

Ep #223: Is 20 Seconds of Running Enough?



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With Your Host

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 today? I am fantastic. I'm having so much fun with my strength training workouts. And I'm kind of blowing my own mind with how strong I'm getting. It is really, really fun.

So I started with my trainer a year ago this week, and I just committed to showing up, being patient, and consistent. And now I am easily dead lifting 100 pounds and doing double bent over rows with a 35 pound kettlebell in each hand. Oh my god. I'm like, where am I going to be a year from now if I could accomplish this in a year? What else can I do?

So ultimately, I want to be able to deadlift at least 200 pounds and do an unassisted pull up. And the really fun part of all this is I have complete and total belief in myself right now. I'm not in a hurry. I'm just going to keep showing up and doing the work one session at a time.

And, by the way, lest you think that I'm some sort of special unicorn, I have for sure not been perfect at this. There have been missed workouts when I'm traveling or I got sick. There have also been workouts where I showed up and told my trainer like, "Hey, my body's just not feeling really great today, what can we do to honor that?" And she'll work with me and maybe we'll do an hour of stretches and stuff.

So over the course of a year with two scheduled workouts per week, so that's 104 workouts total, possible workouts. I'd say I've done about 80, maybe 85% of them. So, my friends, you do not need to be perfect to make tons of progress.

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Consistency does not equal perfection or doesn't mean perfection. Perfection is a fantasy and consistency is real life. And I think the biggest thing that's helped me stay consistent for this past year is to just be in the workout that I'm in.

I'm not thinking ahead to next week, or next month, or even the next set in my current workout. I'm just lifting the weight that's in front of me right this minute and focusing on doing that the very best that I can. And it's kind of like training for a marathon. When you start, you're not going to run 26 miles. You just need to do the first run on your training plan. And maybe that's three miles.

And when you start that very first training run, you can't run mile three until you've run miles one and two. So keeping your mind on what you're doing right now, not worrying about what you're going to be doing in 30 minutes is key.

When you take your mind out of that current moment, you lose focus and you waste mental energy on worry and fear. We don't need this. So if you notice that happening, if in mile one you're thinking, "Oh, there's no fucking way I'm going to be able to make it to five miles today." Bring it back around to, "Well, I'm not running mile five right now, I'm running mile one. So let's get that done. And then we can look at mile two."

So I'm not going to get lost in my thoughts about the end of my run until I get through the beginning of my run and the middle. So stay in the mile that you're in, stay in the interval that you're in.

Okay, so this is actually related to what we're talking about today, which is is 20 seconds of running enough? And somebody actually wrote into the podcast last week and asked if I could revisit some topics from episodes much earlier in the podcast, like three, four years ago and sort of expand on them or say, "Hey, do you still believe exactly the same things?"

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So today I'm revisiting the main topic from episode 44, is 20 seconds of running enough? So when I teach beginners to start running, I always have them start with somewhere between like 15 to 30 seconds of running, followed by a minute of walking. And then repeat that 10 times.

And usually the first question is, is that enough? And there's so much more to that question than you think. And I'm going to dive in explain why people ask it and, of course, what the answer is. And it's an interesting question, enough for what? Nobody ever really clarifies what they mean by that.

They're like, "Is it enough?" I'm like, "Is it enough for what?" Is it enough to be calling yourself a runner when you're running 15 seconds at a time? Do you mean is it enough running to increase your fitness or get better at running? Or is it enough running to train for a 5K or even a marathon?

There's a lot of ways that you could look at that. And the good news for y'all is the short answer, yes, it is. It is enough, it is enough for all of those things. But let's take it point by point because as you've heard me say before if you run, you are a runner.

So the first question is, is 20 seconds or 15 seconds enough running to call yourself a runner? And here's the thing, again, if you run you're a runner. Whether it's for 20 seconds at a time or two hours at a time, running is running. Some people run straight through. Some people sprint for super short distances. Other people run and walk and run and walk. And it is all literally just different ways to be a runner.

So if you do a workout where you run for 20 seconds and you walk for a minute, and you do that 10 times, boom, you're a runner. I mean, you ran for 25% of that workout, I call that being a runner.

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So point number two, can running for 20 seconds at a time make you a better runner? And again, the answer is yes, 100%. First of all, 20 seconds of running is more than you're doing right now. 20 seconds is more than 0. 0 seconds of running will not make you a better runner. Intervals of 20 seconds will get you a lot closer to being a better runner than 0 seconds. It's just math, right?

And the other thing to remember is you're not running 20 seconds and then you go home, right? You're doing it 10 times, maybe 20, maybe more. And that actually adds up to a lot of running. So for example, imagine you had a 30 minute workout planned and you run for 20 seconds, and then you walk a minute. And you do that over and over again for 30 minutes. You've actually done seven and a half minutes of running. Seven and a half minutes. Okay, that's actually a lot of running.

And now when you think about it, that way, it doesn't seem so insignificant does it? Now, it could take you months to work up to seven and a half minutes of running without stopping if you don't take walk breaks. But if you do that in little chunks, 20 seconds of running, a minute of walking, and so forth, you can actually get there pretty fast.

And you're going to find that your fitness level is going to improve very quickly as well because the run walk method is great for your heart, it's great for your cardiovascular fitness. It's just a really great way to be active.

And the other thing I want to touch on is this concept of massive action. And this is where you keep taking the small actions you need to take until you get the big result that you want. And so the example I used in the beginning of this episode, my results after a year of strength training consistently, that's a perfect example of massive action.

I just showed up every week and I did individual repetitions of various exercises that were combined into sets. And those sets were combined into

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workouts, and those workouts when you string them together over a year, you get big results.

And massive action, by the way, does not mean that you make huge grand gestures. It's not like I'm going to walk into the gym and the first thing I'm going to do is I'm going to deadlift 100 pounds and then that's it for the year. Massive action is repeating small steps over and over and over. The massive doesn't refer to the size of the action, it refers to the amount of times you do it, a massive number of times, okay?

Another great example is saving money. So if you put \$3 in a piggy bank every single day, after a year you'll have like \$1,095. Now \$3 a day doesn't seem like much, does it? It's the cost of a cup of Starbucks. But if you add it up over a year, it's a lot of money. That's massive action. And also when I look at it this way, I spend a lot of money on Starbucks.

But massive action is just so powerful. And here's what I want to point out to you. If you haven't already made this leap in your brain, running is quite literally massive action. You are taking one step and then another and another over and over again until you've gone a mile, until you've gone 5K, until you've gone 26 miles.

Running 20 seconds at a time over and over and over will take you places, really. So yeah, 20 seconds is enough, it's more than enough. It's enough to make a huge difference. If you do it consistently, you will be amazed at the results.

Now as to whether 20 seconds is enough to train for a 5K or a marathon, I think I've kind of answered that question already. But just in case, yes. Yes, it is because you just keep doing 20 seconds over and over and over again until you complete the distance. And guess what, you can do it for an ultramarathon. People do this all the time in races. It is extremely common and you will not be the only one.

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Now the final point that I want to make about 20 seconds of running is this, and this is very much a mindset thing. When you focus on thinking, and it is a thought, thinking that 20 seconds is too short to make a difference, you put that in the T line of the CTFAR model from episode 33. Which by the way, I'm going to revisit that episode in a week or two and we're going to dive deep into that.

But when you focus on thinking that 20 seconds is too short to make a difference, you're going to interfere with your progress because when you think that thought it creates one of two feelings. The first feeling might be discouraged. And then this feeling of discouraged leads you to the action of quitting. So you're thinking, "Oh, 20 seconds isn't enough." And you feel discouraged and you quit.

And guess what, that proves your thought that 20 seconds wasn't enough because you're not running. And you're like, "See, I'm not better at running." You're don't not get better at running because you only ran 20 seconds, you don't get better at running because you thought 20 seconds wasn't enough and you quit on yourself, if that makes sense.

So the other thing that can happen, the other emotion that you might feel is worry. So you're thinking 20 seconds isn't enough and you feel worry, you feel concern. And the action you take when you feel worried is that you push yourself too hard.

You're thinking 20 seconds isn't enough. And so you're kind of worried about it and then you say, "Well, I'm just going to run for a minute at a time or two minutes at a time." And what happens if your body's not ready for that, you're going to get hurt. And guess what, that also results in you not running.

So thinking the thought 20 seconds isn't enough is not a super helpful thought for you. Focus instead on thinking like, "20 seconds, I can do that. I

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can do 20 seconds over and over again. I'm taking massive action to becoming a better runner.”

All right, so let's stop focusing on whether you're doing enough. Because enough, again, is kind of a fuzzy concept. And instead, tune in to how your body feels when you are running. If it doesn't feel challenged, then yes, either go faster during your 20 seconds or go longer. If you feel challenged with 20 seconds, it's enough. If you feel like 20 seconds is too much, you can go to 15 or even 10. But keep practicing that interval, taking that massive action. When it starts to feel easy, you can do more.

And one last point that I want to make, 15 or 20 or 30 seconds of running is where you're going to start. Now for some of you, that might be where you decide to stay. As long as you're a runner you might be like, “I'm just going to stick with 20 seconds because it feels great. I love it.”

I personally actually love doing a 30 second run and a 60 second walk, especially on my long runs. It feels like I could just keep going forever. It's a very joyful feeling to me. But some of you are going to say, “You know what, that's not challenging enough for me.” Or “I want to see what it feels like to run longer.” And that's okay.

So some of you are going to end up doing longer intervals than that. And I actually have plenty of clients that start out with that 20 second interval and then after a few months they're doing a minute at a time. And then maybe they work up to like an hour of that. And then the next year, they're running three minutes at a time.

The important thing is not to try and satisfy what you think is the standard of being a runner, but to just consistently keep getting out there and doing the amount of running that feels good to you. Maybe some days you want to even do it so it feels like a little bit of a challenge. But you don't have to.

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So we're just going to be focused on the consistency, on the massive action, and on framing our thoughts to like this is a way that feels good to me. This is how running feels good in my body. And we can stop worrying about whether 20 seconds is enough. Because, my friend, you are enough. You do not need to prove anything to anyone. Let's let running be a joyful activity that serves you and not anybody else. You don't have to live up to anybody else's standards. You're just going to make yourself happy.

All right Rebels. I hope this has been a helpful episode for you. If you liked it, please share it on Instagram. I love seeing it get tagged in stories. Let people know about it. Everybody needs to know that 20 seconds is enough, tell everyone.

I'm going to leave you this week with a teaser announcement. So for the first time ever, my friends, I am doing an actual Black Friday event. What? It's going to blow your mind. Make sure you tune into the podcast on November 25th, it's a week from today. It's actually US Thanksgiving Day. Make sure you tune into that podcast for the big announcement.

Mark your calendar for 8am on November 26th to take advantage of it. You do not want to miss that because it's going to happen fast, it's going to be over fast. So 8am November 26th is when the sale drops. I'm going to make the big announcement on the podcast on November 25th. Be there or be square. All right, my friends. Have an amazing week and I will talk to you soon.

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.