

Ep #117: Stop Saying You Can Do Hard Things



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Jill Angie

Ep #117: Stop Saying You Can Do Hard Things

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 117 of *The Not Your Average Runner Podcast*. I'm your host Jill Angie, and today I'm going to take one of your favorite mantras and destroy it.

Seriously though, this is a mantra that I've actually used many, many times myself, and that mantra is, "I can do hard things." And it seems so innocuous, right? Because if something is difficult, the best way to get through it is to believe you can do hard shit. We feel so proud when we do hard things, like we are totally badass.

And I get it. I like to feel badass. I like to feel like a warrior. I like to feel like someone who can do anything she wants to do, especially hard things. And by the way, I have to warn you, I'm going to be biting my tongue throughout this entire show because I'm going to be using the word hard a lot, and it's going to take a lot of effort not to blurt out, "That's what she said," like, every three minutes.

So I think I've got that out of my system now. Anyway, when we do hard things, we think to our self, I'm a total badass. And we feel proud and proud feels good. And when something we want to do is hard, we think, I can do hard things, and we feel determined. We do the thing, and then of course afterwards we feel proud.

And that's how it works, right? Okay, what if that's actually not how it works? What if there is an easier way? What if that is like, the most inefficient way ever to manage your brain? Now, I've been noodling on this a lot lately, whether it is helpful to believe a thing is hard or not. That is the question that I've been asking myself.

Ep #117: Stop Saying You Can Do Hard Things

Because you know that difficult and challenging and hard are all just thoughts. Not actually a circumstance. If difficult or hard or challenging were a circumstance, then everybody would agree. Math is hard. Learning a new language is hard. Running a 10-minute mile is hard.

If difficult were a circumstance, everyone would agree on those things. But not everybody agrees. I think math is easy. I think learning a new language, it just takes practice. But for me right now, I think running a 10-minute mile is hard. Now Andy, he also thinks math is easy, but he thinks running a 10-minute mile is easy. He's like, yeah, no problem. He thinks learning a new language is hard.

So if you can see that hard and difficult and challenging is all just a thought, it's just your opinion or your assessment of the facts. Now, stay with me a little bit longer because I know there are some of you out there listening right now thinking, do not take this away from me, I will come for you.

So just relax, my friends. I promise I'm coming to a point with this. So the circumstance here is always just the facts. You're running a race or you're in a training run, or you're doing your strength training, or you're doing a project at work. Sometimes the circumstance is being married, raising kids, existing.

Those are just circumstance. Note that they are completely factual. Then, we have thoughts about the circumstances such as, this is really hard, this is such a challenge. And when we think that thought, what do we feel? Frustrated, stressed out, something like that. Maybe anxious. And then we act accordingly.

When we feel stressed out or anxious, maybe we quit early or we don't give 100% or we find excuses not to do it, right? Now, here's where it gets interesting because some of you are thinking, no, I don't feel stressed out when something is hard, I feel excited, I feel strong, I feel empowered. But

Ep #117: Stop Saying You Can Do Hard Things

you don't actually feel strong because you think the thing you're doing is hard.

You feel strong because you're thinking, I can do hard things. So that belief that I can do hard things is what creates the feeling of strong and empowered and excited, and so forth. It is not simply believing something is hard that creates it.

Believing something is hard makes most of us feel anxious or stressed if we don't have that correlating belief, I can do hard things. Because really, nothing in life is hard. I know there are some of you that are like, I'm going to turn this podcast off. My shit is hard, right?

No. Life is just a bunch of circumstances and we get to decide whether they're hard or not. Just go to a place in your mind, the unicorn place, where you think, what if I believed nothing in life was hard? I mean, really, really believe it. Like that there are just things that you want to do that you require different skills, and to get better at something you need to work on the skills.

Or maybe there are things in life that you don't want to do. They're not hard. You're like, I just don't want to do this. And then of course, we make it hard with our thoughts. But if you believed that nothing in life was hard, if we just wiped that word off the map, what would your life be like?

Because hard is simply an adjective. We give it a lot of power. We think it's a fact. Running faster is hard for me. It's hard to get up in the morning and go running. It's hard to lose a family member. We have hard conversations. We fall on hard times.

But I think what we really mean when we say something is hard is I don't like this, I don't want to feel this way, I don't want to do this thing, this is uncomfortable for me and I want to stop. And when we're just like, oh no, that's just really hard.

Ep #117: Stop Saying You Can Do Hard Things

But when we believe something is hard, we kind of set ourselves up for battle. We have to overcome the thing and then sometimes, most of the time, let's be honest, we struggle and we suffer. And you know, I've talked about suffering. Suffering is optional. Something that's created from your thoughts. But when we believe something is hard, we have to battle, and then sometimes we suffer.

Now, if you like battling and you like struggling and suffering, then believing something is hard is perfect for you. I am not trying to take that away. I am giving you alternative ways to think with this podcast. And for real, there are people out there who love the battle. They love to fight.

Think MMA fighters. I'd say most of us would agree, MMA fighting is kind of difficult. And there are people out there that are like, yes, bring it on. And they probably don't think the thought, this is hard. They think the thought, I love the battle. So if you're somebody who likes the battle, this probably isn't the podcast for you.

But I know there are a lot of you who really get down on yourselves when something seems to be too hard for you, or when you just think this is going to be really hard, when you think ahead of time. When you think you're going to have to white-knuckle your way through something.

So this is what I want to offer you guys if that's you. Lately, I have been playing with the idea of easy. What if instead of deciding something was hard, because it's just a decision, I just decided it was easy? And it really is just a decision. I know that seems crazy, but again, hard is not a circumstance.

Unless you're talking about the hardness of water or the hardness of a surface, like a granite countertop, which really is all about chemistry and physics and has nothing whatsoever to do with difficulty, hard is not a circumstance. Hard is an opinion.

Ep #117: Stop Saying You Can Do Hard Things

So if you want to talk about things that are hard, it kind of made me think of when I was in graduate school, we had to take quantum chemistry. And I had a belief that that class was hard. I made that class so fucking hard. I suffered, it broke my brain several times, and I mean, I can still imagine myself sitting in those stupid little desks and we had a view of the quad where everybody would walk around in that particular classroom.

It was on the third floor of the science center and I would just sit there and look out the window and think, when the fuck is this class going to be over? I don't get any of this. This is way too hard for me. This is dumb. I don't want to be here.

And so looking back on it, that class was hard because I believed it was hard. That class was hard because I was thinking all these thoughts like this is too hard for me, I'll never understand it. I have to pass this class to get my chemistry degree and it's too hard for me.

I felt defeated ahead of time. I did not show up for my homework and my study sessions and the classes the way I really needed to. Hell, I didn't even show up for half the classes. I was like, it's too fucking hard, why should I even bother? So that meant I felt defeated ahead of time, I felt frustrated, and that meant my action was to not show up the way I really wanted to, and then the result was it was really fucking hard.

But what if I had just believed oh, this is easy and I'm simply learning how to do it? This is easy, I'm just in the process of creating the neural pathways so that I can make this way of thinking about chemistry habitual. Instead of this is way too hard for me, if I had just believed this is easy and I'm learning it, I would have shown up so differently for everything in that class.

I would have felt curious, I would have actually engaged in the class and asked questions, and my professor looked exactly like Beaker from The

Ep #117: Stop Saying You Can Do Hard Things

Muppet Show. He was a very entertaining guy. I might have actually asked some questions, learned some things, instead of sulking in the corner.

I would have engaged, I would have asked my fellow students for help, I might have even done some of the homework, I might have even started to really understand it instead of memorizing the shit for the test. That's basically how I got through that class.

I only got a C. I would have been on Dean's List that semester if it was not for my C in quantum chemistry. But it was all because of my brain. It was all because I believed it was too hard for me, or I just believed it was hard, period, and I didn't show up very well for it. If I'd believed it was easy, I would have had a totally different experience.

So I have started toying with the idea that things are easy, like, in a lot of different places in my life. Specifically, with this marathon training because really, let's break it down. Running a marathon is easy, you guys. Because taking a step is easy. Running one step is easy. We can always take one more step.

I will argue this until the end of time. You can always take one more step. Nobody is going to fight me that it's hard to take a step. So that means a marathon is quite literally taking roughly 60,000 easy actions one right after the other. 60,000 individual steps, give or take a couple miles.

So what if you just believed that? What if you believed, oh, a marathon is super easy, it's just a series of tiny easy actions, one right after the other? How would you show up for your training if that were the case? If that's what you believed?

How would you think about your training and your race? So many of my clients are paralyzed by anxiety in the weeks leading up to their races or in the weeks leading up to their really long runs because they keep focusing

Ep #117: Stop Saying You Can Do Hard Things

on this thought, this is going to be so hard. And then they worry and they suffer, even when they're not running.

I mean, this is actually kind of crazy because suffering about something that's coming up before it even happens, we do this all the time. I've done it myself. But really, when you're thinking the thought this is going to be so hard, you are already suffering. And the worry and all of those emotions that are miserable, even when you're not running.

You think I'm going to be so miserable when I'm running, but then we make ourselves miserable even when we're not running because we're thinking this is going to be so hard. But what if you believed that a race or a training run is just a bunch of easy actions over and over again until you get to the finish line?

This changes everything. Try it right now. Imagine yourself taking one step. It's easy. You guys, it's so easy. Then imagine yourself taking another step. Still easy. And another, still easy. Do you see how your brain is breaking a little bit? Because your brain wants to believe that running is hard. Your brain wants to believe a marathon is hard. Your brain wants to believe a 5K is hard.

You have been taught that it is, that running is hard. You've been taught that believing you can do hard things is the path to getting yourself where you want to be. Hell, I have taught you that. But what if that's just one way of thinking? What if there's a more efficient way to think about it?

And that is to instead of having to overcome that something is hard and then talking yourself into believing you can do hard things, what if you just go right to the source and say, oh no, shit's easy? What if you worked on that belief instead?

Because if you're going to have to spend time managing your mind into a place where you feel the way you want to feel and start taking the actions

Ep #117: Stop Saying You Can Do Hard Things

you want to take, I'm like, oh, it's just way easier to just figure out how something is easy and believe that than to be like, oh, this is really hard, oh, but I can do hard things, and constantly be managing your mind around this is hard but I can do hard things, this is hard, but I can do hard things.

It seems so much more efficient to just do the mental work to believe it's easy. Now, I really have been applying this everywhere in my life. For example, some of you may know, I'm working on not using snack foods to entertain myself when I'm doing something I want to do, or when I'm working on something like my taxes and I'm thinking, oh god, this is so hard. You know what would make this easier? Cheetos.

Because my brain is like, I don't want to do this thing right now, this doesn't feel like a lot of fun, so I should probably eat some Cheetos. And so the story I have been telling myself is it's really hard to not eat while I am doing something like my taxes that I don't want to be doing. But really, Cheetos don't make it any easier to do my taxes. I end up with orange dust all over my keyboard.

And this belief that not eating when I'm stressed out or bored is hard is kind of a lie because actually, it is not hard to not eat. The act of eating takes more effort than not eating because eating means I have to get up, go to the kitchen, get the food, put it on a plate, maybe heat it up. If it's Cheetos, I got to drive to the store, get out of my car, walk into Wegmans, go to aisle whatever, 27, always at the wrong end of the store.

It's just a lot. It's actually a lot of effort. It's actually way harder to eat than it is to not eat. And not eating means I don't actually have to do anything. If I'm going to eat in response to boredom or stress, it's more to do. It's just my brain that makes it harder to not eat.

When I made that connection the other day, I was like, what? Wait, wait, wait. It is easier to not eat the Cheetos? How is this possible? But I'm like,

Ep #117: Stop Saying You Can Do Hard Things

no actually, it kind of is easier to not eat the Cheetos. It's actually really complicated to eat the Cheetos.

And so I think it's really, really fun to play with our thoughts in this way. So this isn't about whether I should eat the Cheetos or not. This is about me sort of breaking down my story that not eating when I'm stressed or bored is really, really hard. Because when I believe it's really, really hard, then I have to tell myself oh, but you can do hard things. But I don't want to do hard things right now, I want to be comfortable, I want it to be easy.

Instead, I'm like, it's just way easier to not eat right now. So I'm practicing thinking this way in all different areas of my life. And what I want you to do this week, I'm going to challenge you to look at your own life and everywhere that you say something is hard, why do you believe it's hard? I really want you to think about it.

Are the individual actions hard? Probably not. I mean, sure, if you're learning a new skill, you don't yet have the muscle memory to do it. Or if you're strength training and you're moving up to a new weight, or you're running and you're working up to a new distance, your muscles haven't experienced that load yet and they need to create - the fibers need to be stressed out so that they can get stronger.

Or if it's a mental skill that you're working on, maybe a new way of thinking, your neural pathways just haven't been created yet. But believing something is hard is so different than I don't have the muscle memory or neural pathways created for this skill.

The first one, when you think this is hard, you don't feel so great when you think that. But if you're like, oh, I just don't have the pathways yet, it's like, oh, I'll just keep practicing until it's there. It's a very neutral way to think about it.

Ep #117: Stop Saying You Can Do Hard Things

It's a really important shift I think if you are struggling because running is too hard for you right now. Let's come at it the other way. Let's come around and say oh, it's not hard. Hard is just a thought. I just don't have the muscle memory created yet and once I do, this will be easy. Or it's easy to just keep taking one step after another.

How many different ways can you think about running or getting out of bed in the morning when it's cold outside and it's warm in your bed? Like, how many different ways can you think about it to make it easy?

So again, take a look at your life and where you say that things are hard. How can you make them easy? Because easy is literally just as much of a thought as thinking something is hard. We have so little resistance though to the thought that something is easy. We have a lot of resistance when we think something is hard, but when we think it's easy, we feel light and excited and curious instead of heavy and afraid.

So if you believe something is easy, there is nothing to overcome. You just do it. And I used to say this all the time. If it were easy, everyone would do it. And that is me buying into the belief that there are easy things and hard things. But what I think is actually more accurate is if everyone believed it were easy, they would do it too.

Big shift. So if it were easy, everyone would do it buys into the belief that some things are hard and some things are easy. But I love this new thought, if everyone believed it were easy, they would do it too. Because that puts it back on the individual.

Instead of saying the circumstances, this is really hard, you get to decide if something's hard or easy. And as soon as you believe it's easy, then you can do it. So instead of believing you can do hard things, I want you to play around with believing the things you used to think were hard are actually easy.

Ep #117: Stop Saying You Can Do Hard Things

Because I swear, it seems so much more efficient to me. And I like things to be easy. We all do. So that's my like, helpful thought reframe for you this week is stop saying I can do hard things, and start looking for ways you can make it be easy.

Okay my friends, before I dive into my latest obsession, which you are going to love, so you definitely want to stick around for that, I have a very huge announcement. So later this month and this podcast is coming out in early November, and so later this month, we are opening the doors on a brand-new program.

It is going to be epic. It is called The Rebel Runner Roadmap. It is a 30-day online class. It's just 30 days long, to teach you the fundamentals of running. That is from running form, strength training and stretching, and all the brain work that you need to create the thoughts to keep you motivated and focused and confident.

All of that stuff. I've created the four pillars of running, which basically is what I teach in Run Your Best Life, but I've put it now into a 30-day online class. And it's not ready yet. Like I said, it's opening later this month. But if you want to get on the waitlist to be notified for when it's open for business, and by the way, when we open the doors on this, the people that sign up first are going to get four extra bonuses.

We just figured that out with the team. I was like, are you sure we want to give all this stuff away? And they're like, yes, totally. So we're doing four really amazing bonuses for the early birds. So you do want to be on the waitlist to be notified when it opens.

So you can do that by going to rebelrunnerroadmap.com. All you got to do is put in your email address and then when it opens, boom, you'll get an email and you can sign right up for that. And again, that's going to be in the show notes too, but if you want to sign up to be notified, rebelrunnerroadmap.com.

Ep #117: Stop Saying You Can Do Hard Things

And you guys, this is unlike any class I've ever done before. It is not a race training. We are not going to be training for a 5K or a half marathon or anything. It's just 30 days and it's a class where you will learn exactly what you need to do to either start running the right way or up-level your running.

Again, we're going to talk about breathing and pacing and intervals and how to really set yourself up as a runner so that you can be super successful. With the mindset, with the motivation, with confidence, and then all the physical stuff. I'm even going to teach you guys how to coach yourself. It is all part of this 30-day class and it's really a great way to set yourself up for success in 2020.

So again, if you want to know more, sign up to get notified as soon the class is open at rebelrunnerroadmap.com. As soon as it's open, you will be the first to know and the early bird signups are going to get four amazing bonuses.

Okay, so here's what I'm completely obsessed with this week, and like I said, I think you're going to love this. So I invested in this little gadget called the Garmin Running Pod, I think. It's - I don't know, sort of a neon green color. And you may have actually seen me post about it in my Instagram stories. I just got it last week and it's this little device that you sort of clip on to the back of your running tights.

It's about as big as the tip of your thumb. It's not huge. And what it does when you pair it with your Garmin is it keeps track of things like your stride length, your vertical oscillation, which is how up in the air you go with each step, your ground contact time, which is how much time you spend the ground with each step, and a few other things.

I love data so it has been very, very cool to see this information and start to notice trends and make some observations to go, ooh, that's interesting. Now I understand why my right leg is a little more tired than my left leg after each run.

Ep #117: Stop Saying You Can Do Hard Things

For example, my right foot spends 6% more time on the ground than my left. So I'm a little bit imbalanced. My right side is a little bit weaker and my left side, my left foot is touching down and pushing off a lot faster than the right, so I'm like, okay, that makes sense because I think my right side is a little bit weaker, so now I'll do extra reps on the right side when I am strength training.

Now, let's see, what else? My ground contact time in the beginning of the run and again, contact time is how much time my foot spends on the ground before it moves to the next step. The ground contact time in the beginning of my run is shorter than at the end, which means it correlates with the fact that my cadence gets a little bit slower at the end.

So I'm going to see if I can get somebody from Garmin to actually come on the podcast and talk all about this kind of data next year. And not necessarily about my data, but like, just in general, what you can learn. I mean, if you have a Garmin, even without a running pod, there's a ton of data that you can review.

And then if you add the running pod, there's even more. So I'm really hoping to get somebody from Garmin to come on the podcast to talk about that all next year. Because I think this is actually something most runners should be using and looking at so that they can diagnose injuries or issues before they become injuries.

So we're going to have a link to the pod that I bought in the show notes. It's about \$60. I think it's compatible with most Garmin models. But it's not the only kind of pod you can get out there. There's other similar gadgets that do things.

So if you don't have a Garmin, there's - I can't remember the name of them offhand but anyway, long story short, if you just look for a running pod, you should be able to find other options. But for sure, the one that I got is

Ep #117: Stop Saying You Can Do Hard Things

cheaper than some of the others. Like I said, it's about \$60. So if you have a Garmin, I think it's a great option. I think it's compatible with most models.

So that is it for today, my rebellious friends. I will see you next week and I hope you run happy.

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.