

## Ep #106: Coping with Race Day Anxiety



### Full Episode Transcript

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 106 of *The Not Your Average Runner Podcast*. I'm your host, Jill Angie, and today we are diving all into race day anxiety. And before we do that, if you're noticing anything different about my voice this week or in the past few episodes, it's because I'm recording them at 5:30am in the morning. This is my new podcast recording schedule and I actually really, really love it.

I write the script the night before and then I just get up first thing in the morning and do it before I go for my run. And this morning, this is my fourth try at the introduction because the first time I kept having to clear my throat because it's first thing in the morning, and then the second time I realized I was whispering, which is so funny.

It was like, hey rebels, you are listening to episode, and I was like, alright, that's creepy. And then the third time I started laughing thinking about the second time, and here we are at the fourth try. So fourth time's a charm and we are going to talk all about race day anxiety. But I apologize if my voice sounds a little bit different because now that I'm recording these in the morning, I just haven't had time to get up and be talking and all kinds of stuff.

So this is my new sexy morning voice. Let's talk about anxiety you guys. Now, I wanted to talk about this because it is something that happens to every runner, whether you're a brand-new beginner or someone who's done a ton of marathons, and how I define it is as a nagging feeling of worry or fear. It's an emotion. Anxiety's an emotion. A nagging feeling of worry or fear that pops up whenever you think about an upcoming race.

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And most of us think about this in terms of the few days leading up to the big race, where we devote a lot of thoughts to questioning are we going to be able to finish or will I be last, or will I maybe set a PR this time, will it be really hard, what's the weather going to be like, if the weather sucks I'll be uncomfortable the whole race.

We spend a lot of time asking ourselves these questions. And all of them are just some version of can I do it or will it hurt, right? And when we ask those questions, we feel anxiety, and that plays out in our lives as not sleeping well, compulsively checking the weather, pouring over the race website looking for evidence that they have a lenient sweep policy, or talking to anybody that we know like, oh my gosh, it's got a 15-minute per mile pace and I'm running a 15:30, do you think I'm going to get swept?

Talking to anybody who will listen about if we'd only trained better this wouldn't be a problem. And so in other words, we spend a lot of energy thinking about something that is really not within our control at that point. Your training was in your control six months ago or three months ago, but now you've done what you've done.

So we spend a lot of energy kind of rehashing, wishing we'd done it differently, or worrying about the future that the weather and so forth, and none of that's within our control. And so the result is we show up on race day not rested, possibly not fueled or hydrated, especially if we've been anxious the week before and trying to numb out a little bit with cupcakes or other kinds of food, if that's the thing that you use for that, and then we also show up with a head full of thoughts that don't really help us perform our best.

Any of this sound familiar? So most runners do experience some version of what I just described, and the longer the race, the more anxiety there seems to be because if it's a 5K, I mean for me, I don't have a ton of anxious thoughts because I've done enough 5Ks that I know.

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The only time I have a little bit of anxiety about it is if I have to get up really early. If I have to set an alarm for 4am and I've had to do that for a couple races this year. And then the night before I don't sleep well because I'm worried about oversleeping, and the irony that we give up sleep because we're worried about sleeping too much is not lost on me.

For but a longer distance like say, a half marathon, I really have to manage my mind like a motherfucker or I get all caught up in the worry. And it even happens for long training runs. That distance, I just did a nine-miler this past weekend and I kept having to talk myself off the ledge the night before. I was looking everywhere for reasons to cancel because my brain was like, oh, this is going to be hard. You're not going to be able to do it.

I mean, after all these years, my brain still has those defaults and I've just done enough work on it to know like, actually, you can do nine miles. It's going to be fine. But even that morning, I woke up, I heard the wind blowing outside, and I swear this is the exact thought I had. Your hat is probably going to blow off in the wind so you should plan to do this run tomorrow.

What? This might actually be the lamest excuse I've ever heard to skip a training run that my hat might blow off. I was like Jesus, no, go, get up, do your run. And I did and it was fine. But that is one kind of race anxiety. It's that night before, couple days before. We're not going to talk about that kind today, but I promise, if you do struggle with that night before and that day before training, what I'm going to talk about today is going to help you with that.

But the other kind of race anxiety is the kind that you feel in the months and weeks leading up to a race. When you're looking at your training schedule and you are thinking, how the hell am I going to make this happen, right? We have all been there. I have definitely been there. I've been there a lot this year thinking about the Philly marathon because that is a brand-new

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distance for me and I have - my brain is like, this is - what were you thinking when you signed up for this?

So the problem is when you think that way, when you think to yourself how the hell am I going to make this happen, you feel really, really anxious and then you don't show up for yourself very well. You spend a lot of time worrying, overanalyzing, looking at your Garmin data and just kind of looking for any evidence that you're getting faster and only finding evidence that you're getting slower, and then you're thinking I'm getting slower, and even though it's the middle of summer and you're dealing with the heat and the humidity, you're just always looking for evidence that you're failing.

You're regretting the decision to sign up for the race, you're finding excuses not to train. This is what happens when we think the thought how the fuck am I going to make this happen. So what is the result of that? We think that thought, we feel anxiety, anxiety leads us to worry, to overanalyze, to obsess, to regret, find excuses, and the result of that is you've put so much energy into the worrying, you don't give 100% to your training, especially if you're finding those excuses.

So your training suffers and then race day sucks. And I do see this with my clients sometimes, especially the ones that are in Run Your Best Life and they're moving up in mileage for their half marathon training. They're starting to get super anxious about their race, which is two months in the future, and then they get all up in their heads. They end up not really training 100% and then lo and behold, they don't perform well in their race and they're like, see? I told you I couldn't do it.

So here's what's really going on. There's a couple things. The first is that you think the race itself is the main goal. And I know there are quite a few of you that are like, duh Jill, the race is the main goal. I wouldn't be doing the training without the race. And I hear you, but what I mean by that is you are thinking that if you don't do well in the race, all of your training has been

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wasted. All of your time has been wasted. All of your money has been wasted. You're basically a failure.

And I know there are some of you nodding your head right now. Now, when you think the race is the main goal, you miss out on all of the rewards of the training because the race is just a moment in time, and if it's a 5K, it's likely an hour or less of running time. And compared with all the hours that you spent training, it is a drop in the bucket. So the race is not the goal. The race is not the reward. The process of training is the reward.

Because here's what you get out of training; you get stronger and fitter, you learn the skill of showing up for yourself, you learn the skill of consistency, you practice talking to yourself differently, you gain confidence, you start talking back to your inner mean girl, you evolve. You evolve into a different person. The race does not do that for you. The race is just a little reward to help keep you moving through the training and to get the benefits of the training.

And all the benefits of training help you elsewhere in your life too. So the race, you guys, the race is not the reward. The race is not the goal. It is the process of training that is really what you're after and really helps you evolve and change into the person you want to be.

So to stick with a training plan and really give it your all, you have to get to work. You have to work on your body for sure, but you also have to work on your mind. And that work does not feel easy most of the time, but when you keep showing up for yourself over and over again, it changes you and you start to feel those effects everywhere in your life.

A race does not give you those benefits. A race is just your celebration of everything you accomplished, whether it goes well or whether it goes shitty. Nobody can take away all of the training miles that you did. Nobody can take away all of the mental work that you did. When you shift your belief

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from, I'm training so I'll do well on race day, if that's your current belief, to I'm training because it makes me stronger, helps me work on my thoughts and beliefs and helps me evolve, you suddenly have a whole different experience.

Instead of feeling anxiety, you start feeling proud, badass and confident. The race does not give you that, you guys. The race is just a moment in time. It is the training that gives you all of that stuff, so that's why the training is the goal. Make sense?

Okay, if you're focusing on the training being the goal, it takes all of that pressure off that one day. If you fuck up the race, there's always another one. I promise, there really is. The next year, the exact same race will come up again. You can do all the training, still totally screw up the race, and still feel proud and badass.

It happens, you guys, even to the pros. They do all the training and then sometimes something happens. They trip and fall and that's it, they're out. But nobody can take the training away. Nobody can take away all the mental work that you did. Nobody can take away that you showed up for yourself.

So you guys, the pressure is off when the race is no longer the goal. And the reason you're worried about your race day performance, the reason you think it's the goal is because you think first of all, that you have to achieve that goal to be proud of yourself, and also because you think it has to be perfect. You can't be proud unless you meet all your goals, right?

And some of my half marathon students right now in Run Your Best Life are saying well, if I miss a training run, I've failed. And I'm like well, there's 16 weeks of training. You're probably going to miss a training run. So you're just going to fail ahead of time? No.



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So I want you guys to start learning how to be proud before your race day. Be proud of your training. Being proud of yourself, feeling accomplished, feeling confident comes from what you are thinking, and if you're thinking damn, I'm such a badass, I showed up for all my training runs, like 90% of my training runs even when it was hard, even when I wanted to quit, I learned so much about myself, you'll notice that none of those thoughts has anything to do with how you do in the actual race, but the all make you feel proud.

Now again, the race is this tiny little amount of time compared to all the hours that you spent training, so stop putting all the emphasis on how you do on race day and spend your energy on being proud of your training. Now, I know there are some of you out there thinking what I'm really saying is you shouldn't try on race day, and that is not what I'm saying at all.

Hear me. I want you to work just as hard, maybe even harder on race day as you did in all your training runs. I want you to show the fuck up for yourself on race day and make that race your bitch. What I'm saying is not to hang your emotions on the outcome of the race. So especially the emotions that you're feeling during training, if you're out there during a training run and your brain is all like, you're 10 second slower than usual, you're going to embarrass yourself during that race, I promise your training is going to suck.

And then your race is going to suck, so whatever is going on in your mind is what creates your experience. This is really powerful. Whatever is going on in your mind is what creates your experience. If your mind is a mess, your experience will be a mess. If your mind is like, neat and tidy and all buttoned up, your race experience is going to be a lot better.

Now, the more mental energy that you spend on what you're doing, what you'll be able to do in your race, you're creating this really bad experience already in advance, before it even happens. So whatever is going in your

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mind creates your experience. Your thoughts create your feelings, feelings drive your actions, your actions give you your results. So when you think icky thoughts, you feel icky and you'll have an icky experience.

The circumstance of the race, whether it felt easy or hard, whether you set a PR or it was your slowest time ever, those circumstances don't have the ability to make you feel anything. Hear me on this. Circumstances are neutral. Your thinking about them, your opinions, your judgments about those circumstances are what creates your feelings.

So you can feel proud about your slowest race time ever if you think thoughts like I really showed up for myself today, I rocked my training, I gave 110% in this race, you'll feel proud. You can also feel ashamed of a personal record. Like your fastest time ever doesn't create that feeling of proud if you're not thinking proud thoughts.

If you're thinking something like I could have gone faster, I didn't train hard enough, even if it was your fastest time ever, you can feel ashamed of that. You can feel guilty. So it is not the circumstances of the race time that creates our feelings. It is our thoughts about it, so choose them wisely.

So race day anxiety, which I define as that nagging feeling of worry or fear about a race and in this case, I'm talking about when you feel it weeks or months in advance of the race is going to affect your training. Now, race day excitement, feeling excited about the race for weeks or months in advance of the actual day is also going to affect your training.

When you feel anxious, you don't show up for yourself as well. When you feel excited, when you feel confident, proud, determined, you show up differently and it all starts with your thinking. It is not the race that creates those feelings. It is your thoughts.

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So here's what I need you to know. If what I've been teaching you today is making sense to you, you guys, and you want to run a 5K, I want you to join the eight-week training program that starts very soon. It starts on September 9th to be exact. You are going to learn everything you need to know to run a 5K from the technical side of training.

We're going to help you with all the running stuff, to all the mind management that will keep you motivated and sticking to your training plan. Feeling proud, feeling accomplished, all of that stuff. So if you enjoyed this podcast, if this podcast helped you, you are going to love my training programs because this is not the same old Couch to 5K app that always gets too hard in week three.

We've all been there, right? We are going to get you across that finish line having done the training like a boss. We are going to teach you how to train, we are going to teach you how to manage your mind, and the finish line is just going to be an absolute guarantee.

So you get live coaching three times a week, you get full access to the Run Your Best Life community, we have small accountability groups for each program as well. So we have this beautiful Facebook group with the whole Run Your Best Life community in it and then we also have small individual accountability groups that are optional, but the half marathon folks have their own accountability group. The folks that want to create a morning routine have their own accountability group. The 5K folks also, they're going to have their own little accountability group just for them.

So you get the experience of the big group and the smaller, more intimate groups as well. And you get, of course, the knowledge that you are investing in your future success. So you just go over to [notyouraveragerunner.com/5kclass](http://notyouraveragerunner.com/5kclass). Join there, or you can just go to [notyouraveragerunner.com](http://notyouraveragerunner.com) and click on the link that says train for a 5K.

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Just go do that. It's the best thing that you're ever going to do for yourself, I promise. Run Your Best Life is a game changer.

Alright, are you ready for this week's obsession? Let's do it. right now, I am obsessed with Nuun. Now, Nuun is not a time of day. Some people call it nun, I like to call it Nuun, and if you have heard of it, keep listening because you might not know what I'm about to tell you.

But Nuun is an electrolyte replacement and what I love, love, love about it is it's actually just a tablet. There's a little tube and there's eight tablets in there and you just take one, you toss it in your water bottle, it fizzes up, and it turns into a recovery drink that doesn't have a lot of sugar and isn't super sweet. And it basically just helps replace all the electrolytes that you lost when you were running.

And that in and of itself is really awesome and it's a great reason to be obsessed with it. But now, they have all of these kinds of options. Different flavors, yes, but they also have Nuun tablets that have different purposes. And one of them is to enhance relaxation and rest. It contains some extra magnesium to help you sleep a little bit better, to help you relax, and they also have one that helps boost immunity with zinc and vitamin C. And then now some of them have caffeine if you're somebody who likes a little extra burst of caffeine before you run.

You can use them during your run. I don't use them during my run so much. I use them after as a recovery drink, but you can also use them during your run, like the caffeine one for example. I just love them. So I love how portable they are. They come in this little tube that's very nicely sealed, and so you can throw them in your backpack or your fuel pack. You can throw them in your purse, you can keep some in the dashboard of your car or glove box of your car.

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And the flavors are pretty low key. They're not overwhelming flavors and the tubes, they keep the tablets forever. So I have used them when I wake up in the morning feeling dehydrated, like if I've had a couple glasses of wine the night before. I also sometimes use them as a nice boost on a hot day. I use them before I go to bed sometimes, if I'm kind of wired and I just want to relax, I'll use one of the relaxation ones.

They are awesome. So this is my highest recommendation of electrolyte replacement drink, recovery drink, whatever you want. That's what I use. I use Nuun and they have a lot of options right now, and so we're just going to have a link for you in the show notes for that and I hope you give them a try.

And if you have tried them and you love them, go ahead and post in the Facebook group and let us know why. Okay rebels, that is it for this week. Do not forget to sign up for the 5K program at [notyouraveragerunner.com/5kclass](http://notyouraveragerunner.com/5kclass). Have an amazing week and I'll talk to 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](http://www.notyouraveragerunner.com) to download your free one-week jumpstart plan and get started running today.