

Ep #102: Minimum Baseline and the Drama Threshold



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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 102 of *The Not Your Average Runner Podcast*. I'm your host, Jill Angie, and today we are talking about a little brain hack that I like to use to keep myself and my clients motivated. It's called the minimum baseline, and it is super simple but it's also a total game-changer.

But first, I want to share a note that one of our members in Run Your Best Life - her name is Dora - I want to share a note that she wrote after her first two months of membership. And she actually posted this in the Facebook group that we have and it just made me super happy. So anyway, Dora wrote, "Hey, is anyone experiencing wins in other aspects of life? Because since I joined Run Your Best Life, I feel more confident in other non-running areas of my life."

And I want to take a moment and just say how freaking awesome this is because what Dora has found out is that the tools we teach in Run Your Best Life do more than just make you a better runner. They help you up-level your whole life. And she's been doing the work and seeing results, and girl, I am super happy for you.

Okay, the other thing I need to tell you is this week, we are bringing back the latest obsession segment of the podcast. And I got a little lax with it, but we've been getting a lot of people writing in and saying hey, will you do that again. So it's actually going to be the regular closing of the show again from here on out when I don't have a guest of course, and we're also compiling a page on the *Not Your Average Runner* site where we will have

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links to all of the obsessions plus a bunch of other resources that I absolutely love.

And you can check that out at notyouraveragerunner.com/resources, or just go to the show notes for this episode and you'll be able to click on it. So I just want you to make sure that you hang out to the end of this episode so you can get this week's obsession. And meanwhile, let's get into the meat of the show.

Alright, so let's talk about this minimum baseline concept. And some of you might know what I'm talking about and some of you might be like, what? So let's set the scene. So think about the last time that you had a run scheduled. Maybe it was in the morning, first thing in the morning, and then the alarm goes off and you think oh, hell no.

There is no way I could possibly run three miles today. I'm tired, it's hot out, I don't have time, and next thing you know, you've totally justified skipping your run but of course, the problem is that you're going to do the same thing tomorrow. You're going to have the exact same conversation in your brain tomorrow and it's going to be just as hard.

And the next day and the next day because here's the thing you guys; we get good at what we repeatedly do. Our lives, everything we do in our lives is basically just a bunch of habits, even if we don't realize it. And a habit is simply something that we've done so often that it's on autopilot. Like putting on your seatbelt when you start your car, you don't have to think. You just do it. Or saying I love you when you hang up the phone with your sister, it's just a habit.

And criticizing your body when you see yourself in a mirror, also simply a habit. Hitting the snooze button instead of getting up when your alarm goes off, also just a habit. And the reason these actions are habitual is just because you've repeated them over and over and over. That is all. Habits

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are neutral. You guys, this is so important to see and understand. Habits are neutral. We label them as good or bad or something that we want to quit or something that we want to implement.

But really, habits are not good or bad. They're neutral. They're just the actions that you're taking. They're just the things that your brain has automated because it likes to be efficient. Your brain just wants to put things on autopilot so that it can get busy worrying about other matters that require more brainpower.

So the problem is once you've gotten into the habit of skipping your run, once you've done it repeatedly so you're really good at skipping your run, if you want to change that, you have to create a new habit. You have to reprogram yourself. And that is what the minimum baseline approach does. So this is a nice little brain hack that I learned from Brooke Castillo of The Life Coach School and if you do not listen to her podcast, you need to just start subscribing today. It's amazing.

It's called The Life Coach School Podcast and Brooke owns the school or created the school where I trained as a coach and I credit her work for changing my life in a big way. So this brain hack that she teaches called the minimum baseline is really a way to get around your current thinking, the thinking that's not doing you any favors, so you can start taking the action that you do want.

So how it works is you decide the absolutely minimum amount of something that you know you will do. The minimum amount you know you will not have any argument in your head about it, it's a complete no-brainer. If you say I'm going to do this, your brain's like okay. Because for many of you, when you think about getting up and say there's three miles on your training plan, your brain is like, fuck no.

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We're going to have to get dressed, and then we'll have to warm up, and then we have to run for like, 45 minutes at least and then we have to stretch and we're going to be all sweaty and it's going to be hard and uncomfortable and we're tired and really, that just doesn't sound good at all. Let's just skip the whole thing and stay in bed.

But if you said hey brain, we're going to do 10 minutes this morning and then come back and shower, and then you can spend the next half hour scrolling through Facebook if you want to, it's going to be super easy, you probably won't even break a sweat, your brain's like, okay, that doesn't sound too bad. So you go, you do 10 minutes, and you actually feel pretty good once you're out there and pretty often, you end up maybe doing two miles, maybe 20 minutes, maybe an hour.

Depends on how good you feel, but once you get out there and your brain is not arguing about the getting out of bed part, it's pretty easy to stick with it. But if you don't want to stick with it, you've already given yourself the out. You've said my minimum baseline is 10 minutes. Boom. We can just go back at 10 minutes and box checked for the day. Brain tricked, run done, you get to feel really awesome about yourself.

And that is all there is to it. But of course, there are always things that you need to know. So the first thing is when you're setting up your minimum baseline, your brain is going to say like, 10 minutes or whatever your baseline is, your brain's going to say that's not enough to have a training effect. It's not worth the time, it's not going to make you any faster, it's not going to make you any stronger. It's stupid. This is what your brain's going to say.

10 minutes is stupid, this is dumb, if you can't do something that makes a difference in your training, you shouldn't even bother. Your brain is a perfectionist and actually, it does have a valid point here. Because 10

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minutes really doesn't help you get closer to that half marathon or that 10K or that 5K or whatever it is.

From a physical perspective, going out and doing 10 minutes is not going to move the needle. But the point of the minimum baseline is not about your training. That's what you need to remember. And the point of the minimum baseline is to help you create the habit of keeping your training commitments, of showing up for yourself, of getting out of bed when the alarm goes off instead of hitting the snooze.

Or for those of you who work out after work, if your habit is to find excuses to drive by the gym and go straight home, then the point of the minimum baseline is to help you break that habit and actually drive to the gym and do your workout. The point of the minimum baseline is to help you create the habit of showing up for yourself.

So that is why we choose something that is so minimal your brain will not argue about the amount of effort it's going to take. Because creating and maintaining the habit of running on your scheduled days and of strength training on your scheduled days is like, at least half the battle of running. Seriously.

We spent so much time and energy arguing internally about whether it's okay to skip today that we could have half of our run done by the time the argument is over. So when doing your scheduled workout is a habit, you don't waste all that time and energy arguing because you just do it.

So here's where it gets a little bit trickier too, and if you've sort of like, mentally dozing off throughout this podcast, if I've been lulling you to sleep, you need to sit up and pay attention right now because I know you think you get this concept. You're like yeah, minimum baseline, just do the minimum amount that my brain won't argue with.

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But I promise you, the next thing I'm going to tell you is critical to making the minimum baseline work for you. If you don't do this thing, it's not going to work. So pay attention. So you are going to want to set your minimum baseline to be what you think is the minimum acceptable amount of exercise to keep you feeling fit or to satisfy something in your brain that says if it's not a 30-minute workout, it's not worth doing.

You're going to want to set your minimum baseline to where you think your brain will find it an acceptable amount of exercise to feel like you're training, to feel like you can actually check that run off. Most of my clients - this happens, whenever I teach this they say okay, I got it. My minimum baseline is four times a week for 30 minutes. This is a huge mistake because that amount of exercise, believing that your minimum baseline is that amount of exercise is actually keeping you in bed or on the couch.

If you were really able to do four times a week for 30 minutes without arguing, if it was a no-brainer, you would be. Let me repeat that. If your minimum baseline was actually four times a week for 30 minutes, if that was the amount of exercise that your brain never argued with, you would actually be doing that.

And if you're listening to this podcast the whole way thought thinking yeah, I really need help with this, I tend to hit the snooze alarm a lot, I know you're not working out four times a week for 30 minutes. Maybe you're doing it once a week. So your minimum baseline amount needs to be so freaking small that you really won't have any objection to the amount of time spent.

That might be five minutes, you guys. Because the point of this - remember, the point of this is not about your fitness at all. It is about building the habit of showing up for yourself. So I want you to think like, 10 to 15 minutes twice a week. That's a minimum baseline.

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Now, over time when you've executed that minimum baseline flawlessly for a couple months with no exceptions, when you don't have the argument in your brain at all and when maybe you've gone out quite a few times for your minimum baseline and you just keep going and there's no drama, then you can increase it a little bit.

So for example, when I first started back to running after my knee injury, it had been a couple months. Probably three months since I had been really working out regularly. And I had to set my baseline way back and it was like, 15 minutes three times a week. And it took me most of February to really make that a habit again because my brain had gone right back to, we don't exercise. Silly brain.

So it took me most of February to really nail it, to get into that groove, and by March I was really in the groove. And so now fast forward to July, my minimum baseline is two miles three times a week. Now, how do I know that's the right amount for me? Here's why. Because I have drama in my mind when I think about running four miles.

If I get up and I've got four miles on the calendar, sometimes even three miles, my brain is like oh god, no, we'll never get there, we're going to die. It's kind of funny the crap that comes up. But when I think about running two miles, I'm like oh okay, that sounds like fun, no problem. Two miles, there's never any drama ever. I'm always excited to run two miles. I am never excited about running four miles.

And here's what's so funny. When I get out there and I'm excited about running two miles, I start running, and then I'm like, oh crap, this is hard. But I'm already out there and I know from experience, from years of doing this minimum baseline work that after about a mile, my brain is going to get on board. And especially - here's the thing, I get going and actually, the first half mile is not too drama filled.

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When I hit that half a mile I'm like, oh my god, it's a mile and a half until I end my minimum baseline. And this drama happens every time. And I could write a script from it. So first half a mile is usually not too bad, then I hit that half a mile mark and like, I'm just like oh my god, it's a mile and a half until I get to my baseline, I'm never going to make it, I probably should call an Uber.

And but then I'm like alright, I'm just going to focus on getting through the half mile. Then I get to a mile and then I'm like, I'm almost halfway done. Two miles is almost here, I'm going to be fine. And I swear to god, almost every single time I go out to run, I'm planning to cut it short at two miles. And by the time I get to two miles, I'm like oh, well I could do one more or I could do two more or whatever it is that's on my schedule.

And sometimes I end up doing more than what's on my schedule because it feels so good. But I know that the first two miles is not going to sound hard until I get out there running. As soon as I'm running, there's a little bit of drama in my brain and as soon as I get to the end of my minimum baseline, I 90% of the time want to go farther. It's fascinating.

And so literally, it's just this tape that runs through my brain every single time. So my drama threshold of getting my ass out the door is two miles, and then I know that for that two miles, there's going to be some discussion in my brain. I also know that I can manage my brain for two miles pretty easily. So when you're setting up your minimum baseline, I want you to think about where your drama threshold is.

There's two things here. What is the drama that's going to keep you in bed? What is that distance? And then cut that distance at least in half. So if you have two miles on your training schedule and your brain is like, two miles sounds pretty far, your minimum baseline should be no more than a mile. In fact, I would say like, a half a mile or 10 minutes or 15 minutes, whatever.

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Does this make sense? So I really want you to give this a try and I want you to know that you can apply it to anything, really. It doesn't have to be exercise. Get creative. Sometimes I do this with doing the dishes. We make this beautiful meal, Andy usually does the cooking, and so I'll do the dishes. And my brain is like, you cannot get up and - we'll finish eating and my brain will be like nope, there's too much. You shouldn't do any of the dishes, you should do it tomorrow. There are a lot of dishes to do.

And so what I tell myself is you just have to get up and put three things in the dishwasher. I legit use this as the minimum baseline technique to get the damn dishes done in the evening. I say you just have to get up and put three things in the dishwasher. And then usually I get up and I'll clean up at least half the kitchen. And then I say to myself alright, before you go to bed, you have to put three more things in the dishwasher.

And then I'll get ready for bed and I'll go in and I'll finish cleaning up the kitchen if there's still anything left. So you really can use the minimum baseline idea for just about anything, but you've got to know what your drama threshold is. What is that amount of running or time or whatever it is that your brain just short-circuits and says no fucking way, we can't do this?

And I'm not talking about your brain short-circuiting when you think about I'm training for a marathon and eventually I have to run 18 miles. I mean like, on a daily basis, what's the drama threshold? And then at least cut it in half to set your minimum baseline. Alright, I want you to give this a try. Let me know how it goes.

Now, it is time for the latest obsession. And this is one that I'm really, really enjoying, and it's - I don't even know if I'm going to say it right. Well, I will say it right. They're resistance bands and they're by a company called Letsfit. It is grammatically incorrect, which actually does annoy me just a tiny little bit, but I love so much about the resistance bands beyond that that I overlook the name.

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So they're called Letsfit, and they are basically this little collection of resistance bands that are available on Amazon, and they come in a pack of five different levels. So each pack that you get has five different strength levels. So from extra light to extra heavy or something like that. They come in their own little bag so that if you want to take them to the gym or whatever, they don't just wander around the house.

You put them in a nice little bag. They come in different colors, and so I have the one that's like, dark pink, light pink, purple, red. They're cute. And the very best part is that they are under \$10. So the reason I know about these is that there's actually a resistance band strength training routine on YouTube that I absolutely love. I recommend it to every single one of my clients and I have no affiliation with the guy who did this routine. I just love it so much. I think it's one of the best routines I've ever found.

So you can find a link to it in the show notes, those of you that are thinking how do I find this routine, it's in the show notes. But of course, you need resistance bands to do it. And so one of our members found these on Amazon and loved them so much. I bought them for myself to try them out. Holy shit you guys, they are awesome.

So the thing that I love about them, first of all, I love the fact they come in all kinds of pretty colors. I love that they are \$10. I love that they come with their own bag, but they're also not bulky. If you've ever tried to buy resistance bands on Amazon, sometimes they're like, you have to buy a 30 foot roll and then cut them yourself or I don't know, they have that weird powder on them and I guess - I don't know if the resistance bands, the Letsfit ones are latex or not, but they don't have the same feel as the ones that come in a big roll.

So they're already in a loop so you don't have to tie them and they're already right at the perfect length. They're very sturdy, they're very well made and again, they're under \$10. They're perfect for travel, they're

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perfect for taking them to the park. You could even get a couple. You could keep one in your car, just keep in your car, and then you could have another for home or whatever.

So they're amazing and you should go get them and you should also do the strength training routine that I'm going to link too in the show notes. And also, the resistance bands are in the show notes as well. Okay, so rebels, real quick before we end up. Next month, which is - this is July so next month is August, for anybody who's listening to this later on.

Next month in Run Your Best Life, we are working on consistency. And so that includes things like the minimum baseline technique that we talked about today, as well as other skills to keep you motivated to stick with your plan. So our half marathon training class is well underway now and I know this from experience. In about two weeks, the excitement is going to wear off. Mileage is going to start creeping up and everyone is going to start trying to find excuses to skip a run here and there.

It's going to be like, oh, I was really tired this morning or all kinds of excuses. And what happens is so we get really excited about training for a half marathon or whatever it is because we're thinking about the goal, but then the reality of training sets in. And so like a month after things start, excitement wears off and people start struggling.

And so what we've done is decided that August is going to be consistency month because we want to keep everybody in the class focused and moving forward. But that doesn't mean it's just the half marathon people. Everyone in Run Your Best Life is going to be working on consistency. We want to get you guys set up for success in August so that when you hit September, back to school time - back to school time is a big time for people to set up new routines.

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We usually get a big influx of new runners in September and so we want everybody to do that consistency work now so that when they kind of ramp up their training plans in September, that they're ready to go. So if you would like to join us to work on consistency in training for yourself, you can do that at runyourbestlife.com. We have monthly options and we have annual options as well.

Seriously you guys, it's \$39 and you get all kinds of amazing coaching from me, from coach Jen. Every month we do a different focus and like I said, August is going to be consistency. So rebels, that it is for this week. You can join us at runyourbestlife.com and you can find the transcripts for this episode at notyouraveragerunner.com/102. Have a great week and I'll see you soon.

Thanks for listening to this episode of *The Not Your Average Runner Podcast*. If you liked what you heard and want more, head over to www.notyouraveragerunner.com to download your free one-week jumpstart plan and get started running today.