

Ep #84: From Doubters to Athletes - Six Amazing Members of Run Your Best Life



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Jill Angie

[The Not Your Average Runner Podcast](#) with 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 84 of *The Not Your Average Runner Podcast*. I'm your host, Jill Angie, and I have a huge treat for you this week. So, last week, I gathered six members of Run Your Best Life, the amazing coaching group that I have, and these six members have done some pretty amazing things with their running and their lives. And I interviewed them all on a Facebook live, and then we recorded it, and I'm bringing it to you this week. So, if you missed it in the Facebook group, boom, here it is, right on your phone this week.

Now, each of these women is really the quintessential *Not Your Average Runner* for a variety of reasons. And all of them started out just where you did, which is not quite sure if running was a thing they could do, but they tried it and they succeeded. Some of them learned how to run by working directly with me in Run Your Best Life. Some of them had already started and then joined Run Your Best Life to work on their confidence, or maybe own their identity as a runner, or just for the community and the coaching that we provide in that group.

But all of them have very unique stories and perspectives to share, and I think you're just really going to enjoy it. So, this episode is definitely for you if you're just starting out as a runner and having doubts as to whether you'll ever get where you want to be, because each of my guests kind of had the same doubts and got through it to become very accomplished athletes.

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So, during this interview, we cover a lot of ground, in particular, we talk a few times about what it's like to be coached in Run Your Best Life. So, if that's something you've been thinking about, you can actually get a feel for what that's like by listening to today's episode. And it's not just the running stuff, but also the life coaching we do in that group, because Run Your Best Life is so much more than just a running club, right?

You can get a running club anywhere. Run Your Best Life is a place where you learn to create mindsets that help you succeed in all areas of your life, not just on the treadmill. Now, we work a lot on confidence in that group, we work on inner mean girl thinking. All of my guests have worked on their personal beliefs in these areas and others, with the help of Run Your Best Life, to help them excel as runners.

So, without further ado, let's get to the interview.

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Jill: I have six badass Not Your Average Runners with me tonight and we are going to talk about everything that they did to get started running and how they got from being on the couch to being some pretty accomplished women at this point in time. And so each of these women, I have to tell you, each of these women is a client of mine that I've worked with and they all have very, very different stories and they're all really amazing stories, and I cannot wait to share them with you.

So, here's what we're going to do. I'm going to keep looking down at some notes that I've got because they all have really good stories. So I'm going to introduce everybody really quick and then you're going to hear from these amazing women. So, I'm just going to go ahead and start with Karen Bowen, who started running about three and a half years ago and she's got

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– you know what, I'm going to go off-script right now – Karen's got a really great story about how she started running. So, Karen, can you just come on right now and tell this story, because it's the best.

Karen: Yeah, she likes this story.

Jill: It's good.

Karen: Yes, I had started doing some walking because I needed to do exercise, and I was 51 at that time, almost 52, never been an athlete, never ran a step unless I was being chased. I mean, I was just a couch potato to the max, very overweight at that time. And so, I started walking, and I'd actually walked a virtual half-marathon and was really proud of myself that I finished. I think it was over an hour, but by golly, I got it done. And I was playing on Facebook and this little ad popped up about this woman who could teach anybody to run a 5K.

And she was there and she gave this little spiel, you know, no matter what you are, no matter how old, how fat, whatever, I can teach you to run a 5K. You know, I'm just a realist and I don't think people should false advertise anywhere, especially on Facebook. And so, you know, she offered this program. So I thought, you know, I'm just going to show her, because not everybody can run and she's lying to people and that's not right.

Well, so I signed up for Jill Angie's 5K class and I took it. And, you know what, I ran. And the first time I only ran – she only had me run for 10 seconds, but I can't tell you how amazing that was. I had not run willingly my whole life. And those 10 seconds, it was like, my god, this woman might be right. So I took her 5K class, and by golly, then I took it again, and the rest of the story goes on. But she trained me all the way up to a marathon.

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If I can do this – I am the epitome of someone who should never have been a runner. And, by golly, I did it with her help. And if I can do that, she can teach anybody.

Jill: I love that. That story never gets old because I use you as an example of the woman who hired me to prove me wrong. So we're going to dig into your story, because you've had a lot of different experiences along the way and you've got some great stories to share. You're going to have to tell them about sweetie at some point during this call.

Karen: Okay, you let me know when you want the sweetie story.

Jill: Okay, but you guys, Karen is just – she's an amazing example of when you follow the plan and you follow the instructions, you get the results you want. It's just been so fun to watch you succeed and really go on to exceed your own expectations. It's been amazing.

Alright, so we're going to move onto Melissa. And Melissa and I, I think we probably met about four years ago maybe, and you had just started running. You were starting to train for your first half Marathon. I think that's when we encountered each other. So, can you come on and just, like, give us a little brief history of Melissa's running?

Melissa: Yeah, so I actually found your first book completely on a fluke. It popped up on my list of Kindle books for the day. And I downloaded it. I had just happened to take a week off of work because I was on jury duty, which I never got called for. But I read the book and I had never even fathomed that I could possibly be a runner.

But I read the book and I'm like, "I could do this." And so I went out – well, actually the first day, I actually ran up and down the hallway inside my

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house because I was embarrassed to go outside because I didn't want the neighbors to see me. Then I realized, maybe I can do this. So I moved outside, but I was in all black clothes, so I'd blend into the scenery. But then, you know, that whole week, I ran every single day, just fell in love with it, then within a few days I was like, "Maybe I could do a 5K." And then after that, "Maybe I could do a half-marathon, maybe I could do a marathon."

Jill: Right, and so how many have you done? You've done at least a dozen half-marathons at this point, right, maybe more?

Melissa: Yeah, I think I'm about 15 or 16 half-marathons and five marathons.

Jill: And you've got a pretty amazing marathon goal.

Melissa: I want to run all five of the world's major marathons.

Jill: This gives me chills every time I hear it.

Melissa: Sorry, six.

Jill: Six, so that's Tokyo, London, what else?

Melissa: New York, Boston, Berlin, and Chicago.

Jill: And Chicago. And you've done four of those, right?

Melissa: I've just done Chicago and Berlin.

Jill: Wait, didn't you do New York?

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Melissa: No, I'm hoping to do New York next year.

Jill: Okay, that's a lottery thing too, right. But Chicago and Berlin, this is fabulous, okay. And what I think is so fascinating is both you and Karen just kind of started like, "I don't know about this, but I'm going to give it a try." And then, low and behold, like, oops, ran a marathon.

Melissa: And I also want to say, I have done this while working night shifts the entire time. So, people who say, "Oh I've got this crazy schedule..." it is possible.

Jill: Yeah, your schedule is really funky too, because isn't it like a few days on and then a couple days off?

Melissa: Seven on, seven off.

Jill: Oh gosh, that's insane. I love this. Okay, so this is an amazing story. Everybody's got an amazing story. So okay, I'm going to head on over to Stefanie. So, Stefanie is training – when you found me, you were training. I want to say you were like, "I've done a 5K, is it possible I could do a 10K?" But of course, now we've blown that goal right out of the water and you're working on, what?

Stefanie: Half-marathon.

Jill: Yes, love this. So, talk to us about your journey through running.

Stefanie: So, my journey started way before I found the podcast, but I started running in the early 2000s. And I had a friend that was running and I thought it was really cool because she had the cute outfits and I would go to races with her and see all the camaraderie and everybody having a good

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time, but I was always, like, a big walker. I'm like, I can't run, I don't even have two lungs and I have a pacemaker. I'm like, there's no way.

And she's like, you can do this. So my first race was actually in 2000 and it was in Mystic, for the Mystic Aquarium. And I did a 5K. I walked a lot of it, but since then, I've done maybe like 20 5Ks and I've done a couple of 10Ks and I did a half-marathon. I did the Vegas half-marathon in 2014, and I'm training now for my second half.

Jill: This is awesome. So, talk to me a little bit more about some of the challenges that you've had along the way.

Stefanie: A lot of it is just stamina and being able to get mileage in and being able to run as much as I can. Like, when I found the intervals with you, like when I was looking through podcasts, I'm like, "I need a running podcast. I'm tired of listening to the same old crap." So I found you and I just started listening and I'm like, this girl's really onto something. This is great, you know, and she's super funny and clever. And so as I was listening, I was like, this is freaking great. And you were talking about intervals, and I was like, if I can hone in on those skills, I can do anything.

Jill: And so how has your running changed since you started doing this run-walk interval way of running?

Stefanie: So, 2014, the half-marathon was, oh god, like over five years ago, and I haven't done one since. So I just completed eight miles last Saturday. So, saying I haven't run in like five years, an eight-mile run is like huge.

Jill: That's awesome. In the cold too. You guys have had a pretty...

Stefanie: It's finally 50 degrees today, but yeah.

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Jill: Yeah, yeah oh I just love this. Okay, we're going to come back around to all that too. And let's see, who's next? Nancy, hi. Nancy came to me saying, "I want to train for the Marine Corps Marathon." So, do you want to tell the rest of the story?

Nancy: I had just finished a half-marathon and I knew it was pretty bad when I was praying that I would break my ankle so I didn't have to do the race. But I did not break my ankle and I did the race. And when I signed up for the Marine Corps Marathon, I knew my biggest challenge was going to be my brain and my thoughts and the mental part of running. So I know I needed help, and I had talked to Jill briefly during the half-marathon training and I promptly signed up for some help with my mental game.

Jill: Because it is – I think a marathon is 90% mental.

Nancy: It is. I knew, at that point, despite the pace, however long it took, just put one foot in front of the other, I was going to get to the finish line one way or the other. But I knew, at that point, that the mental part of it was really going to shape the experience.

Jill: So, do you think that getting the mental stuff right when you first start running helps you in the long run to do other distances?

Nancy: I do, because once you have the tools, you can apply it to any situation. And the mental game is still there. I still get in my head. I was complaining on the Facebook group the other day about a mental challenge I was having. And so I don't think it goes away. But in working with you, it puts things in perspective and gives you the tools to get through it and to be able to move forward and to have a good experience when you run.

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Jill: And I think that's the key, right, is we don't just want to cover the miles. You can cover the miles and suffer the entire way, and this applies to whether you're a brand-new runner or whether you've been doing it for 20 years. You can cover the miles and suffer, or you can cover the miles and enjoy it. And the only difference is what your brain is doing. Okay, Sarah, also Brooks, how are you?

Sarah: I'm doing great, how are you?

Jill: I'm good. So, Sarah is about to run her second half-marathon as well. So can you talk to us a little bit about what your running journey has been like and what has brought you to this second half-marathon?

Sarah: Sure, I also was never a runner, or any kind of athlete at all. And I was in PNP, which, if you don't know, that's Phit-N-Phat. And there was a race. They were having a 5K, 10K, or half-marathon, and I thought sure, I can do that, and just signed up on a whim to do my first half. So I went from having never run before in January to running my first half-marathon in June of last year. And through that process, I was introduced to the *Not Your Average Runner* podcast. That's how I found Jill. And so now I'm getting ready to run my second half next weekend.

Jill: I love this. So you've been a runner for less than a year and a half? 15 months, is that about right?

Sarah: Yes, about 15 months.

Jill: And in that time, you've already completed your first half-marathon.

Sarah: I have.

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Jill: So this blows my mind, that people think you have to train for years and years and years. And really, if you just apply yourself, you can actually just start and get there within – I mean, you did six months, right, January to June.

Sarah: Right.

Jill: Did you have to do a lot of mental work on yourself as well?

Sarah: Oh my lord, yes. I mean, when I started out, right at first, I didn't because it was like that adrenaline, "Hey, I'm going to run a half-marathon." Like, I didn't even know, I think, what I was getting into. And so I was super excited and it was more my body, you know, just going from being a couch potato to running. But it was pretty quickly that that honeymoon period ended and it became time to start working on my mind. It turned into a mental game pretty quickly.

Jill: And that is just really it. Like, once you get the basics under control, then it's all about managing your mind. Like, learning that skill is so powerful because it means you get to apply it elsewhere everywhere in your whole life. Okay, so, Jen, I want to come over to you now. And Jen is, like, such a believer in the *Not Your Average Runner* process that she joined the company. She is now a fully-fledged employee of *Not Your Average Runner*. But you've been a runner for many, many years. So can you talk to us a little bit about how you came to be who you are today as a runner, because you're very accomplished, and let's hear your story.

Jen: Well, very accomplished in running, that's a high honor. Yeah, I've been an on again off again, and not on-again runner since about 2001. I had never run before. I was not built for running. I was built for, like, you

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know, plowing fields and plucking chickens. And running was never even like a thing.

It wasn't even a thought. And I started kind of the same as Stefanie, like 2000, 2001, I had a terrible experience at a half-marathon and stopped running. Then I came back to it again, like in 2011, and then I had a catastrophic ankle break and then had lots of fertility issues and we ended up adopting a baby and I gained a ton of weight during that process.

And there was a point where I was at the beach with my best friend and I had to climb over a sand dune and I couldn't do it. And my son couldn't walk at the time and I couldn't carry him. I was literally on my hands and knees climbing over this sand dune while my best friend was carrying my son and I was like, talk about rock bottom, that was a rock bottom for me and I was like, something's got to change.

And I had just been introduced to Jill through her book, which at the time was called *Running with Curves*. It's not called *Not Your Average Runner*. But a friend of mine at work gave it to me and I just started looking her up and I was like, I need to hook up with this girl. I think she speaks my language. And I needed help.

Like, I knew at that point that I wasn't prepared to do it on my own. In the past, I'd always done it on my own. I just was sort of like, I'm going to do this thing, zero technical skills, zero knowledge about, like, what you really needed to be a runner. I just sort of went out and did it. I didn't know anything about intervals. I just sort of went out and did it and I was terrible at it most of the time.

And then I found Jill and she taught me all the things. And the most important thing she taught me was the mental part. And I was like, this is

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like therapy. This is like therapy through running. And it really was a very hard time in my life that has blossomed now over almost three years into this, not only for my health and my wellness and my mental health, but into a new career path for me.

You know, I'm still working my full-time job but doing this on the side of Jill, and it's like, now I'm a very big, like, give back kind of person. I feel that that's very important and this is like, I'm still getting all the benefits of working with Jill, but I also get to give back to our amazing community. And I'm looking at the faces of some of these women who I've now known for three years and it's like, you know, we only see each other in person every once in a while, but my heart is swelling up just looking at everybody, and it's just such an amazing community of women and how important we all are to each other to keep us all going.

And I started with Jill in July of 2016, and in October of 2017 I ran the Chicago marathon with no intention of meeting Jill and working with her to run a marathon. I just wanted to be able to climb the sand dune. That was my intention. And then I ran the freaking marathon, so it was pretty miraculous.

Jill: That's awesome. And I just love how, I mean, with the exception of Nancy, I think almost everybody on this call has been like, "Oh, I just want to start running so that I can feel better in my body." And I know that's what you started with, Nancy. But when you and I met, you were like, "I'm going to run this marathon."

But it fascinates me that all of this amazingness for you guys all started with just a, "I want to feel better in my body. I think I might want to start running and I'm not 100% sure if it's something I can do." But you all took this sort of leap of faith and tried it.

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So, for people that are listening to this wondering, “Okay, how the fuck am I going to start running? It’s all fine and good for these ladies. They’re special unicorns.” Here’s what I’d like to do. I’m going to ask a couple of you, like, let’s start with Melissa. Melissa, what were some of the things that you believed about running and runners before you joined Run Your Best Life and before you started running in general.

Melissa: I grew up in Eugene, Oregon, track capital of the world. So I thought, to be a runner, you had to run, you had to run fast, you had to be, you know, skinny, lanky, you know. That’s what I had been exposed to my entire life.

Jill: And so how has that changed for you?

Melissa: If you run, you’re a runner. It’s kind of an extension of Bill Bowerman, back to Eugene, he says, “If you have a body, you’re an athlete.” Literally anybody can run. It doesn’t matter if you’re doing it for 10 seconds at a time or if you’re Meb or Kipchoge and breaking records and world record in the marathon.

Jill: yeah, I love that. And just that quote of, like, “If you have a body, you’re an athlete,” it’s so freeing to think of it that way because then it’s like, oh, I get to be whatever I want to be? It’s sort of a mind fuck when you’re like, wait, all these years, I thought I had to look a certain way or be a certain way to do this thing, and all of a sudden, you don’t have to. And it’s very powerful, isn’t it? Do you find that that spreads elsewhere in your life? Once you get to one thing, you’re like, “Oh, I get to do this thing that I thought I shouldn’t do that I thought I wasn’t cut out for and maybe I am.” Do you look around and say, “Jeez, what else can I do?”

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Melissa: Absolutely, and I think running and finding out I can be a runner, you know, has given me confidence in so many other areas.

Jill Angie: Yeah, I just think that's so fun. And that's, like, one of the side effects. And I know, I wrote about this in my first book, that confidence is sort of a side effect of becoming a runner. And it's like one of the best side effects ever because then you just start stomping around in your life, like, yeah, I am powerful, I can do what I want. And amazing things happen from that, for sure. Sarah, talk to me about how that's impacted your life, that you have a different level of confidence since you've become a runner and has that changed anything in your life at all?

Sarah: Oh gosh, yeah, I think my level of confidence has just – I'm 180 degrees different from what I was a year ago. I think I just show up totally differently in the world now than I did. I'm not ashamed to take up space like I used to.

Jill: yeah, can you say more about that? That's fascinating.

Sarah: I just think I have – I just didn't have self-confidence. And so I just felt, you know, kind of just ashamed of myself a lot. I was never athletic. I never felt like I could be athletic, and I don't know why I felt like that was something that would give me value, but apparently, I did. So when I realized that I could in fact be an athlete, I just feel a lot better about myself and much more confident.

Jill: It just makes me happy when I hear people say, like, I started running and I just feel better about myself, because I think, so often, we think we have to lose weight or we have to make a certain amount of money or we have to be married or whatever it is. We feel like we have to have all these things in our lives to feel better, when in reality, we just need to make

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ourselves a priority and take care of ourselves, and running is a great way to do that.

Sarah: I don't think that, as a person, I'm anything different. It was just realizing what I was, do you know what I mean? Like, when you were talking about what you thought about runners, I thought that runners were athletes. And I still think that that's true. I think what I didn't know was that I could also be an athlete, you know. And I was running a couple of weeks ago and I thought, I'm so grateful for my strong legs, and I thought, you know what, I have always had strong athletic legs, I just didn't know it. So it's just kind of like coming into what you already are.

Jill: Right, there's no need for you to change to love yourself. There's no need for you to change to appreciate and be grateful.

Sarah: You're not changing, you're just becoming what you already were.

Jill: And here's something too that I just want to make sure that anybody watching or listening to this recognizes that you don't have to run a marathon to get any of this stuff. I mean, is there anybody on this call who they had to wait to run a marathon before they felt good about themselves? Right, you kind of start feeling the benefits of running after, I don't know, a week, maybe two. Karen, talk to me about how you felt after – I mean, you said that first 10 seconds of running as, like, magical to you. So, can you say more about that?

Karen: Oh, it was. I truly didn't think I could physically run, and then, after that first time, I remember, it was like we only did like 10 intervals. It was like baby-baby-steps. And- I can remember, it took a while for me to believe in myself that I would be able to do it. But I could. And you built upon what I started. I remember being really unsure that I would be able to do it, and

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what was so helpful was that I had people to support me during that process in the group; you, Jen, Nancy was there, Melissa was there, who kept telling me I could do this.

And before I knew it, I could run a 5K doing intervals. And I remember the first public 5K I did. And this was a big thing, because I, you know, when I looked at myself I saw an old fat woman. I had seen people on YouTube and stuff who raced and they were not like me. So my first 5K that I did in public was a night race in the dark. A very small one. I figured, you know, nobody could see me that way and it would be safe. But I did it and I didn't come in last. That kind of - it was just slowly building. The marathon thing, that marathon was just kind of a fluke because I blame it all on Jen.

Jill: Wait, you accidentally ran a marathon? Is that what you're saying?

Karen: Well you know, we had just finished, we had just done that first half marathon in Colorado and I was on this oh my god I did this, and I think that's when it finally clicked in my own mind. My god, I am a runner. And there is Jen saying you know, I've kind of been thinking about maybe I should do this. Okay yeah, why don't I do it too? It's all Jen's fault.

Jill: We blame Jen for everything. She's an instigator.

Jen: I'll take it.

Karen: Most definitely. I love you Jen.

Jill: That's one thing though that you bring up a really good point. Jen's definitely the instigator, but I think all of us are instigators because it's so - and Sarah, you and I had a conversation about this a while ago of when you did your first half marathon and you were kind of like, questioning the

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second half marathon and I'm like, well how did you get through the first one? And you said, "Well, there were just all these other people doing it."

And so, it's so fascinating the power of community and how that can just kind of carry you along and you can have a community that believes in you so that those times when you don't believe so much in yourself, you've got all these other people that are like, that's okay, I believe in you enough for both of us, right? It's so awesome. Nancy, talk to me about what did it mean to you to become a runner and how did it change your life?

Nancy: One thing that I was thinking about as all the other women were talking is when I started running and doing my intervals, I used to cower on the right side of the lane for wherever I was running, whether a race or just a training run. So I wouldn't be in anyone's way when I did my walking interval. And I remember the first time I said you know what, I'm a real runner, I'm going to take up the whole - I'm going to run in the middle of the lane and everyone else can deal with it. For me, that was my first okay, I'm here, I'm taking up my space. And I really felt empowered to come into my own running ability whether I was doing intervals or not or whatever it was like a real runner.

Jill: I love that. I didn't know that about you. That's awesome. So basically, you're just saying I'm a real runner, I have just as much right to be here as everybody else, regardless of how fast everyone else is going. And here's what's so fun, you probably - I've noticed that in general, other runners are - they're just really nice people.

Nancy: They really are.

Jill: Full of endorphins. They're happy. And so we have these - our brains are like oh, this person's going to judge me or they're going to be mad

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because I'm taking up space, and it's like no, we're all runners, we're just out there doing our thing and most of the bullshit judgment and stories in our brain and not coming from other people.

Nancy: Yeah, and if they're faster than me, they'll go around me.

Jill: Yeah exactly, that's how it works. That's just math, right? So good. Stefanie, I'm trying to unmute your line there. So what would you say - so tell us a little bit about some of the challenges that you overcame because you've got some physical. Can you talk about that a little bit and what you've done to counteract them?

Stefanie: I had some cardiac complications, which resulted in a literal hole in my ventricle between the wall in my heart in the middle. So that pushed up my ribcage so I basically have one long and maybe a little half of the left one, so I've always had trouble with breathing. When it's really cold outside my asthma will flare up and that kind of thing.

But I've also had a pacemaker since I was five, so that's all I've known. So my whole life has been dealing with hard things, and I think the running is just something that just signifies that I can do hard things. I gravitate towards proving people wrong or just don't tell me I can't because I'm going to do it kind of thing. So getting my breathing under control and knowing my limits, which is why I love intervals because I can run when I need to and walk when I need to.

Jill: So I love this so much because I think there's so many people out there that say I can't run because I have this circumstance in my life, and you're just basically like, actually - so? I love that. And this is - I mean, I think you're somebody who's out there thinking I can't run because of these various circumstances, I encourage you to go to your doctor and say this is

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what I want to do, what can we do, how can we make this happen, rather than just saying it's not going to happen. Because I feel like there's a way for everybody, if you want to become a runner, there's a way for you to do it that works with your situation. And you keep surprising yourself, Stefanie with what you're actually able to do. And so, so many of our limitations are really mental limitations, for sure.

Stefanie: None of my doctors ever told me you can't run. They've never - if anything, they're all like holy shit, you did what?

Jill: You're going to be a case study in somebody's medical journal someday.

Stefanie: I already am.

Jill: I love that.

Stefanie: And even when my mom, the first time my mom saw me race, it was just one of those moments where my daughter is doing that kind of thing.

Jill: And here's the thing that I love so much about you too is that's not the story that you lead with. You're like, oh no, I'm training for a half marathon. Boom, done. You don't have a story of despite all of these challenges that I've had, you're like no, no, I'm just a runner.

Stefanie: Yeah, exactly.

Jill: That's your identity now. I just love this so much. Okay, so Jen, let me ask you this. What parts of the Run Your Best Life group have had the most impact on your running?

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Jen: It's back to the mental work. I mean, just having the ability to get coached and listen to what other people are getting coached on. That's why I love the group coaching calls because sometimes, especially when I was new, I didn't really kind of know what to ask. So I would just listen and that was really impactful for me. And then somebody would say something and I felt really comfortable saying I don't know what that is, can you explain it to me. Somebody brought up a Ragnar one time and I was like, what's a Ragnar? I didn't even know what that was.

And so I think that's that level of being with people who are just like you, who are going through the same thing as you, you do start to take up space. I love that notion. And you are able to advocate for yourself and ask questions when normally you would not because you don't want to look stupid or draw attention to yourself. There's none of that in this group. We can say and feel and cry and laugh and everything together and we can do it as an observer or we can do it as an active participant and get just as much out of it either way, which is something that's so, I think, special about this group.

Jill: Yeah. I completely agree because there is a lot of compassion and there's a lot of support and there's an equal amount of tough love, I would say. Usually it's me laying that down but - yeah, it's not all kumbaya, but it's all very caring and compassionate. I just love that so much. And I guess I kind of know the answer to this but I'm curious what you would have to say. Is there something that when you joined Run Your Best Life was not on your radar or something you thought like, well I'll never be able to do that but since then you've accomplished it.

Jen: Yeah. The Chicago Marathon. Not in a million, trillion, bazillion years. It's not like I wanted to and didn't think I could do it. I didn't even want to. I was like, that's bananas, that's for weird people. I don't want to do that.

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Jill: So tell people the story of how you made the decision, but I'm really curious like, why did you make that decision in the first place?

Jen: I think because deep down inside I really did want to do something that huge and badass but I never gave myself permission to even think that I was capable of doing it. And so when I started - I mean, literally we started working in July. That October, four months later is when we had a conversation. It was a middle of the night text to you saying, "Hey, I think I might want to run the Chicago Marathon," and you were like yes, we're doing this.

Jill: 3am folks. It was 3am.

Jen: But I mean, I think it's probably something deep down inside I always really thought was the ultimate goal but I would never ever be capable of it so I didn't let myself want it. And so I always told myself I didn't want it but I actually really did. And so when I finally got enough confidence to feel like it was something that was attainable for me, that's when I said it out loud. And you said to me once, you were like, you would have never sent me that message in the middle of the night if you didn't think this was something you could do because you knew deep down that I would have said yes, we're doing this. Because I joked about I didn't know we were going to be doing it right away.

That experience and the experience I've gotten through this, it permeates your whole life. It really - running is just the mechanism for transformation and I'm not talking about physical transformation. It's mental transformation. And when we talk about taking up space, we're talking about taking up literal space like running in the middle of the lane but also mental space and advocating for ourselves and speaking up and not being

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afraid to ask questions. Not being afraid to be vulnerable. And that is really powerful for women especially.

Jill: I could not agree more. I did a Facebook Live earlier today where we talked about how men have no problem. There was a woman on a coaching call earlier and she said that she was having a hard time justifying going for her three runs a week that she'd been assigned because she felt like it was taking time away from her family. And I think women have that thought process like I have to give more of myself, I have to completely give over everything of me to serve my family, whereas men are like, no, I take care of myself first so that I can take care of my family.

And I think the kind of coaching that we do in Run Your Best Life helps women realize like it's okay for them to take up space in their families and say like, no I get to have time too and I can be a better version of myself when I take that time for myself. And it's not like we're saying two hours a day, seven days a week. It's like, 45 minutes three times a week maybe when you're first starting out. It's not that much time.

But women are not taught that it's okay to do that. I mean, part of it's hormonal I think because women have a lot more estrogen and estrogen is that hormone that makes you want to take care of people, so part of it is hormonal, but part of it is societal and we're just not taught that we are allowed to take up space as well. So I think that's just what you've all said about physically taking up space and mentally taking up space is just - it's so important. And you get that when you're exposed to a community of women who believe that and who model that for you.

There's just wave upon wave of women in this group that are like, yeah I don't do that anymore because I've learned that I'm just as important as

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everybody else. Sorry, I just went on a little mini rant there. That was unexpected but Stefanie, would you like to share something?

Stefanie: Yeah, I just wanted to say too with the whole confidence thing too, it's been such a confidence booster for me to go running that now for the first time in my life, I actually feel like I'm in control of my life and in control of what I want. And I don't want to give that up. I'm like, fuck no, I'm not giving that up nobody.

Jill: Yes, exactly. I got this thing and I'm holding onto it.

Stefanie: I finally have it and I'm like, no.

Jill: I think it's really hard to go back to not having confidence and not having this desire to take up space once you've felt what it's like and you realize nothing about you has to change except your mind. It's like, you can't unflip that switch.

Stefanie: Yeah. Running is the hardest thing I've ever done, so I'm like, if I can do that, I can go back to grad school, I can do anything.

Jill: Yeah. So I want to ask you guys a question and just raise your hand if this is a question that you want to answer, but I know one thing that a lot of new runners struggle with is I don't want to go outside, I don't want to run outside in public or I don't want to wear a tank top even if it's 90 degrees outside because people are going to see my body, people are going to judge me, I don't feel comfortable. So does anybody want to address that? What was it like for you - Karen, please.

Karen: When I first started, I would wear usually full-length little pants, a short-sleeved shirt that came to my elbows. I was very embarrassed to be

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running because you know, I shook all over and I didn't think I was doing it very good anyway. I mean, I was only doing 10 seconds. Gradually it got better and I remember the first time it was so hot here that summer and I just sweat like a piglet anyway. And I went out running in a tank top and you know what, nobody wrecked a car, the Earth continued to rotate, nobody noticed, and if they want to look, that's fine, I don't care.

It was my issue. It never was anybody else's. And I had to be okay in running the body I had. I think in my mind I was going to wait until I was slim and trim and that was never going to happen. So I had to get okay with me.

Jill: Right, and it's always our problem. Not somebody else's. And we always think like, everybody's looking at me. No, actually they're not. People driving down the street, they're just driving. They're like oh look, human running by the side of the road and they keep going. It's not - nobody is offended by our presence and we just think like nobody needs to see that. If I had a nickel for every woman that has not worn a tank top because she's like, nobody needs to see that, I would be a very rich woman because everybody needs to see that.

They're bodies. They're human bodies. It's like, not - we don't all look like Kim Kardashian and thank god. She's a lovely person but most people look like us, and so for us to think that there's something wrong with that, it just sets us up to keep small everywhere in our life. So I think yeah, running outside in a tank top and realizing that nobody died or got pregnant, to borrow a Corinne Crabtree-ism is like, one more brick in that confidence wall. It's like okay, now I can run outside and people can see me and I'm okay with that. Nobody died. Okay Sarah, what would you - please.

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Sarah: When I started running just a little bit over a year ago, it was hard for me to go outside in a tank top. I mean, I wanted to run in sweatpants and like you were saying, the t-shirt that hangs down to your elbows. And I pretty quickly got over that because I live in Tennessee and it was hot and I had to go outside. But I'm not going to - if somebody's thinking oh I want to start running and I need to get past that, I don't want anybody to think that it's not still sometimes a struggle. You know what I mean? That it's okay if you're still not always comfortable.

I mean, I still have days where I go out in my tank top and my running tights and I'm not super comfortable but I do it anyway, and it's something that you still kind of argue with your inner mean girl sometimes but you do it anyway. And it gets better and it gets better and it gets better, and you still have days where you're like, drawing a purple scribble dress on yourself when somebody takes a picture. But it gets better. That's my point. But it's never going to be perfect and that's okay. We don't do perfect.

Jill: You're right, we don't. Okay, so I'm so glad that you shared that because that is very true and I think - I've had people come up to me and say oh well it's easy for you. Well, I've been working on this brain for 20 years to try and change this and like, it is probably just in the past maybe three years that I've really gotten to the point where I'm like, fuck it, I'm just going to wear a bikini in public. Really, at this point I'm just like, come at me bro.

And I've tested it. I walked around Brooklyn in a bra and the fat police didn't show up. So I've done a lot of testing of these theories and been like oh, apparently you really can do whatever the hell you want. But you're right. It doesn't mean that it happens overnight and it doesn't mean that if you - one day you feel great about your body and the next day you don't feel great about your body. It doesn't mean there's anything wrong with you. It doesn't mean you're not doing it right. It means you're human.

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Sarah: Right. And you go out in public like that five times and you're going to feel great about it four times and one day you're going to feel really shitty about it but it's okay because the next time you'll be okay again.

Jill: Exactly. It's a process. So Sarah was just referring to - we have one rule in Run Your Best Life and that is we don't do perfection. We only do progress. Because I think that that's like, when I say you're trying to be perfect, then it gives people permission to just fuck stuff up and be themselves instead of having - for things to look a certain way.

Okay, so what I'd like to do is take some questions from the Facebook group. So you guys over in Facebook land, if you have questions, go ahead and put them in the comments. You can just ask it generally and then I can call on somebody or if you have somebody specific that you want to address it to, just let us know and we will - and I know the Facebook group is about 20 seconds behind the Zoom. So while we're waiting for that, let me ask this question and you guys can just raise your hand. What piece of advice would you give to somebody who is thinking about becoming a runner?

Melissa: If you're thinking about it, do it. It's pretty - something like Run Your Best Life is just a fantastic way to start it. Several people have said it. You get the tools, especially the mental work. I still get so much benefit from the mental work, even four years after I started running. There's always something new that I'm learning. But you also get the camaraderie and you go in the group, you don't even have to post something about running. It's just like I'm having a crappy day and somebody's there to bounce stuff off of or say yeah, it's a crappy day but it'll get better.

Jill: And the answer is usually go for a run and it'll get better. Okay, so we do have a question. Joanne says, "Are there any suggestions or resources

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about nutrition? What to eat before you run or after you run?" You know what Jen, I'm going to ask you to answer that question because you're a - Jen is not just our coach. She's also a chef and she's really good at the nutrition stuff.

Jen: That being said, I am not a dietician and I'm not a nutritionist. I'm a chef, but I do specialize in healthy cooking and cooking for people with special diets and especially for people with diabetes. But I would say if you're having lots of concerns about your nutrition, I would see a dietitian and I would especially see a dietitian who is not going to be like, well you need to lose weight first. Really vet them out and find a dietitian who's going to work with you...

Jill: Because that's a bullshit dietitian. Do not hire that person.

Jen: For sure. But I think when you're running, you want to try to eat I would say as sort of - I use the word cleanly as possible in a really loose way. I'm not talking only whole foods, I'm not talking only whole 30 or paleo or whatever it is. It's whatever works for your body the best. You can test a few things out before and after your runs and are you getting gut problems, are you feeling sick when you're running, are you feeling anything - maybe test a few things out.

And just realize that you don't need - you probably need less fuel than you think you do, especially on runs. If you're running a 5K or less, three miles or less, or even four miles or less, you probably don't need any fuel or nutrition on the run itself. But beforehand just be careful. You probably don't want to eat a huge egg and bacon breakfast before you go out for a run because you don't want to be too full and you don't want greasy fat will sit heavy on your stomach.

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So I would say just really - I usually do half a banana and a bite of peanut butter half an hour before I run because bread or wheat or flour sits badly on my stomach only when I run. I eat it afterward, but only during my run. So I try to keep it pretty simple. Sometimes I run fasted. I don't eat anything at all. I just have some coffee with a little bit of cream in it beforehand. So it's really up to you and I would say afterwards eat what's going to replenish you.

I mean, I would say try to get a little bit of protein in probably as quickly as possible. Protein's going to restore your energy and it'll help with your muscle repairing the quickest. And try to do it quickly, as soon as you're done. And that doesn't mean go eat a steak. I mean, you can, especially if you're done a really long run and you're starving, but I would have something like a nut butter or something that's a little bit - got a little bit of protein, maybe a little bit of fat that's going to absorb fast.

And I always err on the side of knowing what's in my food. So I like to eat real foods as opposed to packaged stuff, but I do the packaged stuff too something when I run. So if I'm on a long run I'll eat the little shot blocks or something like that, but you know what kind of food makes you feel good and I would stick with it. And don't use running as an excuse to overeat because you're going to end up doing more detriment to yourself than good because you want your body to repair itself in a healthy way and you don't want to counteract your mental health after running.

Like I feel so good and then you go out and you eat something that you maybe wouldn't have normally ate, then somehow end up feeling badly about it. So just think of food as fuel, especially before and after and during the runs. There's lots of great resources out there and I'd be happy to link some stuff to some people who are really good at helping runners with their nutrition. But I would say you know, go as cleanly as possible.

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Jill: Okay. So Cheryl says, "Do you all still do intervals for all races? 5K, 10K, halves, or are there distances you are no longer doing intervals and running straight?" So Melissa, yes, tell us everything.

Melissa: I actually - I mostly - race wise, I mostly do halves and marathons now and I still use intervals. Sometimes on my training runs or if I'll do a 5K every once in a while, I'll run it straight but I still mostly I do intervals. My intervals have just gotten longer.

Jill: Love that. And why do you do intervals?

Melissa: I know that I can get through a race a lot better if - and my intervals are like, run eight to 10 minutes, walk 30 seconds, but just having that 30 second break is enough to just snap my muscles out of the running mode so that I don't get tired as quickly. Also, I've found over doing all these races, most people are doing intervals because they stop to walk. They're just not planning on doing it when they go out at the starting line.

Jill: That's a great point is most people - because most people think you know, the way you approach a race is you run as far as you can until you're exhausted and you walk to recover, and that is kind of the fastest way to fail I think. It tires you out really fast, it saps all your energy. And so doing intervals where you know I've just got to run for 30 seconds or I've just got to run for five minutes or whatever your run interval is, it's mentally and physically just going to be a lot better for you because mentally you're like, I know how far I have to run and then I can stop to walk. And then physically, you stop before your body is at exhaustion so the recovery is a lot more effective. Yeah, Sarah.

Sarah: I run 45 seconds and then walk 45 seconds. I just want to say there's no shame in that, that not everybody has an end goal of not walking

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and not doing intervals. So I think sometimes people think I have to have a goal of eventually not running intervals anymore and so I just wanted to throw that out there that sometimes it's okay just to keep running. And actually, I heard you a couple weeks ago say to somebody that maybe you'll be able to run longer in your life if you don't put quite so much wear and tear on yourself, if you do give yourself the break of intervals, and that's kind of what I've been going with.

Jill: Yes, exactly. If you're 50 years old and you're just starting to run now, do you want to be a runner still when you're 70 or do you just want to run for the next couple years? Because if you just want to run for the next couple years then just like, plough through and have at it. But if you're like, I want to be a runner when I'm 70, I want to be - every time I see that Facebook video of that 102-year-old woman that is like, doing the 100-meter dash still, I'm like, I want to be that person.

And putting a lot of - trying to force yourself not to take walk breaks now and I mean, one thing that we're doing right now in Run Your Best Life is we've got this 5K course going on. And everybody has been coming in saying okay, what are the intervals I should be running next week and where am I going to go from there and how should I progress. And the whole approach that we're taking to that class is the opposite of Couch to 5K.

So you do Couch to 5K and the expectation is the first week you're running 30 second intervals and then by week three you're supposed to be running five-minute intervals and then by week six or eight, you're supposed to be doing 30 minutes with no breaks. And so that's the mentality that people have like, that's the app that everybody uses as an example and so they think that's the way it's got to be.

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But that's actually the opposite of what we do. We work the first week or two to get your intervals figured out and then you just use those for the entire training so that you kind of get that piece dialed in and you can just forget about it and you can think about other things. So yeah, I'm glad you brought that point up because first of all, there is no shame. Jeff Galloway, for those of you who don't know who Jeff Galloway is, I mean, he's an Olympic runner. He won medals in the Olympics and that's how he runs. He does run-walk, run-walk and he teaches that. So it's a thing. It's an actual thing.

I just want to say thank you so much to everyone who's joined us today, and especially our six badassess. So can I ask you guys to all unmute yourselves and say goodbye at once just so we can hear how much fun it is.

All: Bye.

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Okay rebels, I really hope you enjoyed today's episode. It was such a pleasure for me to get all of these amazing women together in one spot to really talk about their running and their lives. And of course, if you want to become a part of Run Your Best Life, all you have to do is go to runyourbestlife.com to sign up. It costs \$98 a month, there's no contract. You can join, decide if you like it, there's no contract that's going to keep you in for years and years or anything like that.

But I can tell you for sure it is the best investment you'll ever make in yourself because becoming a runner will not just change your body. It will change your whole life with the tools that we teach you. So what are you waiting for? Just join up already.

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Anyway, go to runyourbestlife.com. I hope to see you there and if nothing else, I will see you next week.

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.