

Ep #202: The Science Behind Running Easy with Denny Krahe



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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.

Jill: Hey Rebels, so I have a super fun guest for you this week. I'm here with Denny Krahe of Diz Runs. And he was actually on the podcast almost three years to the day from when we are recording this. So you were one of my very first guests actually, you were Episode 15. And I'm super excited that that Denny's back to talk about everything that's happened with him in the meantime. And we actually have some really good conversation planned for you today.

But last time we talked Denny had just released his book *Be Ready On Race Day*. And so I do kind of want to talk about that a little bit and hear a little bit more about how that's going. But before we dive into any of that, thanks again for joining me today. I'm so glad you're back.

Denny: Oh, well thanks for thanks for having me, Jill. It's always a good time to reconnect a little bit, talk some shop, and hopefully have a good time along the way.

Jill: Yeah. And I was kind of like- I put up transcripts of all the episodes and I was reading through the transcript from our last episode. And one thing that stood out to me is I remember we talked about how you run and see alligators almost all the time when you run. That brought back so many good memories. I'm like, "Oh, that was a really fun conversation."

But I do want to kind of talk about your book because it had just been released way back when. But it's like such a phenomenal idea that I don't

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think anybody else is doing in the run coaching business. So can you talk a little bit about that and how it's evolved over the past three years?

Denny: Yeah, absolutely. The idea of the book, for those that missed our first go around a few years ago is that basically it's kind of the framework for what I do as a coach and probably pretty similar to what you do as well, Jill, for putting a plan together for people that we're working with. Whether it's a group, whether it's an individual, whatever the case might be, kind of, you know, here are the steps.

But instead of me necessarily doing it for you and then saying, "Here's the plan at the end." It's like, "Here are the steps. And now you do what you need to do to put the plan together that's right for you." Because, you know, I'm just not the biggest fan of one size fits all. I don't feel like it's an accurate statement. I don't feel like one size fits all in any area of life, whether we're talking run coaching, training for a race, clothes, foods, diets, I mean, whatever. One size doesn't really fit all in any area.

So the idea that most of the books out there about how to run this race, that race, whatever, tend to have, "Here's the plan." And a lot of times those are great starting points, but there's always these little tweaks, those little adjustments that - maybe not always, most of the time need to be made.

And so I tried to write a book that kind of helped say, "Whether you're starting from scratch or whether you're starting with a framework, here's how to tweak it, here's how to adjust it. Here's how to really make it your own so that it's your plan, not just a plan." Which hopefully is helpful for most runners.

Jill: Well, I mean, it's helpful on many, many levels, but some of the conversations I've been having with people lately are, you know, "Oh, I'm

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doing this training plan and I just found that, I don't know, week seven was actually really too hard for me and I couldn't do it. And so I quit and I'm just not going to do anything." And I think with the tools that you teach in your book, that doesn't have to happen.

Denny: Yeah, that's certainly the goal, you know, just to empower somebody. Especially newer runners, especially folks that maybe haven't trained for a half marathon before, a marathon before. Whatever distance, I mean, it really applies to just about any type of distance. But to not feel like you're stuck on, "This is the projection. This is the timeline."

And if I did struggle or if life happened, I got sick, or I got a vaccine and that threw me out for a couple of days Or you know, work got crazy and all of a sudden like, "I missed a couple of runs and should I move forward with the next week's plan? Or should I..." You know, just kind of trying to answer some of those questions. And again, just empower somebody to be like, "All right, look, I need to adjust, I need to tweak a little bit."

Because as I say, more often than not life is going to life. Life happens to all of us in some form or fashion at various points along the way. And so we just got to be able to adjust and adapt and be comfortable with doing that. As opposed to like, "Oh no, I missed this week, what am I going to do?" Well, you tweak it, you adjust it. And it's probably not going to be the end of the world that you missed that week as long as you can stay on track and keep moving forward.

Jill: Right, right, instead of like if you miss a week, don't make it mean that you're going to fail and then turn it into missing six weeks. Missing a week, I mean I can tell you there's been plenty of races where I've missed a week or missed a long run that was somewhat important. And lo and behold, still finished the race.

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So I love that you have created this tool for people. And even when you are coaching a client, even when somebody that you're working with, empowering them to make some decisions for themselves on the fly. I think, you know, first of all, it strengthens your relationship with that client, because you're sort of empowering them like, "No, you don't need to ask me every little thing." You teach them the why of the training and then they're going to get so much out of it.

But yeah, I've never seen that done in any other running book. And I'm just so glad that you put it together for people because I think it's powerful.

Denny: Oh, thank you, I appreciate that. It's good to hear that as well. Because, you know, sometimes you wonder, right? You put the book out there and you hope it helps. And glad to hear that you think that it's a good idea. So I appreciate that.

Jill: Yeah, for sure. So we agree on a lot, I think we have very similar coaching philosophies, which is super fun because we kind of coach different populations of people. Because I think whether you are a plus size, or whether you're an elite runner, or anywhere in between, we all still have the same mental BS, right?

Denny: Oh yeah.

Jill: That's just a human thing, it really doesn't matter. But you use some techniques that I think are really cool that you work with your clients on. And one is this concept of effort-based training and heart rate training. And I would love to kind of dive in and have a conversation about that.

And maybe what does that mean to you? And maybe for anybody who's listening that's like, "Heart rate training, what's that? Or effort based

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training, what's that?" If you could maybe explain a little bit about it and talk about your approach.

Denny: Sure, happy to do that. And this is probably one of those terms that different coaches, different folks, everybody that kind of follows this is going to have a little different tweak, a little different way of going about it. But for me effort-based training is kind of the general umbrella to where instead of focusing on maybe pace for every workout, and we're trying to do X number of miles at a certain pace limit. It's more about how hard do you feel like you're working?

And my kind of philosophy, and there's some pretty good science, I think, that backs this up is the idea of kind of training at a relatively "easy level". Which doesn't just mean easy, but metabolically easy, or based on level of kind of how hard your body is working. Which I tend to prefer monitoring that by heart rate. It's just kind of a pretty good way of making sure that you're not working too hard.

Because sometimes, and this is something that's, I think, pretty common in the running world. What we think is easy and what feels easy, isn't always easy to our body based on just how hard our body is working. And sometimes I think that kind of stems back to the idea of kind of no pain no gain, and if you're not working real hard it's not really beneficial. You're not getting as much out of it as you could be if you were working harder.

And certainly for like endurance sports for, you know, you're talking about a half marathon, a marathon, you're going to be out there for three hours, four hours, five hours. Whatever the case might be, it's not all about just going as hard as you can go for three hours or four hours. That's a sure fire way to not have a good race. That's a sure fire way to blow up, to feel

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miserable, to not have a great day. Versus finding that level where you can just kind of cruise.

And so when you're training by effort or when you're training by heart rate, below a certain level, again, where I would call it kind of "easy" what you're really focused on is building your aerobic system. Really building your kind of base of fitness. Which, again, you know, painting with a broad brush but a lot of runners don't have as well of a developed aerobic system as they could because they're training too hard all the time. Or they're training kind of more moderate.

They're kind of in that middle ground where it's not really hard, but it's not really easy. It's just kind of that that gray middle ground area that doesn't build the aerobic system as much so that when you do go for a walk long run or when you do go on race day it's a lot more difficult to maintain the effort from start to finish. You kind of fade, you have a tendency to fade at the end because you start to run out of fuel, you start to run on fumes towards the end.

Even if you're supplementing with, you know, even if you're fueling during the run. It's just kind of your aerobic system is tapped out, versus if you really build that aerobic base in theory, and what I've seen somewhat in practice, although it's not perfect, but you're able to almost even get faster. But if not at least maintain all the way through. Which is a weird feeling when you feel like you should be fading and you look down at your watch at mile 24 and you're like, "Oh crap, we're actually doing all right. Like we're actually maybe getting a little bit faster at this point of the marathon." It's an interesting feeling, or it's an odd feeling the first time that happens.

But, you know, again, going back to effort-based training. It's hard to wrap your head around this idea that like I can run at, you know, whatever pace.

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Like for me it's usually like 10 minute pace, plus or minus 30 seconds. But on race day I can run it sub nine minute pace, 8:30 pace, eight minute pace even for some of the shorter, you know, for like a half marathon. Which for me would be shorter, a shorter race would be like a half marathon. Even though I rarely run that pace on race day.

So it's kind of mental gymnastics to get there, but the science is strong. And just building that aerobic base is great for injury prevention, great for endurance building. It's just a really overlooked and powerful thing.

Jill: Well, and I think to me it's kind of a relief to think, "Oh, I don't need to train at my race pace, all the time." Because race pace feels, you know, it's challenging because you're thinking, "All right, I want to do my best in this race." But when you think about training, like doing all of your miles at that pace, that is really hard on the body. So it's kind of a relief to know, "Oh, I can actually train at a pace that feels comfortable and almost like a cruise control, and still see some really great benefits on race day."

Denny: And I definitely used to do that, kind of be of that thought, that mindset of you got to be pushing hard, maybe not every run, but most runs. And really, you know, if I wasn't running at nine minute pace, or 8:45, or something like that, it was like, "What is even the value of being out here?"

And now, other than when I do a workout, because I still do hard workouts or speed workouts, whatever on occasion. But now unless I'm doing one of those I rarely am, you know, 9:15, 9:30 would be kind of a, "Wow, all right, things are going pretty good today, the heart rate was staying down and we were moving all right."

But as long as my heart rate is where I want it, I don't worry about my pace anymore. And that's really kind of what I try to encourage my athletes that I

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coach to focus a bit more on. And some are a little bit harder to come around. The buy in sometimes is a little bit slower for some than others. But I think long term it's the best way.

Now, if you're just trying to maximize everything for your race in two months or three months, then you're not going see as much progress in that amount of time. But if you're talking, you know, I want to be getting faster for two years, three years, five years down the road, I don't know, I think it's the slowest but steadiest way to really kind of make the progress that a lot of folks are looking for.

Jill: I love that. So you mentioned that you have heart rate, you know, ranges for yourself that you like to apply to your workouts. How did you come up with those? Because I look at the heart rate charts, and I think I regularly exceed what's recommended for my age, like all the time. And I don't feel uncomfortable with that.

So my brain is like, "Oh, I think that the heart rate charts might not necessarily be accurate for everyone." So how do you decide what your zones are or what your ranges are for various types of workouts?

Denny: Yeah, this is one of those areas where, again, you're going to have different metrics, different ranges, different definitions, and sometimes I think this is where we make it more complicated. You know, like the more complicated the formula in theory, the more accurate it's going to be. But then you're just stuck doing all kinds of complicated math. And like I'm a math guy, but I'm also a keep it simple, stupid kind of guy.

So the formula that I use is really basic. It's kind of pioneered or put to the forefront by Phil Maffetone who is kind of the heart rate training guru. He started more to focus, I think, on kind of triathlons but it works well for

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running as well. And it's just simply 180 minus your age is the basic formula.

So I'm 39 - And what that formula tells you, I guess to back that up, is kind of where about your body switches over from getting all your energy demands aerobically to starting to become more anaerobic.

So if you're below that number, in theory, and again, there's a little bit of wiggle room but you're going to be pretty close here. Below that number means that you're basically exclusively working aerobically. So that's fat burning zone, that's aerobic energy production zone. Again, in theory, the kind of pace that you could pretty much just go all day and never run out of fuel. Now, you might run out of muscular endurance, like you might fade and not be able to go all day. But from an energy production standpoint you can just cruise.

And so like I said, for me I'm 39. So my number is 180 minus 39. 141 beats per minute and as long as my heart rate is staying below that, in theory, I'm in the aerobic zone. And there's some wiggle room in there as well, as far as, you know, if you're coming off an injury, if you're coming off of an illness. If you've been running for a while and healthy you can add beats or subtract beats and still theoretically be in those zones.

But I just keep it simple. Like I'm either below 141 and I'm running easy, I'm running aerobic. Or I'm intentionally going above 141 for a workout, or if I start trickling into 142, 143 it's time to slow it down. You know, maybe take a walk break or maybe just back off the pace a little bit and let my heart rate come back down so that I stay aerobic for an aerobic or base building type of run.

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But you can get crazy with it. I know that there's different zone methods where it says zone one, zone two, zone three, zone four, zone five, and it's all these different ranges that are all plugged into some type of formula based on how old you are, or maximum heart rates, or things like that. But most heart rate training methods, whatever you kind of apply it to kind of get to what you were saying, Jill, where it's like, oh my gosh, your heart rate gets above the limit pretty quickly.

Jill: Yeah.

Denny: At least it can. You know, when I first started this, gosh, probably three, three and a half years ago. I mean I think I was probably doing this, kind of getting into it when we first talked a few years ago. I mean, I was before that, like I said, running a nine minute pace thinking that was easy. I started doing heart rate stuff and it was like 11 minute, 11:30. Every once in a while, it would be like 10:45 and I was like, "Yeah, we're moving today. I'm under 11 minute pace for my runs."

And then it's just over the years it's just slowly kept ticking away as the aerobic base, the efficiency, the endurance starts to improve. You know, pretty soon everything was below 11. And pretty soon we're getting closer to 10 minutes most of the time. And now we're kind of in that, you know, 9:45, range to 10 minute range most days.

But it's been a slow progression. But that's kind of the science behind it or at least that's some of the basic science and that's how I figured out my zone is just 180 minus age. And I get people that push back and go, "Well, you know, if I did this formula, I could be six beats higher." It's like, "Well, okay, if you want to split the hairs, whatever."

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But just run easy. And I'm not even at 141 most of the time, like I'm mid-130s, maybe 120s. You know, like just cruising, having a good time, easy peasy. Just getting my miles in and enjoying the time out there without stressing about breathing hard or working too hard or things like that, just cruise.

Jill: I love that. And we talked yesterday just about the reasons why you run and especially now how important it is to kind of find those reasons for training that have nothing to do with doing well in a race because there are no races. And so if you have that just simple joy of movement, just getting out there cruising, enjoying the miles, relaxing, I think it probably feels good to train this way rather than -

Let me back it up a little bit. I'm a little curious, when you started using this method and you went from pushing yourself like, "I got to run a nine and a half minute mile or an eight and a half minute mile." To, "All right, I'm just going to let my heart rate tell me the pace." What kind of thoughts were going through your mind when suddenly you're running an 11 minute mile during your training, whereas previously you would have been running faster?

Denny: It was a little bit of a hit to the ego. It was a lot of bit of a hit to the ego, let's not kid ourselves. You know, Strava and Instagram and all those places where all of a sudden it's like, "Oh, all right. Well, this is what it's going to be." It was a lot of questioning.

And it was kind of a, I don't know, it wasn't necessarily an angel and a devil situation, but it was like you read some books. You look at some of the research. You look at some of the case studies. You look at some of the science behind all these folks, whether it's elites, whether it's "regular

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people” whatever, that have embraced heart rate training, running easy, and they're still able to race fast.

And you talk about elites and Olympic level athletes even where it's like they're still at the top of the sport. And now their easy might be different, you know, their easy might be seven minute pace. But when they can go down and throw down for 4 minute and 40 second per mile at the marathon, like seven minute pace, yeah, that's probably pretty easy for them.

But when you look at some of the training logs and things like that, and you're like, “All right, well, this makes sense. At least it looks like it should work.” But then you get out there and you're running at 11 minute pace, and you have to walk at 11 minute paces to keep your heart rate under the certain zone.

And you're like, “Well, gosh, I'm trying to -” You know, at that point it's like I'd never broken for hours in the marathon. It's like, “Well, you know, to do that, I've got to be at 9:05, 9:06 pace and here I am, I can't even run at 11 minute pace. How am I going to get to where I'm running a sub four hour marathon? How am I going to get to where I can run even a nine minute pace with my heart- Like it's not happening.”

And so you start to question like, “Can I maintain speed? Am I going to get slower? Am I going to slow way down by running easy all the time?” And for lack of a better way of saying like, no, you're not. And maybe if I was worried about my 100 meter dash speed, like, yeah, I might be a touch slower in the 100 meter dash. I'm still not setting any records in the 100 meter dash either way, but my top end sprint speed might be just a touch lower. But you don't run your top end sprint speed in a marathon. Like you

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don't even run your top end sprint speed in a 5k. Like just physiologically that doesn't work.

So it's like I kind of wrestled with it enough. But then I settled on, all right, if I get a few seconds slower in the 100 meter dash, but that gets me a minute faster in the marathon, that's a tradeoff I'm willing to make. And then it was just a matter of putting it through the paces.

So I committed to a year when I started. After interviewing some people on the show and reading some books about it and whatnot I said, "All right, I'm going to do this for a year." And of course, I used the podcast as my accountability. I broadcast it, I announced it, I said anywhere that anybody would have cared, I said, "I'm going to do this for a year. I'm going to report back and let you know how it goes."

And I figured I'd probably have a good idea in a few months, but at least a year would give me a good college try, right? If it doesn't work in a year, then I'm not going to stick with it.

And so I started in December of 2017. And then I signed up for a trail half marathon in the early part of February of 2018. And so I did nothing but easy runs for those two months leading up to the half marathon. And then I just kind of said, "Well, let's see what happens."

At that point, I don't remember exactly when, but I mean, it was 147, 145 was kind of a recent-ish half marathon that I had run on the road. So I knew it wasn't going to translate exactly to the trail. But like I said, "Well, if I can come in under two hours. Like that would be like, that's kind of my hope. I hope I can run at least a two hour half marathon."

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Not worrying about the heart rate for that day, like just going to run, listen to my body, kind of push as I felt able. And I actually like came in at 155. Like 155 flat, it was like exactly 155. But no real push at the end. Actually, my daughter who was like four at the time actually ran the last 100 yards with me. So instead of sprinting to get under 155 it was like, you know, hand in hand with a four year old or three year old, I guess at the time to cross the finish line. Which that was cool in and of itself. I mean, what a great opportunity, great memory that was.

But it was just like, “Wow, 155.” I didn't feel like I ran hard. I didn't feel like I really pushed that much. And that was when I was like, “All right, maybe there really is some proof to the pudding here.”

Jill: Yeah.

Denny: And by the time the year came up I was in. Like this is working, it's working slowly, but it's working. And it's just kind of, you know, since then the two and a half years or so since then it's just continued to slowly but surely, tick tick tick in the right direction as far as maintaining faster paces at lower levels of heart rate. And who knows where it'll stop.

At some point father time is going to catch up to me, and I'm not going to probably keep getting faster at lower levels of heart rate. And I'm going to keep getting older so my heart rate, you know, 180 minus age is going to keep ticking in that direction. But I mean, I'm not saying I'll never change off of it. But until something new comes out, some new method, I'm in on it for myself. It's just it works.

Jill: I love that. And I think the message that I'm getting loud and clear from you too, is that this is a long term commitment. This isn't like, “Oh, I've got a

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half marathon in three months and oh shit, I might not make the cut off. So I got to figure out a way to get faster.”

This isn't going to make you faster in three months, it's a long term commitment. And you have to be willing to maybe be slower in the short term so that you can reap the benefits off the back end.

Denny: Yeah, absolutely. And again, it doesn't mean that you can't run harder once in a while. In fact you should run harder once in a while. You should do some hard workouts or some hard intervals or things like that. But yeah, in terms of progress, short term versus long term, like if you're going to do heart rate training, again, any type of effort. I always kind of default to heart rate but there's different methods.

But if you're going to do anything effort based you've got to have the long term view in mind. Otherwise, you'll just be frustrated as hell when when you feel like you've made zero progress in six weeks or eight weeks or whatever. Because it does, it takes time. It takes time and consistency. And I mean just like progress with running anyway, but it really takes time and consistency to see substantial improvements.

Jill: I love that. But I think that kind of leads me into the next question that I want to talk about is one of your training philosophies is focusing on what you need to do for you and not trying to do something that other people are doing just because it's, I don't know, because everybody on Instagram is trying it or whatever.

So can you speak more to that as a coach and just as a runner yourself? Like what does that mean to you? That focus on what's important for you versus trying to keep up with other people.

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Denny: You know, I struggle with social media lately. I enjoy it for the interaction ability, but I struggle with it. And even though I know better, but it's like you start scrolling and you're seeing stuff and you're like, "Damn, I wish I could do that." Or "Oh, I wish I had time to do this." Or "Oh, this would be a cool thing."

Like whether it's running, whether it's business, whether it's promotion, like whatever it is, it's just, you see all the things, it's so easy to get distracted, or you start comparing yourself. And, you know, I'm sure everybody's kind of heard the idea of social media is everybody else's highlight reel, and behind the scenes you're comparing it to your blooper reel to everybody else's highlight reel.

And so it's just like, you know, when you start focusing on workouts that other people are doing or paces that other people are, distances, or whatever, you're looking at what other people are doing and you don't get the full picture, right? You don't you don't see that this person has been- You know, you look at me, all right, not that I'm anything worth looking at. But you look at my stuff on social media, my paces or whatever, you're like, "Oh, wow. Today's run was whatever, 9:45." But it's taken me three and a half years to get there.

But if you just started with heart rate training, you're looking at me as some type of inspiration, you're like, "Well shoot, I wish I was running at 9:45 pace or whatever." Well give it three years and maybe you will, maybe you won't be. But give it three years and you're going to see progress from where you are today.

And so I just I just struggle with the social media side of things, playing the comparison game, not recognizing that like, "Oh, this person has run, whatever, 60 half marathons. Like I've run one." So clearly, there's a

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different level of experience, there's a different level of amount of training that has gone in over the years to get to that point.

But you don't realize that when you just see their posts of like, "Had a terrible day in the half marathon today. I ran two hours and six minutes, and it was the worst half I've run in three years." Well, if you just ran your first half marathon in three hours and four minutes, like you're like, "Well, God, I wish I had a terrible day that was two hours and six minutes."

But again, that's your real life and that's their kind of highlight reel, or like maybe that's their blooper reel. But it just doesn't relate, it's not an apples to apples type of comparison. And, you know, when you get too caught up in what other people are doing, or paying too much attention, or putting too much weight in this person's workout, or this person's training philosophy, or this person's race results or whatever, it's kind of cherry picking and you're not getting the full picture.

So see, I don't remember exactly what the question was. As per usual, I get flapping at the yap and kind of lose track of what I'm trying to say. But that's where kind of comparing to other people can get me in trouble and I know it can get other people in trouble too, where it's like, "Oh, so and so did this, why can't I?" Well, because you're running, you know, 20 miles a week, and they're running 80 miles a week. So there's a little bit of difference in level of fitness, body adaptability, things like that, that it's easy to lose sight of when you're just seeing the Instagram posts or the splits on Strava, or whatever it might be.

Jill: Right. And I see this a lot in one of the Facebook groups that I run that somebody will complain that they had a bad run and they'll say, "Oh, it took me 30 minutes to do my 5k." And then there'll be all these people saying

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like, “You should be proud of that because it takes me 45 minutes to finish a 5k.”

And it's exactly what you said like, “Okay, yeah, but maybe that person normally runs a 20 minute 5k. And so they know like something's not right, and they're not feeling good about it.” And I think we just kind of believe that if somebody is doing something better than us, then they have no room to complain. When in reality, hey, you know what? We all get to complain. We're allowed to complain about whatever we want.

And it actually brings to mind have you read the book; I think it's called Tipping Point by Malcolm Gladwell. And he talks about like we see the end product of somebody's hard work and they say, you know, to make somebody into like a genius or a virtuoso, I think it's like 10,000 hours of work. And so all you see is, you know, Bill Gates making the first PC or whatever. And nobody realizes how much time he spent working on that.

So, yes, there are people out there that are naturally gifted runners. Maybe their body geometry is put together just right, their mitochondria are- But just because you're gifted at something doesn't mean that you haven't put in hours and hours and hours of work to hone your craft.

And yeah, I think sometimes that gets lost on social media, that all we see is the result. And we're like, “Oh, it's not fair. Why can't I have that?” And it's like, “Okay, well go put your 10,000 hours in, and then we'll talk.”

Denny: Right. Well, and everything's relative too, so what's fast to me is absolutely slow to somebody else. And what's slow to me is fast to somebody else, and long and short. And all those things, it's all a sliding scale.

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And again, on social media you start to compare, “Oh, well, I'm not as good as so and so because they're doing X, Y, Z.” Well, no. For me at least, the only comparison really is myself. Like am I moving in the right direction toward my goals compared to where I was six months ago? 12 months ago? If so, onward and upward. If not, what needs to be fixed?

But the more time I spend on social media, the more time it's like, “Oh, well they've made progress quicker.” Or whatever, you start playing that comparison game and that's just not beneficial on any front.

Jill: It'll take a runner down fast.

Denny: Yeah, it really will. It really will.

Jill: It really will, yeah. So I'd like to switch gears a little bit and kind of dive into cross training, and injuries, and sort of that genre. And specifically, I'd love to know your thoughts on what do you consider cross training? What do you consider like the best cross training for runners? How do you fit that into an injury prevention plan? I know that was a lot of a question to ask.

Denny: Cross training is one of- I kind of smiled when you asked what is cross training. Because I'm guilty of this too, I'm absolutely guilty of using cross training as kind of a catch all term. And for some people cross training is everything. It's strength training, it's yoga, it's foam rolling, it's other aerobics stuff, so it's biking, swimming, whatever.

I think for me I try to define cross training as a cardiovascular focused activity that's not running. So it's the elliptical, it's the stairs, it's swimming, it's rowing. You know, it's the bike, it's all of those types of things. Strength training is different. Recovery stuff, yoga, foam rolling, that stuff is different.

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They're all kind of under the, I call them the little things. All kind of supportive stuff for running.

But to me cross training is aerobic. And it really is one of those things where when you're talking to runners, we like to run. Like that's kind of what we probably would prefer to do over just about anything else, at least when it comes to exercise. Or at least when it comes to aerobic exercise.

So the idea of like give up a run to get on the bike, or to get in the pool, or to, you know, go rollerblading or whatever is like, well, yeah, I'm sure it would probably be good. And it's not going to hurt me, it's going to help my aerobic system, but I really would rather go for a run.

But the reason it's important is let's not kid ourselves, running is a contact sport. It might not be a contact sport like we think of in terms of lacrosse, or hockey, or football, or any of those types of other sports where it's slamming and really like collision sports.

But every time your foot hits the ground when you're running, I believe the numbers say that it's like the force of four times your body weight on that one single leg. On your knee, on your lower leg, on your ankle, on your foot, every time your foot hits the ground. And depending on how much I trust my app on my phone, I go for a six mile run in the morning, that's 10,000 steps. So that's, you know, do the math on that four times my body weight with each of those steps, like that's a lot of force.

And so if you're not careful, and especially when you're new to the sport and your body is kind of adapting to the demands, and the wear and tear, and the pounding of running, it's real easy to do too much too quickly. Or to think you're not doing too much but it just accumulates over time. You start

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to get these were and tears, stress fractures, which would be kind of the worst end of things.

But like plantar fasciitis, shin splints, IT bands, some of those more common running injury type of things that don't really show up from any one day, but just three or four times a week you're running, you're getting all these miles in and it's just the pounding, the wear and tear, and they start to develop.

So cross training is a good tool to still get some of the benefits, still get a lot of the benefits of training. To still work your aerobic system, to still work your body, to break a sweat, you know, whatever goals that you have towards running related, but without nearly as much wear and tear. Or at least a different form of wear and tear. So you're stressing some different body parts or you're moving in different ways that that repetitive motion of running isn't really happening.

Talking just like as a specific example, you're talking about running versus cycling. Well, yeah, you're still working your hips, and your knees, and your ankles in both forms. But obviously in cycling there's no pounding force, it's not impact. But also think of the range of motion of your hips when you go through the cycling motion versus running motion.

It's a lot fuller range of motion, especially if you've got the bike set up right so it fits to you. You're getting the full all the way extension down at the bottom of the pedal stroke. And the foot comes all the way up so you're getting full flexion. Maybe not quite full extension at the hip, but you're getting a lot. Same thing with your knee, you don't bend your knee nearly as much running as you do cycling.

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So you're just working your body different ways, you're mitigating the stresses of running. A lot of times you're shoring up some weak links, because you're working muscles differently. So it can be great for injury prevention, just from a standpoint of not the same force production, but also shoring up weak links, working this muscle a little bit differently. You know, so it's great.

I say all that, do I do as much cross train as I should? Absolutely not. Absolutely not, not even close to as much cross training as I know that I should, as I want to do. But I just don't make it the priority that it probably needs to be because, you know, touch wood, I've been healthy, I'm feeling good, I'd rather go for my runs.

But yeah, there's sometimes that kind of just putting it on the calendar and sticking, like this is the day that I'm going to do my bike workout. Or, you know, this is the day I'm going to get in the pool, or whatever the case might be. It's a good thing. It's a good thing for runners to be a little bit more diverse in their training methods, or the training exercises that they're doing. Because it's just, you know, well rounded is better than singularly focused. Even if running is the focus of your goals, just that little bit more balanced health is never going to be a bad thing.

Jill: Right, I think that's what I think of as cross training and strength training is like they're there because they feel great to get the benefits. But really, it's just all there to support my running.

Denny: Right.

Jill: So what would you say, like when we're thinking about injury prevention, because I think that's probably the biggest fear of every runner is I don't want to get hurt. Because we know like the second you get hurt as

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a runner, it throws everything off. So what would you say if somebody said, "I only have time for one activity outside of running." What would you say is the most important thing for them to do to prevent injury? If they could pick only one activity?

Denny: That's the million dollar question. I don't know that there is a one thing that's best. Well, all right, I'm going to apologize already for ducking your question and copping out with my answer. I think that the best thing that someone can do outside of running is the thing that they're most likely to do consistently.

So if you hate the bike, then cycling is not the best thing for you. Maybe it's yoga, which isn't even necessarily cross training per our definition. But it's a great thing to help with recovery, help to just feel good.

So if you really like yoga, that's the best thing. If you really love swimming and you have access to a pool or you live by the beach and it's getting to be summertime or you live down here in Florida, where it's always summertime, go to the beach and go swim. If you love the water but maybe stand up paddle boarding is your thing. Great, do that great core workout, great balance and stability work. Great, love it.

So again, I mean like I said, I know it's a terrible cop out answer. But if I were to say that biking is the best thing and somebody is like, "God, I don't biking." I don't want them to be miserable, like do something that you enjoy. If you like going to the gym or the fitness center or whatever, you feel comfortable and safe with the protocols and all that kind of good stuff. And just getting on the elliptical and turning on some movie on Netflix on your iPad and like just vegging out for two hours on the elliptical.

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Like it sounds torturous to me, but if that actually is something that just allows you to just turn off and unplug and just focus on whatever trashy show, or comedy, or drama or whatever that you enjoy from a perspective of that type of entertainment, that's awesome. Do that.

So yeah, I don't think there's a one, again, one size fits all right. There isn't that, it's what works best for you. What do you most enjoy? Do that because they're all going to be beneficial, you do what you want to do, it means you're going to be more likely to do it.

Jill: I love that. I mean, that's kind of how I would answer it too, I think. Just like there's no perfect shoe for everyone, there's no perfect cross training activity for everyone.

So although I really am partial to the bike. I don't know what it is, although I haven't been riding my bike outside very much at all, let's be honest in probably 2 years. But I'm like, I love the Peloton.

Denny: Because you've got that Peloton. I like it too, except I got the DIY version of the Peloton. Where it's like I got the mount for my phone with the app. And then I got a good spin bike, but I was just like, "I mean, I think the app is good enough for me." And so I got a nice spin bike. I don't use it as much as I should either. But I like Peloton too, I'm partial there.

Jill: Yeah, well, I mean, I think that's what makes it so great is the app itself and the wide variety of stuff. And what I think is so fascinating, I did one of those power zone pack challenges earlier this year, where they really focused on like three to four days a week. And so I was kind of like taking a break from running and I said I'm going to go all in on the bike. Three to four days a week of doing power zone rides.

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And the way they structured them was just so in agreement with how you approach your heart rate training, which was we're going to train you under your threshold quite a bit. And then we're going to have sometimes where we train you above. But mostly it's going to be below and at the end you're going to notice that you're stronger. And so I just love how coherent a message that is across different disciplines.

I guess the other question I wanted to talk to you about, because you've got a lot of experience helping people deal with injuries. And you've got a lot of training and a lot of experience in that area. When you have a runner that comes to you and they've got an injury or they're like, "Oh, this part of my foot hurts." Or my knee or whatever. How do you guide somebody on treating that?

Is it like, "Listen, you got to get yourself to a doctor right away." Or is it "Oh, let's wait and see?" What's your approach with developing injuries in your athletes?

Denny: Yeah, it's tricky because I pretty much do all of my work online. So I don't have the, I don't want to say luxury necessarily. But my background is in athletic training, which is very hands on. You know like it's the guy that when you're watching a football game and somebody gets hurt, I would be the guy that runs out on the field to assess and figure things out hands on.

And so when I'm working with somebody in a different state or a different country, or whatever the case might be, I almost feel like I've got one hand tied behind my back because I can't feel stuff, I can't test stuff. I can't kind of feel it that way.

But it's a tricky one. Again, it's not a one size fits all answer here, which is kind of a theme with me. But when it comes to some of the more common

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running types of injuries, your plantar fasciitis, your IT band, Achilles tendinitis, or just tendinitis in general and shin splints, and things like that. I guess maybe there's like some buzzwords that kind of stand out and you start asking somewhat specific questions. Try not to be leading questions, but you're asking questions and, you know, kind of like a choose your own adventure. They say one thing, and that takes you this direction. And then they answer the next question, it takes you that direction.

And the things that are fairly standard, they kind of make themselves evident, as far as some of the common signs of plantar fasciitis, or common signs of shin splints or things like that. Not that I'm claiming to diagnose or things like that with perfect accuracy, but it's like, "Hey, you know, it really sounds like it's a case of shin splints. Try these two things or these three things and see if we're not seeing some progress in three or four days. And if we are, let's keep going with it. And if not then you might want to go get it checked out."

And then sometimes there's things that somebody will complain about, or say, "Oh, this is bothering me." And especially if it's into the hips, if it's into the lower back. Those areas are so complicated and there's so many things that could be contributing or could be, you know, it hurts on the left side but the problem is actually on the right side because there's some misalignment issue. There's no way that I'm going to be able to assess that and give any type of reasonable like, it's probably this situation over the internet.

And so in those situations it's like, yeah, go see somebody. Go see the chiropractor, go see a physical therapist, go see somebody that hopefully you already have a little bit of relationship with. But you need somebody to put hands on you to feel, to measure, to assess in a way that I just can't do.

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But injuries are tricky. It's one of those things where, I mean, a lot of things like this, where prevention is better than cure. Like if you can do some of the little things, if you can do some of the things to try to help avoid injuries or back off when you feel something might be a little bit off instead of like, "Oh, I'm just going to power through." Because it's probably not going to get better.

You know, you can really nip a lot of things in the bud and hopefully avoid having to really take time off. But when it gets to a certain point, at least for me being online, I can't.

Jill: Yeah.

Denny: There's only so much, and even then, I run into trouble sometimes where somebody is telling me, "I'm pretty sure it's shin splints." And then I, I'm like, "All right." And they maybe pass a test of a couple things that make sense. But then we're trying stuff, and it's not getting any better. And then it's like, "Well send me a picture of like pointing to the spot where it hurts."

And then all of a sudden, it's like, "Yeah, that's not shin splints." It might be sort of in the area of the shin but it's a different location or whatever. And, and so it's like, "Oh, well yeah, it's probably not." Like we're speaking different languages because I have one set of expectations and they may not have the years of athletic training practice and educations and things like that. Where it's like, you know, we're just speaking a little different language.

And that's where you're like, "Go see somebody. And then you can tell me what they said it was, and then it's going to line up better with what I think that you're saying it is, and now we can try to put things together."

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Jill: Yeah. Well and I think it's really common too, for people to come to their coach and say, "All right, I'm having this pain, how do I fix it?" Because this happens a lot with my athletes, is they'll say, "I don't want to go to the doctor because they're going to tell me not to run." And I'm like, "Okay, but maybe they're right and you should." Because I think, like how many times have you seen one of your athletes run through an injury and then end up like having to take time off rather than just having to slow it down?

So I think it's important to like work with your coach, figure out, "Okay, let's try these things." But if this doesn't work get it figured out sooner rather than later.

Denny: Yeah, I mean, that's the trickiest scenario. Because not only, like I said, there's a lot that I know that I can't accurately figure out from six states away, or whatever the case might be.

And it's not funny that you mentioned this, but it's interesting that you bring this up. Because just in the last few days one of my athletes, you know, "I'm kind of working through something I don't know." And it's like, "Yeah, let's just go get it checked out. Let's just do it." Kind of get that ball rolling with the health care system here in America for, you know, whatever you think of it, I think it leaves something to be desired.

But, you know, she goes to the doctor, she gets an appointment with the orthopedic but of course she doesn't see him, she sees the physician's assistant or whatever. The person that's kind of the guard, the gatekeeper, if you will. And, you know I'm just hearing her side of the story, but it was like literally she said, "I talked to him for less than 30 seconds. I didn't even explain the symptoms, really." And he said, "Oh, it's just X, Y, Z, you'll be fine. Don't run for four weeks and it'll be fine."

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And she was like, “But wait.” Like no asking questions of changes in training or any anything, nothing. And she was so frustrated because he didn't seem to even care anything about what she said. And again, as runners we like to run. So all of a sudden, like don't run for four weeks. Well if you're not a runner, yeah, like don't to run for four weeks. Okay, that's fine.

Jill: Yeah, right? Not a problem, I wasn't going to anyway.

Denny: If I'm not going to run for four weeks, we've got problems. My wife is not going to be happy with me, maybe after two weeks. Certainly by week three and week four there's going to be some stress in the house. Like I'm not going to be a good father. I need my runs to just kind of help keep me balanced.

And maybe that's unhealthy in and of itself, which might be a conversation for another day. But just to go to the doctor and be like, “Well, just don't run.” I mean, unless I've got bones sticking out and things that are clearly yeah, I probably shouldn't run, we need to figure out something. What can I do? And too often it's just so dismissive.

So I mean, and that's where if you're in a community that has a bunch of runners in it, you know, like just the local community. The town you live in, if you can ask other runners or at least other people that are active like, “Hey, is there somebody that I should see? Is there a good doctor, physical therapist, chiropractor, whatever, that understands runners?” That understands that just saying, “Don't run for two weeks, or four weeks, or six weeks” is almost a nonstarter. But can say, “All right, well, here's what we've got. Here's what we can do. Here's the progression.”

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Those are the types of folks that if you can work with are going to be the best to help you not only solve, hopefully solve the problem, but also figure out the root cause of the problem to prevent it going forward. And hopefully make you stronger, fitter, healthier to continue to run going forward as a result of working with them as opposed to, "Oh, just don't run for four weeks, and then you'll be good to go." Well, then you kind of feel like you're starting from scratch and that's frustrating.

So it's finding that hat person that kind of understands the athlete mentality versus just - And I know that, again, with the healthcare system that we have, it's not always possible. But as much as you can, that's the route to try to go down.

Jill: Well, and it really does make a big difference. Because I'm thinking back to, I mean, I was plagued with knee problems for several years. And the last time I had that issue, it must have been 2018. I was like, just down again. I'm like, "This is ridiculous."

And I had been going to an orthopedic specialist, and he would put shots in my knee. And finally he was like, "Look, we're just going to need to do some surgery on your knee. Not a replacement, but we're going to have to go in and clean it out, blah, blah, blah." And I just was like, "No." I said, "I'm going to be training for a marathon." And he's like, "Oh no. No, that's a terrible idea. You should not train for a marathon." He's like, "At your age-" And I'm like, "Oh, all right." I said, "All right. Well, you know what? Thank you so much for your opinions." And I left.

And I went and I said, "All right, I got to find somebody else." And so I found this non-surgical sports doctor who wasn't a runner, but his whole practice, they treated athletes. And worked with him and three months later I was back on my feet, and boom, I haven't had any problem since.

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And so I think it's really important, like you said, to find somebody who's going to work with you, and not just say- Because this happens a lot with my athletes as well. The doctor will say, "Well, maybe it's time you just stopped running." And I'm like, "Nope, that's a second opinion." That's what we call that, that's just a second opinion.

If you get three different physicians and a physical therapist that all say, "You know what? Yeah, you should stop running." Okay, maybe. But don't give up after just one.

Denny: Well, yeah, and along those lines I think it's something that is easy to not realize, or maybe not accept, but the doctor, the running coach, the nutritionist, the physical, they work for you. You don't work for them; you don't have to appease them.

Jill: Right.

Denny: Yes, they have some area of expertise or some area of knowledge that you're trying to glean from, learn from, benefit from. But when it comes down to it, if their bedside manner doesn't work for you, their personality doesn't jive with you, whatever the case might be, they work for you and not the other way around. So don't be afraid to just-

And I know it's tough. I struggle, like I'm not a confrontational person. So it's easy for me to say, "Just tell that doctor where he can go and what he can do when he gets there." But at the same time, like you said, if they're not giving you the time of day, or they're not giving you an answer that you like, I mean, go get a second opinion. Go get a third opinion, go see if there's other options out there. And nine times out of 10 there are other options. Now, they may not be great options, or they may not be exactly what you want to hear. But at least you don't have to just bow down to whatever the

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doctor, or the PT, or whoever has to say because they're the "expert". They still work for you.

Jill: Yes, exactly. Exactly. I love it.

Denny: I got a little preachy there but, yeah.

Jill: No, it's good. I'm 100% on board with that. So I think we're going to end this on a very empowering note. So what have you got going on right now? Where can people find you? If they want to work with you, how can they work with you? Tell us all the things.

Denny: All right, well the easiest, if you can remember Diz Runs, if you can remember those seven letters you can pretty much find me wherever. D-I-Z-R-U-N-S, dizruns.com is the website. Dizruns on pretty much all the social medias. Diz Runs Radio is the podcast.

Which I don't know why it's not Diz Runs podcast, like I don't know. I guess I like alliteration, so Diz Runs Radio flew off the tongue just a little bit better. But wherever you're listening to podcasts, you can find it there. And I ramble on a couple times a week. Well, one time I ramble on and one time I let other people talk most of the time. So you might like those ones better.

But that's all the places to find me. And as far as what I'm working on, I mean, there's always things. And I say I'm working on all these things, but they're all like ideas. But there is the beginnings of a second book working on.

Jill: Yes!

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Denny: So yeah, hopefully that'll- But there's been beginnings of the book being worked on for like a year now and we haven't- I'm going to blame the pandemic that I got derailed. The time I was going to spend writing the book I ended up spending teaching kindergarten, which spoiler alert, I'm not cut out to be a kindergarten teacher. We learned that the hard way a year ago.

But I just never got back on track with book writing once I hung up the kindergarten teacher, once I took that hat off. But working on Marathons And Metaphors, kind of a book about life lessons and things I've learned from running and from talking to people as runners on the podcast. And so yeah, stay tuned for that. But don't like hold your breath because you'll be holding your breath for a while.

That's the big thing I'm working on. Then all kinds of other random odds and ends, and podcasts, and YouTubes and things like that.

Jill: I love that. And if people want to hire you as a running coach, how do they do that?

Denny: All the information is on the website dizruns.com, like I said.

Jill: Okay.

Denny: Or just reach out on social media. I'm pretty laid back as far as like, I'm not going to try to hard sell anybody. So if you have questions, or if things aren't clear, or you want to hear the fine print or whatever, just ask. And I'm not going to used car salesman you. I'm just going to answer your questions and treat you like an adult that can decide. If you think that I might be right or it might be a good fit, cool. If not, cool.

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Like I said, you don't work for me, I work for you type of situation. So I want you to be comfortable from the beginning. So just ask the questions. And if you just have a question but you don't want me as a coach, just ask the question. And I talk about running all day, every day. So I'm happy to answer any questions or just yammer back and forth as well.

Jill: I love it. Okay. All right. Well, thank you so much. And by the way, everybody needs to go check out Denny's Instagram, which is Diz runs, right?

Denny: Yeah.

Jill: Because you post like the most random things that you see on your runs. It's just like, "Oh look, there's somebody's washing machine in their front yard." I love the stuff you see.

Denny: And if it's Monday through Friday there's like a 99% chance that it's just in my neighborhood. Which I have a fairly decent sized neighborhood, so, you know, I've got a fair bit of stuff to choose from.

But yeah, somehow toilets are my thing because in my neighborhood, like apparently everybody in the neighborhood in the last two years decided to redo their bathroom. So they all just, you know, put their toilets out to be picked up by the waste disposal people. And so if I see a toilet, there's going to be a picture of that is what I saw on my run today.

I don't know exactly how that happened. And maybe there's probably a story there somewhere. But now people tag me in their photos when they see toilets.

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Jill: I love this. All right, so you guys if you see a toilet when you're out running, please take a photo.

Denny: Tag me.

Jill: Put it on Instagram and tag Denny. All right. Well, thank you so much for joining me today. This has been a delightful conversation as always. And I look forward to it, let's make it faster than three years next time.

Denny: Sounds good, Jill. Thanks so much, appreciate it.

Jill: All right.

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.