

Ep #72: The Truth About Fat-Shaming



Full Episode Transcript

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 72 of *The Not Your Average Runner Podcast*. I'm your host, Jill Angie, and we are closing in on 100 podcasts. Like, 28 more to go. This blows my mind, and I want to thank everybody that listens and writes in and shares the podcast with somebody who needs it.

The Not Your Average Runner team, we actually met last night to talk about our 2019 goals, one of which is to inspire a million women to build confidence and self-love in their lives through running and getting the podcast out there is a really big part of that plan.

Now unfortunately, iTunes is not on board with this plan. They recently made a change to their process for publishing podcasts that impacts where you can put keywords. And keywords are really important because it means people can find you more easily.

Now, I'm not going to go into all the details, but the bottom line is that all of us in the podcasting world are getting fewer new listeners as a result of this change, and this really impacts my ability to inspire more women. Now, of course none of this is really your problem. You're already here and listening. But if you have been listening to the podcast and you've been loving it and you believe in our million women mission, then you can help get the word out by doing a review on iTunes so that we get bumped up in the rankings.

Now, it doesn't have to be a long essay. Just a few words about why you love the show and what it's done for you as a runner. I would be forever

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grateful. And just for fun, I'm actually going to read a review now and then on the show, and if I pick your review to read, I'm going to send you a *Not Your Average Runner* car magnet as a thank you.

So seriously, if you write a review, make sure that you subscribe to the show and you're listening regularly because I don't want you to miss out if I call your name. Now, if you're not an iTunes listener, don't worry, I've got you covered. You can write a review on any platform and the team will be reading them and picking from all over.

So like, Stitcher and Pod Dog, there's one out there that has a dog in the name, and of course Spotify. Anywhere that you go to listen to your podcasts, please go ahead and write a review there, but we are definitely targeting iTunes because they are sort of the biggest provider of podcasts for us.

Okay, so this week I want to read an iTunes review from - I'm going to butcher the name here but her name is Machyatt. And she writes, "I am a new runner and Jill Angie and her amazing podcast have helped me get there. I listen on every single run. She and her guests are knowledgeable, motivating, and sincere. I highly recommend this podcast. Just like me, you'll be addicted to *Not Your Average Runner* too."

So I just want to say thank you so much to Matchyatt. I'm so glad to hear that we've helped you start running and I would like to invite you to email support@notyouraveragerunner.com with your mailing address and your actual name and we will get your car magnet out to you as soon as possible.

Okay, today I want to talk to you about fat-shaming, and this is a pretty big topic. I've been wanting to include this on the podcast for a while and really haven't been 100% sure how I should approach it, but we're just going to

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dive right in. We're going to talk about what it is and really what you can do about it.

And it is a pretty hot topic these days. You can't scroll halfway through Instagram without hearing about fat-shaming or seeing it on Facebook. But if you've been fat-shamed in your life, you know what it feels like. You know it doesn't feel too great. And so I actually made a joke a while ago to some of my friends that my vet was fat-shaming my cat. My beautiful little kitten Maddy, who's really not a kitten anymore, she's like, a year and a half old.

But anyway, I took her in for her annual checkup and the vet was doing the typical visual exam, looking at her skin and her paws and so on and looking at her ears. And Maddy has this little pooch by her back legs, which a lot of cats have, and just a side note, it is actually called a primordial pouch. Most people think it means your cat is overweight, but thin cats have it too and it's basically just extra skin around the abdomen to protect the internal organs during a fight and also to allow cats to stretch really long when they're running. So it has an evolutionary reason for being there.

But anyway, the vet kind of pinched her little pooch, said, "Oh, that's at least half a pound. You should get her more exercise and start feeding her less." And y'all, I was immediately offended because I am so careful about not overfeeding her and she gets so much exercise. We have multiple play sessions a day, she runs around like a maniac, up and down the stairs.

She's just relentless. So it was kind of funny to watch me get all like, "Don't fat-shame my cat," in my mind about this vet's comments. And I mean, it made a funny story when I told it to some friends later on and of course as I'm telling it to you. But to be honest, my vet really wasn't fat-shaming Maddy at all. She was just expressing her medical opinion, which I happen to disagree with.

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It was all me that felt that little twinge of shame thinking, "Ooh, I might not be taking the best care of my little hellion." Like, the vet's words were just the circumstance here and I made it mean that she thought I was a bad cat mom and I felt shame about that. But in that moment, I did not want to take responsibility for my own feelings and so I totally blamed the vet for fat-shaming my cat.

Now anyway, I did get over it pretty quickly because honestly, it really wasn't a big deal, and in my opinion, Maddy is perfectly healthy and happy and active. She is like, just the cutest thing ever. I love her little primordial pooch. She's so damn cute. I pick her up to kiss her like a million times a day and fortunately, she's pretty easygoing and she tolerates it pretty well. Otherwise I'd probably be all scratched up, but she's awesome. And I'm over the comments that the vet made because the vet was just giving me her professional opinion and that's the end of it.

But it did really make me think about what we mean when we say fat-shaming because it's a term that gets tossed around a lot, and in fact, a few months ago I interviewed somebody on the podcast who lost 100 pounds. You might know her; her name is Corinne Crabtree. She has a little, just a tiny little podcast called Losing 100 Pounds. It's actually an amazing, fabulous podcast. I just love her to pieces.

She was on my podcast and so the reason why I posted her picture on my Instagram, I posted her before and after because I was advertising the episode where I'd interviewed her. And then I got accused of fat-shaming. I mean, me. The poster girl for you don't have to lose weight to be athletic, you don't have to lose weight to love your body, you don't have to lose weight, period.

I was accused of fat-shaming and I was horrified. The commenters on that post really believed, strongly believed that posting a picture of somebody who's proud of their weight loss, especially as a before and after picture

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was very insulting to anybody who is overweight or who struggles with their body image.

And they felt that what I was sort of not so - I mean, I wasn't blatantly saying it, but they felt that my posting the picture meant I thought you need to lose weight to feel worthy, to be happy, to be healthy, whatever, and that posting a before and after picture was very harmful to anyone that is learning to love their body and is recovering from diet mentality.

And I completely disagree with all of that. Now, in my opinion, if you want to lose weight, if you want to do whatever it takes to lose that weight and you are proud of the accomplishment, good for you. Celebrate the shit out of that. If you don't want to lose weight, that is cool too. Celebrate the shit out of that. It's all good.

Each of us has autonomy over our own body and we get to decide what's right for us. So that means that posting a before and after picture on Instagram isn't really fat-shaming at all. It's just - what we post on our Instagram is about us. It's not about other people. So unless the caption that goes with that post is hey, I lost weight and you should too, you big fat loser, which I don't think I've ever seen that, unless that's the caption, it's not fat-shaming.

Being proud of your own accomplishment, if you choose to pursue weight loss and you're proud, I lost weight, look at this, I did this thing, it's not shaming anyone else for not doing or wanting that thing. If I post a picture of me finishing a half marathon, I'm not shaming anybody who doesn't want to do a half marathon. Nobody would argue with that.

Nobody would argue with the fact that hey, I'm a runner, I post pictures of me finishing races and I post pictures of me looking pretty fucking happy after finishing a race. In no way do people misconstrue that as me shaming

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people who don't want to run, for their choice not to do that. I mean, it doesn't enter into your possibilities.

But when we post a picture of weight loss, suddenly it's like, oh, you're shaming anybody who doesn't want to lose weight. No, it's the same thing. If I post a picture of me after losing 100 pounds, I'm not shaming anybody who doesn't want to do that. I'm not causing harm to anybody who doesn't want to do that. It's their thoughts about it that are causing the problem.

So stick with me here because I know this is not a super popular opinion, but if I can influence just a few people to think a little bit differently about this, I will have done my job. So fat-shaming is a really big catch phrase nowadays and I think it's getting used very inappropriately so that people do not have to take responsibility for their own thoughts and emotions.

And you heard me right. I think at least half the time, maybe three quarters of the time, we are using the term fat-shaming to put responsibility for our own emotional and mental health on someone else, and that is bullshit. And again, I know that's not a popular opinion but this is my podcast.

Anyway, here are a couple definitions of fat-shaming that I found online and I think most of the definitions are very, very similar to this and I wholeheartedly agree with all of these. So fat-shaming is the action or practice of humiliating someone judged to be fat or overweight by making mocking or critical comments about their size. It is the act of bullying, singling out, discriminating, or making fun of a fat person.

Now, do you notice anything about those definitions? These definitions involve someone else actively mocking or criticizing somebody else for their weight with their words or their actions. It's like making jokes about or criticizing somebody else's weight either in front of that person or behind their back. That is fat-shaming as we define it, and it's really never okay to do that.

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Like, another word for it is bullying. Another word for it is being an asshole, right? And if somebody does that to you, I give you permission to punch them in the throat. Well actually, not really. I don't want you to get arrested for assault, but you can definitely tell them like, "Hey asshole, that's not cool."

But here is what is not fat-shaming. When you tell somebody, "Hey, I signed up for this half marathon, I'm so excited," and that person is surprised or maybe they tell you it's a terrible idea. There is no shaming going on there. First of all, the person might just not know that fat girls can run. Believe it or not, there are people in the world that literally just don't know that fat girls can run.

It's not that they think there's something wrong with it. They're just like, "I had no idea that was a thing." Or they just might not know that you're a runner even. They might be like, "Oh, I'm surprised that you're a runner because," I don't know, sometimes we learn something new about somebody and we're surprised. It doesn't mean anything.

Or they might be thinking how much they hate running and they can't believe anybody would want to do it on purpose. They might have a million things on their mind that are not shaming until the words, "You are too fat to run a half marathon, you should lose weight or you're going to embarrass yourself," come out of their mouth, they are not fat-shaming you.

Even if they think it but don't say it, they are not fat-shaming you. Even if you're sitting there thinking, "I know they're thinking it," and they don't say it, they're not fat-shaming you. Or how about when somebody says, "Hey, you look great, have you lost weight?" Not fat-shaming. It's not. Or when you go into a store and it's like, all size 12 and below and the clerk kind of looks you up and down and says, "Are you shopping for someone else?" still not fat-shaming.

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Now, stay with me here because this is really, really important. And why do I care so much about whether you correctly or incorrectly label fat-shaming? Because when you say someone else has shamed you, you are putting that person in charge of your emotions. That is never okay. It's way worse than any shitty comment someone makes to you or about you.

Like when somebody looks surprised after you tell them you're doing a half marathon, that is literally a neutral circumstance. It is just the facts. You said words, that person had an expression on their face. What you make it mean, your thought about it is what creates the shame for you. Let me repeat that. You are creating the shame. You are doing the fat-shaming to yourself.

Because you might think, "You know what, maybe he's right. I was crazy to think I could do a half marathon." Or, "That hurt my feelings, he doesn't believe in me." And you feel ashamed or maybe embarrassed or hurt. You are creating the shame for yourself when you form opinions about what this person said to you.

It's so important that you understand that because this applies to more than just fat-shaming. It applies to every interaction you have with any human on the planet. Once you realize that you are creating the shame for yourself and understand that your shame is under your own control, that is such a powerful place to be. That is where I want all my rebels to be.

Now, it is never okay to mock or criticize somebody about their weight or about anything, honestly. We're talking about weight here but you know I mean it's never okay to mock or criticize people, period. But it happens. It happens. And you know what? Even when it happens, the person creating the shame is still you. Other people can't make you feel anything. Happy, sad, everything in between, it is all created by your own thoughts about the circumstances in your lives. Nobody can hurt your feelings. Nobody.

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Do you remember the coaching model I taught in episode 32? If you haven't listened to that episode, please go back and listen to it. It's a good one. And I teach the coaching model there that I use with all my clients. I'm just going to review it really quickly here.

Basically, circumstances happen in the world. Circumstances are the facts of our lives. We have thoughts and opinions and beliefs about those circumstances. And those thoughts lead to emotions or feelings. Feelings drive our actions and eventually our results. So this means when a circumstance happens, you don't feel anything about it until you have a thought. The thought comes between the circumstance and your feelings, your emotions.

Now, that is really good news for you because it means you always get to decide how to think and feel about anything. And I don't even like using the term fat-shaming to describe the act of mocking or bullying somebody about their weight because it really implies that the bully can create a feeling of shame for their victim, and that is just not possible, rebels.

The only way I can feel shame when somebody mocks me is if I think a thought that creates shame. Now, I can feel some of you strongly disagreeing with me right now and that is okay. You are totally entitled to your opinion. But I just want you to know, I'm not in any way saying I approve or think it's okay to say shitty things to anyone else about their weight.

It's not cool, not one little bit, but again, it's going to happen. We are human and some of us aren't really good at being kind or even keeping our opinions to ourselves. That's how the humans are. But here's the thing thought, someone says words to you and you feel that hot sting of shame and you think it is what they said that caused the shame. It is not.

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In between the spoken words and that hot sting of shame is your thought, and that is where the problem lies. The problem is never that somebody fat-shamed you or mocked you. I mean sure, it's a shitty thing to do. I 100% think people should stop doing it but that is really not ever the problem. The problem is how you think about it.

But the problem is also where all your power lies because then you have that choice to decide how you want to think about it. And just as in aside, think about my little Maddy. It is impossible to fat-shame her, partially because she's so fucking cute. She's just - she's like this little round ball of fur, she's so happy-go-lucky, I can't imagine why anybody would fat-shame her.

But even if somebody wanted to, it's impossible to do it. The vet could have literally said you're too fat and you're an ugly cat and she would have looked up with those big green eyes and started purring. There would have been no shame felt by her because cats don't walk around worrying about how their little cat bodies look. They just don't. I mean, if anything, they strut around, they put themselves on display.

Their body image - body image is not a cat thing. And so they can't feel shame because they don't - first of all, they don't have thoughts, but I'm kind of stretching this analogy a little bit. But really, think about it. You can't shame a cat, you can't body shame a dog. If you said to a dog - dogs have very obvious emotions and if you said to a dog, "You're too fat," the dog would just kind of blink at you and be confused.

So the difference between cats and dogs and humans is that humans have this belief system, collectively, that there is such a thing as the perfect body or the perfect way to eat or the perfect way to live or the perfect weight to be. So we have that whole belief system and then we also have this other belief system that if you don't fit in with those perfectional ideas, there's something wrong with you.

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And when we think the thought, "There's something wrong with me," we feel shame. So when somebody mocks you for your weight and you feel shame, it's because there's some version of I'm not right, there's something wrong with me going on in your brain, which means you are literally fat-shaming yourself.

And if this is still a stretch for you, first of all, I get why it's a stretch for a lot of people because we've been taught all of our lives that other people can make us feel bad, but it's not true. We are the only ones that can make us feel bad. Now, when you are on the receiving end of a comment that could be considered fat-shaming, that doesn't mean you don't tell the speaker, "Hey, it's not cool to talk to me that way."

I'm not saying you just roll over and slink away. If you feel called to speak up, go for it. I just want you to get your mind right and make sure that you know that that person has no power to make you feel shame. They just say words and you get to decide how to think and feel about it.

And here's the rest of what I want to discuss about today. There's actually a lot less fat-shaming going on in the world than you think because again, per our earlier definition, to fat-shame someone, you need to be criticizing or mocking them with your words or your gestures or your actions, right? So my client that I mentioned earlier who said she'd been fat-shamed by another adult, she was actually mistaken.

Now, the other woman hadn't said anything that could be remotely construed as shaming. She had opinions about my client's ability to perform based on her weight and she took actions based on those opinions. She was trying to uphold the responsibility of the job that she'd been given.

Now, she was totally mistaken. My client was more than capable of getting things done and in fact, was excelling at her job. Her coworker definitely

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could have handled things better, but the only shaming that was going on was my client shaming herself and blaming it on her coworker. And now, that is a really tough pill to swallow because it is so much easier to say, "I feel terrible because this person said a shitty thing to me."

But when we lay responsibility for how we feel at someone else's feet, especially somebody that is clearly not qualified to make us feel good, that is like putting your toddler behind the wheel of your car and then being pissed at her for driving into a tree. Don't outsource your emotions to unqualified people. Actually, don't outsource your emotions at all. It's a terrible idea.

If you separate out the circumstance from what somebody said or did from your own thoughts and feelings, you don't ever have to be shamed by someone else. Even if someone gets right up in your face and says, "You're too fat to run, you'll never finish, you should just give up right now," the shame is still coming from you. It's all on you, rebels.

Now, that is great news. It may not sound like great news but it really is because it means you have the control over it. Nobody in the world can fat-shame you without your buy-in. How fucking awesome is that? It means that you now live in a world without fat-shaming. When you take responsibility for your own emotions, fat-shaming literally goes away.

And it doesn't mean that people stop making derogatory comments but you're not going to get fat-shamed by any of it when you take responsibility for your own emotions. Now, here's the story I like to tell myself. I've never been fat-shamed in my life. I literally tell myself that story and I believe it 100%.

Now, I have for sure had people comment on my weight and sometimes with what I consider to be a mocking tone. They don't think I should have the body that I have. That's totally fine, everyone is entitled to their opinion.

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You can be the juiciest peach in the world and there will still be somebody that doesn't like peaches.

Okay my friends, I want to switch gears a little bit. I know we had a really heavy topic here. I hope you'll think about this. I hope that you will kind of ruminate on this in your mind. I would love it if you'd go to the Facebook group and really like start a discussion. Share your opinions, share like, have you had an experience where you thought you were fat-shamed and like, can you look at that a little bit differently and change the story that you're telling about it. I'd love for you to take this to the Facebook group and have a discussion about it.

Now, what I want to tell you about today before we close is that we are doing some really cool stuff in 2019 with the Rebel Runner Unleashed program. And I know you know all about the race-cations. We're going to Savannah, we're going to Seattle, we're going to New Orleans. But what you might not know is really the race is just the celebration of the transformation you're going to go through while you're training.

Rebel Runner Unleashed is not a simple training plan with a race. It is a personal development program that will help you transform into the badass superhero of your own life. Now, running is just one of the tools that we use to get there. We use running, we use life coaching, everything I teach here on the podcast, plus a whole lot more.

It is a transformative four-month experience where you will chase down and achieve a really big goal, in this case a half marathon, with a dozen other women who have been working to make the same transformation. So you'll end your race day with confidence, more confidence, self-love than you've ever felt before. Pretty much feeling like you can take over the world. And you'll have a gorgeous race medal to add to your collection.

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So you will learn how to motivate yourself when things get hard, or when they stop being fun, because guess what, it's going to happen. You will learn how to be an example to others about what's possible. You will learn all the skills from a master certified life coach, that's me, and my team who are all very talented. I have two life coaches on my team.

You will learn how to manage your inner mean girl so you can get the fuck out of your own way and make some shit happen for yourself. You'll also learn all the finer points of training for an endurance race so that you can finish feeling strong and really proud of what you've done.

Now, here's what this program is not. And I mentioned this last week, I'm going to mention it again. It's not just a show up and party race-cation. We are doing some deep work here in the four months leading up to that race. So the race is the celebration of everything you've accomplished. It is also not a program that you can do half assed. You need to full ass this shit, my friend.

So don't apply if you're not 110% sure that you want to transform yourself into a fucking superhero. It is also not a solo exercise. You're in this with me. You're in this with all the other women in the training group, and you're in this with my team. They'll have your back and you'll have their back. All the women that you're training with. I'm there, my team is there to make sure all of you stay on track and apply what you're learning so that you finish your race and feel amazing.

I have a 100% success rate in training people for distance races. If they put in the work, they cross that finish line. I have not lost a single client yet. And I am tough on you, as my clients will tell you. I'm also very long and compassionate because I have been where you are, which is how I know what you need to get across the finish line.

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And finally, I'm not going to sugarcoat this. The experience is an investment. This program is an investment. Transformation doesn't happen by accident. It is an investment of both time and money and it will require you to become a different, stronger, more powerful version of you to get to the end. But if you are up for the challenge, if you think you've got what it takes, I want us to have a conversation.

So you're going to head on over to rebelrunnerunleashed.com and fill out your application. Then you'll set up an appointment with Lauren, my team member, for a free accelerator session. My amazing - the amazing Lauren will talk with you to see if you're a fit, kind of figure out what's going on with you, what are some of the challenges that you're having, and then you're going to go ahead and talk to me next and hopefully after that, the next thing you know, you'll be that badass who just crossed her finish line and has made that transformation that she's been wanting to make, to become that person she's always wanted to be.

So you can go to rebelrunnerunleashed.com, you can even go to talktojill.com. Fill out your application, set up the appointment with Lauren and she's like, super sweet. She's also a runner so you get to talk to her and experience her amazingness and then maybe you'll talk to me and maybe we'll run this race together.

Okay, that is it for this week rebels. Everything I mentioned in this episode can be found in the show notes at notyouraveragerunner.com/72, and I will talk to you next week.

Oh wait, and next week, oh my god you guys, I'm going to give you the explicit warning right now because I'm interviewing a sex coach. We're going to talk about all of the amazing similarities between revving up your sex life and revving up your running life.

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So please, make sure that you've subscribed to the show so that you get that automatically delivered to your inbox because we're talking sex and running next week and it is going to get hot and heavy. Alright my friends, have an amazing week. I will 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 www.notyouraveragerunner.com to download your free one-week jumpstart plan and get started running today.