

Ep #20: How to Stop Quitting



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With Your Host

Jill Angie

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Welcome to *The Not Your Average Runner Podcast*. If you're a woman who is midlife and plus sized and you want to start running but don't know how, or if it's even possible, you're in the right place. Using proven strategies and real-life experience, certified running and life coach Jill Angie shares how you can learn to run in the body you have right now.

You are listening to episode number 20 of *The Not Your Average Runner Podcast*. I'm your host, Jill Angie, and today's topic is how to stop quitting. We also got an Ask the Curvy Coach question from Tammy, and then my latest obsession.

So whether you're a brand-new runner, an experienced pro, or maybe even just contemplating about it because all your friends are running, you are in the right place.

Now, first of all, I just want to recognize that we are 20 episodes into this little podcast, that is almost six months. My mind is blown. I just want to say thanks so much to everyone for coming along with me on this journey, having me in your ear when you're out running or driving around or whatever it is, and yeah, I'm just so grateful that we are here together doing this.

And I do have a little announcement to make this week. I am putting together something amazing to help a few really dedicated listeners run their very first half marathon and transform into true rebel runners. All within one single year of glorious badassery.

So it is going to be life-changing, and if this is something that interests you, if you've been running for at least a few months, and maybe you've thought, "Hmm, half marathon, that kind of sounds scary but also like, something I really want on my bucket list," if you're ready to make this the year that you really step out and do some epic shit, I want you to apply for the rebel runner program. So all you have to do to apply is go to

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www.talktojill.com and then fill out the questionnaire and schedule a quick 10-minute call with me and we will talk.

Alright, now here is our Ask the Curvy Coach question of the week from Tammy B. Tammy writes, "What to do when you're in the middle of a crummy run? Do you ever just not feel it when you're running? This morning I woke up and I got ready for my run, just the usual day. I have a new updated playlist and I was excited to start running, and then last night I decided to try running in a new place closer to home. Also, I decided to change my intervals from one to one to three to one, and that's in minutes. It turns out the place I decided to run was pretty crummy and not very pretty at all, and basically a big cement circle to run around and around. Ugh. And clearly, I should have changed my intervals from one and one to one thirty and one. In order words, 60 seconds to 90 seconds. So I ended up having a pretty terrible run. I kept thinking that eventually it would all iron itself out, that eventually I would settle in. But no luck. So next time, would you just stop and make some changes, or stop early and call it a day? Thank you."

That is a great question, Tammy. And in this case, I would have just stopped my watch, stopped running, fixed the intervals, and then started up again. I would have just kept going and made a mental note to not return to that place for running.

I think there are times when it makes sense to call a run short. Like, if you're feeling an injury developing or if the place where you're running maybe feels unsafe, or the conditions aren't great, say if there's a lot of like, mud after a big rainstorm or a lot of ice and you could easily slip and fall.

But if it's just boring or your intervals feel too hard, I would say adjust it and keep going. Because we all have runs that don't feel as great as others. It's really normal and I actually don't like to call any run terrible because just the fact that I got my shoes on and went running in the first place is

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awesome. But for sure, sometimes things don't go as planned and it's just a matter of making an adjustment and doing the best you can with what you've got.

But your question that you phrased about not feeling it during a run is very common, and sometimes it has nothing to do with your intervals and everything to do with what I'm going to be talking about today. So stay tuned for that.

Now, if you want to get your question answered, all you have to do is email me at podcast@notyouraveragerunner.com. I'm picking one each week to read and answer, and you can ask me anything. And if I pick your question to answer on the show, I'll also send you a Not Your Average Runner car magnet.

This week, I'm going to teach you how to stop quitting. And I know this maybe sounds like kind of a weird topic, but I think you know what I mean when I say that. Now, how many times have you started something, like running or maybe trying to change something in the way you eat, or, "Oh, I'm going to meditate every day," right? And it's like a New Year's resolution, basically.

And it's all great for a week or two, you're excited, your motivation is high, you can't imagine ever not doing this new thing, right? You're a changed person, you start telling everyone you know about how you're never going to go back to the way you were. And then something happens, maybe you're extra tired one morning, or you get stuck in a big traffic jam on the way home from work, forget to bring your running shoes to the gym, whatever it is, and you miss a run.

And sure, shit happens, right? But it's like, once that door is cracked open, it's really easy to miss another day. And then the thoughts start, right? The how I'm screwing up or I've lost too much fitness and my next run is going

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to be really hard, and all that inner mean girl stuff starts up. And then the next thing you know, it's been two weeks, and then three, and then you've given up completely.

And honestly, it really doesn't have to be that way, and that's kind of what we're going to talk about today is like, how to slow that train down before it goes completely off the rails.

Now, one thing I can tell you for sure is that running is something that everybody wants to quit at one time or another, right? It might be first thing in the morning and they don't want to get up and they think, "This is stupid, I'm not going to be a runner anymore because getting up in the morning is really hard." Or it might be like Tammy said, which was, you know, like, she just wasn't feeling it halfway through her runs.

There's all kinds of reasons that we want to quit, but running's hard and everybody does want to quit at one time or another. Now, if you're brand new to running, that means you just need to be prepared for that moment, or moments, when you do want to quit. And really, this concept applies to everything in life, but we're just going to talk it through in the context of running today.

So the first concept I want to introduce you to is that we quit on different levels. And I like to call them big quits and little quits. So big quits are very decisive and conscious. We actually just say, "I quit," right? I'm not going to do this thing anymore or pursue this goal. It's an intention that we're not going to - you know, we're going to discontinue whatever the behavior is or we're going to discontinue pursuing the goal, period. And we do them with intention.

It's like quitting a job. It's a conscious decision. It's like, I'm not going to show up for my race because you know, for whatever reasons we have. It's that very conscious decision.

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Little quits are totally different. Little quits are giving in to that urge for a momentary comfort or relief at the expense of your long-term pleasure, and at the expense of satisfaction of meeting your goal. So little quits happen when the action you're planning to take, such as getting up early for a training run is uncomfortable in some way.

It's like deciding to sleep in a little longer in the morning because it feels better in that moment, right? Your bed is warm, it's cold outside, you're kind of tired, maybe you stayed up late the night before. So right in that moment, staying in bed and skipping your run seems like a good plan of action. But then, later on, you're not happy with yourself.

It's totally a big trade-off that we make, and it happens because our brains are more concerned with what we're feeling right now than what we might feel later. You're basically procrastinating your discomfort, right? And by that, I mean your emotional discomfort. Because sure, you're going to feel physically more comfortable lying in bed, but then you're going to feel guilty or disappointed in yourself if you skip your run. You're going to feel awful later on. So you're just procrastinating feeling it.

What's happening in that decision moment there when you say, "I'm just going to stay in bed," is that you're quitting on yourself, just for a little bit. It's a - I call it a little quit because it doesn't really feel like quitting. It seems like you're just taking a break or you're just taking a day off. But it really is a temporary quit. It's like, just for the next six hours, I'm quitting on myself.

And just to be clear, this is totally different than taking time off because you're injured or sick. You should always listen to your body. I'm talking about those times when you know you could go running and you just choose not to.

So we just finished the whole 5K Training podcast episode series, so let's use that as an example. Let's say your race is in 12 weeks, and your

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training plan has you running three times a week. So that's 36 runs, and you've signed up for the race, so you've committed to it, right? And because of your work schedule, you know, at least twice a week you'll need to get up early before work to go running.

Now, every evening before your scheduled run, you have the best of intentions, right? You pack your gym bag or you lay out your clothes. You make sure your phone and your Garmin are charging. You set your alarm. And you go to sleep thinking, "I'm going to get up and I'm going to go running tomorrow morning." And then the alarm goes off in the morning and you're super cozy in bed because it's a bed, right? Duh, we're always super cozy in bed. And you think to yourself, "You know, I was really good all last week, I nailed every single run, bed feels so good, I'm kind of tired, so just this one time I'm going to skip my run."

And it doesn't really seem like a big deal. I mean, it's just one run, right? This is a conversation we all have with ourselves. But this is a little tiny quit. And it does seem tiny, right? You're like, you're not quitting with a capital Q. You're still planning to keep training for the race, you're just skipping a run.

Now, every time you find yourself in this situation, I want you to know that you really - you are quitting on yourself right then and there. You don't think of it that way because like I said, you're still planning on doing the race, but you're giving up in that moment and that is quitting. And if you had to say out loud every time you skipped a run, if you had to say, "I quit," it would be totally different, right?

You'd realize that's exactly what it is. If you had to say, "I'm quitting on myself for the next four hours, I'm not going to go for my run." So here are some phrases that we often use that are kind of red flags that we are - that it's a little quit, that it's that like, tiny - like, quit with a lower-case Q.

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So when you find yourself saying, "I just need a break right now. I'm just too tired today," or, "I'm too busy," "It's too hard," "I'm not good at this," "I'm confused about what to do," "I have plenty of time, I'll do it tomorrow," "I just don't feel like it." And that last one, "I just don't feel like it," is a killer.

Like, all of those sentences are evidence that you're quitting on yourself in the moment. And every time you hear yourself say one of these - like, I want you to say - like, what if instead of saying that to myself, I said, "I quit right now." Would there be a different outcome?

So here's the hard truth. Little quits sound totally legit in the moment, right? I don't feel like it, I just need a break, I'm too busy. That sounds totally legit. But they're just really excuses for not doing something that you said you want to do. You're deciding in that moment that your short-term pleasure, which is the sleeping in a little longer is more important to you than your long-term wellbeing, which is feeling good about getting your run done, right?

I want to repeat that. You are deciding that your short-term pleasure is more important than your long-term wellbeing. Or to put it another way, you're deciding that you'd rather feel the emotional discomfort, the guilt later instead of the physical discomfort right now. Like I said, you're procrastinating feeling that discomfort.

And I mean, of course it makes total sense, right? Our brains are way more concerned with how we feel right now than how they might feel later. So in evolutionary terms, like 10,000 or a million years ago, I guess, you could be dead tomorrow. So your brain evolved to focus on the here and now. And also, you could be chased by a tiger right here and now, and so our brains were like, not super concerned about 24 hours, 48 hours, three months from now. They're concerned about the present moment.

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That makes sense. But the problem is we don't live in that environment anymore, and the problem of getting chased by a saber-tooth tiger has been replaced by the problem of whether to get up and run in the cold or stay in bed. And our brains don't really know the difference. Our primitive brain still operates that same circuitry of protect you in the moment.

And they always want to take the path of least resistance, the path that seems like the safest one, and of course, to your brain, staying in bed instead of going out and running after - like, running - you know, thousands and thousands of years ago, when you had to go running, it was because you were chasing food or you were running away from a bear. Now, your brain is like, "You want to go running just because?" Like, it's very confusing. So like, the path of least resistance is of course to stay in bed.

And then what we do on top of that, so our brain is just doing what it's been designed to do, but when that happens, and after we wake up and we get to work and we realize, "Oh crap, I missed another training run," we start to talk meanly to ourselves about it, right? Because a few little quits add up and then we're like, "What's wrong with you? Why can't you stick to anything? You're so lazy." Right?

The inner mean girl has all kinds of things to say. But really, like, we're being mean to ourselves but we're behaving exactly as evolution intended. It's the environment that has changed and our brains have not caught up. But the good news is once you know this, you can do a couple of things. First of all, you can stop beating yourself up every time you don't keep a commitment like a training run.

Because missing the run is one thing. You can put strategies in place and work on yourself so that you don't do it again but heaping all the negative thoughts on top of it is what makes it so painful and so much worse. You can't go back in time and redo that run. But you can avoid making it worse by not saying terrible things to yourself about it.

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So let's just agree right now that the beatings can stop, okay? No more beatings for missing a run. Next thing is now that you know this is how your brain works, you have ammunition, okay? When that morning alarm goes off and you start thinking how nice it would be to stay in bed, I want you to remember that your primitive brain is the one doing the talking.

So you're like - your brain is still fuzzy in the morning. The alarm goes off and like, not all of the systems are turned on yet. So the primitive brain is in charge, and it's the one doing the talking and it's the one saying, "Hey, it would be much better to just stay in bed."

So that is not the part of your brain that needs to be running the show right now. Because you're really not in any danger. Now, I know you're asking yourself right now like, what's the big deal if we quit on ourselves once or twice along the way? Right? Like, why are you making such a big deal out of this, Jill?

So, I mean, what if I have to miss a run here and there? And the answer is it's really not a big deal if it's just once or twice, okay? But here's where it gets tricky. Because when you quit on yourself once or twice, and it doesn't have a huge impact on your training, which it won't, right? Missing a workout, missing two workouts doesn't undo all of your hard work.

But that's a slippery slope because then you start to think you can get away with it, and you can get away with more. So then you start running twice a week instead of three times a week, or you skip a long run here and there, and that's really the true issue. Because too many little quits over time add up to the big quits because now you're building the habit of quitting instead of building the habit of running.

So you're just basically reinforcing that circuitry in your brain every time it says, "Let's stay in bed," and you're like, okay, that circuit gets stronger. So let's take a 5K as an example again. Your training plan says to run three

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times a week for 12 weeks, that's 36 runs total. And along the way, mostly during the training process, there will be times when you don't feel like doing what you need to do.

And as we discussed, you're not going to think of it as quitting because you're still planning to run the race, right? So you're not thinking, "I'm going to quit the race," you're thinking, "I'm just taking a break from this run right now." And it sounds perfectly legit. But if you miss one training run out of 36, you'll still be fine on race day.

Once you realize that missing that one run doesn't make much of a difference, you'll be tempted to do it again and then the next time you don't feel like it, doing it again, then one little quit leads to another and suddenly it's race day and you've only done maybe 20 out of the 36 runs and you're under-trained.

And so then you make a conscious decision, "I'm not trained, I probably - it's not safe for me to do this." Your brain makes this decision that you should not do the race. And that's a big quit. That's a conscious like, I'm not going to show up for this race because it's a bad idea, when really like, in that moment, the big quit seems like you're just making a decision based on the current situation, which of course is true. But the reality is that that quit started months back the first time you said, "Fuck it, I'm just going to sleep in."

Those little quits, they start adding up. They give you evidence to support the big quits, the capital Q quits. And they're what happen when you're like, not 100% committed to your goal. And the little quits, they undermine your confidence and your belief in yourself.

So what we really need to do is when I say how to stop quitting, I don't mean the big quit where you say I'm going to drop out of my race, or where

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we stop running for three months. I want to start figuring out how to stop the little quits.

So this actually starts with having very compelling reasons for wanting to achieve your goal. And they need to be so important to you that you wouldn't dream of not taking the necessary action.

So for example, if you gave me \$1000 and said, "If I don't do all my training runs, you can give that money to a political candidate that I do not like, but if I do all those runs, you give me my money back." So if that's the deal that we make, you give me \$1000 and I'm going to hold on to it, and I'm going to give it away to somebody you don't like if you fail, you're going to be really motivated to get up every morning and do every single one of those training runs.

That's a lot of money and there's no way you're going to let me give it to that candidate that you don't like. Now, that's an extreme, but very effective example. But you get what I mean, right?

So you need to know what your compelling reason is. It's that thing that makes it pretty much non-negotiable, and pretty much a done deal that you will, you know, do what you said you were going to do, that you're going to do all your training runs.

Now, for a lot of people, that's just knowing there's a race at the end of the line, and that's more than enough of a compelling reason. And for the record, I am actually not one of those people. Some people are compelled by the satisfaction of crossing off training runs on their calendar, or accumulating the miles, like, these people are like those thousand-mile challenges, they're all in, it's very motivating for them. And I'm actually one of those people.

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For my couple half marathons, here's what I did. It was so much fun. So for the first couple that I did - I didn't do it for the ones after that, but the first couple like, I really had to kind of get into this sort of mindset of like, being all in with my training. And so, I would make a Post-it for every single training run and then put them in a grid on my wall and then every time I completed a run I took down a Post-it.

And it was very, very satisfying. Now, if you've ever signed up for a race and it wasn't quite enough to keep you motivated, or you hate the thought of Post-its all over your wall, you are going to need something maybe a little more compelling.

So I want to take you through a little exercise. And this is not an exercise that requires you to get up and move your body at all. This is strictly a writing exercise. So I want you to take five minutes, set a timer, and write down everything that running gives you.

And for example, on my list, it might improve fitness, stress relief, clearing your mind, I call it burning off the crazy. Getting to spend time with friends, right? I have a running buddy that I like to go out with. Quiet time. For me, it's also podcast time, it's also listening to music time. I get increased confidence and self-esteem from running. The pride of accomplishment. I get to wear my cute running outfits.

Some other people might say, "Oh, you know, running gives me a chance to set a good example for my kids." Or, they like collecting race medals, they like how they feel right after a run. I absolutely love that too. So you get the picture. Like, list out all the things that you get from running, okay?

Then I want you to go through your list and decide what on that list that you can't live without. For example, with me, the joy of movement and combined with stress relief, I literally just cannot live without that. Nothing - I mean, it's life-giving to me to feel that joy of physical movement. And

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obviously, stress relief is important. Like, nothing else relieves my stress the way running does. And when I'm not able to run regularly, yeah, I have to like, turn to other methods of stress relief, but running for me is like, the best way to do it.

There's just something about the rhythmic movement of my legs that feels very meditative, and I find it very calming. I can't quite seem to get that feeling from anything else, except maybe spinning. Definitely not cupcakes. I've totally tried that.

So I know that when I skip a run, I'm going to have this sort of edgy energy in my body that needs an outlet. And one thing I know for sure is that that energy will show up like an unruly toddler if I don't give it something to do. So for me, running three to four times a week keeps that all under control.

And so that to me is a very compelling reason. So I want you to go through your list, decide what you can't live without, and then cross off the stuff that's optional. Like, maybe running clothes. You can live without running clothes and so forth.

Then take that smaller list. So this is the smaller list of like, everything that running gives you, then you've kind of brought it down to a list from that list of everything you can't live without. And now I want you to cross off anything that you can get from something other than running.

So for me, listening to podcasts is on my list of things that running gives me. And it's also something that's on my list of I can't live without it because I love listening to podcasts. But I can listen to podcasts at other times. So like, running isn't the only method for me to get that.

So I want you to go through and so now you're kind of like, crossing off and finding the things that like, are mandatory for you to have, and that running

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is pretty much the only thing that gives you that thing. Whatever's left, whatever that, you know, smaller list is, those are your really compelling reasons.

And so I want you to take a moment and write about why those things are important to you. And it might be things like setting a good example for your kids, or burning off the crazy, or you know, the time that you get to spend with your husband. Like, maybe you and your husband run together, whatever.

Like, write about why those things are important to you, why you feel like you can't live without them, what your life would be like if you didn't take time to create those things. You know, maybe it's the confidence or the self-esteem, or the quit time, or setting a good example for your kids. Like, whatever it is, what would your life be like if you didn't take time to create those things through running?

And I want you to connect with this list on a daily basis. Like, before you go to bed at night, first thing in the morning, read it aloud to yourself as a voice memo on your phone and listen to it in the car, or as a meditation before you go to bed. I want you to - like, think of it as if you're installing it like software into your brain.

And then the next time you find yourself wanting to sleep in and skip your run, remember what we've talked about today. This is how your brain evolved. Nothing has gone horribly wrong if you wake up and your body says I don't want to go running today, you haven't lost your mojo or your motivation.

Your brain is operating as designed. It is trying to protect you from perceived danger, such as getting out of your nice warm bed. It's literally just a thought error. Your brain is perceiving getting out of your bed as

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danger. Your brain is perceiving running for reasons other than tracking down food as danger. And it's trying to protect you, right?

So in that context, like, it makes perfect sense, and you don't have to think there's something wrong with you. It's totally normal to think I don't feel like doing this right now, or any of the other excuses your brain will come up with. The key is just to be ready, to just recognize the typical things that you think when you want to quit and use a conscious decision-making process to decide what to do.

So take the time, and this is another great exercise for you to do. Take the time to anticipate what your challenges and obstacles and excuses will be so that you're prepared instead of taken by surprise.

So using our 5K example, you're going to have 36 workouts to do to train for your race. This means there will be 36 opportunities, 36 times when you are going to want to quit. That's a good thing to know because each time it happens, you just remember these are just thoughts that your brain comes up with to keep you safe, and you don't have to believe them.

So take a moment to write out 10 things - 10 challenges, obstacles, or excuses that you expect your brain will come up with whenever it's time to do a run, and be specific and draw on past experiences if necessary. And then like, I want you to - when those times come up, you have three questions that you're going to answer for yourself.

The first is, do you want to quit right now because of discomfort, fear, or anxiety in the moment? Like, are you just worried about the run or are you - you don't want to, you know, get out of bed because it's cold outside. Or are you afraid that you won't be able to finish it or whatever. Whatever that is, like, if that's the reason you want to quit, that's never a good reason to say I'm not going to go running.

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Are you saying things like, "I just need a break or I'll do it tomorrow or I don't feel like it?" Again, if that's the situation, your primitive brain is in control. Go for a run.

Are you in a hurry to quit? Right? Do you have a feeling of anxiety? Like, I just can't do this right now, I just can't handle this right now. Again, it's probably a good reason to go for a run because the run will help you with that.

So if the answer to any of the above is yes, it's a clue that your primitive brain is in control. And that's when you need to go back to those reasons you came up with to override that. Those compelling reasons that you just can't live without, the things that running gives you that you can't get anywhere else that you have to have in your life.

Okay, now just to be clear, if you're injured or sick, again, I'm not suggesting you should override that. I want you to always listen to your body. But for anything other than that, use the process above to get yourself up and out the door.

I promise it gets easier, and the more you override your primitive brain, the easier it gets. It's just like a muscle. Like, exercising a muscle like anything else, keep at it and eventually it's going to become a very, very solid habit.

Alright, that is how to stop quitting. And if you have any questions or thoughts about that, you can email me, post your questions in the Facebook group, it's all good.

So this week, my obsession is actually pretty simple. So my foot has finally healed up enough. My plantar fasciitis is almost completely gone. I still have a little bit of residual pain, but I am able to start walking again and it is warm outside in Philly, I'm super excited.

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So I'm obsessed now with the cute running skirts that I got a couple months back that have just been sitting on a shelf in my closet waiting for some action. And so I want to suggest to you, like, if you've never tried a running skirt, check them out. Because I think they're super comfortable. You can get them with capris, or with shorts, or just almost any length in between. And they come in all different designs and all different styles.

And I just think they're super fun. It almost feels like getting dressed up for your run. Like, when I put a running skirt on, I am more excited about running. And actually, I wear them like, just the other day, I met a girlfriend for coffee and I was - I showed up in a running skirt. She's like, "Are we going running today?" I'm like, "No, I just really like my skirt and I like to wear it."

So they're, you know, casual, but like, a little less - they look a little less like yoga pants and a little more dressy, I guess? I don't know. Anyway, I am in love with running skirts. The ones - my favorites are from Skirt Sports. Some of my clients love Sparkle Skirts, and I suggest trying them both out.

And here's the deal: if you love running skirts too, I invite you to post a picture of yourself in one in your favorite on Instagram, and tag me @notyouraveragerunner so I can see your beautiful skirt.

So that's all we have for the podcast this week, and everything I mentioned in this episode can be found in the show notes at notyouraveragerunner.com/20. And I still can't believe we're at 20 episodes. This is so much fun.

So that's the end of this week. That went really fast. If you've decided that you're ready to get started with running, and if all my talking about it has tipped you over the edge into full on insanity with the rest of us, I want you to head over to notyouraveragerunner.com/start to grab your free jumpstart

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plan and get everything you need to know to start running right now in the body you have today.

That's it for this week, I'll talk to you next week. Bye.

Thanks for listening to this episode of *The Not Your Average Runner Podcast*. If you liked what you heard and want more, head over to www.notyouraveragerunner.com to download your free one-week jumpstart plan and get started running today.