

## Ep #86: Practicing Self-Healing Through a Cancer Diagnosis with Ceca Mijatovic



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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 86 of *The Not Your Average Runner Podcast*. I'm your host, Jill Angie, and today I am here with the fabulous Ceca Mijatovic, who is a badass life coach and also the host of the Truth & Dare Cancer Podcast.

Now, Ceca focuses on helping women who have been recently diagnosed with cancer learn how to navigate their cancer journey alongside their family and their career and everything else going on in their life. She helps them supercharge their self-healing and recalibrate their lives using cancer as a powerful catalyst for change.

She has had her own battle with the big C and it became a really potent agent for her for positive change in her own life and now she wants to help other women use their own diagnoses as an opportunity to transform their lives for the better. Now, Ceca is also the founder of the Truth & Dare Cancer coaching practice, where she dares women with cancer to find the truth in their cancer, which I just think is so amazing.

Now, we had a paradigm shift in conversation about what it's like to get a cancer diagnosis, make your way through all of the thoughts and feelings that come along with it, and how to take amazing care of yourself all along the way. So without further ado, here is Ceca.

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Jill: So, I am here with Ceca Mijatovic, and trust me, I practiced that name several times. It's such a beautiful name. Ceca Mijatovic, who is a life coach for women recently diagnosed with cancer. We were just chatting before we started this interview and she shared some statistics with me about the amount of people that'll be diagnosed with cancer in a lifetime and what impact that has on them and the people around them.

And so what we're going to talk about today, because this isn't something that's really discussed in regular conversation, you don't really hear about this stuff, so we're actually going to dive into self-care strategies when you've been diagnosed or when somebody you know has been diagnosed. And what that means, what that looks like, and how you can continue to fit movement into your life and just some other strategies for self-care that will make a huge impact on your life. So Ceca, welcome to the show. I'm so excited to talk to you today.

Ceca: Hi Jill, me too. Thanks for having me. So glad to be here.

Jill: So you have a really interesting story and I think before we get into all of the amazing guidance that you're going to share with us today, I'd love for people to just sort of understand who you are and where you've been in your journey so that they kind of understand what you have to offer.

Ceca: Absolutely. So it's a long story and I'll try to make it as brief as possible. I've been in a corporate world for over two decades and alongside about seven or eight years ago, I intentionally focused on changing my life and intentionally living, although I've been also in a spiritual journey for a long time. And as part of that process, I was trained as a life coach and I opened my coaching practice four or five years ago alongside my corporate career.

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And literally, two days before I was going to resign and take on coaching full-time, I had a dream to actually go and see a gynecologist and four weeks later I was diagnosed with cancer. And that completely propelled me on this different fast-track spiritual path, if you would. So I went through my cancer journey and during that process, had three operations in five months. I was sick for a year, sick meaning literally in bed for a year. And during that time, I realized that I needed to pivot my coaching practice to solely work with women who were recently diagnosed and really help them grapple with this intense experience.

Because what happened when I was diagnosed, instead of going to be educational background or going to be corporate leadership expertise and experience, I did not use any of that knowledge. I actually just zoomed into my coaching and I self-coached myself through my cancer crisis. So having said that, now I work with women with cancer and who were recently diagnosed like we said, and I really help them grow through the cancer experience and essentially transform their cancer from a thing they have into a healing process they can master.

Jill: Oh my gosh, I absolutely love this. I feel like everybody needs to know this. Because I think of - I've had friends who have been diagnosed with cancer and the only person they have to turn to is either their doctor or other friends. There's not somebody out there that says hey, I can help coach you through this whole process and maybe - obviously you're not giving them treatment information but you're helping them manage their brain around the whole experience, right?

Ceca: Absolutely. I think that the mindset work as well as clearing the emotions and not letting them be stored and stuck in your body are the two areas that are hugely underestimated. Not only when you're going through a cancer, I think just in life in general. And I think there is a huge misconception because I'm sure in your community, you also work with

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your clients and women on their mindset and on the emotions because the whole mind-body connection. And we are not taught in school, we are not taught in our family circles or at work or in any other situation in how to intentionally deal with both, with mindset shift and thoughts and beliefs as well as with the emotions.

Jill: Yeah, no, I agree. So obviously my community is all runners and women in my community use running to process emotion, to help them manage emotion. It helps them do something with it sometimes if they just are feeling stressed or whatever. Usually going for a run can help manage that. So what happens when you've received a cancer diagnosis? What happens to your exercise routine and can you talk a little bit about what that can mean for somebody who is maybe used to going out and running a few miles several times a week and now they've got this situation where maybe they don't know if they can still do that or how do they keep including movement as part of their self-care?

Ceca: Sure. Great question, Jill. So what happens when you get the news - I mean, getting the news, it's very paralyzing. So it's really a shock to your system physically, emotionally, mentally. And it kind of just locks you in your tracks. It's really important - the first module I teach is to step into your power and it's counterintuitive because what you want to do based on that paralyzing feeling, you want to gravitate towards hiding or retreating or pretending it didn't happen but basically you just want to disassociate from it because it's very traumatic news.

So what I teach is to actually do the opposite. When you get a diagnosis, that's not the time to fall apart. Later on in the process you'll have a full permission and you'll have time to fall apart. It's actually encouraged to fall apart. And I actually teach you how to constructively put yourself back together, but when you're first diagnosed, that's not the time, and it's not the time for many reasons. But the main reasons are you have to actively

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participate in choosing your doctors, in choosing your other practitioners like - let's say you have chemo nurse, say if you have radiation oncologist.

All those people, you need to select based on who you want to work with because this is a relationship potentially for multiple years. So you need to pick your team. Second thing is what you mentioned. What is my day-to-day routine and two, most important things that we can do immediately in our self-care, even when we don't know much about our diagnosis is cleaning up the diet and making it - delete the amount of processed food as possible and exercise.

Not eliminating exercise and not letting it fall off the schedule because you feel emotionally, mentally, and physically taxed from this news and from other activities. Now you have to do research, now you have to pick your practitioners, now there is all this unknown. There are lots of mental and emotional things going on when you're diagnosed. Exercise and what you put in your body are the two things that cannot be compromised.

And then going through the journey, just to touch on the second part of your question is that they really need to be maintained throughout, however obviously, there are ups and downs in how you physically feel, the level of sickness, and everybody's cancer experience and journey is very unique and it's such a broad spectrum. So especially when you're receiving some intense treatments, you may be in bed. I was in bed for months.

So when you're in bed, the name of the game is to improvise and compromise on how you do things but not to give up on doing things for yourself that are good for you. So even if you're in bed and you really can't go for a walk or you can't go for a run or any other more active form of exercise, you can still make the movements. I mean, you can still work your joints, you can still try to lift your legs, lift your feet, move your arms. And

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even just go through an easy stretch that will tremendously help your body and get the body fluids moving, and get also the emotions moving like you were saying earlier.

Jill: Yeah, that just really makes a lot of sense to me because I think it sounds to me like it's a matter of figuring out what is the minimum you can do and then make sure you do that. So instead of just saying fuck it, this horrible thing happened to me, I might as well just lay in bed, and I'm not saying that maybe lying in bed is all you can do, but what can you do while you're there to at least make yourself feel a little bit better rather than going with this hopeless I might as well give up feeling.

Ceca: Exactly. And it is the most important thing that mentally and emotionally you can do for yourself because you're not turning back on yourself. Meaning by not giving up on your exercise, you're not giving up on your healing and you're not giving up on your life and you're not giving up on what's important to you at that given point in time and you're putting yourself first, which are all of the aspects of cancer and healing that you have to heal in your life in general. And that's where coaching comes in. You learn so much by taking these different actions in how that translates in your day-to-day life is way beyond just exercise, let's say.

Jill: Right. Let's kind of dive into that a little bit because I know that you mentioned something about mental fatigue versus physical fatigue, and what are some ways that you help your clients handle that? Because I'm sure I imagine if I got a diagnosis like that, my brain would be immediately tired, just sort of overwhelmed with all of the thoughts and all of the emotions. Where do you start with that?

Ceca: Great questions. You know Jill, I just did recently a podcast episode on mental rest, and what I teach my clients is that there are actually three

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types of resting that we can do. Mental rest, emotional rest, and physical rest. And all three are important but because of such a close mind-body connection, sometimes we apply a wrong rest. We can be mentally exhausted but then we think we're physically exhausted or we need emotional rest but manifests itself in the body and we think we just need to sleep, which is not true. We need a different kind of rest.

So what I really want to share is that we live in very highly socialized high tech society, so our brains are overly stimulated, which means they're experiencing our body - the brain body is experiencing this "perceived danger" so we are producing way too many chemicals that are supposed to address fight and flight, meaning cortisol, stress hormones keeping us really tense, getting the mind very tense for problem solving. But all the time. Not just when we are in true danger.

So the result of that is this mental fatigue and chemistry that triggers the body to be in an overrun all the time. So what's affected? Our sleep is affected, our digestive system is affected, our muscles are affected because we are pumping all these chemicals in our brain is because we're stimulated all the time to the point of fatigue. I mean, how many of us feel just exhausted but you didn't do anything. You sat on your chair. Most of the people live sedentary lives so you're not physically tired, per se, but you're just feeling it in your body. Your body feels exhausted because your brain was over-stimulated all day long and made your body exhausted.

So just understanding that dynamic is like well, we don't need to treat a symptom, meaning you don't need to now sit on a sofa for three hours because your body's not tired. You need to do mental resting. So how do we rest our brain and our mind? Well, meditation, any kind of visualization that takes you out of that three-screen experience or it takes you out of your day-to-day if you are in a high-tech world or if you're living in a big busy city and so on. Just calming yourself down.

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Reading, reading poetry or novels. In other words, you're not acutely engaging your brain in thinking process. Music, any other form of art that's really letting your emotions and your mind kind of flowing and floating. And engaging also all your five senses when you are doing these types of - let's say walk in nature or doing this kind of mental resting. And the amazing thing happens, even if you do this for 15 or 20 minutes, your body will go through a shift and will start feeling invigorated.

Like it will start feeling - because you're going to stop producing these very intense chemicals, you're going to then start producing actually positive chemicals and then you'll be shifting it to rest and restore phase or state in your mind and that will then trigger the completely different physiology in your body. I'm sharing this because there is this big misconception that we all continuously feel tired and that we just need to rest our bodies when we actually need to rest our mind and shift our mind into rest and restore state.

Jill: I love that so much. Because I think we - oh gosh, hold on. My Google is talking.

Ceca: Google loved it too.

Jill: Google is impressed, and I don't even think we're going to cut this out of the podcast because it's just too funny. Google is over there saying I'm learning. When you give her a command that she doesn't understand she says please wait I'm learning or something, and it was right as you were finishing all that stuff and Google is like, I'm learning, so thank you Ceca.

Ceca: I have chills all over my body, that's great.

Jill: Thank you for teaching my Google home. Anyway, I just completely forgot what you were talking about. We were talking about mental rest and

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I'm kind of obsessed with this concept lately because it's so easy for us to think that relaxing is like sitting down with our phone and scrolling through Facebook and what I'm hearing from you is that is the opposite of mental rest.

Ceca: Exactly. You're just perpetuating the same thing that you experience the entire day or entire week. Overall, it's just teaching ourselves to treat the problem, not a symptom. Once you have this awareness and understanding, then you'll make different choices.

Jill: So let's talk about - we did this in my Run Your Best Life in January. We talked a lot about gratitude and how much of an effect gratitude can have on your life. And it's not just sitting there in your office looking around going I'm so grateful I have a laptop, I'm so grateful I have a roof over my head. It goes so much deeper than that. So what effect does the practice of gratitude have on healing and can you talk a little bit about what it means to you? What is your interpretation of that?

Ceca: Absolutely. And I totally agree with you because it's becoming kind of like a cliché and it's okay, it's hitting completely mainstream and I think sometimes the messaging is really important even if people don't fully grasp what's going on, I think it's also positive that people are incorporating it into their lives.

First, being grateful, we also have to engage all of our senses because that's how we engage our body. Not just our mind, not just saying it to ourselves. The reason for that is if we engage all of our senses, then we trigger energy in our body an energy of gratitude and the studies have shown that when we feel grateful, so not only we are thinking that we're grateful but when we feel grateful, that state of being has the same frequency of being in love.

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And what it means is it's triggering the same parts of your brain so it's a high energy stimuli, if you would, that then produces all these positive hormones and positive biochemistry in your body. So it's very healing, it's very invigorating, it makes you feel that great vitality, and it's not that you don't feel super excited but your body feels light and it feels like it wants to move, it wants to move forward.

The second aspect is just the nature of our mind, of our conscious and our subconscious mind working together. And I teach this in my community of women with cancer for healing, but it applies to obviously your community of runners and any other area of life. So if you are grateful repeatedly about same things, so let's say in my case it's healing and yours is let's say running a half marathon, and you engage all of your senses, like your feeling in your body and you can hear the sound of crossing that finish line and you feel the breeze and you feel the sweat on your face and on your body of running those 13 miles, when you engage your brain in that, your brain - and being grateful for it and saying like, oh my god, I feel so pumped and I feel so wonderfully thankful for this just happening, grabbing that water and tasting that cold water, your brain wants to bridge that gap.

Your brain then starts working out the connections of what needs to take place for me to realize that because you're sending it messages that this already happened. You're being grateful and you're "pretending" engaging your body to say hey, this already happened, so your brain now is catching up and bridging the gap, which means it will be releasing chemicals that will make you want to go and workout, that will make you choose food that supports running half marathon. It will have you go to bed earlier to get rest and sleep because it's supporting this thing that you're already grateful for and now he's like, I need to catch up. Does that make sense?

Jill: Yeah no, it totally does. It's actually a technique that I teach my runners. I call it the coffee shop story and I say write out the story of your

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race finish and all the training you did and everything you did to get across the finish line as if you're sitting in a coffee shop telling your best friend how you made it happen. But you write that story before you start training so that you sort of - you feel grateful in advance, you feel proud and accomplished and everything in advance because you're practicing what it's going to feel like on race day that your brain just says okay, I guess that's what we're going to do now and it just gets to work helping you make it happen.

So I love the idea of applying this to like a recovery story and so forth. So I think that's really cool. And most people are like, what are you talking about? I can't feel the emotion until the thing happens, and really you can feel the emotion whenever you think the thought. And that's the key is to start thinking the thoughts that are going to get you the result and then you get to feel the emotion ahead of time.

Ceca: I mean, that is one of the most fundamental concepts we can learn to better our lives forever. You know how they say like, 80/20 ratio, I'm thinking this is like, 95/5 ratio. You're doing 5% of work meaning knowing how your thoughts trigger your emotions, and 95% of your life will change.

Jill: Yeah, I completely agree. But let me ask you this because I'm sure there are people listening right now saying okay that's all fine and good to be grateful for something in advance, but when you've been hit with a cancer diagnosis, that's not being grateful for a half marathon finish line. People are going to say that's different because my life is on the line. How do I muster up gratitude when I've been hit with a diagnosis that big?

Ceca: You cannot afford not to be grateful, let me just first say that.

Jill: I got chills.

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Ceca: Because it's kind of linked to what we were talking about earlier. You cannot give up on yourself and the very next thing is identity. So stepping into your power that we mentioned earlier is also not identifying with your disease, and it's easy to do because it's so overwhelming. Like you said, your life could potentially be on the line. And not identifying with cancer at each [inaudible] and basically you really have to hone in on what are the other aspects of yourself, different roles you play in your life as a sister, mother, daughter, friend, what are your qualities that you have, you still have all your talents and qualities and interests that you had before this diagnosis and really keeping it in check and saying this is something I have. This is not me. I am not becoming a cancer patient. I am still the same person and I just have cancer.

And then being grateful for your healing and imagining your life after you go through this is huge and part of this journey and of course, we could talk for days, I already feel Jill, we could just be jamming not for hours but days, but one thing that I teach that I'll circle back to what we just talked about is really having a mission that's larger than yourself. Having this really grand purpose for living is what's going to give you that extra juice and then being grateful for that.

So being grateful not only to heal yourself but to heal the earth and what I mean by healing the earth is be an activist for people. So heal the society from a people's standpoint, be somebody who is interested in an ecosystem of our earth like water, food, the whole ecosystem is broken. You can be healing the earth spiritually. There are all these misconceptions on spiritual beliefs and what kind of issues it's causing worldwide. And having a grand mission - and of course, if you're really sick, your mission is your family, like seeing your children graduate, seeing your children hit all these milestones, but get big. Get so excited and exaggerate your mission.

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It doesn't really need to affect millions of people. It can affect 100 people or a thousand people, but really get excited about that and being grateful about that because again, of what we talked earlier. That's how gratitude works. Your brain will be healing your body because you have this great mission to accomplish and you really need to accomplish your purpose for being here today.

Jill: And really, like trying these techniques, what have you got to lose, right?

Ceca: Exactly. There are no side effects. It's not like you're going to generate five other diseases because you just took this pill.

Jill: Exactly. There are no side effects to positive thinking whatsoever.

Ceca: Well, there are positive side effects but they are not the ones we are talking about like negative ones. Exactly.

Jill: There's no downside to believing this is possible for me to believing I'm going to be around to achieve all those things, because whether or not it happens, what I believe is when you have grand plans and when you just put your heart and soul into achieving something because of the impact it's going to have on you, the people around you and so forth, first of all, whether or not you achieve it, just the way you feel when you think about the possibilities makes you feel amazing.

Because somebody just - I think it was Brooke Castillo, who's been one of my coaches in the past, she said for most people, the actual vacation is not the best part. It's the thinking about it and planning about it and imagining how much fun you're going to have. The vacation could be awesome but we get just as much good feeling and benefit from thinking about it and

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being excited about it. So I feel like there's no downside to being excited about things you can achieve in your future because you get to feel those feelings right now.

Ceca: I mean, it's absolutely true and what I say all the time to my clients, don't lose yourself in technicalities, don't worry about what it looks like at the end. To your point, what does the vacation look like and in our case healing, what are the stats? The stats mean nothing. It's really the feeling and engaging your emotions and like you were just saying, planning it and really experiencing with your entire body, not just your mind, what is it like. And I want to say what would it be like because you're literally feeling what is it like to be at that destination.

Jill: Yeah, that's so powerful.

Ceca: And I say that and I'm a mathematician and I'm saying numbers are out. You just need to understand and educate yourself on your diagnosis but you should never believe and you should never think about your prognosis. You create your own prognosis.

Jill: So good. So good. Oh my gosh. I agree. We could sit here and talk about this for hours and hours and days because I think we both have a very similar approach to working with our clients, which is helping them use their mind to get what they want instead of the getting in down to the details, but we are almost out of time so what I'd like to do is have you share - so first of all, you're the host of a beautiful amazing podcast and then also, I know there's going to be people listening to this that want to maybe get in touch with you, maybe work with you, or at least find out more about this whole process that you teach. So tell us everything.

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Ceca: You are so kind, yes. In the interest of time, yes, I'm a host of Truth & Dare Cancer Podcast and that's probably the best way to kind of get a feel for my teaching and my approach to healing, as well as the same URL would hold true for getting more information about me and so on and that's truthanddarecancer.com. And then in terms of what I'm teaching, if there are any of the listeners who've been recently diagnosed or have friends and family members who have been recently diagnosed, I do teach a 12-week coaching program that's really designed to transition you from cancer being a thing that you have to really transforming it into a healing process that you can really master.

And the idea of the program is that you create your new life while healing yourself so that once you're healing or once you have this new normal, you know exactly how you're going to live your life and what you're going to achieve and how to create this experience with clarity and calmness and being ridiculously empowered.

Jill: Ridiculously empowered, I love that. Don't we just all want to be ridiculously empowered? I know I do.

Ceca: Yes, I think you're doing that and I think you're doing it for your community.

Jill: So good. So is it truth and dare or truth or dare?

Ceca: I'm so glad you asked that. It's and. Because you have to be truthful and daring to face cancer.

Jill: That's awesome. Because it's funny, you think of the - I immediately thought of the game and I'm like wait a minute, that's not what she said. truthanddarecancer.com so we will make sure that the link to that is in the



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show notes. Check out the podcast, and then yeah, if you have recently been diagnosed or if - where was the stat that you told me before we started talking about the number of people that'll be diagnosed in a lifetime?

Ceca: It's astonishing. It's almost scary to say it but we need to say it, we need to raise the awareness. So when we talked earlier, so one in three people will be diagnosed with cancer in their lifetime, which really means that everyone, like 99% plus of people will experience cancer either by having it or knowing somebody close to them who has it. It's a huge number.

Jill: So this is important not just if you've been recently diagnosed but if you know somebody, somebody you love or maybe you work with somebody. It doesn't even have to be a close family member. Maybe you work with somebody that you're like, I don't really know how I can help out that person, point them in Ceca's direction and say hey, I just heard about this amazing podcast, you might want to check it out and see what it's all about. And I just think the more people know that this is out there and available, the more people we're going to have surviving and thriving.

Ceca: Yes, and Jill, you're so on point on saying that. We did not - there are so many aspects of this to talk about but one thing worth mentioning is that there is tons of shame associated with getting a cancer diagnosis, especially for women. So you saying that even if you know somebody as an acquaintance or somebody in passing, neighbor or colleague, do share with them that there are solutions out there like my coaching for example, and other people who are trying to make a difference.

Because women experience this humongous shame because in some ways they think how did I - what did I do wrong, how did I do this to myself,

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and most importantly, now I won't be able to show up for my family, I won't be able to show up for my friends. There is huge amount of shame which we really need to break that mold and this is why I want to talk about it all the time, just to raise the awareness and say there is so much you can do, there is nothing you have done wrong in terms of getting this diagnosis. You need to learn from it and move on and heal yourself so that you can show up for your family and friends and so on.

Jill: I love that so much. And I think like you said about the shame and maybe - I know sometimes when you know somebody that's been affected by cancer, we - it's happened to me. I feel uncomfortable because I think, I don't know what to do or say, I want to support this person but I make it all about me and I'm uncomfortable when that's total bullshit because really it should be all about them. But I think one thing you can do is either share this podcast or share the Truth & Dare Podcast on your Facebook wall and make it a public post and just say hey, I know it can be something that's uncomfortable to talk about but I just found this amazing podcast, hey, you don't even have to acknowledge that you have cancer. You can just click on it and listen and I think it doesn't even need to be like you sit down and just say to your friend here's this thing. Just share the fuck out of it so that everybody knows and those people that feel uncomfortable talking about it can still click the link and maybe listen to it in private if they are feeling that shame.

Because I think the more we make this available in a way that people can interact with it, consume it without having to talk publicly about it, then they'll learn it's okay to talk publicly about it but you have to make it available to them in a way that it doesn't feel scary. So please, everyone, share Ceca's podcast. [Truthanddarecancer.com](http://Truthanddarecancer.com).

Ceca: Thank you so much, and meet them where they are because they're already grappling with so much, so we don't need to push them out of their

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comfort zone. We just need to meet them where they are and this was part of my mission that got me healed.

Jill: I love that so much. Alright, well thank you so very much for joining me today. I think this was a really important discussion to have to just get your message out there so that more women don't have to suffer in silence. So I love this. Love this so much.

Ceca: Well thank you so much, it's been a great pleasure Jill, and I really love what you teach as well and it translates really well to healing any aspect of the life. It doesn't have to be cancer and that's why some of these universal teachings are paramount for changing the world.

Jill: Yeah, totally agree. Alright, let's go forth and be amazing.

Ceca: Yay.

Jill: Alright, thank you so much Ceca.

Ceca: Thank you Jill.

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Hey rebels, I hope you enjoyed my talk with Ceca, and you can find all the stuff we discussed right in the show notes at [notyouraveragerunner.com/86](http://notyouraveragerunner.com/86). Until 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](http://www.notyouraveragerunner.com) to download your free one-week jumpstart plan and get started running today.

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