

Ep #164: How I Started Running Again After 3 Months Off



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With Your Host

Jill Angie

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Take one workout a time, at a time also. And don't compare your current performance to where you were a month ago or six months ago. You're going to be so tempted to do that, to say, "Look how much fitness I've lost," and then you're going to go right down that road of the yelling and the screaming at yourself, and that's not helpful. It's going to make you feel terrible, and we know what happens when we get into that headspace, right?

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, fall has officially arrived and I am here for it. What about you? The weather is amazing. And I started my morning today with a pumpkin spiced latte, had some pumpkin pie for lunch. It was very yummy. But you know, I draw the line at pumpkin spice Oreos.

I tried them last year. They were not good. They're gross. Where do you draw the line with pumpkin spice? Like, some things just should stay original, I think. So last week, Andy was on the show with me and I mentioned how I have been delaying my return to running.

And earlier this summer, I made a conscious decision to take a couple of months off. We got a Peloton; it has been super fun riding instead of running. And my plan was to start running again at the end of August. And guess what, I did not do that.

And I had all the thoughts about it, like you'll never be able to start again, you're done as a runner. I was so dramatic. It's going to feel so hard. But

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every day, I'd get out of bed thinking today is the day, and then I'd be like, nope.

So spoiler alert, I did start again last weekend. It was virtual Ragnar weekend and although we did decide as a team we could do our miles on foot, on the bike, or on water, I did want to run some of them. So I went out last Friday morning for a three-mile run. It was hard but not a suck-fest, which was awesome.

I've gained about 15 pounds since the pandemic started, and that for sure slowed me down and made it a little bit harder. But that's to be expected. And the truth is the 15 pounds is not what was keeping me from restarting. It was all of my thoughts about it. All of my thoughts about the 15 pounds, about not running for a couple months, about feeling like a fraud because I'm coaching other people on running but I'm not running myself.

There was just a stew of shitty pumpkin spiced thoughts up in my old brain. Now, I'm telling you this for a couple of reasons. So first, in case you had any illusions that I am the type of runner who just jumps out of bed each day, excited to get my shoes on and go, no, that's not me.

I have those same mental conversations that you have, or mental arguments, whatever you want to call them. But the difference is I don't let myself get to a place where I'm beating the crap out of myself for failing. Sometimes I'll hear those inner mean girl thoughts and I'll be like, alright, we got to do something about this.

So I'll say, okay, clearly I have some resistance to running again, and then I ask what is it? I wonder what's going on. Why am I struggling right now? So today, the other reason I'm telling you about my restarting in running is I wanted to share my process for getting back into a running routine after a break.

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And I think we've talked about it before, but in this episode, I'm going to get a little more personal and share what I did this particular time to get myself back into it. And I actually spent quite a bit of time last week sort of untangling things in my brain and what I did was I put it together into three simple steps that I think are super helpful and will help you get some traction in your own life.

So the first step, and this is the most important step of all is to separate story from fact. So before you do anything else, I want you to write down and yes, I mean with a pen and paper, write down all the facts. The data. Because you're going to have a lot of stories about your time off from running.

Stuff like, oh, I really let myself go, or I'm so lazy, I can't seem to get it together, or I'm so far behind, or I lost so much fitness, or some version of that. So I want you to get really, really clear on the facts first. The facts are the number of times you ran, or the number of times you've exercised in the past month, or two months, or however long it is.

Be specific and accurate. No adjectives, no adverbs, descriptors, modifiers, anything else. Numbers only. Two runs in two months, or zero runs in three months, or whatever it is. Numbers, data, factual. And you can do the same with other things that you think might be holding you back.

Your weight, for example. You might say okay, I weigh this many pounds now. It's this many pounds more than I weighed in March. Put the numbers in there, and I want you to take the language of I gained weight out of your circumstance. Saying I gained weight is not very neutral.

It has a little bit of story to it. It's like, I gained weight. So when you have that as your circumstance, you are always going to have some opinions. So I want you to take that language of I gained weight out of it if weight is something that you are putting into your circumstances.

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Because it is so easy to beat yourself up about it, so just write down the actual numbers. So once you have the facts clear, and there may be other factors that you are - data, other numbers that you are putting into your circumstance. That's totally fine. But once you have all those facts clear, then you can see all the ways you're telling yourself a story about it.

Whether it's I gave up on myself, or the pandemic kept me from running, or I gained weight because I couldn't get to the store for my healthy food. Whatever it is, if it's not data, it's a story. And you can see then all of the thoughts that you have about why you're not running right now, and you can then evaluate those stories.

So I want you to take a moment and see how your stories make you feel. Not how the circumstances make you feel, because not running for two months doesn't make you feel any sort of way. It's your opinion, your thought about it that creates that feeling.

So when you think to yourself the pandemic kept me from running, you feel powerless, right? Or when you think, oh, I gave up on myself, you feel discouraged. Maybe a little mad at yourself. When you feel powerless or discouraged, how do you think your how up for your running?

That's right, you don't do it. You don't show up. You either skip it or you procrastinate it, or you half-ass it. And none of those things really gets you the result that you want. So I want you to pay close attention to your story because I know that you want to believe it.

I know you're like, Jill, you just don't understand, I really couldn't run because of the pandemic. Like, let's not get into story. Let's not get into any of that. I want you to just put numbers in your circumstance line, and then you can decide what you want to think about it.

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And there is no upside to thinking that you self-sabotaged or that you gave up or that you had no choice or that you're just an undisciplined mess. There is no positive to believing those things. I mean, even if we could somehow prove in a court of law that those things are factual, there is still no point to wallowing in it because it makes you feel like shit, and then you just keep wallowing.

So I want you to be noticing your stories, keep redirecting yourself right back to those neutral facts, and then decide what story do you want to tell about those facts that serves you, that makes you feel confident and empowered, and motivated, and determined. Because you can tell whatever story you want about the facts. Choose one that helps you. Not one that holds you back.

Okay, the second step, when you are restarting a running routine, you are going to be tempted to craft the perfect workout plan with all the bells and whistles. You'll be like, I'm going to run three times a week, I'm going to strength train twice a week, I'm going to yoga on Sunday mornings, I'm going to take a spin class, I'm going to meditate every day.

This is my chance to get it right, it's a restart, it's a fresh start, it's a reboot, I'm going to be amazing. And 100%, I'm all in for the thought I'm going to be amazing. But if you believe that being amazing depends on doing this perfection workout plan, you're not going to be very happy in the short term.

You know you've done this in the past. It hasn't worked. No, it has not. Because you are living in a perfectionist fantasy world. You were not perfect then, and you will not be perfect this time, especially if you haven't done any work on your thinking, because you're going to get the same old results.

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Perfectionism sets you up for quitting and giving up. And when you believe you have to do all the things and not miss a single one to be worthy or to be good at exercise, well then you get this neat little excuse to quit and start again tomorrow or Monday or the first of the month as soon as you fuck up, and you're going to fuck up, okay?

So here's why perfectionism is so attractive. Because when you think, when you sit down and you imagine this ideal fantasy world where you've done everything perfect, you feel amazing. You experience those emotions when you think in your mind, when you create this fantasy world about how awesome it's going to be when you do all the things.

So you are pre-experiencing those emotions because you're thinking the thoughts. So you imagine how you're going to feel when you are the workout queen. You are the queen of running and training perfectly. You think it's going to be so great, you're like, I'm going to be so confident, I'm going to be so proud of myself.

But here is the thing; feeling confident and proud doesn't come from what you do. Doesn't come from the action line in the model. It comes much higher above from the thought line. We know we have thoughts, they create emotions, and the emotions drive the actions.

So you got to think thoughts that make you feel confident or proud first. And then guess what, the action follows on. The action of following your routine comes out of that emotion. If you expect your workout routine or the perfect completion of a workout routine to create that confidence for you without changing your thoughts first, you're going to be disappointed because it's not going to work.

A perfectly completed workout program does not make you feel awesome or worthy or accomplished. All of those things come from your thinking. Now, if you complete that workout program exactly as you desired, you're

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going to have a thought, oh my god, I'm so amazing, and you will feel those emotions.

But those emotions don't come because you completed the workout program. They come because you have a thought about it. And if you fuck up on the workout program and you create thoughts of I suck, you're not going to feel some awesome emotions out of that.

And here's the deal; I don't say - shouldn't be saying if you fuck up. I should be saying when you fuck up. It is really hard to be perfect with a workout routine because life. You're going to get sick, or there will be a crazy thunderstorm on your long run day, or your boss is going to make you stay late for work.

Or someday, you're going to wake up in the morning and just be tired as fuck and say screw it, I'm not going to do it. It's going to happen. This is not a matter of if you mess up. It's a matter of when. And I don't even - we say fuck it up, but really, it's just a choice.

You're going to have those days where you have to choose between, okay, I could either run in the thunderstorm to get my run in, or I can change to a different day. It's a choice. It's not that the weather derailed you. It's that you decided you didn't want to run in the weather and you modified your routine.

So take control of that. Your boss didn't screw up your running because he made you stay late. You chose to agree and say okay, my boss wants me to do this, I'm going to do it because I like my job, because I don't want to get fired. So take control of those choices instead of saying that I had no choice because the weather or my kid got sick or my boss is an asshole or whatever.

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Take control of those choices. But if you believe that you have to be perfect with your fitness routine, if you think that I have to do all these things and I can't miss a single workout, or it's all a waste of time, if that's what you believe, you're screwed. Because then you're like, oh well, I messed up, now I have to start all over, but first, I'm going to spend a couple weeks doing nothing and internally yelling at myself for being such a fuckup.

You know you've been there. So I want you to decide right now that you're not going to be perfect, you're not even close. Let's just be cool with that. I will never be perfect, it's just not possible, so I'm taking it off the table as a goal that's worth striving for. I don't even think it's worth going for. I mean, always, always set high standards for yourself, but don't use missing them as a reason to beat yourself up or an excuse to quit on yourself.

So number three on this step-by-step journey to restarting running is to take one workout at a time. In fact, if you used to run three times a week, I would start out and run twice a week. You're not going to put all the workouts back in your schedule all at once because again, that's like expecting perfection from yourself.

So let's start out with two workouts and let's get really comfortable with two runs a week, and then you can add that third run back in. Because here's the thing; if you really haven't been exercising for a few months, you're kind of like, your body is back in that beginner fitness state.

I mean, maybe not all the way back. But definitely in a place where you need to ease yourself in. So you're not just going to jump right back in and be back doing all the things. I want you to kind of set yourself up for success and maybe twice a week for the first couple weeks is your running goal. And then you can add that third one in.

So take one workout a time, at a time also. And don't compare your current performance to where you were a month ago or six months ago. You're

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going to be so tempted to do that, to say, “Look how much fitness I’ve lost,” and then you’re going to go right down that road of the yelling and the screaming at yourself, and that’s not helpful.

It’s going to make you feel terrible, and we know what happens when we get into that headspace, right? Every run feels terrible when you’re telling yourself a story about how you’ve lost all this fitness. You’re like, I’m so slow, it’s going to take forever to get back where I was, and then you feel discouraged.

And then of course you either skip running, procrastinate it, or half-ass it. And guess what, you don’t get to where you want to be any faster. It slows down your progress when you keep telling yourself I’ve lost so much fitness. So please, don’t get all wrapped around the axel comparing yourself to your prior performance.

Of course, you are not going to run as fast as you were before. You took time off and your body adapted to the lower training load. And this is how we create a neutral circumstance about our fitness level. When you increase your training, your body adapts to the extra needs. When you train less, your body adapts again. That is all it is. It is just biology.

You can tell yourself a story about losing fitness, but it’s not like you misplaced your fitness. It’s not like you’re like, what happened? Where did it go? Maybe it’s in the bedroom. No, your body just adapted to doing less. That is the circumstance.

When you say I’ve lost so much fitness, you feel defeated and then you don’t try very hard. You either skip it, procrastinate it, or half-ass it. But when you make it neutral, you’re like, oh, I was training less and my body adapted. Boom, done.

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When you say that, it's a neutral statement. It's factual. You can even say my training load before resulted in a VO2 max of X, and then after a few months of training less, my new VO2 max is this. You can even put numbers around it, but I just kind of like saying my body's adapted to doing less training than before because it's neutral.

And then I can look at it with curiosity instead of frustration. So there's a great quote that I don't know who said it. I wish I could find the original author so I could attribute it, but it's basically don't look back, you're not going that way. And it's true.

Because when you put your focus on where you used to be, you're not moving forward. You're stuck in the past. And I want you to put your thoughts on where you want to go. Not where you used to be. If you were able to do a half marathon in under three hours 10 years and 50 pounds ago, you might be tempted to say I want to get back to that.

But you can't because you're 10 years older, you can't go back in time. You can never get back to where you were because that's how time works. But you can become the best version of yourself right now and that might look different than it did before. Hell, it might even be stronger.

But I promise, if you keep saying I want to get back to where I was, you're going to stay stuck where you are right now. What you say to yourself about this stuff matters. The language you choose is important. So I want you to use words like I'm working towards this goal. Use forward-looking language that keeps you thinking about what you can create now instead of what you're trying to resurrect from your past. Got it?

Okay, so just to recap, when you are restarting running after some time off, I want you to start off by A, number one, let's not switch to letters, let's stick with the numbers. Number one, separate the facts from your story. And

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once you have the facts pulled out, then you can rewrite your story about those facts in a way that helps you.

Number two, avoid perfectionist fantasy workout routines. You're never going to be perfect so let's just move on. Let's just assume that we're going to fuck shit up and it's okay and it doesn't mean anything about us.

And then number three, I want you looking forwards, not backwards. Set future-focused goals to work towards instead of trying to re-achieve something you had in your past because the past is gone and you know what, it probably wasn't as awesome as you think it was. Let's set future forward-facing goals.

Now, if you are just starting out on your running journey, I want to encourage you to sign up for my free 30-day running start training plan. It's free and it's perfect for anyone who is either new to running or maybe coming back into it after several months off. So if you want to do it, just go to notyouraveragerunner.com to sign up.

If you know someone else who could use it, make sure to tell them about it. And that it is for this week. Okay? Okay. My friends, I love you, stay safe, get your ass out there and run and I will see 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.