

Ep #154: Let Your Mind Run - A Review of Deena Kastor's Book



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Jill Angie

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

Ep #154: Let Your Mind Run - A Review of Deena Kastor's Book

I'll be honest, I really didn't know much about Deena Kastor before reading this book. I knew she was a really accomplished runner, I had a lot of respect for that, but I wasn't familiar with her story. And reading about her mental work has inspired me in so many ways. I cannot recommend this book enough. It will change you. It will change how you think about yourself and your training and your accomplishments.

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. I am reading the best book right now. It is Deena Kastor's memoir. It is called *Let Your Mind Run: A Memoir of Thinking My Way to Victory*. And it is basically the story of how she used her thoughts to become one of the most accomplished runners in the world.

It is so raw and honest, you guys. She shares all of her struggles and how she surmounted them using the power of her mind. It's so freaking good. Now obviously, she trained her ass off for all of her achievements. She wasn't just sitting around wishing really hard to win a medal. She used her thoughts to push herself harder, to get past the negative self-talk, visualize what was possible for herself, and also, to evaluate her failures objectively with a growth mindset, instead of beating the shit out of herself.

So we're reading this book right now in *Run Your Best Life*. It's our July book. And while it has been on my list for a while to read, I am just blown away by how much of Deena's story really resonated with me and inspired me. I mean, obviously I'm a runner, I've known who she is for many years,

Ep #154: Let Your Mind Run - A Review of Deena Kastor's Book

but I didn't really appreciate not just her athleticism, but her mental game until now.

I mean, it's very cool to read about elite athletes. So from that perspective, the book was amazing. I just dream about what it must feel like to run a five-minute mile or finish a half marathon in just over an hour. Like, it is cool to read about that experience and be like, wow, what would it feel like?

I'm like, damn, finishing a half marathon in an hour and eight minutes, that's my four-mile time right now. My 13-mile time. This book, it made me want to work on speed, it made me want to set a goal to not just finish the Philly Marathon in 2021, but finish it in under six hours.

And if you recall from my training podcast last year, my goal was a lot closer to seven and a half to eight hours. So this book just inspired me on so many levels, but one of the things about the book that was so damn relatable, and I know it'll be relatable to you too was the mind drama.

Like, when she talks about all of the places her thoughts would go during a race. She's chasing down the person in front of her and she's thinking like, how am I ever going to get through this last mile, my legs feel like lead, I can't do it. And that might have been in a 5K, sometimes if it was a half marathon, it might be the last three miles. If it was a marathon, it might be the last six miles, depending on the distance.

But there was always this thought of I can't do it, this is too hard. And I'm like, reading this going, girl, you can finish a 5K in less time than it takes me to run an entire mile. And I'm thinking to myself, really? Drama about the last mile when it takes you less than six minutes? You can do anything hard for six minutes, right?

I kept thinking back to my own marathon training last year. My 20-mile training run, which took seven freaking hours. And I had to be right on top

Ep #154: Let Your Mind Run - A Review of Deena Kastor's Book

of my thinking every damn minute. And this woman is complaining about six measly minutes.

So simultaneously, I'm reading this, and I felt like a total badass for my own tenacity in marathon training, but I also felt such a kinship with Deena because we've all been there. Where our brain completely melts down over something instead of taking a realistic look at the circumstances.

But really, when I thought about the effort that I put into marathon training, how fucking hard it was, and how often I just wanted to quit and give up and I didn't, I just kept going and redirecting my thinking to keep my legs moving for seven freaking hours, when I thought about that, I couldn't stop smiling. It was a moment of intense pride for me, even as I'm reading about this woman, who ultimately runs a marathon in two hours and 20 minutes.

I was just like, wow, it hit me so hard the amount of work that I did, not just on my body last year, but on my mind and the extreme accomplishment that that was. So I really want you to think about that for yourself. Whatever your race time is, especially if it's way at the back of the pack, the effort that you are putting in to cross that finish line is what counts.

It's what makes you grow and change and evolve. The time it takes you to finish is so irrelevant. It is the effort, that grit and determination that you summon up to finish the task that you set out to finish. I want you to recognize that in yourself. That spirit, that unwillingness to give up. I want you to celebrate it. Celebrate the Deena Kastor within you.

So let's just agree to do that. And it's so funny, I'm reading this book about her and really was starting to feel so proud of myself and my seven-hour 20-mile training run, in the shadow of this amazing woman who can do - literally run a marathon in two hours and 20 minutes and I'm like, oh yeah, 20 miles in seven hours. And I was like, no, I'm a badass, and I thank you, Deena Kastor, for showing that to me.

Ep #154: Let Your Mind Run - A Review of Deena Kastor's Book

I mean, I knew it, but now I really know it. So Deena's journey, however, was not perfect. It wouldn't be a book if it was perfect. It wouldn't be interesting to read. She had a lot of injuries from overtraining, as well as just random tripping and twisting her ankle, just like any runner.

But again, that was so relatable to me because we've all been there and we've had those thoughts, like, my body has betrayed me. When really, an injury is just our body's way of telling us that something is wrong. Injuries are a signal to evaluate your training and make some changes and powering through that pain can cause problems that maybe you'll eventually fix them, but they will linger for a while.

So it's very important to pay attention to the signals your body is sending you, get things checked out, and be diligent in finding the root cause and fixing it. And that is really one of the key messages of this book, not that something has gone wrong if you've gotten injured. It's more like, okay, why did I get injured and how can I fix the problem so that it doesn't happen again.

And she does that in a way where she works on her thinking so that it's not like, oh my god, my body has betrayed me, oh my gosh, I'm failing. It's more like, okay, coming at it with curiosity instead of beating the shit out of yourself. So that was another great message from this book.

And then here's another that again, there was just so much good stuff in this book, you guys. You just need to read it. But she talks about race recovery in a couple instances that I think is super powerful. Because I know that a lot of you get frustrated when you train hard, you finish a big race, and then your pace is slower in the weeks afterwards, or you feel sluggish and fatigued, or you're just like, I just have no interest in running, what is wrong with me?

Ep #154: Let Your Mind Run - A Review of Deena Kastor's Book

And I mean, when people say this to me, I always say you need to chill the fuck out. You just finished a big race, you did a really long, hard training cycle, finished a big race, chill out during the period after the race. And I'm not talking the day or two after. I'm talking weeks afterwards. Let your body recover. Let your body do what it needs to do so you can come back stronger and faster and more powerful.

And so here's a great example. After finishing the New York City Marathon, during which she set a record for the fastest debut by an American woman, she worked her ass off, she pushed really hard during that race, she took a full month off from running. A full month.

And I know there are some of you thinking like, oh my god, I couldn't do that, I'd lose so much fitness. But here is a professional runner at that point, during the book, she had her eye on an Olympic marathon, taking a full month off from running on purpose as part of her training strategy. She just let the soreness and exhaustion from the race just be there while her body did the hard work of repairing.

And the thing is after that kind of hard effort, if you let the rest happen, if you take care of your body instead of trying to jump right back into it and keep pushing, if you let the rest happen, your body will rebuild stronger. It will adapt and you will reap the benefits. If you jump back into it too soon, you miss out on some, maybe all of that. Maybe you set yourself up for injury.

This applies to every single runner. Not just the elites. So right now, I'm giving you permission to rest and relax after your next big race. Think of that time as protecting your investment. The investment that you made in your training. If you start up again too soon, you will lose some of the adaptation and growth that can come from that.

Ep #154: Let Your Mind Run - A Review of Deena Kastor's Book

Now without giving away any big spoilers, there is a moment in the book where Deena has been injured pretty badly and cannot run for several months while she heals. And her mom, bless her mom, calls her up and says like, hey, I think maybe you should see a therapist because this is the longest you've ever gone without running and I'm worried about your mental state.

And Deena's like, alright, your opinion is noted. But to herself, she's like, no, I feel fine. And she has this moment where she realizes that running, her running career, and then all of the work that she had done on her thoughts to be the best runner she could be had prepared her for that exact moment, for being able to manage through all of her recovery without freaking out, without worrying, without anything else.

She just tackles her recovery with as much enthusiasm and determination and dedication as she approaches her training. It was so fascinating to read about that and just think about how what somebody else might think is the most devastating thing in the world and not to say that she didn't think it was devastating in the moment when the injury happened, but her thinking and her thought work brought it around so that she could choose to experience it differently.

So again, I'll be honest, I really didn't know much about Deena Kastor before reading this book. I knew she was a really accomplished runner, I had a lot of respect for that, but I wasn't familiar with her story. And reading about her mental work has inspired me in so many ways. I cannot recommend this book enough. It will change you. It will change how you think about yourself and your training and your accomplishments. I promise you. It's so good.

Now, before I close today's podcast, this is a short and sweet podcast today. I want to share a couple very short passages from this book that I

Ep #154: Let Your Mind Run - A Review of Deena Kastor's Book

thought were especially meaningful and helpful, at least to me. Hopefully they'll be the same for you.

Now, at mile 21 in the Chicago Marathon, this is the second time she's running the Chicago Marathon, she hit the wall in the exact spot that she hit it seven years earlier, which is at mile 21. And she thought to herself, instead of thinking oh god, I hit the wall, fuck, she thought to herself on purpose, "This is why you're here, this is where the growth begins, find the thoughts to rise to the challenge."

I'm going to say that again. Here's what she thought to herself at mile 21 of the Chicago Marathon, hitting the wall. She thought, "This is why you're here; this is where the growth begins, find the thoughts to rise to the challenge."

I mean, wow. Hitting the wall, deciding it's not a bad thing, but rather the start of the growth. What? Most of us hit that point where we're struggling and discouraged and we think, alright, well it's over, I just got to suffer through the rest of this race so I can cross the finish line. We think something's gone wrong that running feels hard in that moment.

But shifting your belief to, oh, this is actually the whole point of the run, that it's the moment that I have been training for, this is the moment where the growth happens, that is a mindset shift that will make you strong as fuck. So good.

And of course, it reminds me of a mantra I created for myself during my own marathon training last year, where I kept saying to myself that when it got really hard, when I hit that point of fuck, this is hard, I would think to myself, these are the miles I came for. Do you remember that episode? That was a good one. I must have been channeling my inner Deena on that run.

Ep #154: Let Your Mind Run - A Review of Deena Kastor's Book

I think that was a 16-mile training run where I came up with that for myself, and it's the same thing. It's like, I can't run - it hit me at mile 13 because I did a half marathon, crossed the finish line, and then went right back into three additional - I just keep going for three more miles. But as I hit that half marathon, I was thinking, I'm so done, this is so hard, I can't do the next three miles.

And then something in my brain shifted and I was like, no, these three miles are the important miles. These are the miles that I came for, and I could not do these miles until - I can't experience these miles until I do the first 13, so I had to get to that point. Seriously, I must have been channeling my inner Deena on that run.

Anyway, the other passage from this book that I want to share is really the summation of the entire book and Deena writes, "The power of a single positive choice is the first step into the story we want to create. The outcome we desire. Every decision that follows builds and expands and accumulates, and yet it comes back to the micro decisions we make in any given moment when we can go in one direction or the other. On some days, the positive path is harder to find, and we have to be relentless in its pursuit. But a better outlook is always there and well worth chasing. On the other side, our potential and possibility."

So this basically says it all for me. This is a life philosophy that will serve you well. Not just in running, but everywhere. I love that. Every moment we have a chance to make a decision to go in one direction or the other, and sometimes it's going to be hard to find that positive path. It's going to be hard to find that positive direction. We have to be relentless pursuing it because the option is always there, the better outlook is always there.

Just so fucking good. I am legit probably going to print that out and just hang it on my wall. So that is it, my friends, for my review of Let Your Mind Run by Deena Kastor. I barely scratched the surface of the amazingness in

Ep #154: Let Your Mind Run - A Review of Deena Kastor's Book

this book, so I urge you to grab a copy for yourself and read it immediately. We will have a convenient link in the show notes for you as always.

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.