

Ep #197: (Part 1) Are You Ready for Your First 5K?



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With Your Host

Jill Angie

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

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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. How are you doing? So I have been doing a lot of interviews lately here on the show, which has been awesome. Don't you just love hearing everyone's stories? I think it's so much fun to hear people's running stories and the challenges that they faced and how they've overcome them. It's just amazing.

But you know what, I've actually kind of missed our one-on-one time, so this week and next week, it's just you and me. So with summer rolling around and things opening up everywhere, there are actually a lot of races happening again. So exciting.

So I thought this would be the perfect time to dive into 5K training. And this is going to be the first of two parts for this topic. Part two comes out next week. And in the first episode here, we're going to get you in the perfect mindset to start training and picking a training plan. And then next week, we're going to dive into the nitty-gritty of actually how to prepare and run your best race.

Now, if you have started running but you have not done a 5K race yet, this is going to be the perfect episode for you, especially if you're kind of wondering if it's something you're even ready for, if it's something you should do at all. And that's a question I get asked all the time, so I'm going to answer all the commonly asked questions in this episode.

So first of all, if you have been considering a 5K, probably already been out there walking, maybe even running a little bit here and there, maybe you've even done a few training runs that are at three or 3.1 miles. So if you've

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been considering a 5K and you've been walking and doing a little bit of running, 3.1 miles which is the distance of a five kilometer race, is totally within your reach.

In fact, if you're able to walk continuously for an hour, you can do a 5K. If you're already run-walking three times a week, you can do a 5K. So if you're listening to this episode with that question in your mind, should I start training for a 5K? Can I really do it? Is this possible for me? Here's what I want you to know.

You can go the distance. It is not about that. What you are really asking is will I be the slowest person there? Will the other runners yell at me for taking walk breaks? Will I feel out of place, embarrassed, or uncomfortable? Will I come in last and then what happens?

So the true question is not whether you're ready to complete a 5K, but whether you are ready to claim your new identity as a runner, taking it public, letting the world know that you are part of this crazy ass sport, and proud of it.

So the truth is you might have to take some walk breaks and that's okay. And actually, that's the way I recommend that you approach it. The method I teach in the Rebel Runner Roadmap, it's a run-walk method, it's very powerful. If you want to know more about how to do the run-walk method, I recommend you check out episodes seven, 105, and 150 where I talk in detail about different aspects of run-walk.

So if you use a run-walk interval approach during your training and on race day, first of all, you're going to have an awesome race. And you're going to see that there's tons of other people doing the exact same thing. So if that's your first question, am I allowed to walk during a 5K, the answer is yes, I recommend it and I have a whole approach to teach you how to do it.

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Now, you might also be a little nervous thinking, “I don’t know if this is the right thing for me, I don’t belong with those people, I’m not one of those runner types, I’ve never been athletic.” You might feel nervous about that. And again, totally okay and really, really common. You’re trying out something brand new and that can be scary.

You’re going to have a million questions about what might happen. The human brain tends to go right to that worst-case scenario all the damn time, and then we freak out and we quit. So I want to talk about the worst-case scenarios like, let’s put them on the table. Let’s go there. Let’s say what if this really happens, what are we going to do?

Because I want to set your mind at ease that everything is going to be absolutely fine. So first worst-case scenario, you’re waiting for the race to start, you look around at everybody else in the corral, and the starting corral is just the word we use to describe the area where everybody hangs out before they say three, two, one, go.

So you’re looking around at everybody in the starting corral and you’re thinking I don’t belong here, everyone else looks like a runner, they don’t look nervous, and you’re thinking at some point, security is going to show up and drag me out. That’s one of our worst-case scenarios.

Security is going to drag me out, or somebody’s going to point at me and say, are you in the wrong place? The walkers are back there, somebody’s going to make fun of me. So we have all these thoughts about opinions that other people might have about what we look like and whether it looks like we belong there.

We feel nervous and we think I should probably not do this at all, because the worst thing that could happen is that somebody comes up to me and says you don’t belong here. So let’s just put this one to bed right away,

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because I promise you, if you paid your race fee, nobody's going to drag you away. If you paid your money, you belong.

Also, here's what happens when you are in that starting corral. You could smile at other people near you, tell them, "Hey, it's my first race and I'm a little nervous, do you have any tips for me?" And guess what, everybody is going to have tips for you because runners are awesome. They love to help newbies.

So if you look around and just pick a friendly looking face and say, hey, I'm a little nervous, it's my first race, what should I do? What's the best way to approach this race? They're going to have all kinds of tips for you. So worst-case scenario also, you speak to another runner in the starting corral and they just kind of give you a funny look and turn around because they're in their own head and they're trying to get themselves ready, that's the worst-case scenario. They don't speak back. Or maybe they smile and they nod and they say good luck. You're going to be fine.

So just remember, runners are awesome, they love to help people, you belong if you paid your race fee. And seriously, runners are super friendly too. During the race, say hi to people, make eye contact, don't hide in your hoodie and pretend to be invisible because your inner mean girl's going to have a field day with that.

She gets a lot quieter when you are interacting with other people and you can't hear her because you're listening to other people. So I want you to really hear me now. Make sure your inner mean girl is listening to me as well in this moment. You belong. Why? Because you share the desire to run or walk a 5K with the other people in the starting corral and the other people in the race. You belong.

Want to run a 5K? That's it. That's all it takes, you're in the club. Everybody there has the same goal and that goal is to cross the finish line and give

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their best effort. Really hear me on this. Everyone's goal in a 5K is identical. They want to cross the finish line and they want to do their best.

Finish times might be different between all the different people. But the spirit is the same. They want to do something that feels meaningful, something to be proud of, something that maybe even felt a little out of reach a few months back. That's it. Everyone at a 5K has the same goal, cross the finish line, do their best. You belong.

Now, second worst-case scenario that comes up sometimes is you're going to be the only one doing run-walk intervals and you might get in trouble for doing it. So first of all, there will definitely be other people doing run-walk. I promise you this. There might even be a lot of people doing it.

If you're in a 5K with me, you'll definitely have at least one other person doing it. Now, some of the run-walkers might be doing it a little differently than you. They might be doing a different ratio of running to walking, they might just run as far as they can and walk to catch their breath and then start running again, which by the way, I do not recommend that as a strategy. It's very tiring.

But I promise, there will be others doing run-walk and guess what? Nobody and I am pretty sure this has never happened in the history of 5Ks, nobody has ever been kicked out of the race for walking. It's just not a thing. Even in the Olympics, they don't get kicked out of the race for walking.

So you can do run-walk, you can show up to your race and you can do run-walk, you won't be the only one, you're not going to get into trouble, it's totally allowed. So if you're doing that run-walk method for your first 5K, again, you're going to be pleasantly surprised. You're not going to get any funny looks. Nobody's going to kick you out.

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And by the way, if you do run-walk for your first 5K, you're going to have a better experience to be honest. You're not going to feel panicky; you're going to be like, of course I can do this for 3.1 miles, no problem. You're going to be in a totally different brain space than if you're thinking, oh my god, I can't walk, I can't walk, I can't walk. Then you're panicking and freaking out, and the next thing you know, your brain is like, we can't do it, we should quit, we should go home.

So worst-case scenario number three, let's talk about the elephant in the room. This is what everybody asks. What happens if I'm last? Or close to last, but really, what happens if I'm last? Everybody envisions this being the worst possible thing that could happen during a 5K is that you're the last person to cross the finish line.

A lot of people have this fear. They're like, the world is going to end if I come in last. And I know I'm overdramatizing it, but seriously, you all know if you've had this thought that it feels really big and scary in your brain. What you're actually afraid of is how you're going to feel if you come in last.

And you might think that you're going to feel embarrassed, or ashamed, or defeated. You're like, oh my god, I cannot bear to feel that way, that would be the worst thing ever. And seriously hear yourself. You're like, I could come in last and it would be the worst thing ever if I felt embarrassed or ashamed.

I could think of way worse things to happen than you coming in last in a race and feeling bad about it. A lot of worse things. And there's a lot of amazing things that you could believe about coming in last in a race.

But here's the thing; again, you're not afraid of coming in last. You're afraid of how you will think and feel if that happens. But all of the feelings that we experience in our lives are determined by our thoughts and those thoughts are where we have choices.

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So if you come in last in the race and I've been last before, didn't die, promise, did not die, didn't die of shame, didn't melt away, it's because of the thoughts that I had about it. So if you come in last, you're going to have thoughts about it.

And if you think, "Hey, I finished, I'm amazing," you're going to feel pretty proud, accomplished, kind of badass. If you choose to think, "Oh, I came in last, I suck, everyone is laughing at me," you are going to feel embarrassed, ashamed, defeated.

Coming in last doesn't make you feel bad. It is your opinion about what it means to come in last that makes you feel that way. And this is where managing your inner mean girl is so important, and we talked about her in episode nine. So if you haven't listened to that episode, take a ride in the way back machine and make sure you check that one out.

Because whether or not anyone actually is laughing you, and they're not by the way, but even if they were, it's irrelevant. And most of the time, again, people are thinking that you're pretty awesome, but that's irrelevant too. Whether people think you suck, whether people think you're amazing, none of that makes you feel anything about yourself. It's your thought process, it's your belief system that creates the feelings.

And when you are thinking mean thoughts about yourself, you are literally causing yourself pain. It is not other people and what they think. It is your assumption about what other people think. It is your beliefs about yourself that are causing you pain.

And here's the other thing; other people and their imaginary opinions that we don't even know, we just assume that they're making these thoughts about us, you're literally letting the imaginary thoughts of strangers make you feel like shit. It's crazy.

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You're like, oh, that stranger is probably having a thought, I better feel bad about it. No, that's no fun. So I want you to repeat after me. I get to decide how I feel no matter what the circumstance is. I get to decide how I feel. I get to decide how I feel.

In fact, you are the only person who gets to decide that for real. You get to decide and it starts with how you think about yourself. So, what do you want to believe about your running? Do you want to believe that you're a failure? That you're not good enough? That you should just stay home? I do not think so. That doesn't sound like fun at all.

Or do you want to believe that you're amazing and courageous and kind of rebellious? Because you're out there doing your thing, giving it all you've got, disrupting the entire fitness industry by showing that you don't have to be a size six to run. Let's choose that. Personally, that would be my choice.

Because it means I don't have to fit into anyone's standard size or pace or anything like that to feel good. It takes practice but I promise, you can start believing that way too. And this is why when someone asks me if I think they're ready for a 5K, I always, always say yes. Not a question of whether you can finish the race but rather what your experience will be like.

And 80% of that experience starts in your brain. 20% of that is actual training. So decide when you want to run your first 5K. Think about it. When do I want to run my first 5K? Make a decision. Then decide in advance what you want to believe about it no matter what. Even if you come in dead last.

Decide right now that you're going to believe some pretty awesome shit about yourself and then start practicing it. And then once you've made that decision, you're like, I'm going to run a 5K in September, I'm going to feel proud of it regardless of my performance, I'm going to feel really badass

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and proud, once you've made those decisions, the next step is to find a training plan.

There are hundreds, probably thousands of them out there. You can get books or apps. Sometimes when you sign up for a race, they'll give you a training plan along with it. Lots of local clubs will also have in-person 5K training groups or you can run with other people.

So when you're deciding which plan to use, I'm going to give you a bunch of things here to consider. So the very first thing to consider is your current running pace.

So many training plans, such as a Couch to 5K app assume you're going to be running a 10-minute mile or faster. And so those plans train you to do a 5K in about 30 minutes, which is a great goal, nothing wrong with that goal. The problem is that these plans are only eight weeks long or sometimes only six weeks long.

And that means if you're currently doing 30 second run, 60 second walk, and you're going at maybe a 15-minute per mile pace, it's extremely unlikely that you're going to be doing a 5K in 30 minutes in two months. It's not that it's impossible, it's just not very likely.

And so you go through the Couch to 5K training plan, you get to week three or week four, suddenly it's too hard, and you quit and you give up and you think oh, something's wrong, I couldn't keep up with the plan. I'm like, no, that just wasn't the right plan for you.

Now, if you're listening to this and you're currently able to run a 10-minute mile or faster pace, Couch to 5K might be a great choice for you. It's definitely convenient. But for the majority of you that are listening that are not doing a 10-minute mile, let's find you a training plan that works.

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So here's what I want you to look for. At least eight weeks, maybe even 12 weeks. And this is really important. Especially if right now you can't or not that you can't, but you're not currently doing three miles at least once a week.

So if you're not currently doing at least three miles, three miles at least once a week, you might want a 12-week program. But there's nothing wrong with taking a little bit longer to train. It just means you're going to ease into it slowly and you're going to have a much lower chance of getting injured.

So number one is eight to 12-week training plan. Number two, you want a training plan that has you running for three miles once a week at least in the month leading up to the race. And when I say running three miles, I mean run-walking three miles.

You also want a training plan that doesn't tell you how fast to run. Because the training plan is there for you, it is not there to tell you how fast you should be running. It's there to help you get to the distance.

So training plan without a pace requirement, a training plan that does not have you running more than four times per week. And honestly, I'd rather see you run three times a week, but I know some of you are like, "But I want to run more." Four times a week max, three times a week is actually ideal for beginning runners in my opinion.

Now, if this training plan is part of a local training group where you're going to run in person, this is really important. You need to ask a lot of questions. Make sure they have a plan in place for slower runners. Will there be somebody running at the back of the training pack, making sure that nobody gets left behind? Will the rest of the group wait until you are done?

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These are important questions to ask because so often, these in-person 5K groups say they're beginner friendly but what they really mean is hey, if you can do a 12-minute mile you'll be fine, but we're not going to deal with anybody that's running slower than that.

So there are so many women that miss out on this kind of a local training group, or they show up to this kind of a training group, they do one training run. And everybody else is finishing 10, 15 minutes faster than them, and then they feel discouraged and they quit.

So make sure you ask a lot of questions if you're going to sign up for a local group. And by the way, side note, this is why it is so important for all of you to get out there and run in public, to show up at races, to represent that not every runner is a size six and not every runner can do a 5K in under 30 minutes.

Claim your place at the starting line. Show people what courage and commitment looks like in all shapes, sizes, and ages. Become a Rebel runner, my friends. But I digress a little.

So that's everything that you're looking for in a training plan. And now, a few times a year, I actually open up the Rebel Runner Roadmap, which is my 30-day learn to run class. And in that program, I do get you set up to train for a 5K.

So if you haven't taken this class, make sure you get on the waitlist for that program. You can go to rebelrunnerroadmap.com and then just put your name and email in there and you'll be on the waitlist. And as soon as it opens again, you'll get an email to let to know that it's ready.

The next opening for the Rebel Runner Roadmap class is August 2021. So about two months from now. There are also plenty of great books out there that will serve this need for you. And in particular, I recommend my book.

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It's called Not Your Average 5K. You can get it on Amazon, and you can get the Kindle version or the print version.

And there are two plans in that book, depending on your current fitness level that can be modified as necessary. Now, I'm not aware of any good apps out there right now that meet the requirements, the training plan requirement that I have above. It's kind of depressing honestly.

It doesn't mean that they're not out there. I just haven't found out yet. But if you know of one, please let me know. And at some point in the future, I will be creating a Not Your Average Runner app. It's coming. But for right now, find yourself a training plan that meets all the guidelines I just talked about and you'll be in great shape.

Alright my friends, next week we're going to dive into the nuts and bolts of 5K training and how you can get the most out of it so you are completely prepared on race day. Are you excited? I'm excited. Okay Rebels, 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.