

Ep #91: Rocking the Road Warrior Mom Life with Joanne Meloro



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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 91 of *The Not Your Average Runner Podcast*. I'm your host, Jill Angie, and today you are going to meet one of my favorite people. Her name is Joanne Meloro. She's been a client of mine for a few years, she's a friend of mine, and she's also an amazing, amazing human and an amazing coach.

Now, Joanne is actually a certified life coach who helps road warrior moms manage the overwhelm that comes from pursuing a professional calling while being away from their families. And we'll talk in detail about what a road warrior mom is in the podcast, but I promise if you are one, you know exactly what that means.

Now, she also coaches women who are struggling with career demands and the conflict that they often feel with their personal goals outside of work, and that means running. So if you're somebody who has a family and you're on the road a lot and you have a busy job and you're like, how the heck am I going to get all my running done at the same time? She is an expert in that and we're going to talk about all that today.

She's very passionate about working with women to understand that they can follow their hearts to live a fulfilling personal life and also be a powerful career woman and/or mom, and a runner. She herself is an avid runner. She is absolutely a member of the Run Your Best Life community, a very active member.

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She's a road warrior mom herself for over 13 years and she's currently training for the Seattle Rock 'n' Roll half marathon in June, the Philadelphia women's triathlon in July, the Ragnar trail run in Wisconsin in September, and she just as of this morning, signed up as a VIP attendee for the very first Run Your Best Life retreat in Savannah, which means she'll be doing the half marathon that weekend.

So long story short, she's an accomplished and busy woman who knows how to get shit done. So without further ado, here is the amazing Joanne.

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Jill: Hey rebels, so I am here with the one and only, the superwoman Joanne Meloro who is somebody I have known for - gosh, how long have we known each other for?

Joanne: At least two years, going on three I think.

Jill: Oh my gosh, yeah. So Joanne came to me a few years ago to train. She needed help training for a race she was doing and we've been working together pretty much ever since, but she's not here to talk about - she's here to talk a little bit about her training and how awesome she is with that, but she's here to talk about some other really awesome stuff because basically, Joanne is a coach for women who travel all the time for business and also have a pretty full personal life and a lot of goals that they want to achieve, and she helps them figure out how to fit it all in. So Joanne, thank you so much for joining me. Welcome to the show.

Joanne: Thank you for inviting me, Jill. I'm so excited to do this with you.

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Jill: I am too. So I know I did not do it justice to what you actually do, so can you share what exactly it is that you do and how you started doing it. Just tell us everything.

Joanne: Okay, sure. So I would consider myself a road warrior for my day job, which is as a consultant for an engineering company that works with pharmaceutical and biotechnology manufacturing clients. So I pretty much go wherever our project is, which could be anywhere in the world. So mostly my travel and project work has been domestic, but I have been to China for a project as well.

So figuring out the travel thing has become really key and critical to my sanity, my everyday sanity. So it's taken me a really long time to do this. I started this kind of work in 2006. So it's been - this will be the 13th year, I guess, that sounds crazy, of me traveling like this for work. In addition, since I met you, I mean I guess before I met you even, I became a certified life coach because for me, I feel like it's something that I've been doing on a volunteer basis for a really long time with young women who are undergraduate students, generally speaking, and so it seemed like the next logical step for me I guess in a progression towards what I have really come to embrace as my life purpose.

And kind of like what I'm really good at and what I love doing, and I lose track of time when I'm doing it, and I have been doing it for free so I would be doing it for free, but I also realized that it's something that is very valuable to people and so it could be sort of my plan B retirement thing that I could do from anywhere, on the beach, in my jammies, wherever in the world and really, really lend some value and help people.

I primarily coach women and because that's where I'm comfortable and our message really resonates and I do help women who like me, are road

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warriors for work and have to travel a lot. So I work with them to help calm down the overwhelm and the tension that we feel between having to juggle our career goals that entail and require us to travel a lot and be away from home, and also, make sure that we keep our personal lives and our personal goals very much at the forefront and trying to reduce the stress that comes with that because it is many times, it's a counter point to each other. So just helping with that.

Jill: I resonate with that so hard because that was me before I became a full-time coach, and really, it's hard on your relationships when you're gone for weeks at a time, it's hard on your body. Not just the being away from home and out of your routine but flying all over the place and switching time zones and add to the top of that like, having it be more challenging maybe logistically to figure out how to get your exercise in, and then of course you're eating at restaurants all the time, and you're not at home in your own bed and it's rough. It's rough.

Joanne: It is, and it's what I've learned and what I help my clients think about is it's really about how you approach it. Obviously organization is key but having the right thoughts and sort of the right approach going into it and understanding what you want to get out of your travel and understanding what you want from your personal life as well really helps along with that. And if you think that this is going to suck, I guarantee it's going to suck. Every trip is going to suck.

But if you say okay, well this is what I have to do and this is my goal, and while I'm there, my other goals are for me personally, then that really helps kind of get you over that hump. And technology is a wonderful thing. We should all be using technology to our benefit and that means communication for me when I'm traveling. So it's really important to me to stay in touch with the people that I love most of all because no matter what, my clients manage to stay in touch with me. Sometimes despite my best

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efforts, but I'm just joking about that. But really, using all of the technology that's available that we have at our disposal is super helpful too.

Jill: So I know that everybody listening to this, most of everybody listening to this is a runner and so if you're a runner and if you're in this place of like - I love the term road warrior - if you're a road warrior, let's start there. How do you fit running into a - and talk about your travel schedule too. It's not like you go on one trip a month.

Joanne: Yeah, every week. Every week and often multiple stops within the same week. So that's true, but just like your training schedule works if you're not traveling, it starts with the same basic premise that you need to plan for it. So knowing what you want to do in advance and looking at your calendar and figuring out where you're going to be and what other things you have to do that day and then just kind of juggling that and seeing where it all fits in.

So plan your day and plan your work or work your plan I guess, it's kind of the same. But that has really helped me a lot to know what I want to do and what I want to accomplish. I know what my travel times are oftentimes ahead - the beginning of the week or on the weekend I'm looking ahead to my work week and I know what my flight schedules are generally speaking. I know what sort of time I'll roll into the hotel. So I'll know if it's reasonable for me to do an evening run or a morning run basically.

And I make sure, I always - one of the things I look at when I'm planning where I'm going to stay is what does that fitness room look like. That matters to me because - so one thing I think about all the time is what is this area like that I'm going to be staying in. Have I ever been there before? Is it a place that I think I might feel comfortable actually going outside to run by myself? Because I will be by myself.

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And that really plays a key component for me. Not so much the weather but really how safe do I feel in an area as a woman traveling alone, running alone, if I don't really know the area, if I've never been there before. Are there parks around that I can run on a trail? Is it really - you know what I've found to honestly be one of the safest things, I know this sounds crazy is running loops around a parking lot of a mall or a smaller shopping center.

Just running loops in the parking lot. It's oftentimes really close to the hotel and I can do it early in the morning in daylight or before our dinner is a good time for me to run, so I try to figure out things like that. And I always travel with resistance bands, so that's the other thing that I have. Packable, they're light, I can throw a couple in my bag with no worries whatsoever about taking up more space. Actually, my running shoes take up the most space I think in my luggage, in my suitcase usually. But the resistance bands help a lot because I can do whatever - I can target whatever area I need to target with strength training if it's a non-running day.

Jill: And you were talking about technology, like all you need to do is dial up a YouTube video and you're good to go, right? You don't even have to remember the moves on your own.

Joanne: No, exactly right. I don't. I can't remember. There's too much other stuff. I can't remember everything.

Jill: Do you ever travel to the same place twice or are you usually like, once and done at every one of these places?

Joanne: Well, it depends. So sometimes I'd say - most times I am a repeat returner, but I do have those one offs where I'm once and done. I'll be there for two days maybe or maybe three. But otherwise I have a regular - when I'm working in a project situation, I'm there anywhere from six months to a

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year. So I will be generally in the same place, but I sprinkle in a little one offs throughout that time period.

Jill: So that's the running piece. Something that I hear from a lot of our community members is oh, I have to travel and I have no control over what happens while I'm traveling. So I just want to ask what you think of that.

Joanne: I say that's just a thought and as a strong business woman and just a plain old strong woman, I'm in control of my life and that is the thought that I choose to think about how things go. And you know, I try to make a plan and I'll have a plan A and a plan B and a plan C because I know that things change. And I try to be flexible. To me, that's a real big key to again, keeping my sanity. So that's kind of how I think about it, that I am in control. If I'm not in control, who is in control? Nobody. That's ridiculous. So I take control.

Jill: I love that. Because I do think when you show up on a business trip and you're like, it's all out of my control, I don't have any say in where I go and what I do and what I eat and who I talk to, that is a very powerless place to be, because we all have a say. We might not like the consequences of doing something a little bit differently, but at least showing up and saying like, I took this - it was optional for me to take this job, nobody's forcing me to work for this company, nobody's forcing me to take these assignments, I'm choosing it on a certain level, it at least gives you a little bit of that like, alright, I'm here, this is not my - I don't necessarily love being here but I'm choosing to be here for these various reasons.

Joanne: Right. And choosing how you're going to show up in that place makes all the difference in the world. So if I'm setting a personal goal for myself of this weekend I coincidentally for this week in drinking two 32-ounce containers of water a day, I better show up with my 32-ounce

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container because nobody's going to provide it for me. It's that kind of thing. It's deciding about how you want to show up.

If I want to show up as somebody who's prepared for whatever the work situation is and has a positive attitude and greets people positively and cooperatively, if that's the spirit I want to convey, then that's how I'm going to be when I get there, and that's how people are going to see me. And that makes a huge difference actually.

Jill: Right. It's almost the like, fake it until you make it kind of thing.

Joanne: Yeah, for sure. That's looped in my mind. That plays. Like, I'm in charge, this is what I want today.

Jill: Oh gosh, I love that so much. So we talked about the fitness piece. What are some of the challenges that you personally have faced in integrating your life and all of this travel together? Because I'm sure it was a learning experience. You probably didn't start in - what did you say? 2013?

Joanne: 2006.

Jill: 2006. So you didn't start like, knowing exactly how to do this. So what were some of the challenges that you faced and how did you overcome them?

Joanne: Yeah, I'm going to tell you, in the very beginning in 2006, I went from a mom. I have three sons and the oldest was a senior in high school at the time and the youngest was in middle school. And I was around all the time to do the pick ups for all the sporting activities and around for all the teacher meetings and all of that stuff. I worked, but I worked locally.

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So this transition to a traveling person who is away four days a week and then home only three days a week was very difficult for me, and I'm not going to lie and I'm going to tell you that I sobbed in my hotel room by myself in the morning and in the evening. I just couldn't stop crying. I missed my family so much. This was foreign to me.

I wanted to be there because I was very excited about the job I had to do and I got to do while I was there, but the lonely times in the morning before work and then in the evening after work were very, very desolate times for me. And so kind of what got me out of that was actually walking. I found a partner at the hotel that I met during happy hour. They would have those every work night from five to seven or whatever, and I met this woman and we just started walking together.

And I just wanted to sort of take my mind away from my own woes for an hour and so I just asked her about her life and what - I don't know, just talked about - I started out by talking about what she did and then she asked me questions and I found that A, I felt a lot better physically and B, it took up some time that I had previously spent just feeling sorry for myself. So that's honestly how it started.

And from there, it just got a little bit better each week that went by, it got a little bit better until probably a month in I wasn't crying every day. I would just kind of cry on Mondays when I first got there. This sounds so sad but this is so real and so true. It was heartbreaking to me. My son was graduating from high school. My oldest son, and I had felt terrible having to miss some of the graduation festivities.

I mean, I made it very clear to my company that a requirement was - obviously I was going to be there for graduation. Obviously I was going to be there for some of the special awards and honors, things that were

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happening, but I did miss a few things. And so I was very fortunate as well at the time I had a spouse that worked from home. So he was able to pick up a lot of the things that I would typically do, so that was just my circumstance and we worked - we made a plan and we worked the plan.

So it took a while, and as far as the fitness. Like I said, it started with walking and then eventually I read something - I don't even remember where I read it but it was about an oncologist in Philadelphia who worked a lot at CHOP, Children's Hospital of Pennsylvania, and he was collecting medals from marathons and half marathons to give to his oncology patients, to these kids because it made them feel really happy.

And he especially wanted Disney medals because that's what the kids can relate to. So right then and there I was like, alright, well this is something I can do sort of beyond me that will again, keep me busy and sort of keep my mind off of things. And I just decided that I'm going to train for a half marathon and get a medal to give to a kid with cancer. So that's sort of what got me on the path for running, and I'm not fast. I never was fast, and this all started, by the way, I was 46, 47 years old. So I was not a young chick when this was all going down.

Jill: I love this. So basically you had a whole life of being home or not necessarily at home but working locally to yourself and then at 46 like, boom, let's just shake it all up.

Joanne: Yes, that actually happened. There was a couple things, a couple of life events that happened right before that. The passing of my mom really got me to think about what's it all about anyway kind of a deal and recognizing that my own mortality, turning 50, coming up on 50 was a big kind of self-reflection time for me too and what did I want this next part to

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be like. Again, painfully honestly, part of all that was my marriage and what did I want that to be and what did that look like to me.

And so my marriage was one of the things that did not survive that time in my life. I decided that I didn't want to be married to my husband and as amazing a man as he was, a great father and a great partner, it was just not in the cards for us, in my opinion, to be romantically involved. So that was a very difficult time as well. And made even more difficult by travel and being away from home. But it was a conscious decision that I made. It wasn't something that I feel happened to me. I feel like again, it was something, a direction that I walked toward in my life.

Jill: So, the theme that I'm hearing from you is everything from how you find a way to go workout while you're traveling to these major decisions that you're making in your life have been very deliberate, as in like, okay, is this choice going to move me closer to who I want to be or farther away?

Joanne: Yeah, exactly. I have this one overarching theme for my life, sort of like a rule I follow, other than the golden rule, which I think we should all be following, but for me, I also feel like I learned this when I was in undergraduate, in college myself, but you make your own good time. No one is going to make you happy except for you. I can't rely on other people to make me happy. It's got to come from inside and so for me, I've got the power, I make my own good time as needed, and then the third part of that is if you don't like something, work to make a change.

So it's like a no whining zone. I'll have very brief pity parties for myself because I have them because crap happens to everybody in every life, crap happens. And I'll feel bad for a little bit and then it's like okay, time to get up and where do you want to go with this? What's next?

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Jill: And so how do you apply that to your travel life and how do you help your clients apply that to their travel lives?

Joanne: Yeah, so change happens a lot with travel. A lot of unexpected things that are completely out of our control with delays and cancellations and rude people and things like that. And so again, recognizing that that's all part of the game and that you can choose the thoughts, the way you think about when that happens. Not to you, but when it occurs. And just realizing - I sort of always say, so what's the worst that can happen here? What's the worst of this?

Worst-case scenario, I'm going to miss the nine o'clock meeting and I'll arrive at 11 and I might have to stay an extra day, or we can schedule this for another time via conference call. I always try to think of what's the worst case and I realize that the worst case is no one is going to hopefully die. I'm not dead, and it's going to be okay. It's all going to be okay. It's just a meeting. It's just a trip that can be rescheduled. It's just an airplane that isn't going to fly right now and there will be another plane for me to get on, so that's kind of what we talk about.

Jill: It's so interesting too because I know when I'm in the airport and my flight is delayed, I can feel the panic rising because I'm like oh my god, my flight is delayed, and I do the same thing. I'm like, and so what? You'll get there late. There's been times that I've missed connections and I'm like, so I'll take the next plane.

And I think when we just kind of go through that process in our minds like, so what? What's the worst that could happen? It's like, oh, alright well, I'm still going to get to my destination, I'm just going to get there a little bit later. And if it works, it's like, awesome.

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Joanne: And if it's getting home, again, that's a priority for me usually is to get home and so I just take it into my own hands again and figure out how I'm going to get home as quickly as I can. So you know, it's really up to us as individuals how we approach things and...

Jill: It's all about our thoughts, isn't it?

Joanne: Yeah, it really is and it seriously took me I would say a good two to three years to figure that out, that it was okay and the world wasn't going to end if something changed with a travel plan. But then once I figured it out from now on, I'm a pretty cool cucumber in airports and I can - oftentimes I help other people because I'm just like okay, well here's what you're going to do. I watch, like you said, I watch the stress build. You can see it in people's faces and you know, if I can help them, I will help them.

Jill: Do you think - because my theory is that when that happens, people start to have a thought in their head saying that's like basically this isn't going to plan, I don't know what's going to happen next, right? It's like that fear of the unknown and not being able to control everything. And if we go into the airport thinking, I can't control when the plane takes off but there are things I can control, it can shift everything. So what are some go-to thoughts or beliefs that you have for when flights can be changed or I don't know, whatever can go wrong goes wrong when you're traveling?

Joanne: Right, so I often think, okay, so what can I do? Okay, so what is available? If a flight is cancelled, is it possible for me to drive instead? Could I go get a rental car and just drive instead? So I often think about that. I'll just say okay, so what's next? What can I do?

Jill: I love that. I actually use that - something very similar. I was in Tokyo for a client audit years ago. I was in this 40-storey hotel and the gym - I had

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an early meeting and the gym wasn't open early enough for me to go and I'm like, alright, what can I do? I was like, well, I got 40 floors of stairs. And so boom, it was like, go up to the top of the building, come back down.

But I think if I had just been like, oh well, the gym's closed, I guess I'm out of luck, I wouldn't have got my workout in. I probably got a better workout running up and down 40 flights of stairs and I got to see the sunrise over Tokyo, which was absolutely amazing. But I think just that one question, alright, what can I do? So powerful because it puts everything back in your court.

Joanne: Right, and the follow up is what do I want to do? What do I want to do now? That is what I always say. What can I do? What do I want? Well, I wanted to be on the original schedule, that's not happening, so that's okay, there's other choices. How can I get creative?

Jill: Temper tantrums don't help.

Joanne: No they don't, and I have found, honest to goodness, that when I'm really pissed off, really angry about something like that, because that's an easy first response to changes I think is to be angry, at least for me, that's where I go to first.

Jill: Oh no, same here. How dare they?

Joanne: And so what I do then is I force myself to smile and be really, really nice to the counter person that I have to talk with about making the next reservation. And I just feel like I am pissed off now but I am going to smile, I'm going to be super nice because I know for a fact that you get more out of those people that make your arrangements if you're really nice to them than you do if you are like, screaming down their neck and you appear

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angry and you have curt words for them. I know this because they've told me many times. "You're so nice, I'm going to upgrade your seat. Thank you for understanding." That has happened to me more numbers of times than I have fingers and toes.

Jill: It's true, and by the way, I've tried it both ways and you're right. I've lost my shit before on poor counter agents and then I'm like, why am I doing this? It's not their fault the flight was delayed and then I think like, this is not how I want to show up but we have that evolutionary reflex, but we also have a prefrontal cortex with which we can say, no, that's now how we're going to do it.

Joanne: That's not how I would want to be treated. I try to just put myself in their place and I will do things like intentionally hold a door and smile at the person. It makes me slow down and it makes me think about again, how I'm showing up. Maybe I'll make somebody else feel a little bit better even though I'm pretty pissed off right now.

Jill: I think it does diffuse your anger a little bit if you force yourself to smile. It's hard to smile at somebody and be like, raging at the same time.

Joanne: Or just have a kind, slower tone in your voice. A more measured approach. So that's kind of what I do.

Jill: You mentioned earlier in our conversation about the tech that you use to make your journey easier. What is the tech that you recommend? What are all of the apps and the things?

Joanne: So many apps. So many different apps. But for communication, I'm pretty low tech but I FaceTime when I can because when I'm away, I'm really missing their cute faces. This goes for my pets too. So I ask to

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FaceTime with my pets, whether it's with the people that are home or my dogsitter. I want to know how they're doing. So I text and I just use FaceTime when I can or just regular phone calling. So that's low tech.

And there's just so many apps. Oh my gosh, I can give you some recommendations in the show notes for different fitness apps that I use. Runkeeper obviously is one and well, MapMyRun comes in very handy for me when I'm in a new place that I don't know where I'm at because that helps me if I get lost and kind of know in advance, and I oftentimes show it to somebody at the hotel that I'm staying at the desk and ask if this looks reasonable to them because they know the local area better than I do.

Jill: Oh, that's brilliant. So you basically map your route out, bring it downstairs and say am I going to get murdered?

Joanne: Well, I try not to say that because I don't want to speak that and put that kind of out there, but like, does this look good to you?

Jill: Yeah, is this a safe place? Okay, so that's fitness. What other apps do you use to keep your life on track while you're traveling?

Joanne: Everything goes in my calendar. So I use my Outlook calendar for everything. Everything. All of my connections and confirmation numbers and things like that, I actually try to keep it pretty - I say technology but I'm a pretty low tech person in that I don't do anything too, too fancy that's going to integrate all my stuff. I just make sure it all goes in my Outlook calendar and it's all in one place and it's easy to read and I can see quickly where I have conflicts or not.

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Jill: It's about planning and deciding ahead of time what is the experience I want to have and then choosing the thoughts that are going to give you that experience.

Joanne: Exactly, and then keeping sort of like your own personal way of life. My own personal rules. I make my own good time, I'm responsible for my own happiness, and I've got the power. I say those things all the time in that order.

Jill: So real quick, what kind of advice would you give to somebody who is struggling with all of the travel? If they could make one tweak to just make the travel easier, whether it's fitness or communication or something else, what's the one thing that you think makes the biggest difference?

Joanne: I would say figure out your biggest point of pain and have a plan for that. Make that your focus. So if you're really going to be missing your kiddos that are at home, I would definitely plan to leave them with either a recorded story or just a little video. Send a Facebook Live or something like that, and then make sure that you make time at the end of your day. So start and end, sort of like bookend your day with the goodness that you want. That will be my one tip, and again, being really clear about that one thing is that you really want to focus on is very helpful for that day.

Jill: I love that so much. And so how can people find you? Do you have a place where you're like, sharing all this information or if they want to set up some time to actually talk to you and say like, hey, I'm having this problem, can you help me?

Joanne: Yes, for sure. So I do have a website. It's my name, joannemeloro.com. I will warn you, everyone now, it's under construction, but it's accessible and you can book time with me if you want to there, but

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really just on Facebook and I use my personal name, Joanne Shaffer Meloro. So Shaffer is my maiden name but you can find me on Facebook, and that's what I use. I don't really have a business account or anything like that. I'm trying to keep everything really authentic and really real.

Jill: Are you on Instagram too?

Joanne: I'm on Instagram but again, please remember that I am not a young chicky and so I don't go to Instagram as a first point of stopping. Actually, my first point is Facebook and then I go to LinkedIn, honestly. And my LinkedIn is connected to my Twitter. So if I'm tweeting, it's also connecting on my LinkedIn page.

Jill: You're so far ahead of me because I think I have a Twitter account. I don't actually - somebody puts stuff on there for me. I am not sure how it happens but I do not - I'm not even sure I know what the login is. So you're way ahead of me there. That's so funny. Awesome, so we will have all of those links in the show notes for people and I just want to say thank you so much for joining me today and it was just a pleasure for us to catch up like this.

Joanne: Yeah, I agree, and thank you for having this. I was so excited when you asked me and yeah, I just really want everyone to know that there's a way - they say you can't have it all but you can if you know what it all means to you. You definitely can. So that would be sort of my last little nugget. Figure out what it is you want.

Jill: And then you get to have it.

Joanne: And then you can have it.

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Jill: So good. Alright, thank you so much.

Joanne: Thank you Jill.

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Hey rebels, I hope you enjoyed my chat with Joanne, and if you want to learn more about what she does, you can visit her website at joannemeloro.com or just go to the show notes where we're going to have all the links to all of her stuff. Hope you enjoyed this week's episode and I will talk to 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.