebody notices my effort. I don't care how they meant it. I decide to take every word of encouragement at face value. And that is a thing that you can do, you know. You can be mad and insulted and let it ruin your entire run. Or you can just say thanks and move on.

And seriously. Think about it. When you decide that someone cheering you on is a thing that has the ability to completely discourage you, A, that's kind of fucked up. And B, you're handing all your power over to a stranger; a stranger that's actually trying to do something they think you might want.

You're basically saying, "Your well-wishes are hurting me." No, they're not hurting you. They're just words. They're not even mean words. And you're getting it all twisted and you're making yourself suffer as a result. And guess what. Spending your time and energy trying to get people to stop giving encouragement to fat runners is an unwinnable battle.

You have got way more important things to do, like actually running and training and becoming that amazing version of yourself that you've envisioned. Oh, and you know what, you want to fight a battle? How about put your time and energy into dismantling systemic racism in our society, okay? You want a fight? Choose that. If you want to go to war, choose something that's going to make a difference in the world.

Trying to get people to stop saying encouraging things to you when they see you out running, it's just not worth your energy, okay. And if you are somebody who has actually held back on encouraging a fat runner, a fat cyclist, or yogi, or whatever because you worry they're going to take it the wrong way, please, feel free to say what you think. With everything

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happening in the world right now, we need more kind words to be said out loud.

Because I've actually seen people say, "Oh, I saw a plus-sized runner out the other day and I wanted to say good job, but I was worried I'd insult her." Stop it. You want to encourage somebody, you encourage them. Go for it.

And I don't mean you encourage somebody by saying, "Wow, you're so fat, how are you able to do this?" That's probably not going to be appreciated. But don't hesitate to give a thumbs up or a, "Way to go," to anybody, fat or otherwise. It is up to them to manage their own mind around it.

You get to be the person who cheers everybody on. I like those people in this world. We need more of them. So, don't stop that shit just because a couple of people got their underwear in a bunch about it. You do you.

Okay, my friends. Thank you for listening to my rant. I hope it gave you something to think about. I know it might not be the most unpopular opinion if you believe that other people's things that they say to you have power over you. But they don't. They really don't, okay.

My friends, I love you. Stay safe. Get your ass out there and run. And 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.