

Ep #110: The One Strength Exercise You Aren't Doing but Should Be



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 110 of *The Not Your Average Runner Podcast*. I'm your host, Jill Angie, and today we're going to talk about the one strength exercise that you are not doing that can make a huge difference in your running.

And I had to pull it out of my toolkit this weekend, this past weekend at a half marathon, and I'm going to tell you all about it. So you guys, I did a half marathon last weekend and this was my first one in a few years. I'm not going to get into all the details that I took a couple years off from that but rest assured, this was sort of a comeback race for me and it was amazing.

It was the Bird-in-Hand Half Marathon and Bird-in-Hand is a little tiny town outside of Lancaster, Pennsylvania. It's primarily an Amish town and their fire department puts on this half marathon every year as a fundraiser and it's just super fun. It's one I've actually had on my bucket list for a while.

So we ran through Pennsylvania Dutch country, lots of cows, horses, buggies, Amish children, and corn. So much corn. It was like, eight feet tall. It was ridiculous. So like I said, this was kind of a comeback race for me. I took off most of 2018 and the beginning of 2019 to rehab some injuries. I restarted in March from ground zero and so I guess I've been back to running about six months.

And my finish time was about four hours, which I will be honest, was slower than I wanted. I don't usually pay too much attention to my pace but I've got

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my eye on the Philly Marathon, which has a seven-hour time limit. So four-hour half marathon puts my marathon finish at about eight hours. Maybe longer.

But my primary goal with Philly is really to do the training. To get prepared and then do my very best on race day. So one way or another, I know I will finish that 26 miles. That is not even a question in my mind. It might be after the time limit but I actually know the course really well. I know I can finish on the sidewalk if they open the roads, and I checked last year's results.

Several people actually did have finishing times at seven hours 45 minutes, which means they don't really close the finish line down right at seven hours, which is very typical of most races. So anyway, my primary goal is to do the training and be prepared and do my best. And I know I'm going to finish. I just might not finish in the time limit.

So this half marathon though that I did this past weekend, the course was a bit hillier than expected. I'd stubbed my toe really hard a few days before. It was like, I call it my owie toe. Started acting up about six miles in, and also with Ragnar coming up so soon, two weeks after this race, so about – actually, when you're listening to this podcast, I will probably be at the Ragnar race.

So it's pretty close in time. I didn't really want to overdo it. So I was cool with kind of scaling it back a little bit and just having a more relaxed race. But none of that really matters. I'm just showing you my brain. All the thoughts that I'm having. I did the race, had an awesome time, got a really, really cool medal made from an actual horseshoe that used to be on an actual Amish horse.

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We got to eat hotdogs, potato salad, just the one, and Whoopie pies at the end. My legs felt good enough the next morning to do another two-mile run as part of my Ragnar training. And honestly, I think that's my favorite part of the whole experience is that the training that I've been doing for this race and for the Philly marathon has allowed me to be able to do a half marathon, get up the next morning, and do another two-mile run.

And so if that's not a testimonial for the way I train, people, I don't know what is. Anyway, the race was also a benefit for the fire department, which I told you about, so it was so cool. Because at the end of the race, the couple last place finishers, when they came in, there was an actual fireman in full fireman gear, running them in. There were lots of cheers. It was very cool.

And at the start of the race – this is such a fun day. At the start of the race, maybe about an hour before the gun went off, we got there early and there was a hot air balloon festival. And so there were all these gorgeous, vibrant hot air balloons being inflated and sailing off into the sunrise. It was simply spectacular. Very memorable.

And to top it all off, I got to run this race with a Run Your Best Life member named Amy, who I'm also doing the Philly full marathon with. And then Andy was there and he set another PR for himself. Five minutes faster than his last half marathon.

Seriously, he's been working his ass off this summer training. He has not been slacking at all. He's really hitting it hard, doing lots of hills and sprints, just generally killing it. Finished in one hour and 54 minutes. I could not be prouder of him. He's just really, really doing the work.

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Now, the reason I'm sharing this whole story with you is because I want to talk about this strength training exercise that can help you turn around a race that's kind of going south. So during this race, I had a lot of drama in my head. We started out a little bit faster than I'd planned, maybe like a minute per mile faster than I'd planned.

It was cool, it was kind of breezy, my body felt good so I sort of fell into that trap of oh, maybe I'll be able to keep up this pace for the whole 13 miles, despite the fact that I've not been really training at that pace. I know better and when I saw the first mile time, when we crossed the first mile marker, I was like oh gosh, this is faster than I planned.

But I decided, let's just see what happens. I knew I was going to be able to manage my mind around whatever and just deal with it. So I was like let's just see what happens. So the first couple miles were amazing. Then we started hitting these rolling hills. And we started slowing down, which again, absolutely fine. But by about mile six, my owie toe was starting to hurt a little bit with every step.

And boom, my inner mean girl came right out to play. And so I just kept thinking oh my gosh, this is so hard. It feels so hard, I'm going so slow, the bottoms of my feet were hurting and I was thinking like, god, if my feet feel this way at mile six or mile eight, how the fuck am I going to go 26 miles?

My legs were tired, I just wanted to be done. Six miles in, I was like, alright, I'm over it, let's get this wrapped up. But obviously I was only halfway finished. And I kept thinking like, how am I going to get through the next six or seven miles keeping up my intervals? I'm not going to be able to do it. And then I thought if I can't do 13 miles easily, how the fuck am I going to do 26?

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Now, obviously I knew I was going to finish that half marathon. That was never a question. But I kept thinking gosh, it would be so much easier if I could just walk this race. And then I kept thinking about how on marathon day I was going to have to do these two half marathons back to back with a time limit. I can't do it, I'll never finish, I should never have signed up and told everybody. I'm going to finish at least an hour after the time limit, I won't get my medal, I'll have to admit to the world I'm a failure.

Oh gosh, the things that my brain was saying. And then I started finding reasons and excuses to skip a run interval here and there. I mean, for a while we were like alright, if it was a steep hill, we'd walk up the hill and we'd run on the way back down. And then we started walking up the hill and maybe running intervals on the way down.

And then I was like you know what, fuck it, I'm just going to skip the next two intervals because I need my legs to recover. And again, my brain kept going to if I could just walk the rest of this race, it would be so much easier. I'd feel so much better.

It was not pretty. And this went on for like, I don't know, probably like three miles maybe. Maybe even up to four miles. And thinking all of those thoughts, because that's what they were, they were simply thoughts. They were not actual circumstances. None of it was. I mean, I was having sensations in my feet, I was having sensations in my legs, I had a certain heart rate on my Garmin and I had a certain pace on my Garmin, but I started making all of that stuff mean I'm never going to finish my marathon.

Instead of focusing on finishing the half that I was in there, I was already like, two months in the future failing way ahead of time. So here's the thing.

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When I thought those things, when I had all those thoughts in my brain and I kept like – it was like I was fondling them. I was like, take out one of those thoughts and be like, yeah, this is a good one, I'm going to believe in this one, I'm going to believe I'm going to fail. And then I'd pick out the one that my legs and feet were really tired, like yeah, they are really tired, this is awful.

I was just all in with my shitty belief system. And so how I felt when I thought those things was I felt overwhelmed, I felt a little bit of panic, I felt very discouraged and very sad. I just felt awful. And the more I felt those emotions, the harder it got. Every step felt like lead. I was focusing really hard on how much my feet hurt. I was going right to every sensation in my body and making it evidence that I was failing at running and I just could not seem to get myself to move any faster.

And y'all, I mean, what was going on is I was suffering. I was suffering. I was tortured. So damn unhappy. And every single step I was using as a reminder of my failure. And like I said, this went on for a few miles. And when I was asking myself for maybe like, the 97th time how am I ever going to finish 26 miles if 10 miles hurts this much, I had this come to Jesus moment.

Because I've done a lot of brain training, and so I indulged in the drama for a while but then my training, all of my brain training took over and I had this moment. My brain's like, duh, you're going to finish 26 miles exactly the way you finish 10 miles. One step at a time, just like every other person.

And I said to myself, the physical challenge is always going to be there but you don't have to suffer. And I swear on my mother's grave, I was like, huh, interesting. I was like alright, looks like we have a game plan. So for the

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rest of that race, yes, my legs still hurt. My toes still hurt. The bottoms of my feet still hurt.

And I came back and I had a blister. I never get blisters. I was like what the fuck? I was still hot and sweaty and tired, but all of the suffering just stopped. It just stopped. And I spent the next three miles really thinking about that moment and then thinking about all the amazing things that were happening and I had a really good time.

We ate mango water ice at an aid station. These Amish girls were like, here, mango water ice. We chatted with an Amish man on a scooter, I told him how I loved the color of his shirt, which is this gorgeous jade green color. And he was like thank you so much. And we smiled at these cute little Amish girls running barefoot down the road. They had bins full of water bottles, and of course all of the water stations were manned by Amish children. It was the cutest thing ever.

At mile 11 I had a birthday cake flavored GU because my birthday is 11/11 so I was like, alright, happy birthday to me and I took a shot of birthday cake flavored GU, which basically tastes like buttercream frosting. It's really good. We stopped at mile 12, we stopped to visit with and take pictures with two camels.

We passed so many farms and the farm at mile 12 had two camels in the field and they came over and they tried to eat our backpacks. We ran through sprinklers, and then about a quarter mile before the finish we saw Andy and two of my local friends waiting for us. And we sprinted the last 50 yards.

It really, really was awesome. And my body didn't hurt any less in the last three miles. It probably hurt more in the last three miles than it did before

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that. But all of the suffering stopped. I stopped thinking about how much my body hurt and I started getting out of my head and just thinking about how awesome it was that I was at this race. And I just redirected my thoughts.

So here's what I really want you to know today. I mean, this is a story that I'm sure so many of you have had, have been in the same place with your suffering during a race and if you don't turn that around, then the last three miles of the race is not going to be fun. And I sign up for this shit because I want to have fun.

I don't sign up to suffer. I sign up because I enjoy the race experience and so forth. So as soon as I see my mind not enjoying it, I'm like alright, well I'm going to finish this no matter what and I can suffer or I can have a good time. And I always choose having a good time.

So that's the skill that I really want to impart to you guys today is you think all of your strength training and your running training is the most important thing you can do. And that stuff is very important. You will not finish the race if you don't do the running and you don't do the strength training. But all of that stuff is useless if you don't train your brain.

So running is hard if you think it's hard. Running is easy if you think it is easy. Running is a suffer fest if you decide to suffer. And running feels amazing even if you're tired and hurt if you decide it's amazing. I mean, sometimes I think there's actually an advantage to believing that running is hard because what you can do is you can say oh, I'm doing something really hard and I'm proud of that.

But what happens often is when running feels hard, sometimes our brains go to the dark side. We say this is too hard, I'm not having fun, I want it to

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be easier. We think something has gone horribly wrong that it's not easy and we think we shouldn't be doing it if we're not really good at it.

And we've been talking so much in Run Your Best Life this month about perfectionism and that if I'm not good at something first time out of the gate, if I can't be great at it, I don't even want to bother. I don't want to do hard things because they're not fun. But what if doing hard things was fun? And it is if you decide it.

There's no upside to thinking that something is too hard for you or there's no upside to thinking that if you can't do it perfectly, if you're not good at it, that you shouldn't even bother. It's not helpful to think that way. It's not helpful to think about how much you're suffering when you're doing an activity.

In running, the physical challenge is always inevitable, especially as your training runs sort of tip over into those double digits. But the suffering, my friends, is optional. So suffering is the drama in your mind about how much everything hurts, how hard it is, how much it sucks, how slow you are, how you'll never make the cut off, how everyone else is faster than you.

Those are all thoughts, my friends, and those thoughts are basically suffering. Suffer thoughts. That's what I like to call them. Suffering is just drama, right? It's just bullshit thoughts that you're allowing to run around unchecked in your mind. It is self-inflicted and it will stop you from achieving your goals.

So in this race that I just did, the more I focused on the difficulty, the harder it got. The more I was like oh my god, my toe, oh my god, my feet, oh I'm so tired, this is so hard, the more I thought those thoughts, the harder it got. The more I slowed down. The more I made excuses to run less.

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But the moment I chose to stop suffering, it was like boom, it was a snap. Everything changed. Now yes, my feet still hurt, my legs were still tired, I was still hot and sweaty. I could feel my toe swelling up in my shoe, but with that one new thought that I'm just going to do the half marathon one step after the other, just like every other race, with that one new thought, the suffering ceased immediately.

And here is the really fun part. When I stopped thinking all of my suffer thoughts, I opened up space in my body and my mind to feel optimism and maybe even the stirrings of excitement for the challenge of doing 26 miles. I started to think maybe I could actually do this thing. Like what is happening here?

I started to look at that 26 miles as like, it's not impossible that I could do that race and finish in the time limit because once I stopped suffering, I make room for other emotions. And when I feel optimistic, when I feel excited, when I start to feel determined, I start taking better and better actions towards my goal.

And honestly, once I had that moment, the last three miles of that half marathon were pure ass fun. So I want you to know that you have this alternative thinking within you whenever you run, training run or your race, feels impossible. I want you to observe what your brain is saying and decide whether those thoughts are helping you.

So if you keep asking yourself how am I going to get through this, I promise you're going to suffer. Now, if you remind yourself I can do hard things, I like doing hard things, I feel proud when I do hard things, I want to see what happens when I don't give up on myself, if you start thinking those thoughts and push out the suffer thoughts, your entire experience is going to change.

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So I mean, we've been talking – at the beginning of the podcast I said we would cover the one strength exercise you're not doing that can make a huge difference in your running, and that is training your brain to go the distance. So you know when you don't do your strength training and running, if you just go out there and run, do all the miles without attending to make your muscles strong and flexible, you know you get injured.

You're like oh, I have to do my strength training so I don't get hurt. And if you don't do it, you get hurt, you have to take time off, it's not super fun. Your brain is the same thing. If you do not build up your brain strength, when it comes time to do 10 miles or 15 miles, or if you're training for a 5K maybe it's three miles.

If you don't build up your brain strength and your brain isn't strong enough, you will suffer and you will quit. You will give up when it all gets to be too much. So you could have the best training plan in the world, you could have the strongest running body in the world, but if your brain isn't trained to deal with everything that happens, none of it matters. You're just going to be a pair of legs running.

That does not sound like fun, right? So you got to train your mind to deal with the thoughts that are going to pop up. And I'm not saying you just make them stop completely. I think that's impossible, to be honest. But when they do pop up, if your mind is strong, you can deal with them. Instead of just giving into the drama and the suffering and just quitting and saying that's it, I don't want to do this anymore, when those thoughts pop up, a strong mind is like okay, here's what I'm going to do.

So we do a lot of that in Run Your Best Life, which is my coaching community. At least a third of our members right now are training for a half marathon and their training runs are almost to the double digits. And this

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mental strength is becoming more and more important because what it can do is get you through a long run that feels hard. It can get you through a short run that feels like ass. It can get you out the door when you don't want to.

And it can definitely help you when you're injured and can't run because your brain is the most powerful running muscle you have, so you need to make it strong. You need to do strength training for your brain. Now, how do you do that?

Well, by coaching yourself. Work on your thinking. Do your thought work. See where it's bullshit. Use the CTFAR model that I teach you in most of these episodes but definitely in episode 33. Join Run Your Best Life so you can get actual workouts for your brain.

But you guys, you got to do the work. Just running the miles isn't going to get you across the finish line. You have to train your brain along the way. Alright, so that is the strength exercise that you're not doing that is going to make a huge difference in your running. It's your brain.

And here's the thing; you don't even have to get sweaty to train your brain. How fun is that? Okay, so real quick before we jump into my latest obsession, I'm actually doing a brain boot camp in Savannah from October 31st to November 3rd.

Now, this is part run-cation, part retreat, and what we are going to do is work hard on your mind. We're going to give you strength training for your brain while you're there, we're going to have a ton of fun, maybe even run a race or two and then really take your running practice to the next level.

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So the first two days, October 31st to November 1st are brain work and a little bit of body work. You're going to learn all the skills of mind management, of goal setting, of consistency, how to stop negative self-talk. A lot of stuff we talk about on this podcast we're going to dive deep in it.

And we're also going to do some strength training and stretching clinics. We're going to talk about fueling, coach/chef Jen is going to do a fueling demo. We're going to do a group run, we have a few other fun surprise activities planned. Enell is even going to be there doing bra fittings.

So that's the first two days, which is going to be awesome. Then on the next two days, you'll have the option to do a half marathon, a marathon, or a 5K as part of the Savannah Rock 'n' Roll race series, or you can just spend time hanging around Savannah, come out, cheer everybody else at the retreat. Races are not required. They're totally optional.

But here's the thing. Savannah is a fast and flat course and of course, it will be early November so it won't be a million degrees out either. So this is actually a super fun race to do. So basically, here's the deal. You're going to come to Savannah, I'm going to help you make your brain strong. Coach Jen is going to be there too. We're going to be double-teaming you guys.

You're going to learn some other cool stuff, you're going to hang out with some really amazing women, and run with them too. And it's going to be awesome. So if you want to know more about the brain boot camp race run-cation retreat – we need to come up with a better name for it. I want you to go to notyouraveragerunner.com/savannah. All the information is right there.

Okay rebels, all y'all. It is time for my latest obsession. And this week it's a color. I mean, if you've seen my website, if you've seen the podcast art,

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you know that kind of a hot pink and a deep purple, sort of an eggplant-y purple are the Not Your Average Runner colors, and they are two colors that I love.

But y'all, Skirt Sports just put out their fall line and they have this new color called cherry bombshell. And oh my god, I am in love with it. I want to lick it. It's like this deep luscious, lipstick red color and it comes in skirts and tops and I cannot get enough of it. So I have it right now in the Happy Highway skirt.

I have it in the Watch Me Go top, which is a long-sleeved sort of a fall and winter running top that has a hole cutout on the back of your wrists so you can see your watch. Both left and right sides. I love this top. And it comes in a bunch of other stuff. I'm actually going to go back and get it in more colors.

Now, it's not like a fire engine red. It's much deeper than that and it's so pretty. It's the perfect fall color and it also coordinates with a bunch of the other fall prints that they have on the site. So if you – even if you don't wear skirts, you got to go and check this out because it comes in this cherry bombshell color, comes in gear other than just skirts. But also, if you're not wearing a skirt when you're running, you should totally give it a try, it's super fun.

And they just came out with these new high waist tights and I got a pair of those, which by the way, go really, really well with the cherry bombshell. They're kind of a grey heathery color and they have huge zipper pockets in the front. So check those out too.

But anyway, you can go shopping for all the Skirt Sports gear at skirtsports.com and if you use my code, which is NYAR20, you get 20% off

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your purchase, which means you can buy more skirts. Or you can join Run Your Best Life. Even better.

Okay my friends, this is it for this episode. We are done. Get out there and train your brains. And I will see 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.