

Ep #88: How Fast Do You Run?



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With Your Host

Jill Angie

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

Hey rebels, you are listening to episode number 88 of *The Not Your Average Runner Podcast*. I'm your host, Jill Angie, and today we are talking about running pace and running speed, and what is important and what is not so important to worry about when we're talking about those things.

Now, the most common thing new followers ask me, aside from what's the best running shoe is how fast do I need to be to call myself a real runner. And I do not love this question. Mainly, it's because I think we've been conditioned to believe that running pace is the only way to judge our progress as a runner and to judge our worth as a runner.

Think about the first time you told a non-running friend about a recent 5K, or maybe it was your first 5K, and I would bet money that his first question was either, "Did you win?" or, "What was your finish time?" And oh gosh, this makes me so mad because there's so much more to running than how fast you went or whether you won. Obviously only one person can win.

So if you show up to the Boston Marathon and there's 50,000 people, only one of those people is going to win. So asking did you win is just a dumbass question in my opinion, and more importantly, winning is just one single moment in time and if you're focusing on winning, focusing on your pace, focusing on how fast you're running, it detracts from all the other amazing things about running that are, in my opinion, so much more important than how long it took you to go from point A to point B.

Personally, I do not spend hours figuring out how I can get faster. Partially, it's because I'm not a competitive person. I really don't even compete with

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myself and I know not everybody is like that. In fact, there are some of you listening right now that can't even fathom what life would be like without caring about winners or losers or always setting a PR. But honestly, I don't give a fuck about any of that.

I really just like to have fun, which does make it awkward at baseball games when I cheer for the other team after they've made a great play. True story. But I'm just like hey, good job. I just - this is probably why I've never been much into team sports because I don't really care who wins or loses. I just think it's fun to watch people do cool shit.

So anyway, basically, I'm unconcerned with how I measure up to others and I think this sort of drives all of my viewpoints on running because not only am I unconcerned about how I measure up to others, either in my age group or just running near me in a race. I really am not super concerned with how I measure up to myself five years ago.

I don't look back and say oh, I've fallen so far or oh, I wish I could do what I was able to do when I was 40. I'm never racing the person next to me on the treadmill at the gym, I don't try to get ahead of other people in a race unless staying behind them is messing up my rhythm. Like if I'm running faster than you and you're directly in front of me, I will try to get around you. Not because I want to beat you but because I just want to be in my little zone, so that's it.

So running for me really is a way to connect with myself, feel good in my body, to work on my mind, my beliefs about myself, to practice keeping commitments to myself. It is self-care, it's entertainment and meditation all rolled up into one. And I don't believe that I need to run a certain pace to get any of those benefits. I think my pace is irrelevant to all of that.

Now yes, I can hear you. I can feel you disagreeing with me because there are times when speed does matter. I'm not saying pace doesn't matter at

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all. I'm just saying that it's not the most important thing. In fact, it's pretty far down on the list of important things when you think about running.

So for example, it is important if you're signed up for a race that has a 15-minute per mile required pace and they advertise that anybody slower than that will be swept. So you either need to be confident you can finish in the allotted time, or you need to make peace with the possibility that you might not be allowed to finish the race.

By the way, either of those options is fine. But seriously, other than situations like that, your pace is just data. It's just a neutral circumstance and you get to make it mean whatever you want. So thinking or believing that you need to run a certain pace so you can call yourself a real runner or so you can even talk about your running in public so you don't have to disqualify it when somebody says, "Oh, great job on that 5K," and you're like, "It took me 47 minutes."

Thinking that your pace is somehow a judgment of how good a runner you are or that you should be constantly striving to get faster, that that's the only goal with running, all of that is really limiting you from truly enjoying the sport. And before you get all pissed off at me because I know there's going to be people listening to this that say having a pace goal is a great motivator.

I'm not saying it's a terrible idea. I'm not saying you should ignore how fast you run. I'm saying that tying all of your good feelings to what pace you run is very limiting to you. So I said in the beginning of this show we're going to talk about what's important and what's not important about your pace, and what is important is that you like your reasons for running and that if your pace isn't where you want it to be, you understand why that is a problem for you.

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If it's a problem because you have a cut off time at your next race, by all means, work on getting faster. If that race is like, something you want to do, go for it. But if your pace is a problem for you because you won't feel good about yourself or you can't feel good about yourself unless you get below like, a 12-minute mile, I'm totally calling bullshit.

There are so many things to love about running and if your singular focus is on getting faster or proving something to someone, if the only time you ever give yourself a pat on the back is after you've achieved a certain time, you are missing out on the rest of it and you're setting yourself up for quitting on yourself. And by the way, if constantly improving your pace is your only criteria for whether it's worth being a runner or not, there's going to be a time when you're tapped out on how fast you can go.

You're going to get to a certain age, you're going to get to a certain pace for your body size, for your age, for whatever, and you're not going to be able to make yourself go any faster. And if you always need to get faster to feel good about yourself, you are going to be completely screwed when that happens, and it will happen.

Biologically, we kind of peak at a certain age. Everybody's different, but I think if you started running in your 30s or 40s, by the time you're in maybe your late 50s, you're not getting any faster and you might actually be slowing down a little bit. It's biology. And so if your pace is the only way that you get to feel good about yourself with your running, you're completely screwed and you're probably going to end up quitting or suffering even worse.

So I want you to know that using your running pace to beat yourself up for not making progress as a runner or for not being good enough feels terrible, and I suspect if you're doing that with running, you're probably doing it in other areas of your life. So I suggest you go do a thought download and pay attention to why you're making yourself feel terrible.

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But if you're doing that, if you're having these thoughts about how I should be faster and you feel kind of discouraged as a result of that, when you feel discouraged, you're much less likely to keep training and the result is that you actually don't get any faster just because you're not training, and then you sort of double down on those beatings. It's a vicious circle.

And so that thought like, I should be able to go faster or I can't be proud of myself until I go faster is creating this cycle where you're unable to effectively train. Either maybe you're overtraining or you're undertraining or whatever it is, you're not doing it from a place of a love of running. You're doing it from a place of I need to punish myself until I can achieve this goal and then I'll be allowed to feel good about myself. It's total bullshit.

Now, if you want to get faster and you like your reasons, by all means, work on getting faster. But when I say I want you to like your reasons, I mean the reason of I can't feel good about myself until I get faster, that's not a useful reason. A good reason is I want to run this race and I have to run less than a 15 mile to finish it. Okay, I think that's a great reason.

But remember, we just talked about this. Remember that your thoughts create your feelings. So if your thought is, I need to run a certain speed to feel like a real runner, to feel accomplished, you're missing out on everything else about running that is super awesome. And again, you're screwed if that pace goal is something that's going to require you to practically kill yourself to achieve.

So please, running should be a joy and not a punishment. Please don't use it as a way to tell yourself you're failing. I fucking hate it when people do that. Failure is not the end of the world, and often it is the beginning of something really amazing.

Now, all of that being said, all of my little rant, just because I don't give a fuck about getting faster does not mean that I don't actually pay attention to

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my pace. So case in point, last weekend I did the Philadelphia Hot Chocolate 5K. This is actually my second 5K since I started running again in February. And I have done this event, either the 5K or the 15K a bunch of times. I know the route very well.

And my plan, which is always my plan when I show up to a race, was basically just arrive, smile at some people, maybe talk to some people, and have fun. Just go out there. I usually consider races as a catered training run. Like oh my gosh, I get to go out, run my distance, and somebody's handing me water and in this case, melted chocolate and get sweet treats at the end. It's a catered training run to me.

But this race does have a 15-minute per mile pace requirement. I do know from previous experience that at least in my city, they don't actually enforce it and that was a good thing because my 5K that I did two weeks prior to the Hot Chocolate was almost a 17-minute mile. So I knew I was going to be way outside of the cut off and I just showed up like you know what, if they sweep me, they sweep me. They probably won't because they're not super vigilant about it, but if they do, they do.

I don't make it mean anything about myself. I'm not a failure if I get swept. It's just a fact. My speed was longer than the allowable time limit. I'd already done that mental work. I've done it for years and years and I just - I'm always cool with that.

But I showed up, I started in the back as I normally do. Probably about, I don't know, there were maybe a couple hundred people behind me and several thousand in front of me. I'm always in the back and sort of off to the right and I purposefully held a slower pace for the first few intervals after I crossed that starting line because the crowd was pretty thick, so I couldn't run very fast.

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I was waiting for my body to warm up, it was a little chilly outside. So I just kind of - my running intervals were very - they were probably just a hair faster than my walking pace. And so when there was more space, I did allow myself to settle into my nice comfortable rhythm. I was enjoying the views of the Schuylkill River and Boathouse Row. I just love this course, it's beautiful.

Now, at the first mile, and I wasn't - I didn't have a running watch on so I had my phone in my pocket but I couldn't see my pace at all. But at the first mile, Runkeeper said that I was 15 minutes and 30 seconds in, which I was like, that's interesting. That's over a minute per mile faster than the 5K that I did two weeks ago. So I was like, that must be a GPS glitch.

But then at mile two, I was a little bit over 31 minutes in and I realized that I'd actually maintained that pace more or less for two miles. So I thought that's very interesting. So I thought alright, I'm just going to push myself a little bit for the last mile and see what happens. Sprint the finish line, which I love to sprint the finish line, and then I try to do like a leap.

And this time around, I did my leap and the photographer was - I don't know if he was changing his battery or what but I did this beautiful leap, I made eye contact with him and his camera was in his lap. I'm like, motherfucker that was beautiful. I was more pissed about that than anything else.

So anyway, I finished mile three faster than miles one and two. I got negative splits, which makes me super happy because that's something that - it's kind of like the holy grail for running is to be able to run the second half of your race faster than the first half. What it tells me is I was very able to control my pace and to control my effort level so I had enough energy at the end.

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Anyway, I was very, very happy with my performance at this race. It was super fun to see myself get stronger just over the past two weeks as I continue training for the Philadelphia Marathon, as I continue - as I wind down on my physical therapy and just start up taking over with my own strength training. And I was like damn, that's pretty good.

So here's the deal though. The marathon in November has a seven-hour time limit, and so that means for that race, I'm going to have to keep up a 16-minute pace for all 26 miles or risk getting swept. Now, I probably won't get swept. Probably just say you have to get over to the sidewalk, which is totally fine with me, but I would like to finish in the seven-hour time limit.

So what that means is I need to keep a 16-minute pace during the marathon but a 16-minute per mile - because I think my official chip time was 15:45, I know that I actually ran faster than that in the race because I was doing so much weaving in and out of people to keep moving forward that I actually clocked an extra 10th of a mile on Runkeeper.

But anyway, regardless, my 5K time was fine for the marathon, 15:49. But the problem is if you can run 15:49 in a 5K, when you translate that into 26 miles, it's actually going to end up being more like an 18-minute per mile pace. So what happens is the farther you're going, the more your body slows down.

And so I use a pace predictor on Runner's World that basically says my marathon finish time is going to be more eight hours and I don't - that's not what I want because I want to be able to finish in the seven hours. It's the goal that I've set for myself as a runner and so my 5K time right now needs to be closer to maybe 13 or a 14-minute mile to account for that natural slow down.

So I'm like okay, that's interesting, that's all data. I know where I am, I know where I need to be, and I don't have to feel discouraged because I'm not

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there. I've got seven months; I'm going to train my ass off. I know it's possible for me and I know I have it within me to do it. I'm already using visualization techniques to visualize every single mile of the race, hugging Andy after I cross the finish line because he's going to finish probably two hours before me. He's doing the race as well.

Holding that medal in my hand, the taste of that ice-cold post-marathon beer. I'm visualizing all of that. But I am also okay with getting swept if I don't make it. And I know this is like, mind-blowing to people. I can hear some of you giving me the side-eye right now saying what the fuck, Jill? Why would you decide ahead of time that failure is an option?

And that is because I am okay with giving my all to something and failing miserably. I don't make failure mean anything about me other than that I took a chance and I did something. Doesn't mean I won't give 110% effort all along the way. I absolutely will. Every single training run, I haven't missed one yet. I'm very, very proud of that.

But I'm also - I'm not tying my self-worth and my pride and how I value myself, I'm not tying any of that to whether or not I succeed at this goal. What I'm looking for with this marathon training is that the person I need to become to complete all the training, that future version of me, that is what I'm looking for, that is the reward I want.

I'm evolving from somebody who is currently more than a little anxious about how she's going to fit all that training in, I'm evolving from that girl into somebody who believes so hard in herself she does not even consider the possibility of quitting. And the only way I will truly fail at this race, finish line or not, the only way I fail is I quit on myself, if I fail in advance.

The race medal is going to be awesome. The accomplishment of crossing that finish line, amazing. But those are just moments in time. The months of training, knowing that I set a big motherfucking audacious goal for myself

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and went after it like a boss, that is my reward. I would much rather go down in flames chasing my dream than sit on the sidelines wondering what might have been.

Failure does not define me. Failure makes me stronger. Failure does not define you. Failure makes you stronger. A medal is a reminder of that achievement for sure, but I don't need a fucking medal to know that I'm a badass.

Now, that was quite a rant but I want to know, what do you make failure mean about yourself? Would you rather try something and fail and try it knowing I probably will fuck this up, I'm still willing to go for it, or would you rather just not step up to the starting line at all? I think it's an interesting thing to know about yourself because it sort of defines your whole life.

If you're somebody who's like, I don't care if I win or lose, I'm just going to show up and do my best, I guarantee you probably end up having a much more adventurous life, maybe with some rollercoaster emotions or whatever, than somebody who's like, no, I'm just going to sit back. I don't want to fail so I'd rather not try if I don't think for sure I'm going to succeed.

What is the fun in doing something if you know for sure you're going to succeed at it? Where's the excitement in that? I mean like, I do things on a daily basis, and let me tell you, as an entrepreneur, as a business owner, this one big I wonder if this is going to succeed moment after another, that like, whether or not I finish that marathon is so secondary to my life right now as we take *Not Your Average Runner* as big as possible.

So I just really believe that failure is something that we should all be seeking out. We should be trying to find things that we have no idea if we're going to succeed at and just fucking go for it anyway and see what happens because the mental work that you have to do on yourself when

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something doesn't go as planned is so powerful. It's something you can use anywhere in your life. It's not just about running.

Alright, real quick before I go, I do want you to know that we have made it even easier to join Run Your Best Life. So join Run Your Best Life, get the support you need to achieve your own big motherfucking audacious goals. Just do it. We've made it so easy for you. The cost is \$39 a month for as long as you want to be a member.

There are no sign-up fees, there are no contracts, there are no unexpected price changes. If you sign up for \$39, you will never pay more than that. So this means you get all that community, all the coaching, all the accountability, all the swearing that you need to become the runner you want to be for about the cost of a gym membership.

And then here's the beautiful part. Unlike a gym membership, there's no expensive trainers, there's no random strangers on the treadmill next to you, there's no sweaty locker rooms, there's none of that. There's just women exactly like you, coaches who understand what you need, and tons of training and programs and support to help you reach whatever goal you want.

And to be there when you fail and help you get back up on your feet and get going again, and that's the most important part. So just head over to runyourbestlife.com to sign up. It's runyourbestlife.com and just sign up. Just go. I mean, this is the biggest no-brainer of your life, my friend. Runyourbestlife.com. Just going to say that one more time.

Alright rebels, that is it for this week. Everything I talked about in this episode you can find a transcript as always in the show notes at notyouraveragerunner.com/88. You can find the link to Run Your Best Life if for some reason you can't remember, runyourbestlife.com and I will talk to you next week.

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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.