

Ep #258: How to Stay Accountable to Your Training Plan



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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, runners. So last week we talked about doing hard things and I told you my own personal half marathon story that changed my life. And today I want to help you with the nitty gritty of actually doing those hard things. Because when you set a big ass goal, it's just so exciting, right? You get that little hit of dopamine when you think about how badass you're going to feel.

Like if you decide, okay, I'm going to do a half marathon in four months, you sign up, you hit submit on putting in all your credit card information on the website and your brain just lights up when you think about how proud you're going to feel when you're done. Imagining exactly where you're going to hang your finishers medal, how you're going to brag to everybody at work about how badass you are. That shit is fun to think about.

But then, of course, the doing of the goal is a whole other story. Now, when you imagine the work that goes into it, like for example, that first seven mile run. Or those weekend days where you have to block out three hours for a training run and it's going to be so hot, and you don't even know if you can actually go that far. And what if you can't, right? What if you can't? What are people going to think? What if it's too hard for you? Who the fuck are you to think you can do this?

When you start thinking about all that stuff, you can get really scared and maybe even give up on yourself. Does this sound familiar? So setting the goal is the easy part, it's the fun part, it's the exciting part. The doing of the

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goal, that is where you really have to start managing your mind because you got to train yourself not to obsess over how hard something might be. Because that obsession is going to block you from taking action, right?

Getting obsessed in doubt and fear is going to keep you from moving forward. So today, I want to talk about a process that I use to help me stay accountable to myself when I have a big fat goal. And it's actually the process I'm going to be using with the folks in my Big Fat Half Marathon training program that starts next month, and I will be telling you more about that at the end of this show.

But if you've ever set yourself a big goal and then tanked halfway through working on it, or maybe even before you got started working on it, today's episode is for you. Because you may have thought you were just lazy or undisciplined, or you didn't want it badly enough. But I promise that is actually not the problem at all.

I know that you're plenty disciplined in your life. You're a high achiever, you get a lot of shit done all the time. The problem isn't that. It is simply that you have not created the right systems to help you out when your brain gets scared.

And a brain feeling scared usually looks something like I'm afraid to do this six mile training run because I've never gone that far before. Right, you have that thought and then you feel scared. And then you start finding all kinds of ways to delay getting started, like doing the laundry or checking social media or your work email or any number of things that suddenly seem really important at 6am, right? And then two hours flies by and it's too late.

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So that's one way that a brain can look like when it's feeling scared. Or maybe you actually do start your run and you're about, I don't know, you're about four miles in and you're kind of tired and bored and sweaty and you decide that you just fucking hate running and you're going to quit early and just do the six mile run next week, right? You come up with some reason, you need to stop at four miles and you're like, it's okay, I can do the six miles the next week, right?

And then the next week it's like double the issue, right, because now you've got this whole story in your brain about how you failed at running six miles and you don't really have time to run six miles this weekend, right? It's like it becomes a whole big thing.

Or maybe you actually get through that six miles, but it was harder than you expected. It was a lot harder and so you start dreading the seven miler that's going to be coming up in two weeks and you spend the entire two weeks stressing about how awful it's going to be. And again, your brain starts coming up with all kinds of excuses not to do it because your brain is like, hey, we're scared we got to protect, right?

And then maybe you skip your seven mile run because you're afraid. And then you're like, well how can I be expected to do eight miles? I got to do seven miles first. And so you kind of delay and delay and next thing you know a month has gone by and you still haven't done that seven mile or the eight mile run and you're like, well, now I have to quit because I don't have enough time. I don't have enough time left to train.

Does any of this sound familiar? I'm just taking examples out of my own brain here, but I think that you probably operate the same way. Now, your brain is your best tool, and also your worst enemy when it comes to running. If you manage your mind well there is nothing you cannot

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accomplish. But if you let your thoughts just run amok without supervision, you're going to fail.

So the accountability process that I'm going to teach you today, and the one I'm going to be using in the Big Fat Half Marathon program is all about managing your mind really well, instead of letting it run wild. And if you can do that, you're like 80% of the way towards your goal. The rest is literally just running. And the running is the easy part, your legs will do what you tell them to do. Wrangling your mind into position is where the hard work is.

So this process is in three parts, and it's actually really easy to do, okay? And if you do it consistently, you are going to be amazed at how successful you are. Part one is also the easiest part, you're going to choose your training plan.

Now, if you are a member, if you've joined the Big Fat Half Marathon program I will be giving you a training plan. But if you're not, or your goal is something other than a half marathon, you're going to do your research, pick a plan, and put all your runs into a spreadsheet, okay? Or you can get a notebook and write them all down there, that's fine.

Just make sure you've got space to make notes and do the process that I'm teaching you today. And if you're using a notebook, I recommend using like two pages for each week of training. But listen to the rest of this episode before you set everything up so that you can kind of decide what makes sense for you.

And also, please don't make this step complicated. If you stress out that you need to find the perfect training plan or have the perfect notebook before you do anything else, you're going to get stuck, all right? So give yourself, I don't know, a couple days to do the research on training plans if

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you want to, then just fucking pick one and go with it, all right? If you need to adjust it later you can, just get started.

Now, that's part one and once that's done, that's done. Okay, parts two and three of this process are the ones that you're going to be repeating every week. And so part two, at the beginning of each training week I want you to look at what you have coming up for the next seven days. And you're going to take, I don't know, maybe 15 minutes or so thinking about your training runs and any other support activities like strength training and yoga and so forth. And then asking yourself two questions and doing a model. Okay?

And when I say model, I mean the mindset model that I've taught in the past on this podcast. I also call it sometimes the CTFAR model and sometimes I call it the self-coaching model, but you're going to do a model. And if you don't know what that is, after you listen to this episode go back to episode, I think it's episode 33 how to coach yourself, and it explains everything.

So at the beginning of each training week you're going to look at your next seven days of activities and you're going to take 15 minutes or so to think about them and ask yourself these two questions and then do a model.

So question number one is, what obstacles am I going to face this week when it comes to my workouts? Now, these might be time constraints, or weather, or other people wanting you when you plan to work out. Or the obstacles might be your thoughts, like thinking you just don't want to go for a seven mile run or worrying whether you can do it. So write down all the obstacles you can think of, whether they are circumstantial or whether they are your thoughts.

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And then question number two is what strategies are you going to use to overcome each of the obstacles? And this is why I like to use two pages for your weekly write up in your notebook, right? So you're going to write down the obstacles and then next to each obstacle you're going to write down the strategy that you're going to use, okay?

And so really think about it. Like if the weather is going to be an obstacle, decide right now, what is your plan B, your Plan C, your plan D? Come up with multiple options. If you know you're going to have thoughts about whether you can make it through your run or not, what do you want to think instead? How are you going to redirect your mind?

And then after you answer those two questions I want you to write down at least one useful mindset model, CTFAR model, that you want to use to guide your week. And it could be something that ties in with the reasons you want to achieve your goal. It could be something related to how you'll feel after you finish all your workouts for the week or whatever it is that helps you feel committed to following through.

So question number one, what obstacles am I going to face? Question number two, which strategies am I going to use? And then one model to guide your week. And I want you to refer to your notebook often throughout the week, especially if you're struggling to follow your plan. Okay?

Now, part three, this is actually the most important part of the process, so please do not skip this step. This is where the growth is, okay? When I was doing my half marathon, the one that I talked about in the last episode that changed everything for me, this part is where I really saw my results. It's like this linchpin, I don't know if linchpin is right. It's the key. It's the key to everything. This step unlocks everything.

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So part two was about planning for your success, but part three is about evaluating what actually happened and then deciding what to do. And this is something that I learned years and years of working in the corporate world, there we would call it an after action review. You know, whenever we had a committee, and then we had to do things, and then we sat down as a group afterwards and kind of talked about what went well, what didn't go well, and what do we want to do the next time?

And so I've actually, I adapted that just to my personal life, right? When I'm doing things, I look at them afterwards and say, okay, what was great? What was not so great? And what do I want to do differently? What did I learn?

So, here's how we're going to adapt that for your training, you're going to document exactly what happened with each of your planned workouts. Did you do it? Yes or No. Was it at the planned time or a different time? Was it the expected distance or the expected time, amount of time, the expected number of whatever, right? Did you do what you said you were going to do? If not, what were the deviations?

And I want you to be just factual, okay? So we're just literally writing down the data, just the facts. Not like, well, this was a really hard workout. That's a thought, my friend, that is not a fact, okay?

Now, you can do this process after each workout is over if you want to, or you can wait to the end of the week, it's totally up to you. But if you do find yourself skipping a lot of workouts or cutting them short, you might actually want to do this process every day after your workouts instead of waiting till the end of the week because obviously something is up.

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Now, after you document the circumstances of what happened, the actual outcome, you're going to review what worked and what didn't. And this is where I want you to be really honest with yourself and this is where you can start putting your thoughts down, all right?

And none of this like, I don't know what happened bullshit. You know why you didn't do it. If you didn't do your workout or if you cut it short, you know why you didn't do it. So keep asking yourself questions until you figure it out.

Also, it's not because you're lazy or undisciplined. Please stop using that language to describe yourself. If you didn't do a workout or if you cut a workout short, it is because you had a thought that led you not to do it. Figure out what that thought was because that is the key to everything, okay?

So we don't call ourselves lazy, we don't call ourselves undisciplined. We say, hmm, I didn't do what I said I was going to do, I wonder why? What was I thinking? Spend some time on that. And maybe your thoughts were, I don't know, I'm afraid I won't be able to do it, or it's going to feel really hard, or, I don't know, it's raining and I don't like running in the rain.

Maybe you just felt, you know, you were thinking all those thoughts and you felt overwhelmed so you didn't run. That's not lazy. That's your brain reacting to a thought. So once we identify what you're thinking, you can start to question it.

I love to say, here's how I question my own brain, I love to say, but what if I'm wrong about that, when my brain tells me I can't do something, right? If my brain says like, oh, God, it's raining out. You can't run in the rain. I'm like, hmm, but what if I'm wrong about that? What if I actually like running in

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the rain? Like I just like to be curious and kind of try to poke some holes in my story.

And here is the thing, if you did try your run and you didn't finish, you can review what went well and what didn't. And what went well, well, you put your shoes on and you started. You managed your mind enough to get out the door. So I want to make sure that you are looking for the good, even if it is simply I am writing down my thoughts about this workout right now. That's something that went well, you are following the process.

So I really want to emphasize that even if it feels like, oh, I'm just going to sit there and beat myself up, take a moment, take the time to find what went well. Even if it's simply I'm sitting here and I'm writing this bullshit down, right? Because you're going to train your brain to get in the habit of looking for the positive instead of focusing on the negative, right? It takes time, but it's worth it.

Now, when you've uncovered all the thoughts that played a part in your week, both what went well and what didn't go so well, I want you to write out at least one CTFAR model. One mindset model that was responsible for your thoughts. At least one, you can write out more if you have multiple ones.

And whatever your results were, like if you did all of your workouts, if you're like, I did every single thing exactly as I planned. Well, what is your model for that? What are the thoughts that you use that got you feeling committed and motivated and got you out the door? It's just as important to focus on the models that get you where you want to go as it is to play around with and work on the models that are keeping you stuck.

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All of the models are important, all right? So write out at least one thought model that was responsible for your results this week. And then notice, is it similar to the one that you wrote in the beginning of the week as what you wanted to guide yourself? Or is it different? And what are the differences? And how do we close the gaps?

And then use all of this data to help you formulate your plan for the next week, to help you decide, okay, what are my obstacles going to be next week? What are the strategies I'm going to use? What is a model, right?

You're just going to keep going back around and back around for this process, even if you completely fuck up a week, or two, or three, or four. Even if you don't even look at your journal for three weeks, right? I mean, we're human, it happens. Treat yourself with compassion, dip back into this process and use it to move forward because it works.

I would literally not be here talking to you today if this process didn't work, because this process changed my life and led me to create the whole Not Your Average Runner empire, all right?

Now, when I do this process, with my students in the Big Fat Half Marathon program, they're actually going to be turning in their accountability homework to me each week. And I'll be commenting on it and I'll be helping them refine things so they can keep moving forward because sometimes it takes an outside person to look at what you're thinking and show you what's really going on.

And sometimes we think like, I just want some help. I just want somebody to hold my hand a little bit. And so that's what Big Fat Half Marathon is all about. And I'm really excited to work with my students in this program on

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that kind of a deep level and see them slay their half marathons in November.

And speaking of November, in case you missed it, let me tell you about the Big Fat Half Marathon program. So it's a semi-private coaching experience where I'm going to be working in-depth with no more than eight women. And it is very small group coaching with lots of personal attention. We're going to be meeting three times a month over Zoom, and then I'm going to be in daily contact with everyone through Slack.

And if you're not familiar with Slack, it's basically a messaging app that's super easy to use, it's not filled with a bunch of pictures and all kinds of nonsense like Facebook. It's more of a business tool, it's what my team and I actually use to keep in contact for all Not Your Average Runner business. It's easy to use, it's free, and it's very effective. So that's why I'm using that with my clients for this program.

And I created this program for the woman who wants to run a half marathon but has either been afraid to try or maybe she did try and she failed, or she tried and she succeeded but rode the struggle bus the whole way and wants a do over. So if that sounds like you, you can't stop thinking about it, you want it really badly, you just can't fucking figure out how to make it happen, this is the program for you.

And the reason I'm calling it Big Fat Half Marathon is because the program is perfect for you if you're fat. And even if you don't use that word to describe yourself you could think of it as like, I don't know, big chunky half marathon, or big fluffy half marathon, or whatever word you use to describe yourself. Big voluptuous half marathon.

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This is a half marathon training experience that is built specifically for you, okay? The goal race is the Philly Half Marathon on November 19th. There is a four and a half hour time limit for that motherfucker. Okay? Seriously, this is a beautiful half marathon. It's a relatively flat course, absolutely gorgeous, lots of historic views and things to see. I've done the Philly Half Marathon multiple times, I love this course.

November in Philly won't be hot. It's nice and cool and usually fairly dry. And it's just a great race. But, of course, if you can't make it to Philly for that race, I will help you find an appropriate half marathon that works for you. We can even move it up a week or back a week depending on your schedule or what have you. And if there's no half marathons around you, I'll help you figure out the perfect virtual race to do, okay?

So I've trained literally hundreds of women to do their first half marathon. I know what it takes to do one when you're fat. So if all of this is resonating with you, it is probably because somewhere deep inside you know you can do it, okay? And this conversation has perked up that little seed of hope inside you. So let's water that seed.

You can find all of the details at bigfathalfmarathon.com. There are a couple spots left, but it will sell out. The class starts the first week in August. And so if you've ever dreamed about having me all up in your business when you're training, it sounds kind of naughty, this is your opportunity, right? I don't normally work with my clients in this intimate of a setting so this is a very, very special occurrence.

Head on over to bigfathalfmarathon.com to check it out. Again, if you go to bigfathalfmarathon.com details are there. And that is it. Okay, my friends, I hope today was helpful for you. And of course, if you loved this, please

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share it on Instagram. And as always, I love you, stay safe. Get your ass out there and run.

Hey, real quick before you go, if you enjoyed listening to this episode you have got to check out Up And Running. It's my 30 day online program that will teach you exactly how to start running, stick with it, and become the runner you have always wanted to be. Head on over to notyouraveragerunner.com/upandrrunning to join. I would love to be a part of your journey.