

Ep #137: Coaching Yourself through the Coronavirus Pandemic



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With Your Host

Jill Angie

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

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And really, that is what we need right now. If everybody panics, we're kind of screwed. We need as many people as possible to be calm and ready to deal with whatever happens, instead of running around like a chicken with their head cut off.

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. Well, I am recording this on March 19th, basically about a week after the shit kind of hit the fan over here in the States. And you'll be listening to this a week later, so who the heck knows what the state of affairs will be by then? But I'm just going to talk about where we are at right now.

And things got real crazy real fast, right? One minute we were joking about all the people buying 100 rolls of toilet paper at once, and the next minute we're like, "Oh shit, my race calendar for the next three months just disappeared, and now I'm working from home for the foreseeable future."

So we've been talking about it a lot in Run Your Best Life this week, and people have all the feels, you guys. Everything from panic to anger to self-pity to relief about races being canceled, maybe if it was something you were a little scared to do in the first place, to excitement at the idea of working from home.

And so the feelings are just running all over the place. And it's so interesting to me because most of the time, everybody is like, "Oh yeah, I

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manage my thoughts all the time,” but then when we talk about managing thoughts around the pandemic situation, they’re like, “Oh no, this is serious, this is different. Mind management doesn’t apply here because this is real, this is serious.”

And I’m like, yeah it does, actually. The factual things that are happening in the world right now, like race cancellations or being asked to stay home from work for a couple months, the number of confirmed cases of coronavirus, those are simply circumstances. And then you have a million thoughts about those things, and that’s what causes all the feelings.

So this week, I really want to go right back to basics and talk about the coaching model that I use. We’re going to talk about that first, and kind of how it can save your ass right now. Because guess what? You cannot control everything that’s going on. I mean, you can try.

Those of you that are spending hours scrolling through Facebook, looking for some shred of evidence that it’s going well or it’s getting better or it’s getting worse, you can consume all the information, but that isn’t going to help you change anything. What you can control right now is how you show up for yourself, how you show up for your loved ones and your coworkers and everything over the next several weeks, and that is where you can make a real difference.

So if you are somebody who has been listening to this show since the very beginning, you’re thinking, “Yeah, yeah, yeah, I know this already. I know how to manage my mind.” But please stay with me in this episode because I’m going to help you apply it to what’s going on in the world right now.

A lot of the coaching work that I do, especially with my Run Your Best Life folks is to help them manage their minds around their running. But we’re going to take those tools and we’re going to apply them to coronavirus. So

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if you're worried, if you're stressed or anything like that, this episode is going to help you come out of those emotions so that you can be more effective in your life.

And really, that is what we need right now. If everybody panics, we're kind of screwed. We need as many people as possible to be calm and ready to deal with whatever happens, instead of running around like a chicken with their head cut off. So this means you. You are on the frontlines here, my friend. Especially because you've been exposed to mind management and you can help other people do the same.

So the most important thing you can do for yourself and everyone around you right now is to manage your thinking so that you're calm and acting from that place. So here's how you do it. So we're going to start by talking about circumstances. Circumstances are simply facts and data. And by the way, they're out of our control for the most part.

They're things like the weather, your race being canceled, the number of confirmed cases of coronavirus in the world right now. These are facts. And our brains are continually scanning our environment for danger. Looks at all the facts, it will look at data, like the number of cases of coronavirus, and it will make evaluations like this thing is out of control.

And you will want to believe that's true because your brain is telling you, and we're like, "I don't know, it's my brain, it's pretty smart." But out of control is simply a thought you are having about the circumstances. It's an assessment, it's an opinion, it's an evaluation. It is not factual. Because somebody else might look at that number and think, "Oh yeah, we've got this, everything's under control."

Maybe not a lot of people, but somebody else. So circumstances are things that every single person on the planet would agree upon. And if even one

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single person would disagree, it is not a fact. It is not a circumstance. It is simply a thought.

Now, thoughts are where we give meaning to our circumstances, through our beliefs, our opinions, and our judgments. And thoughts are basically just sentences that you say in your mind. We can be aware of them or not. Sometimes we have thoughts that sort of float below the radar in our brains. But we might confuse them with circumstances at times.

And for example, I'm just going to use this simple running example here. Believing or thinking, "I am a slow runner," your circumstance is you run a mile in 15 minutes, and you think, "I'm a slow runner." A lot of people would agree that this is a circumstance. They'd be like, "Yeah, she's a slow runner." But a lot of people might not agree with that.

And so in reality, it's not. Slow runner is simply your opinion about how long it took you to go from point A to point B. Again, I know this because not everybody would agree on what qualifies as slow running. You say you run a mile in 15 minutes, you might think that's slow. Somebody else is like, "Wow, it takes me 18 minutes. I think 15 minutes is fast." It all depends on your belief system.

So circumstances do not have adjectives in them. They do not have adverbs, they do not have descriptors or anything like that. They are simply facts and data and information. So we cannot change our circumstances, but we can change our thoughts about them, and this is where it starts to get really, really useful.

Because the root cause of any problem, my friends, is always our thinking. It is never ever the circumstance. It is the way that we think about it. Let that sink in for a moment. I know it sounds a little crazy, a little like, oh

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yeah, just change your mind and life is easy. And yes, that's true, but also, it's a little more complicated than that.

But nothing is ever a problem until you believe that it is. So here is a perfect example of a circumstance and people's thoughts about it. Now, I have a lot of clients who have been sent home from work right now, and I also have a lot of clients that are still at work.

So one of our Run Your Best Lifers is bummed that she is still at work. She thinks this is a problem. And another one is bummed that she is at home because she thinks this is the problem. So they both think - one of them thinks being at work is the problem, one of them thinks being at home is the problem.

For both of these women, the problem is not whether they're still at work or whether they're at home. It is thoughts that they're thinking about those circumstances. And I know that there's a lot of you - maybe not a lot. Maybe a few of you that are arguing with me in your head, but please just keep listening because it is all going to make sense in a few minutes.

So we have circumstances, that's our fact. We have thoughts about that circumstance, and when we have that thought about our circumstance, that thought generates a feeling. And a feeling is one word that describes an emotion. Worried, upset, panicked, joyful, relieved, motivated.

Emotions are vibrations that we feel in our body in response to our thoughts. And emotions most of the time are feelings and emotions are the things we're trying to seek, like everybody wants to feel happy and they want to avoid feeling unhappy. So emotions are super powerful. That's what we're always trying to generate or avoid.

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It's fascinating. So a lot of times that we believe that our circumstances are what cause our emotions, but circumstance cannot emotions. It is our thoughts about the circumstances that cause them. The thought always comes first, and then we have a feeling. And our feelings, our emotions drive our actions, or our inactions.

Everything we do or don't do or avoid in life is driven by a feeling, or the desire to avoid a feeling. And those actions that we take are what create our results. So basically, things happen, that's a circumstance, we have a thought about those things, that thought drives us to feel a certain way, and that feeling drives an action, which gives us our result.

So let's try an example. Let's say the circumstance is that you're working from home right now because your office is closed. You will have thoughts about that. They could be thoughts like, "Yay, I get more time to run since I don't have to commute every morning, or, "I hate working from home because I like to be around people."

Or you might be an introvert and you might think like, "Finally, I don't have to be around people." You could have a million different thoughts about being asked to work from home because your office is closed. Now, if you think, "Yay, I get more time to run," you are most likely going to feel pleased or excited. You're going to have very positive emotions around that.

And when you feel that way, pleased or excited, you get up and run in the morning, and then you show up for your work at home day, knowing that you've already gotten shit done and it's only 7am. So your actions and your results are like, get up and do your run, and then boom, more productive day.

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So that comes from thinking, “Yay, I get more time to run.” Now, if you’re thinking the thought, “I hate working from home because I like to be around people,” what’s the emotion that you’re going to feel? It’s probably something like isolation or loneliness. And then when you feel isolated or lonely, how do you show up for yourself?

Well, I’ll tell you what, it is probably - if you’re like me, spending more time scrolling through Facebook, texting your friends, trying to find some connection, which leaves you less time to run and by the way, scrolling through Facebook means you’re getting everybody else’s thoughts about this pandemic.

Some thoughts have not been curated very well and you might not want to take them on, but you’re feeding your brain all of these opinions from other people and it leaves you feeling worse. It leaves you less time to run, it makes you less productive at work.

And so that result of being less productive at work, not getting your running done comes from thinking the thought, “I hate working from home,” because that makes you feel lonely and isolated, and then you try other ways to find connection. So in both of these situations, the circumstance is the same. Working from home.

And thinking about it differently creates a different result. So the circumstance is not what causes you to feel lonely, and it’s not what causes you to feel excited either. It is your thoughts about it. So this is a really powerful thing to understand, you guys, because it puts everything in your control.

That means that no matter what happens, you get to choose your reaction. So first thing’s first, I want you to check your mind daily. And I like to call this a thought download, where you actually spend maybe five or 10

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minutes writing down all of the sentences in your mind. And even maybe write down the feelings that you're having.

And if you're feeling stressed or worried or panicked or freaked out, look at what you're thinking, and then question those thoughts. Because if you write down things like, "This is going to ruin me financially," or, "Everything is out of control," and if you - those are thoughts, by the way. Those are not circumstances.

But if you believe them, you have some pretty awful feelings. You have deep fear and panic, and you're going to want to believe those thoughts because they're going to feel true. But really, I want you to question everything. Take a moment.

When you find yourself going to those kind of catastrophic ways of thinking, take a breath, take a moment, look around. Everything is not out of control. If you're listening to this in the car or while you're out running, everything around you is completely under control, unless your car is somehow flying through the air. It's under control.

Everything around you is fine. Every single thing. So you just want to take a moment when you've got these sort of catastrophic thoughts and recognize. See if you can step away and say, instead of this is going to ruin me financially, first of all, there's two questions I want you to ask here.

The first is, is believing this is going to ruin me financially or believing that everything is out of control, is believing those things helpful to you? Is it creating emotions that are going to drive useful actions or is it creating worry and fear?

Because if you're thinking things that create worry and fear, you're not going to show up for yourself or the other people in your life in a

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constructive way. So you can question your brain. Because if it was somebody else kind of talking to you, posting these things on Facebook, and you weren't in their life, you'd be like, that's crazy, you're going to be fine.

When it's coming from somebody else, we can be objective. So I want you to pretend the things that your brain is saying is just stuff that other people are writing on their Facebook wall or telling you, and look at it objectively. And then question, is believing that helping me or not?

So take a breath. Take a breath when you find yourself in that space. Take a pause. I promise you've got this. And here's the best part; you're a runner, so keep running. Keep your routine. If your races have been canceled, keep training anyway. Running will help balance your mind because it doesn't just affect your muscles and your heart and your lungs. It actually impacts your nervous system.

And you guys, it is impossible to run and worry. Just go try it. Go for a run and just try to worry. You can't do it. It's like sneezing with your eyes open. You just can't do it. Just doesn't work. So keep running. Give yourself these little breaks from your brain. And there's something about running that just kind of - it turns off that part of our brain that is constantly looking for danger.

And I think it's just that the flood of endorphins, and even if you don't feel like a runner's high, you always feel better after you're done running. That's endorphins. So get out there, keep active. If you're not running right now, go for a walk. Go for a brisk walk, go for a bike ride. Keep your body active. Keep your routine.

Create a routine for yourself so that you don't feel this sort of unmoored feeling that some of us who work from home frequently - I'm raising my

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hand here, if I don't have a routine, I know that my brain starts to kind of drift a little bit. It starts to go places that I don't necessarily want it to go. So create a routine for yourself and keep it.

And again, if your race was canceled, sign up for a virtual race. Keep training anyway. Show up on the day that your race was supposed to happen and run it as a virtual. Have some friends set up a finish line for you and give you a free banana. Go ahead and keep that goal as part of your life.

So keep running. Watch your thinking. Really watch it like a toddler holding a Fabergé egg. A toddler holding something really, really fragile. That's what I want to say. Like if you had a toddler in your house and it was holding a priceless vase from the - god, I can't even think right now. Holding something really important and fragile.

You would not take your eyes off that toddler. You would watch every single move, right? I want you to watch your thinking the same way and just be like, where you going with that thought? I want to share something that one of our Not Your Average Runner ambassadors - and if you don't know who the Not Your Average Runner ambassadors are, they're members of Run Your Best Life that are just really living and running their best lives, doing their thought work.

They're passionate about running, they're passionate about helping other people start running. We've got 14 of them. And this ambassador's name is Anne-Marie, and I want to share what she wrote yesterday in our Run Your Best Life group because it was super powerful. So here's what she wrote.

"So today was an interesting day. As my races are being canceled, I am forever grateful as I listen to my husband, who works for a company that

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sells many healthcare products, including ventilators and oxygen concentrators.

I am in awe as he speaks with doctors and is part of the solution with all the COVID-19 stuff. He hasn't panicked with all the information and knowledge he's consuming. I asked him why he's so calm and he said, "Panicking isn't going to serve me or you, or the people who are looking for guidance from me." This is how I'm living my life now. Panicking is not going to serve me. I'm doing all the things I usually do. I'm just now doing them at home."

And so, Anne-Marie, I just thought that was beautifully, beautifully said. Your husband is absolutely right. He's getting all the information that all of us are getting. He's probably getting more information and maybe even scarier information than all of us are getting, and he's not panicking because panic is an emotion that's created when you think thoughts like, "Holy shit, the world is falling apart."

And he knows that he's not going to be able to serve himself or the people who are looking to him for guidance if he's in a state of panic all the time. So he's shifted his thinking to a place where he feels calm. And I love that you're looking at him and saying, yeah, exactly, that's how I'm going to do it too.

And so Anne-Marie has given us all some great thoughts to think here, and that's panicking is not going to serve me, I'm doing all the things I usually do, I'm just now doing them at home. So I want you to just really evaluate your thinking throughout this whole time when we're being asked to change our lives significantly while they flatten the curve.

I want you to look at your thinking and see if it serves you. And if it's not serving you, that's when you get to decide differently. And if you need help with that, I want you to post your thinking in the Not Your Average Runner

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Podcast community Facebook group because we've got all of our ambassadors in there and they can help you look at your thinking and maybe decide how you can think differently.

So reach out, we want to help you. And this week, take a moment. Look at what's not working in your life and it might be changes due to the coronavirus. It might be something else. You might be like, I'm good with coronavirus but this shit over here is blowing up.

So first decide what the circumstance is. Be very specific and factual. Then write out all of your thoughts about the circumstance, and then your feelings that are coming from those thoughts. And remember, a feeling is a one-word emotion. And then how do you behave when you feel that way and what is the result?

Look at the model that we've created and decide if you like the result of your thinking. And if not, how might you be able to think differently? If you've changed the thought without changing the circumstance, how might those feelings, actions, and results change? Then once you have a model you like, you can start practicing that new thought and see what happens.

So in a little over a week too, I want to let you guys know, in a little over a week, we are opening up registration for the Rebel Runner Roadmap. And I mean, because running is really one of the best things you can do for yourself right now. It is the ultimate social distancing activity.

Somebody gets within six feet, you just run away, and you don't need any special equipment, you don't need your gym to be open, you don't need anything else except a sidewalk or a trail. And you know what, sidewalks and trails, there's not a lot of people on them right now.

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So the Rebel Runner Roadmap is a 30-day class that's going to help you start running and fall in love with it, and manage your thinking. And for this round of the class that's going to happen in April and May, I'm pretty sure we're going to have some discussions about COVID-19 and how it's impacting your life.

So you're going to learn how to run, you're going to learn how to manage your thinking so you can stop worrying and start feeling like yourself again. So if you want to join the Roadmap, I want you to go to rebelrunnerroadmap.com and get on the waitlist. You'll sign up there with your email address. Rebelrunnerroadmap.com.

Or you can click the link in the show notes. You'll enter your email address and then as soon as it's open for registration, we will email you a link to join. Okay, my friends? I promise that it's all going to be okay. I promise you've got this. And I just want you to get your ass out there and run. It's going to help you. Nobody ever regretted going for a 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.