

Ep #156: How to Become a Consistent Exerciser



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With Your Host

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The problem is that most of us want to change the action we're taking without examining our thoughts about it. We want to keep having our shitty thoughts like, "I hate exercising," but suddenly magically become somebody who exercises consistently, and it never ever works that way.

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. Can we talk about how somehow, it's August already? And can we talk about how I say this every year? It's like I'm somehow surprised at how quickly the time goes. And every year, I'm also equally shocked when the clock goes forward on daylight savings day. Every damn year.

Does this happen to you too? No? Just me? Anyway, I know that there are a lot of you that use the pandemic to start a fitness program. And maybe it was running, maybe it was something else, and you were all excited, but now somehow, you're struggling to stick with it.

And maybe, just maybe this is a thing you do a lot. And you swear this time's going to be different, you're for sure going to stick with it this time around and then suddenly, you've quit again. And each time, you are more and more pissed at yourself, more and more disappointed. And when you are saying to yourself maybe I'm just not cut out to be a runner, maybe I don't have it in me to be consistent, or you just beat yourself up for being lazy.

My rebels, I hear you and I see you. And really, I have been there so many times. You name it, I have tried it and quit. I've signed up for so many classes, sometimes I put down hundreds of dollars upfront and then just quit after a few times. Orange Theory, Pilates classes, private Pilates

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classes, Jazzercise, CrossFit, Beachbody, you name it, I have spent money on it and given up.

And each time, I felt discouraged and disappointed and frustrated because for the most part, I actually liked those things. I took a class, I had fun, I thought, "Wow, this is really amazing, I would love to do this all the time." And then nothing. I'd make a bunch of shitty excuses and never go back and feel worse every time.

And I know there are some of you out there nodding your head right now going, is she in my head? How does she know what I'm thinking? Seriously though, even with running, which I love, I struggled for years to be consistent. Years. I would run, I'd start seeing progress, and then it was like my brain would just short-circuit and I'd forget how much I liked it.

I'd quit for a couple months, sometimes a year for more. One time I quit for up to two years and somehow though, I never quite gave up on myself. I think partly it was because instead of - I mean, sometimes I would beat myself up for quitting, but not every time. Sometimes I would say okay, you're still just figuring this out. You're going to become a regular exerciser, you just need to find what works for you.

And about 10 years ago, I really did figure it out. This secret sauce to staying consistent and learning to love exercise finally gelled for me. And once I got it, I started to become consistent. Like really consistent. Not perfect, mind you. I'm human and some days I have thoughts that keep me from exercising.

But like, most of the time, maybe 90% of the time, I do it and I like it and I'm committed to it. So I can pretty much guarantee you that any thought you have had about exercise, I've either had it myself and worked through it, or I've helped one of my clients work on it.

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And funny story, so I actually think I've told this before on the podcast but I love this story I'm going to tell it again. In August of 2015, I was promoting a 5K training program on Facebook. There was a woman who saw my ad and the ad said I could teach anybody to run.

And she was 50 at the time, and maybe about 100 pounds overweight. And she hated to exercise. She literally hired me to prove me wrong because she thought I was crazy. But obviously, secretly somewhere in the back of her mind, she kind of wanted to become an exerciser.

Now, fast forward five years, she's run dozens of half marathons, two full marathons, she's super consistent, and her identity, her entire self-identity has shifted from someone who only runs if she's being chased to oh yeah, I'm a marathon runner. And this happened when she was 50.

You are never ever too old to change your life. I mean, I'm 52. I'm still changing my life. I'm still evolving and deciding who I want to be when I grow up. And I probably will continue to do that for the next 50 years, right?

So let's talk about exercise in general. If you Google what is exercise, you'll find a bunch of different definitions such as exercise is 20 or more minutes of getting your heart rate into an aerobic training zone or some technical bullshit like that. I don't think these are helpful definitions because what happens if you do 10 minutes of getting your heart rate up and you're like, oh, that doesn't count as exercise and I'm a failure.

So as you'll find out in a few minutes, perfectionist thinking like that is one of the barriers to becoming a person who exercises consistently, but it's really common. We're like nope, they said it has to be 20 minutes to count as exercise so if I do 10 minutes, it doesn't count, it's like it never happened.

And it's twisted that we think of it that way, but we do. So for today's podcast, I want to give you a definition of exercise that I think is really

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helpful. I define it as the deliberate movement of your body for the purpose of self-care, physical or mental. Now, there's no amount of time that counts as exercise. There's no list of approved activities. If you move your body with the intention of caring for your body or mind, it's exercise.

There are so many benefits to exercise, my friends. So I actually asked in the official Not Your Average Runner Facebook group, the podcast community, what reasons people had when they started running. Like when you started running, why did you do it?

And overwhelming, this surprised me a little bit but maybe I shouldn't have been surprised. But overwhelmingly, the response was I started running to lose weight. And now there were quite a few people who also added that once they started running, they kept coming back for reasons other than weight loss, and that is really the key or one of the keys to becoming a regular exerciser.

So we're going to talk about those benefits. That's where we're going to sort of start our discussion today. First of all, the benefits to your mind. Exercise produces changes in the parts of the brain that regulate stress and anxiety. When we say running is cheaper than therapy, this is literally what's happening.

Exercise helps your brain regulate stress and anxiety. It can also increase brain sensitivity for the hormones serotonin and norepinephrine, which relieve feelings of depression. Additionally, exercise can increase the production of endorphins, which are known to produce positive feelings and reduce the perception of pain.

So really, exercise has a lot going for it. And it has also been shown to reduce symptoms in people suffering from anxiety. It can help them become more aware of their mental state and practice distraction from their fears. Exercise improves memory, and interestingly, it really doesn't matter

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how intense your workout is, it seems like your mood can benefit from exercise no matter the intensity or the duration of the physical activity.

So if you're in this place of like, I'm so depressed, I'm too depressed to exercise, I want you to just think about five minutes. What is the minimum that you can do because it will have an impact. It doesn't have to be perfect. You do not have to get out there and run a marathon. Five-minute walk. Notice the difference.

Okay, so exercise is great for your mind. Those are just a few examples. It can also teach you how to endure, it can help you work on your thinking and become somebody who routinely blows their own mind with how powerful they are. Exercise is just great for the mind.

Now, body-wise, it's great for your muscles, your bones, your heart, your immune system, your skin, your brain. Exercise will reduce insulin sensitivity. With so many people, especially in the United States, finding out that they're got pre-diabetes insulin sensitivity or type 2 diabetes, exercise makes a difference, my friends.

And again, you don't have to run a marathon to help manage your insulin with exercise. And this is one of my favorite things about exercise. I hear all the time that running and high-impact activities are bad for your knees. But here's the thing; almost every person I know who's had a knee replacement has never been a runner.

Because high-impact weight-bearing activities such as running actually promotes your bones and your joints to get stronger. It does not tear them down. And this is even more fun. If you're overweight and you actually get more of a benefit from these activities because you have more mass hitting the ground. It's kind of a big deal.

It increases the effect on your bones. You really don't meet a lot of overweight people who exercise that have osteoporosis because their

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bones are strong as fuck. So that's what it can do for your body. That's just, again, a tiny little sampling. And it can also help you with sleep. And if you are perimenopausal or a post-menopausal woman, you know that you need help with this. So exercise can help you there.

Now, I am not here to convince you to start exercising. Because if you're listening to this podcast, you're either a relative of mine and you're trying to support the show, or exercise is something you either want to do or you think you should do, and maybe you're not doing it and you want to figure out how to change that.

So the secret magical solution to becoming someone who exercises regularly is - one of them anyway is understanding why you might want to do it. And I just gave you a bunch of benefits. But understanding why, and then connecting deeply with that reason. And understanding your objections and countering them so they don't get in your way.

So you need to understand why you want to do it, but you also - if you only had reasons for doing it, you'd be doing it. So you must have reasons that are counteracting all of your why's and creating that churn in your brain that keeps you from doing it.

So here are some reasons why you might want to exercise. First of all, to get all the benefits that we just talked about. All those amazing benefits. If you could have that in a pill, you would take that pill in a heartbeat. You can't, but exercise is a great way to do it for free.

So it also gives you an opportunity to work on your thinking. Your negative self-talk, your beliefs that you can't do it, exercise is a great proving ground to evolve how you think about yourself. You can also use it to spend time with or support a friend or family member who's doing it, or get some time alone for yourself.

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I know a lot of moms that are just like, exercise is the only time I'm alone and so I would never ever stop exercising because I would give up my alone time. It's definitely a part of your self-care. It supports your health goals. But it's also a great way to meet new friends or find somebody to date.

How could would that be? You're out there walking or running on the same path week after week and you see this cute person of the gender that you are attracted to and like, boom, there you go, you guys have something in common already.

Here's another reason why you might want to exercise. This is maybe one of the reasons I exercise is you might just love how your ass looks in stretchy clothes. You might just say like, workout gear is so comfortable, I might actually want to use it for what it was intended for, in addition to just hanging around watching Netflix in it.

So let's talk though about your objections because if you only had reasons to do it, you'd be doing it. So you've got some kind of objections in your brain and maybe you haven't recognized them yet, or maybe you think that your objections are circumstances. I promise you they're not.

But here are some reasons why you might not want to exercise. First of all, you might not like getting sweaty. You might say to yourself, "Ew, gross, I hate getting sweaty." You might think you're constantly doing it wrong. You might say, "I don't like getting up early," or, "I don't have time," or, "I'm afraid that I'm going to get injured."

You might not be interested in exercising. In which case, this is probably not the podcast for you. You might not know what to do or where to go. You might worry about what other people think. We talk about this all the time in my Rebel Runner Roadmap program where people are just starting to become runners and they have a lot of thoughts about what other people are going to think.

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You might not like what your body looks like in stretchy clothes. I can't understand why because I think all bodies look amazing in stretchy clothes, but you might not like yours. You might not think you have time. I think I already said that. You might think exercise doesn't feel good.

And I get that because it might be uncomfortable. Your heart rate is elevated, maybe your muscles are feeling a little tired or maybe they're burning a little bit and you're like, this doesn't feel right. Actually, that's awesome when that happens because it means you're doing it right.

But there may be some concern about that. You might not want to spend money on a gym membership or a trainer. You might be concerned about exercising alone. You might not trust that you would stick with it.

If you listen to that list of thoughts that I just gave you and said, oh yeah, I can hear my brain there, that's why you're struggling. Because even though you've got a lot of great reasons to do it, you've got a lot of reasons in your brain to not do it. So there's this epic battle being set up between the I want to and the I don't want to half of your brain. Halves of your brain.

So here is the million-dollar question, rebels. If you are not exercising consistently, if you're not exercising at the frequency that you want to be, do you like your reasons for not doing it? If your reason is I just don't like getting sweaty, are you cool with that? Are you cool with saying I'm giving up all the benefits of exercise because I don't like getting sweaty?

And if you are, awesome. If you are cool with that, then honestly, I would just say look, I just don't want to be an exerciser. Admit it to yourself. Stop arguing with yourself and just say look, I don't want to be an exerciser because I don't like getting sweaty. Boom, done.

And then stop telling yourself I should be doing it, because what happens is your brain is bouncing back and forth. I should be doing it, but I don't want to, but I should be doing it, but I don't want to. It's exhausting. So just

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decide, maybe I should be doing it but I really don't want to and that part of me is stronger and I'm just taking it off the table.

But if you're not exercising and you really do want to be, all of your reasons, all of your objections are the problem. Because the action, if we think about the CTFAR model, exercising is an action, and that means anything on the A-line is driven by an emotion, a feeling that we have on the F-line, and that F-line comes from your thoughts.

So the problem is that most of us want to change the action we're taking without examining our thoughts about it. We want to keep having our shitty thoughts like, "I hate exercising," but suddenly magically become somebody who exercises consistently, and it never ever works that way.

When you think the thought, "I hate exercise," or, "I don't like getting sweaty," you feel resistance. And when you feel the emotion of resistance, you are much less likely to work out. Way less likely. So you really - if you want to become a person who exercises, you need to start by understanding all the thoughts you have about exercise so that you can address them. Otherwise, you're just going to keep struggling.

So I'm actually teaching a class about this in a few weeks and I'm going to talk about it at the end of this episode. I'm going to tell you how you can learn more about the class. But I want to teach you - I'm going to give you a little bit of what I'm going to teach. Just a little snippet, a little taste of what I'll be teaching in the class for the rest of this podcast.

So first of all, here are some very common thought errors around exercise. And I know you've said these to yourself. I've said them to myself. And when I used to say them all the time, I didn't work out very often.

So here are some examples. It doesn't count unless I do a certain amount of minutes or I get my heart rate up to a certain level. It doesn't count unless I do at least 30 minutes, or it doesn't count unless I get my heart

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rate up to 150. I have to do it at least five times a week or it's not worth my time. If I have to walk sometimes, I can't call myself a runner. If I can't run a 5K without stopping, I shouldn't even bother.

So these are all examples of perfectionist thinking, which is such a sneaky thing because it seems really true and important. And if you said to me, if I can't run a 5K without stopping I shouldn't even bother, and I was like, well, that's really just your opinion, you'd be like no, I know a lot of people that believe that also, so it's true.

But I'm like, I don't know, I know a lot of people that believe that exact opposite, so maybe they're right. So that's how I know it's a thought. Just an opinion that's not helpful for you. So here's an example. If you think to yourself, "It doesn't count unless it's at least an hour," how do you feel? You feel defeated.

And when you feel defeated, you are not likely to do anything. Not even 10 minutes because why bother? So you do nothing. You fail ahead of time and you reinforce your story. Now, the way to counteract this is first to identify where you're thinking this way. Where you're in an all or nothing belief system, and then start working on creating a new way of thinking that will result in the feeling of motivated or determined and then subsequently, the action of exercising.

So if your belief right now is it doesn't count unless it's an hour, you might want to work towards believing 10 minutes of exercise still counts. Because if you believed that 10 minutes of exercise counted, you'd be removing the barrier to going for a 10-minute walk or going for a 10-minute run.

So this is basically the minimum baseline technique, which I've actually talked about before on this show. It's essentially the minimum amount of something that you know you'll actually do no matter what. And I have a term I like to use called the drama threshold.

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And the drama threshold is the amount of exercise that does not create drama in your brain when you think about it. You want to set your minimum baseline below that. So for example, it might be that you don't have any drama in your mind about taking a five-minute walk every day.

I mean, maybe you have a little bit of drama thinking five minutes isn't enough, but you don't have the drama of like, I don't want to do five minutes, I can't do it, right? For you, five minutes might be that. It might be 10 minutes for you, it might be two minutes for you.

But whatever that amount of time is in your brain that doesn't trigger alarm bells in your brain, this becomes your minimum baseline. It's that amount of exercise you're willing to commit to no matter what because you know it's going to be easy for you.

Then when your brain wants to procrastinate, which it will, you'll get around it by saying okay, all you have to do is five minutes or 10 minutes or whatever your baseline is. Now, here's the deal. I know you perfectionists are thinking, well, if it's not an hour, it doesn't count. And the minimum baseline is not about whether it "counts" as exercise.

The minimum baseline is about retraining your brain to stop procrastinating the actions you want to take because you think they're going to be too hard. I have a lot of clients who the first time around, they set their minimum baseline to what they think is the least amount they can do to make progress on their training plan.

They're like, well, it has to be 30 minutes or it's not going to move my fitness forward. This is not a minimum baseline, my friends. Because if they were able to do 30 minutes consistently, there would be no drama. They wouldn't be saying I don't know why I can't keep up with my training plan.

Instead, there's a lot of internal arguments and tantrums going on and a lot of giving up. So the minimum baseline is the amount your brain won't argue

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with when you say, hey, we got to go out and workout. What is that amount? If you say we got to go for five minutes, is your brain like, okay, I can do five minutes? If you say we got to go 15 minutes, is your brain like, hell no, that's too much?

If that's the case, 15 minutes is your drama threshold. You've got to set your minimum baseline below that. You commit to the minimum baseline and you do it no matter what over and over again. And what this does - it might not move your fitness forward, but it might. Five minutes is better than zero minutes.

But what it really does is it helps you form the identity of being someone who exercises regularly. And when you have that identity, you exercise, even when you don't feel like it because it is just who you are. When you have created the identity, you become eventually, somebody who does the full workout, at least most of the time.

You always have that minimum baseline tool in your pocket just in case, but when you have the identity of being an exerciser, you don't struggle with am I going to exercise today or not. It's just a matter of this is what's on my training plan, am I going to do this or am I going to modify? Which you might do occasionally.

And here's a great example of this. I have a very strong identity as somebody who exercises every single day. I didn't always have that identity. But once I created it, it's there. It's to the point of every morning I get up and I don't say am I going to exercise today? I say what am I going to do for my exercise today?

And this summer, as all of our races started to get canceled, I was thinking I wouldn't mind taking a break from running. I did have a little bit of a thought in my brain like, gosh, if I stop running for a month or two, just to kind of give my legs a break and focus on other things, am I going to struggle to exercise?

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And I thought about it and I was like, I don't think so because it's just what I do. So now, so we've got a bike. We got a Peloton, an exercise bike, and I will tell you what, I get up every morning, and to me, the question is, am I going to Peloton today? Am I going to walk today? Am I going to strength train today? Am I going to do some combination of all of those?

There's never a question of am I going to work out or not? It is always, what am I going to do? And now, usually the question is, do I have time to do a whole hour or do I only have time for 45 minutes? That identity of being an exerciser is so strong that my brain breaks when I think, "Oh my gosh, I can only get 30 minutes in." And it didn't happen overnight. It happened with months and years of, like, doing the minimum baseline and working on my thoughts about it.

Okay, so that is just one, that's just a tiny tip of one of the tools that we'll be talking about in the virtual class that I'm teaching. This is kind of a big deal. I've never taught a class, like just a one-off virtual online class like this before. I've never done this. I mean, I teach classes all the time to my members, my coaching members, but I've never just done it for the general public.

But on August 23rd, I'm teaching a virtual class all about becoming someone who exercises, someone who does it consistently, someone who does it for life.

I'm going to teach you the basic components of a well-rounded exercise routine, what you need to set up and so forth. And then, you're going to learn exactly how to manage your mind around all the drama that will come up. Because most people know what to do. It's just that their brain won't let them do it. So, we're going to spend a lot of time on that.

So, my goal for every student in this class is to be able to create a realistic workout routine for themselves that they can actually stick to, along with learning all of the tools that I can throw at them. I'm going to teach you all the things, everything I've got in my arsenal, like the minimum baseline, to make it happen, so you're not going to walk out of here going, "This is the

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exercise I should be doing.” You’re going to walk out going, “Oh, and this is exactly how I’m going to make it happen.”

You’re going to have a plan for how you are going to create your identity as an exerciser, how you’re going to deal with the negative self-talk, how you’re going to deal with the tantrums in your brain, all of that stuff. Because that’s really the only barrier between you and being an exerciser.

So, the class itself is over Zoom. It’s from 12pm to 3pm eastern time on August 23rd. It is only \$39 to attend. This is, like, such a great price. And it’s called Not Your Average Workout, How to Start Today and Stick with It for Life. And again, you’re going to learn exactly how to do that.

You’re going to learn how to start today and stick with it for life. It’s perfect for anyone just starting out as an exerciser. But also, if you’re someone who’s struggled with consistency over the years, it’s the perfect class for you as well. If you are 40, if you are 50, if you are 60 and you’re struggling with consistency, this is a great class for you.

You do not have to be fit already to do it. You can be overweight, you can be completely out of shape, you can be like, “I don’t even know where to start with exercise,” I’ve got you covered, alright.

So, if you want to sign up for the class, all of the details can be found on my website at notyouraveragerunner.com/workout. I really, really hope I’ll see you there. And we will have a link in the show notes. So, if you’re like, “I can’t remember that,” the links are going to be in the show notes. But you can also just go to notyouraveragerunner.com and click the link there. Or you can type in notyouraveragerunner.com/workout and all of the information will be there.

Again, the class is August 23rd from noon to 3pm eastern time. And it’s going to be over Zoom. You can come in your pajamas. You can bring a glass of wine. It’s going to be amazing. Okay, my friends, I love you. Stay safe. Get your ass out there and exercise. And I will see you in the next episode.

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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.