

Ep #41: The First Mile Always Feels Like Ass



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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.

Hey rebels, you are listening to episode number 41 of *The Not Your Average Runner Podcast*. I'm your host, Jill Angie, and today we are talking about the first mile of your workout and how it feels like ass almost every single time. There are reasons why that is and there are ways to handle it and I'm going to break it all down for you today.

Now, before we get started, today's episode is sponsored by Run Your Best Life. This is a group where running meets life coaching, where you become a better runner and uplevel your life along the way. So if you've been enjoying the podcasts, you are going to love Run Your Best Life. You can join any time at runyourbestlife.com and I hope to see you there.

Now, this week's inspirational quote is a good one. I mean, all of my quotes are good ones but I especially love this one. And by the way, did you know that you can get the Not Your Average Runner manifesto, which has a whole bunch of quotes on it? It's something - it's a PDF that you can print out and hang up, and you can actually grab your copy at notyouraveragerunner.com/manifesto. And this quote is from the manifesto and here it is: "It doesn't matter how many times you start over as long as you do."

Now, I was inspired to share this one after I got the following email from Christa. Here's what she wrote: "Hi Jill, I'll be honest, I just bought your book about 20 minutes ago so I have made it through the first three pages on the Kindle version, on my phone no less, but I can't tell you how excited I am to get started. I used to be a runner. I've completed several half marathons, a couple of marathons, neither of them went as well as I'd

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hoped but I didn't die, and more 5Ks and 10Ks than I can remember. I started running in 2007 while doing Weight Watchers, and it helped me lose almost 60 pounds. I have coached several friends through Couch to 5K and they're beginning runner programs. Unfortunately, my whole life got upended in 2014. A divorce followed by a need for a second job, which really made making time for running tough, and a nasty bout of plantar fasciitis that lasted nearly two years and really impacted my ability to run. I have tried to restart Couch to 5K so many times only to quit after a few weeks. Now I'm 60 pounds heavier than I was when I started Weight Watchers the first time, my hips are constantly tight and sore, piriformis syndrome according to my chiropractor and I had been feeling as though I had lost that active girl I used to be for good. Last week, purely by chance, I discovered Corinne Crabtree and her Phit-n-Phat program on Facebook. I have been listening to her podcast and keeping up with her groupies Facebook page religiously. I am finally ready to lose this weight for the last time and hopefully get my running game back in the process. And lo and behold, I heard her mention you and her podcast. I had to check you out, and as soon as I saw you mention Couch to 5K and it being too hard after week three, I knew I had found a kindred spirit. When I saw your website link for your training plan, I set down my phone and signed up immediately."

Damn, I just love people who take action like that. Anyway, back to the letter. "I know this is what I want to do. I know that I can do it. I've been looking for the right plan and yours just dropped into my lap at the perfect time. See, here's the thing. My boyfriend of the last three years asked me to marry him last week and I said yes. We've set a date for May 4th 2019, most people will probably think I'm trying to lose weight just for the wedding, but in truth, I'm losing the weight because I want to live a long healthy, happy life with my new husband. And besides that, I just turned 45, it's not going to get any easier the older I get. I miss being the girl who had a race planned at least once or twice a month. I have a ton of medals from that time, but I've left them in a box for the last two years. Seeing them now

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is painful to me. I miss my friends telling me I was nuts for running in crazy temperatures and crazy to them distances, and I would just laugh. I miss watching the sun come up while doing my cool down walks after a hard run. I miss being a runner. I'm ready to change all that. Shoot, typing all that out actually made me a little bit teary eyed. I just started reading your book and subscribed to your podcast, but I think it's pretty safe to say that you have a brand new fan."

Thanks. So first of all, congratulations Christa and Christa's boyfriend. Yay. I am so happy for both of you and May weddings are always the best. Thank you so much for sharing your experience too because first of all, I know there are a lot of listeners that can relate to exactly what you said. That I used to be a runner and then I kind of fell off the wagon and now I miss that person.

Because here's the deal: sometimes life happens and we all have these great habits that get tossed aside so we can deal with something else. And so many of my clients make it mean that they have failed or that they're a terrible runner because they've taken a break. Because here's the thing: that's really all it is. Taking a break. The fact and the circumstance of the matter is that you used to run and then you didn't for a while, and now you're starting again. Those are the facts, and then you get to make it mean whatever you want.

Lots of people make it mean that they've fallen off the wagon, which then creates feelings of disappointment or discouragement. But you can also make it mean, like you're doing, that you chose to take a break from running for a variety of reasons and that you're choosing to start again. This creates feelings of motivation and excitement and are much more likely to lead you to have a great running experience, to lead you to stick with it and to feel like you're making progress.

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So it's going to help you and when you feel like discouraged, when you feel like, I fell off the wagon and I feel discouraged, you're much less likely to get out there and start running. So we need to create thoughts, we need to think thoughts that create those feelings of motivation and excitement, and are more likely to lead you back to running. So keep up the great work, keep us posted on your progress and I just want to say I'm so glad you wrote in and I know there are a lot of listeners that can relate and might be very inspired to get back out there just because of you sharing your story.

So you guys, if you're feeling the way Christa feels, then I want you to know you're not alone and that you can always come back to running. And the quote that I shared, "It doesn't matter how many times you start over as long as you do," holds true.

Okay rebels, let's talk about that first mile. You know the one that always feels like ass, the one that feels like why am I doing this again, this is really fucking hard. So maybe for you it's the first 10 minutes or the first 20 minutes, or the first two miles, right? It might be 30 minutes, it might be 40 minutes. Whatever it is, I want you to know that you're not alone. Because most runners, in fact, I don't think I know a single runner that just walks out the door, starts running, and feels like a gazelle and is like, "Oh my gosh, this is so easy I feel like a butterfly," right?

The majority of runners say that running doesn't start to feel good for at least a mile. And that - I mean, whether you're a five-minute miler or a 25-minute miler, right? It's just the way the human body works. And I think this is a great thing to know because it means your inner mean girl can take a rest now. Instead of beating you up for how your run feels in that first mile, she can just sit down, just take a backseat, because that's exactly how it's supposed to be.

So let me repeat that. The first mile is supposed to be hard pretty much every single time. Now, there are a couple of reasons for that.

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The first one is just basic human physiology. It takes some time for your body to adapt to the change from being at rest to doing the work of running. So your heart needs to start beating faster to circulate your blood. Your blood needs to start circulating faster to supply your muscles with oxygen so that your legs can run, so they can move faster, and your lungs need to start pulling in more oxygen to give to the blood. It's a whole system of your heart and your blood and your muscles and your lungs.

And this system takes time to go from rest to running. So until you get your heart rate up high enough to provide enough oxygen supply to support that new level of effort, it is going to feel like ass because your muscles - in that interim period, in that 10 to 20 minutes, they don't quite have enough oxygen to run and so your muscles are like, hey this is hard, what are we doing, right?

So that's why it's so important to warm up by walking for at least five minutes. Don't ask your body to do more than it's ready to do and I know I talk a lot about when you're starting as a runner, when you're becoming a runner for the first time, you don't want to push yourself beyond your limits until you kind of get to a certain level. So you don't want to do too much too soon. So that applies in the macro scale of like, long-term over weeks and months, if you push yourself too hard in the beginning you're going to end up with an injury, but it also applies on the micro scale. It applies to each individual run. You want to start out a little bit slowly so that your body can adjust.

I mean, you can start out doing more than your body is ready to do, but it's going to suck and here's the deal: most people don't realize this, but it will actually take longer overall to get to the part where it feels good if you don't warm your body up. Now, I actually have a client, Melinda, that hated doing her warm up. Every single time we talked, she'd say, "I don't have five minutes to walk before my run, I'm running in the morning before I go to

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work, I just don't have the time to tack on an extra five minutes, I just want to get it done."

And one day I said, "Look, just try it once, I'm your coach, try it once, see what happens." And the next time we talked she was a convert. Cracks me up. Because when she did that five-minute warm up, she was actually able to run faster when she started running. So she ended up saving time because she was able to cover more miles in less time by doing a warm up.

So she had like a three mile run, by warming up for five minutes, the three miles that she was going to run took a lot less time. And as an added bonus, she did not have shin splints. She used to complain about shin splints all the time. She started doing a warm up, her shin splints went away and her first mile was a lot less difficult. I mean, it still felt a little bit like ass, but it wasn't like that two miles of just sucking wind and being miserable. That is the power of a warm up.

Now, what I consider to be a warm up is like, a brisk walk for at least five minutes to get your body ready for that effort of running when you start the first running interval. Some of you might need a longer warm up. I know some people that are like, hey, I need 20 minutes of walking before I can start running. And that's okay. Everyone is different. But make sure you do it.

And the other question I get a lot is should I include that in my stats, and I have a few clients who, you know, they use Runkeeper to track their runs, and they're like, "Yeah, when I include that five minute warm up as part of my Runkeeper, it slows down my overall pace." So don't include it. So if you're somebody who is concerned with pace and improvement and you want to see progress over time, don't start Runkeeper until your five minute walking warm up is done, and then you can start Runkeeper and go from there.

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Okay, the second reason that your run is hard in the beginning is because your brain is forgetful. Now, even though every single time you go out there, the first mile feels like ass every single time and then you start to feel better, your brain doesn't remember. That means when you do your warm up and you start your intervals and it feels hard, your brain is like, "What is happening? Stop this torture immediately."

And that's where you need to step in and just remind yourself, okay brain, it's all good, this happens every single time and in about 15, 20 minutes, you're going to get a little hit of endorphins and it's all going to be okay. Maybe you just write that in Sharpie on the back of your hand so you don't forget it.

Now, I like to tell myself when my brain starts to act up, I say, "You know what brain, you can quit after a mile." For me, that's kind of about my typical endorphin lag time. After about a mile, my body is like, not nearly as unhappy about it and actually is kind of like, this is sort of fun, right? So I say to myself, "Self, you can quit after a mile if it doesn't start to feel better, but you have to stick with it long enough to get past that point. You have to stop with it for a mile and then you can decide if you want to stop."

I never let my brain make the decision to stop during that first mile. Because it's not - my brain is not qualified to make those decisions, and I delegate those decisions to my prefrontal cortex and not my automatic thinking brain. I mean, this is kind of a hack because once those endorphins kick in, you're not going to want to stop.

So you're totally tricking your brain but I think that's fair because your brain pranks you all the time. If you listen to this podcast, you know your brain is constantly playing tricks on you, right? So it's only fair to play a trick back and just be like, yeah, sure, you can make that decision as soon as we get past the endorphin lag because as soon as they kick in, you're not going to really want to stop. So it's a little hack but it works.

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Now, I know what some of you are thinking. There are a few of you that are like - maybe more than a few - you're like, "Hey Jill, I don't get a runner's high. I've never felt that endorphin boost," and I have friends who tell me that. They're like, "I've been a runner for five years, I've never felt the runner's high." And I hear you.

Now, some of you have never felt it because you just haven't stuck with a run long enough to get there. You might be somebody who it takes 20 to 25 minutes before that runner's high kicks in and maybe you stop running at 20 minutes because you're like, "You know what, this is hard." Or maybe you're brand new and you just haven't figured out what your lag time is.

For some people it's a mile, for others it's two miles, and then at that point, at least for me, sometimes I feel like I could run forever. Sometimes I get this huge hit and it's really fun. It's like, very blissful. And that happens once every few months. Most of the time, I hit that point and it just stops feeling like ass. And what I have is this nice feeling of effort. I'm not blissful, I'm not like, euphoric or anything like that.

Because a runner's high really is not an out of body experience. It's not like doing heroin, it's not like flying. It's just sort of a generalized good feeling that you have in your body. And when you're putting the effort of running on top of that, sometimes people are like, "Well, running is hard, how can I feel good?" Like, if you are able to get to that point where you get past the endorphin lag time, you actually might notice that like, yes, the running is hard but there's this comfortable feeling of effort rather than it feeling like just a grind.

And sometimes it manifests as just thinking really nice things about yourself. Like, after you get past that first mile, you might find yourself thinking like, "Hey, I'm kind of a badass, this is alright." Like, you might just stop - like your inner mean girl might shut up long enough for you to think some nice things. Sometimes it does feel just like running just got a little bit

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easier, and that's great, you feel like you get into a groove. That's also a version of the runner's high.

So everyone's runner's high is different. Some people say, "Oh, I don't get my runner's high until after I'm done running," and for sure I think most of us feel amazing after we've gone for a run and that pulls us through the run even if it's uncomfortable. But I want you to start paying attention to where is that point in your run where you feel that shift from this feels like ass to hey, this isn't so bad, and just like, quiet your brain down.

Maybe like, go for a run without music or with a podcast, or at least listen to my podcast after you hit the runner's high because I don't ever want you to not go running with me because I feel like I get to go running with all of you and it's just the best. But anyway, take a moment or take a run or two where you're not distracting your brain because I think that's - we go out running and we think, "I don't want to hear my thoughts because all I'm going to do in my head is complain about running," and so we try to turn off our thoughts by listening to music or listening to a podcast, giving our brain something else to do so we can sort of drown out the inner mean girl.

And what I'd love for you to try go running with your inner mean girl for a while and see if she kind of stops talking after 15 or 20 minutes. See if she stops nattering in your ear about how hard it is after a certain point, and sometimes you can't really find that point unless you are allowing your attention to really, really go into your body.

Now, I also have a theory that a runner's high only exists as a counterpoint to that first shitty mile. Like, you can't feel the runner's high if that first mile doesn't feel shitty. It's like, if we have only positive emotions in our lives, if we only feel joy, if we only feel excitement and happiness and pride of accomplishment, so forth, if we don't have any of those negative emotions, those exciting emotions, those happy emotions are going to get really boring after a while.

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So sometimes I feel like the runner's high is there because you know, like we can only feel how good that feels because the first mile feels so awful. Like, we're just so relieved that the hard part is over that maybe we imagine feeling better than we do or maybe we're only able to feel that good because we've gone through the discomfort of getting to that point.

And again, if you're brand new, here's the other thing. If you're brand new and you're like, I've been doing this for six weeks, I've not felt a runner's high, hang in there because you might get it. You might get it. You will get it. It just might not look the way you expect it.

So regardless of all of that, what you tell yourself about the first mile really matters, and that's kind of the other piece of this, like, how to deal with that first mile and not feeling good. If you beat yourself up about it, if you're arguing with yourself the whole time going this is wrong, this is terrible, this isn't fun, it's going to suck more. Like, saying to yourself over and over again in your brain this is so hard, why does this feel so hard, this feels like ass, it's going to feel even more like ass. The ass is going to get bigger and bigger. It will not be fun because you're arguing against reality and you're focusing on what you don't like about your run.

So I want you to remember - I'm just going to give you some thoughts to think here. There's nothing wrong if the first mile is hard. Here's the deal. If the first mile of your run is hard, it makes you just like every other runner. It makes you a real runner, it makes you an athlete. This is how the body works, it means everything is operating exactly as designed. There is nothing wrong with you. So I want you to carry that thought with you and just remind yourself that when the first mile feels like ass, it makes me a real runner.

So to sum it up, I want you to warm up before each run to ease into it. Now, this isn't going to make the first mile feel easy but it's going to make it a lot less difficult because it's not going to be as hard on your body. And then

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second, stop telling yourself that the first mile should be easy. It shouldn't. That's how it works. Let it suck so that you can enjoy the joy of the second mile.

So this is just an example of one of the topics that we talk about every single week in Run Your Best Life. Now, Run Your Best Life is a coaching group that I started last September and what we do is we use a lot of the tools that I teach in this podcast, including managing your mind so that you can get the fuck out of your own way and really do what you want to do, which is run.

It has been really life changing for so many of my clients. They're way more consistent with their running, they're able to shift their negative self-talk to a much nicer place. In other words, they're learning to stop being assholes to themselves. And you could actually read about some of my clients and their experience with Run Your Best Life on that website. So I invite you to give it a try for yourself at runyourbestlife.com. Check it out, see what it's all about. It's pretty fun, there's a lot of swearing, and yeah, you can meet some of my rockstar rebels over there. They're really an amazing bunch of women.

Alright, so this week I have two obsessions, and the first - because we've been talking a lot about Run Your Best Life, the first is actually something you can only access if you're in that group, and that is the private podcast that I just set up for them. It is so damn cool. So basically, every single live coaching call, every expert class, every Facebook live that I do in that group gets turned into an audio podcast that gets delivered directly to my member's phones.

So if you're a member, you've basically got a whole other podcast from me and from all of the experts that I know out there to listen to with exclusive content that is not available to anybody that's not a member of that group. So I want you to think about that. So if you love this podcast, you can get a

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whole other podcast by joining Run Your Best Life and you will be super exclusive because only the people in that group have access to it. So that's the first thing I'm obsessed with and it's really fun. I'm just totally loving that.

But the second is my gear guide. So for the past six months and I just realized, we've been doing this podcast for - oh my gosh, it's seven months. I wish I could add better. So for the past seven months, I've been compiling all of my recommendations into a kit so that you can access it all in one place. So you can just like, go to the kit and it'll have links to grab whatever cool stuff that I mention on this podcast and you can grab my t-shirts as well.

And it's fun, right? And it's divided up into a beginner's running kit, a collection of my favorite running tanks and I've actually started compiling a cold weather running kit as well. So you can check that out at kit.com/notyouraveragerunner. That's kit.com/notyouraveragerunner, and that's where you can find links to all of the things that I recommend like the Enell bra or the socks, and I just added a new pair of socks that I'm in love with and obsessed with, and the Nathan hydration pack that I recommend that I think is really, really good for women with big boobs. I put that piece on that, the running skirt that I recommend, all that stuff.

So you can find everything there, kit.com/notyouraveragerunner. I hope you check it out because everything on there is something that I have personally tested and love using.

Alright rebels, that is it for this week. Everything I mentioned in this episode can be found in the show notes at notyouraveragerunner.com/41. Talk to you soon.

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

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