

Ep #162: 3 Steps to Finish Strong in 2020



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With Your Host

Jill Angie

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If you are delaying getting back into your routine because you're thinking about how hard it's going to be right now – and I guarantee that probably half of you are actually thinking that way. You're like, "Oh god, I need to get back to running but I've lost so much fitness. It's going to be so hard. I think I'll do it tomorrow..." really examine that thought process because delaying it isn't going to make it any easier. The longer you wait, the harder it's going to be. So, the best time to start is always right now.

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. Can you believe there's only about 100 days left in 2020? This has been a motherfucker of a year, hasn't it? I know I don't need to tell you that.

This morning, I was thinking to myself, gosh, it's going to be kind of a relief to put up that 2021 calendar. And my 2020 calendar is adorable. It's got corgis all over it. Andy gave it to me for Christmas and I'm still like, "Okay, I'm ready for the next calendar."

Who else thought 2020 was going to be their year and then, I don't know, by March, the wheels were off the bus and now you're just hanging on for dear life? I've definitely had my moments where I felt that way. And I have totally joked with my friends about using 2020 as a swear word. Like, when something goes horribly wrong, instead of saying, "That's all fucked up," we just say, "Oh yeah, that situation went all 2020."

But you know what, here's the deal. When I spend a lot of time thinking to myself, "This year has been awful," guess what? I feel awful. I feel pissed off, frustrated, discouraged. I feel definitely very sort for myself. Because I had to cancel my wedding, damnit. I deserve a little self-pity, right?

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No, I do not. Self-pity is toxic. It infiltrates your entire life. I mean, sure, it's not fair that COVID19 showed up and changed everything. Nobody signed up for a pandemic this year. Nobody said, "Yeah, that sounds like fun, let's do that."

But it's here and we can either accept it and deal with it, or we can wallow. And nobody likes a wallower. I mean, it's fun to say wallower, but nobody likes an actual wallower. And wallowers don't get what they want out of life. Why? Because they're too busy complaining and moaning about how unfair everything is to actually get shit done. And I know that you don't want to be the person that is wallowing all the time. I know you don't want that.

So, that's why today's episode is all about how you can turn it around and finish 2020 like a boss. I have three no-bullshit steps. There may be some tough love included, to help you not just survive the last three months of this year, but to make it your bitch. Are you ready? Let's go.

Alright, number one – and I warned you, there's going to be some tough love today. Number one step is stop whining. I really mean this. Stop saying, "2020 has been such a disaster." Stop saying, "Fuck this year." I get it. We all get it. This year has not gone as planned. Not even close.

Everyone has been impacted. You are not the only one. And whether it's having all your races canceled, to losing your job, to losing a loved one, to getting sick yourself, we've all had some sort of impact.

Okay, to be honest, I do think that some level of bitching about it is helpful. It lets off a little bit of steam. But there is a huge difference between saying, "2020's been a tough year and I'm ready for some good news..." and constantly telling yourself and anybody that will listen that 2020 has been a suck-fest – suck-fest... suck-fest, I don't even know what that is – that 2020 has been a suck-fest and it's responsible for everything that's wrong with your life.

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That second statement, not super helpful. First one, you know what, it has been a tough year. I'm definitely ready for some exciting good news, like maybe races actually being rescheduled. But that's very, very different than saying, "Oh my god, 2020 has destroyed my life."

Because the truth is, 2020 has not destroyed your life. You are responsible for your life. The circumstances have changed, okay. There is a pandemic and that may or may not have changed some circumstances in your life. It has actually changed the circumstance for pretty much everyone on the planet. You are not special.

We are all figuring it out. And yes, maybe some people have had less impact to their lives than other people. But seriously, I know some folks where the only change to their lives is that they have to wear a mask in public and they can't go as many places as before, and you would think their entire world has fallen apart.

And I know others who have lost loved ones, who have had to close their business, who have gotten sick themselves and it has really taken a toll on their health. And they're like, "Yeah, you know, it's COVID. It's not what I chose..." but they have a totally different outlook. They're like, "I'll figure it out, I'll get through it. It's going to be fine."

So, that's how I know that it is not the circumstance of the pandemic that is creating your feelings, your actions, and your results in your life. It is your thinking. It is how you are choosing to think about the pandemic. And if you're thinking whiney thoughts, you're going to feel like shit and you're going to blame the pandemic.

It's not the pandemic's fault that you're unmotivated or frustrated or pissed off or whatever. It's your fault. So, own that shit. The sooner you stop complaining about it, the faster you're going to move towards the life that you want.

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Okay, that was step one. Now that we've got the biggest part of the tough love out of the way, step two to really finishing strong this year us to begin right where you are now. And this applies especially if you've taken a break from running or fitness or scaled back.

I know, when all my races were cancelled, I made a conscious decision to switch up my routine and shift over to the bike and really, I haven't really run more than a couple of times for a couple of months right now. If I had to go out right now and run five miles, I would be sucking wind pretty bad.

Last year, roughly this time, I was able to go out and do a 20-mile training run and there is no way I could do that today. And it's so tempting to make that mean that COVID has destroyed my running or that I'm lazy and undisciplined and just generally beat myself up for losing fitness. I'd just say, "Look what COVID has done to my life."

But really, I've just chosen to be in a different phase of fitness right now. I made that choice on purpose when the pandemic hit. I said, "Okay, this is what I'm going to do."

So, I want you to be careful with your language. Make sure it's not passive. If you're saying, "I got derailed," that makes it seem like there was an invisible hand that reached into your life and held you back. When actually, the pandemic happened and you decided, whether consciously or subconsciously, to change your running and fitness routine.

You had plenty of excuses and you were like, "Yes, I'm all in with those excuses." You may have had great reasons. You may think they're totally justifiable. And of course, they are, right? That's the thing. Your reasons are your reasons. If you believe they're justifiable or you believe they're flimsy, regardless, you had a thought in your brain and you were like, "Yes, I'm on board with that." And you followed through on that.

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But you are the one who made those decisions. COVID did not make the decision for you to stop running or to stop working out. COVID may have made the decision for you that your gym wasn't open anymore. But you're the one who said, "I'm not going to find an alternative."

And here's the thing; all of those decisions you've been making created the body and the fitness level that you have right at this moment. You might be less fit today than you were six months ago. Those are circumstances. But the key to succeeding right now and for the rest of this year is to focus forward. Any comparison to where you used to be is going to keep you from moving on. It's going to keep you stuck right where you are right now.

Have you ever heard that quote – I love this quote, "Don't look back. You're not going that way." It's so true. Think about when you're riding a bike. If you're constantly looking behind you, you're going to crash. When you're riding a bike, you have to be looking forward. You have to focus your eyes and your attention where you want to go. Or you're not going to get there.

So, step two is really to start by assessing where you are right now. And if you haven't been running, I want you to go out for a test run and see what it feels like. There's no judgment allowed. This is a data-gathering activity only. And I don't want you to push yourself to exhaustion either, right?

Just go out for a medium effort run and if you can, if you have this capability, don't even look at your watch or your phone for your stats until your run is over. Set it up so you're just going to go out and run your intervals and your watch is going to tell you, it's going to beep when 30 minutes is up and you're going to say, "Okay, now I'm done."

And for the love of god, don't look at your data after your run and then compare it to where you were six months ago. Please don't do this because it is irrelevant. It really, really is. There is no way you can go back in time and do anything differently. You cannot change the actions that you've taken for the past six months.

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So, let's not rehash it and talk about, like, "Oh my god, look how much fitness I've lost." You can't change it. But you can start today, right now, from where you are at in this moment and decide how you're going to move forward.

And I know how tempting it is to self-criticize and compare yourself to others, compare yourself to yourself six months ago and find yourself lacking. But what did we just learn about wallowing? It does not help you.

So, you can always find yourself lacking if you look hard enough. Your brain is very good at this. And if you're superficially looking and you don't come up with anything, your brain can make some shit up if it's not immediately obvious how much you suck. This is how brains work.

So, please, don't go looking for it. You've got to let it go. There's no upside to bemoaning where you used to be. There is nothing good that's going to come from that. I know you think it's motivational. You think, "If I just set the goal to get back to where I was six months ago, that will motivate me." I promise you, it's not going to motivate you. At least not in the long-term.

It might get you out of bed a few times. But if you're constantly doing that comparison and looking backwards and beating yourself up for losing fitness, that is not a long-term motivational strategy. It is a long-term quitting strategy. It's going to keep you stuck and unable to move forward.

And while we're at it – apparently, I had a little more tough love in me – while we're at it, let's stop using the term losing fitness or backsliding or any of those other things. Because they're all simply a comparison to where you used to be. And you don't do that anymore.

We don't wallow. We don't whine and complain about any of it. We don't talk about our past accomplishments in the negative. If you're going to talk about your past accomplishments, I want it to be in a, "Wow, that was a super-fun thing I did and I'm so proud of myself," kind of way. That's cool.

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But you're done with, "If I could only get back to that 12-minute mile I used to do when I was 50 pounds lighter and 10 years younger." Because you're not any of those things. You're 50 pounds heavier and 10 years older. Let's own that shit, knock off the comparison, and move forward.

And one final comment before we move onto the third step. If you are delaying getting back into your routine because you're thinking about how hard it's going to be right now – and I guarantee that probably a half of you are actually thinking that way. You're like, "Oh god, I really need to get back to running but I've lost so much fitness, it's going to be so hard. I think I'll do it tomorrow." Really examine that thought process because delaying it isn't going to make it any easier. The longer you wait, the harder it's going to be. So, the best time to start is always right now.

And finally, step three – we've done step one, we've stopped whining. Step two, we've taken an assessment of where we are and we have dropped any comparison to your six-month-ago self. And step three is to set a goal. And I want you to set a 30-day goal.

And I know, I talk about setting big audacious juicy goals on this podcast a lot. And I love them. I love setting them and blowing my own mind when I achieve it. So, you might be wondering why I'm suggesting going a little bit smaller. Why not just sign up for a half-marathon next year to really give yourself a kick in the ass to get started?

Well, that is one option, but I don't think it's the best idea right now. Why? Because it is super easy to say, "It's so far away. I don't need to start training right now. I can wait until October or November." And what you'll do us you'll keep delaying your training. And what that does is it reinforces your current routine of not running regularly.

And the more you reinforce your current routine, the harder it's going to be to change it. So, instead of setting a big future goal, I want you to focus on the next 30 days. That is all.

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So, what can you accomplish right now that's going to give you some quick wins and set you up for future success? What habits can you establish right now?

So, this 30-day goal is a lot less about what the endgame is in 30 minutes and more about giving yourself daily wins to reestablish your identity as a runner, as somebody who exercises consistently. And those daily wins are going to flood your brain with thoughts like, "Fuck yeah I just nailed another day. Yay me."

So, I want you to think about the habits that support your goals, like daily stretching or maybe running three times a week, strength training twice a week, drinking your water every day, writing in your journal, developing a morning routine. Maybe it's going for a daily one-mile walk. Whatever those habits are, it's something – pick ones that are habitual, that you're going to do routinely, and that are part of your self-care.

Pick one or two of those habits and spend the next day getting really, really good at doing them. Make it like your job to address all the thoughts that are going to get in your way by creating thoughts that are going to drive the action of your habit.

So, you're going to have those thoughts like, "I don't really need to do my strength training today. I can wait until tomorrow." And that's a thought that you're going to have to weed out and replace with a thought like, "I'm building my new routine. It's very important for me to adhere to my schedule so that I get used to keeping my commitments to myself."

And here's the other thing. The perfectionists. I see you. I hear you. I can feel you through the microphone. You're going to want to overcomplicate it by doing all the things. You're going to say, "Well, if two habits is good then four is better. And if four is good, I should probably just start now and implement 10 new habits that are going to make me an amazing runner."

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No. Please don't do this. Don't overcomplicate this, okay. I'm very serious about this. Pick one or two and practice those for the 30 days. Get really focused on becoming consistent with those habits. Then, after you've got a month under your belt, you can add another one for the next 30 days.

And if you are starting now, by the end of 2020, you'll have four to six habits in place already. They'll be installed. And then when January 1st comes around, you can be like, "Alright 2021, let's do this" You're going to have all of the baseline in place so that you can really slay next year.

And oh my god, I cannot wait to hear about all of your success. So, just to recap, three steps to finishing strong in 2020. One, stop whining. Two, get a sense for where you are right now and stop comparing yourself to where you were six months ago. Get a sense for where you are right now and accept it and be ready to move on from here.

And then, number three, pick a 30-day focus, a 30-day goal where you pick one or two habits that are important to your self-care and work really, really hard on establishing those habits. And then, you can add more at the end of that 30 days.

Okay, alright, my friends. I love you. Stay safe. Get your ass out there and run and I will talk to you next week.

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.