

Ep #134: How to Stay on the Wagon



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Jill Angie

[The Not Your Average Runner Podcast](#) with Jill Angie

Ep #134: How to Stay on the Wagon

When has anyone ever improved their performance because they got yelled at? Aside from being in the army and being in boot camp, where basically you're just doing pushups so that the sergeant will stop yelling?

Welcome to *The Not Your Average Runner Podcast*. If you're a woman who has never felt athletic but you still dream about becoming a runner, you are in the right place. I'm Jill Angie, a certified running and life coach and I teach women how to start running, feel confident, and change their lives, and now I want to help you.

Hey rebels. So I want to talk about wagons today. And not the little red kind, which by the way, I never had one of those as a kid and I am pretty sure that is some sort of violation of the parent code. And we're not going to talk about the pioneer kind, the covered wagons, and you know what, now that I'm thinking about it, I never played that Oregon trail video game as a kid either, and what the hell?

Apparently, I was raised by wolves. Now, the wagons I do want to discuss are the kind that we ride when we're doing the things we believe we should be doing, like sticking to a fitness routine or eating "healthy." And I'm using air quotes here. So real quick though, before we get into this wagon thing, have you ever seen that episode of Seinfeld where he and George are arguing about whether an alcoholic is on the wagon or off the wagon when he's not drinking?

It's actually pretty funny, and I think I'm going to put a link in the show notes to the clip because I just love how they are willing to kind of explore what this whole wagon business is. And I've been thinking about it a lot lately myself. I don't know why we even use the term on the wagon to describe sticking to a training plan or following a diet.

Ep #134: How to Stay on the Wagon

Because when you're on the wagon, you're powerless. You have to go where the wagon goes. You're not in charge. you're just a passenger. If you get off the wagon, you get to create your own path, decide which way you want to go, what you want to do. You are the one in charge. It's much more empowering, yes?

So I think we have it backwards. But maybe because it's easier to ride a wagon, we just get to ride along and somebody else is in charge and we like things to be easy, so there's this sort of desire for a mythical wagon where you don't have to think carefully about what you're doing. You just ride along and magically, you get the results you want.

But either way, this concept of being on the wagon, what we're really saying when we say that is I am doing things the right way. It means I'm following my plan and I'm not deviating. And of course, there's this implication that somehow you're a better person because you're doing the "right" things, and I wish you guys were in the room with me to see my eyes hard-roll at that.

So anyway, this whole concept of being on or off a wagon, or a plan, being on track or off track is just bullshit. You guys, there is no wagon. I mean, I know you know there's no literal wagon, but there's also no metaphorical one either, and ditto for going off the rails. The wagon is just another metaphor for all or nothing perfectionist thinking, and it is keeping you stuck, my friend.

Because when you believe there's a wagon to fall off of, there's no room for making mistakes. There's no room for learning, for anything other than being good or bad. And when you believe you're being bad, you feel all kinds of emotions. Most of which lead to you continuing to do the exact thing you're trying to avoid.

Ep #134: How to Stay on the Wagon

And then it takes this Herculean effort to get back on the wagon or start over and you're like, okay, this time I'm going to be perfect, it's going to be amazing, and you're like, figuring out how awesome you're going to be. You're envisioning it. And then as soon as you make one little mistake, it's like, I can't do anything right. And it starts all over again.

So I want you to get off the fucking wagon, my friends. Get off it and stay off it. The wagon is not your friend. It is not helpful. The wagon is binary. There are only two choices. On or off. Compliant or non-compliant. There is no room for error on the wagon and it doesn't let you make mistakes and figure things out on your own.

So this is going to be a big mental shift for a lot of you because we like the thought of being on the wagon or off the wagon. I mean, we prefer to be on the wagon, but we like this black and white thinking, especially if you're trying to lose weight. If you subscribe to the wagon metaphor, you're either eating the way you should be or you're not, and that's how you look at it.

If you can't be perfect, you can't do everything the right way, then the alternative is to be face down in a pan of lasagna. In running, it kind of looks like this. I missed my Monday run, I always do this, now I'm behind in my training, how am I ever going to get back on track, I'm probably going to fail at this half marathon.

You keep swirling those thoughts around in your head and then you keep focusing on that one missed run until you feel so defeated you skip the next eight. And then it's like, three weeks before race day and you're - once again, I completely fucked this up, going to have a shitty race, I wasted my money. Even if I finish I'll be embarrassed to hang this medal on the wall.

Instead of that, you could say I missed a training run but I have 20 more left and I know one run is just a drop in the bucket. I'm going to show up for that next run like a boss. And maybe even say like, why did I miss that

Ep #134: How to Stay on the Wagon

training run? Was that just kind of a random one-off or did I have some thinking that led me to skip that run that I need to clean up?

So you have these options. You can say, “I completely failed, I always do this, now I’m not perfect, now my training has been flawed because I missed a training run, it wasn’t perfect,” or, “I missed a training run, I wonder what I can learn from that and how can I show up like a boss for the next one?”

So the problem is never that you got off track by missing a run or eating something off of your diet plan. The problem is that you make it mean you’ve fallen off the fucking wagon and you’ve trapped yourself in perfectionist thinking.

If that’s your paradigm, this concept of either on or off, either good or bad, and don’t even get me started on when people say, “I’m being so bad, or I’ve been bad.” Just please stop it. There is no moral value assigned to eating a cupcake when it’s not on your plan or to skipping a training run that was on your training plan. There’s no moral value there.

You’re not a bad person, you’re not being bad if you don’t do those things. You just didn’t do those things. That’s a choice you made. Don’t make it mean that you’re a failure or you’re just bad at this. Just stop, please.

But anyway, let’s talk about this whole concept of starting over. If your paradigm is that you have to be on the wagon so that you can stick to your training plan, then when you make a deviation, you have to start over. And if there is one phrase I hate more than falling off the wagon, it is I have to start over.

Please stop saying that. When you say you’re starting over, what you really mean is this time I’m going to be perfect. I get a chance to do it exactly right, prove to myself that I’m not a failure, that I’m worthy, that I’m a good

Ep #134: How to Stay on the Wagon

person, and I'm good at this. But you know what? You're not going to be perfect. Stop lying to yourself. Perfection does not exist.

And even if you do do it "perfectly," you're still going to be able to find things you could have done better because perfectionists are never ever satisfied. So we've already torched the wagon and burned that to the ground. There's no wagon. Let's talk about what if you believe there was no such thing as starting over. Instead, there's just different levels of engagement with whatever you're working on.

Like, sometimes you're working really hard on running, and other times, it's on the back burner. Sometimes you do it once a week, sometimes four or five times a week. Sometimes you're injured, sometimes you're in peak shape. There is no starting over. You start once when you go for your first run as a brand newbie. And then after that, you are just a runner in different phases of your practice.

You are learning what works and what doesn't, how to manage your mind, what training strategies move you forward and what training strategies don't work too well for you. It's all just growth. There is no perfection in running. I want you to burn that in your brain. There is no perfection in running, just like there is no crying in baseball.

So I want to talk to you about something that we did in Run Your Best Life at the end of 2019. It was a 90-day thought download challenge, and it was for October, November, and December. And some people were like, okay, this is how I'm going to do the challenge. I'm going to keep track of how many TDLs I do in this 90 days, in the next 90 days.

And other said, no, for me, 90 days in a row is the challenge and if I miss a day, I have to start over because it doesn't count unless it's 90 days in a row. Now, which group do you think got more TDLs done in that 90 days?

Ep #134: How to Stay on the Wagon

Well guess what, it was the ones that said I'm going to do as many as I can in 90 days because they left room for error.

The goal for sure was to do all 90 days, but they framed it as let's see how many I can do instead of I have to do all 90 or I didn't do it right. And say that somebody in the challenge did 30 of the 90 days. Maybe they did a TDL every third day.

Now, do you think that at the end of 90 days because they only did 30 of the 90 that they got nothing out of it? No. They had so much more awareness of their mind. Maybe they made some different choices that they would not have made if they had done no TDLs.

So 30 days isn't "perfect," but that doesn't matter. You still get so much out of things, even if you're not perfect. Striving for perfection actually holds you back. Striving for growth and improvement is what brings you forward. Seeing what you're capable of instead of saying I have to be perfect or it's a fail.

So expecting nothing less than perfection creates drama when you do not measure, and we never measure up, you guys. You think, "Oh, I fucked up, I have to start over. I'll wait until Monday or the first of the month, and then I can be perfect." And you waste all this time so all the stars can align. Just stop it.

You can apply this really well to your training by the way. Maybe your training plan has 50 runs on it to get you to your half marathon. If you decide that training for this half marathon means that you have to do all 50 runs, or you didn't do it right, and if you didn't do it right, your training is flawed and you can't be proud of yourself on race day, and I know there are some of you out there that think this way. That if your training is flawed, you can't be proud of yourself on race day.

Ep #134: How to Stay on the Wagon

But if that's how you're deciding to think about it, if your compelling reason to do your training is so you can be perfect, then the first time you miss a run or it doesn't go well or you cut it short, you're going to beat yourself up, you're going to feel awful, you're going to struggle harder.

And really, this beating up of ourselves, we think, "Oh, if I yell at myself, I'll be inspired to try harder. No. When has anyone ever improved their performance because they got yelled at? Aside from being in the army and being in boot camp, where basically you're just doing pushups so that the sergeant will stop yelling?"

I mean, sure, you might try harder in the short-term when somebody yells at you, because you want to stop the yelling, but overall, it is not a long-term life strategy. You know, if you're a parent, you know that yelling at your kids doesn't give them incentive to try harder. It makes them either want to rebel or it makes them believe that they're not good enough.

So why do we think that beating the shit out of ourselves for missing a training run is going to inspire us to do the next one? It doesn't. Stop the beatings and get off the wagon. Stop relying on this fictional dream of perfection that helps you stay motivated and focused because you're never going to get there.

Perfection doesn't motivate you. It doesn't work. It makes you quit, it makes you give up, it makes you believe that you suck. And when that happens, you get nothing. You never get better. And I've had a few people say to me like, "No, perfectionism is a good thing. I'm proud of myself. I'm a perfectionist. I have high standards."

Having high standards and being a perfectionist are two completely different things. Having high standards means you're always striving to do your best. You're always striving to improve. Having high standards is not

Ep #134: How to Stay on the Wagon

the same as it has to be perfect, or it's not good enough. It's a huge mind shift.

When you decide I've got very high standards, you're always striving for more. When you are a perfectionist, that means that you're saying if it's not perfect, I don't want to do it. It's not worth doing. And that keeps you stuck. Having high standards keeps you bringing yourself forward and trying for more and achieving. And perfectionism is a blocker.

So instead of focusing on how can I start over, how can I get a fresh start, I want you to look back and think about what you have accomplished. Observe the changes that you have made, even if you stopped running for 10 years and you've decided I'm going to run again now. I haven't run for 10 years but today I'm going to start again.

I actually see like, that is how deeply embedded in our vernacular that concept of start again is, but you've stopped running for 10 years, today you're like, I'm going to go for a run. You're not starting over. You're not a brand-new runner. You're taking what you learned from your past, you're applying it to your current situation, you're not back at ground zero.

You've got experience, you've always been a runner, it's just that you've been on a break for a while. So sometimes as runners, we're in periods of running very frequently, sometimes we are not. Allow there to be some grey area in your practice instead of making it all black and white.

Because the grey is where you have room to grow. Got it? Okay, now real quick, we are going to be opening the doors to the Rebel Runner Roadmap again on April 6th, and this will be your last chance to join the Roadmap and then join Run Your Best Life before the fall. Several months we're going to be closing it down.

Ep #134: How to Stay on the Wagon

So if you want to start running for the spring and summer, you got to get on the waitlist today. Go to rebelrunnerroadmap.com to do that. You're just going to put your first name and your email, and then as soon as the doors open, we will email you and let you know that it's ready for you to join. Now get your ass out there and run and I will see you in the next episode.

Oh, and one last thing. If you enjoyed listening to this episode, you have to check out the Rebel Runner Roadmap. It's a 30-day online program that will teach you exactly how to start running, stick with it, and become the runner you've always wanted to be. Head on over to rebelrunnerroadmap.com to join. I'd love to be a part of your journey.