

# Ep #267: How To Ask For What You Want When You're Fat



## Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Jill Angie**

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

## Ep #267: How To Ask For What You Want When You're Fat

Welcome to *The Not Your Average Runner Podcast*. If you've never felt athletic but you still dream about becoming a runner, you are in the right place. I'm Jill Angie, your fat running coach. I help fat women over 40 to start running, feel confident, and change their lives. I have worked with thousands of women to help them achieve their running goals and now I want to help you.

Hey runners. Okay, so this week we are talking about something that might seem like it's not running related, but just hang with me because I promise you are going to get something out of it.

Now, here's the backstory, a few months ago I went to a luxury spa in Philly for a massage and they handed me a robe that did not fit. I asked for a larger robe and I was told, we don't have them. We have one size fits all robes, right? But, of course, we know how that actually works, it's really one size fits most or, I don't know, one size fits some. That's what the tag should read.

Anyway, so I'm at the spa in this lovely relaxation room for before and after the treatments. I'm paying a lot of money to be there and I can't really relax in the relaxation room because my robe doesn't close, it doesn't cover me. And, my friends, when I realized that robe didn't fit I had a lot of thoughts.

One of those thoughts was like, "Good job, Jill, you've gotten so fat you can't even go to a spa for a massage anymore." Right? That felt great. I also thought, "Oh, don't make a scene, just take a towel with you to put across your lap." And then finally I thought, "What the fuck? I can't be the only fat person who's ever come here. This is so annoying."

And the emotions that came with those thoughts, well I felt shame, I felt embarrassment, definitely a healthy dose of righteous indignation. And I did

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ask for a bigger, well, when I asked for the bigger robe, I did ask for it, when I asked, my voice was shaking, right? I was kind of starting to nervous sweat. I was so uncomfortable.

I knew other people in the locker room could hear the conversation, I was both embarrassed and angry. I was frustrated. And I was thinking, "Oh, my lovely day at the spa has been ruined by this stupid fucking robe." Actually, what I was probably thinking was my lovely day at the spa has been ruined by my body.

Now, the staff could not have been more apologetic and I decided to not let a robe ruin my day because the massage itself was excellent. They, strangely enough, offered me a shot of bourbon afterwards. I don't know if that was to make up for the robe or if they do that for all their clients, it was very strange, but whatever. And I was also there with a friend, it was actually her birthday, and so I definitely didn't want to make a huge scene and ruin her day.

So I wrote them an email when I got home explaining how disappointed I was and they immediately offered me a free massage. They said we're going to order more robes, as soon as we get them we'll let you know, come back, have a massage on us. And I was like, great. And they emailed me a couple months later and I went back, the robe they gave me was the same size as the first.

They literally gave me the same exact robe. Apparently, they had some sort of miscommunication and I felt myself going through that whole range of thoughts and emotions again. And eventually they did find a robe that fit me. I don't know where the hell they got it from because it wasn't the same color as the others, it didn't have the spa logo, it was a little bit raggedy and it dragged on the floor when I walked around, right?

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It wasn't a robe for a fat woman of five foot four, it was a robe for a person who is about six foot eight. And I don't know, it was awful. I expressed my disappointment again and I just decided, well fuck it, I'm not going to go back to that spa.

But it really got me thinking about how conditioned we are to blame ourselves when something like this happens and to feel deep shame and embarrassment because we are thinking that somehow it is our fault for not fitting into somebody else's expectations, right? In this case, their expectation was apparently that only certain sizes of bodies were going to be asking for massages.

And I mean, the day that I went for that first massage and had the robe that didn't fit, there was another person walking around with a robe that didn't fit. I'm like, this isn't just me. But I realized I might be the only one that's ever said something instead of just walking around in a robe that doesn't fit.

But there's other examples out there, like asking for a seatbelt extender on a plane. If you've ever had to do this, oh my goodness. So first of all, every single plane seems to have differently sized seats and seat belts. I don't know why they can't, it's like women's clothing, why can't we just have a standard? But that in itself is frustrating.

I've literally switched seats within the same row on a flight and found that seats right next to each other had differently sized belts. So I don't even know how the fuck that's possible but there we are, right?

A couple years ago I was on this little puddle jumper flight, it was one of those planes that on one side there's one seat and then on the other side there's two seats. And there's, I don't know, maybe 50 people fit on the plane.

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So I'm on this flight, I couldn't fasten my seat belt so I signaled the attendant. She brought me an extender without any fanfare, which I definitely appreciated. No words exchanged, she just came over, I pointed to the belt and she nodded, went and got the extender, brought it back gave it to me without saying a word.

Then I realized that the reason I couldn't get my belt buckled was because it was looped around the arm and the seat next to me, which was taking probably eight inches off the belt. So I signaled her again and she came back and I said, "Oh, I actually don't need this after all." And she said, "Phew, you don't look big enough to me to need one."

And I was just, my jaw dropped. I was like, what the fuck is that supposed to mean? Should I be ashamed of myself for needing one? Should I be proud of myself because I don't? Like what kind of thing is that to say to a person? I was pretty mad about that. Still, because obviously I'm still thinking about it.

And then the other example that comes to my mind immediately about asking for what you want, about fat bodies not fitting into the standard size world is race shirts, okay? And if you're fat and you've done a race ever, you know what I'm talking about because what the fuck? It blows my mind that races don't offer a wider range of shirts because there are a lot of fat folks out there running.

And maybe it's because we are all conditioned, again, to not make a big deal when things don't fit. We're all taught to be ashamed of our bodies, so when we ask for an XXL shirt, because it's the biggest they have, and it doesn't fit, we just quietly leave and don't say anything, right? We're like, don't make a scene, just take your shirt and go and give it to Goodwill or whatever.

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So maybe, maybe race directors just haven't figured out that a large portion of the participants aren't getting what they paid for because the fucking shirt doesn't fit. Maybe they just haven't figured it out because not enough of us are speaking up. And don't even get me started on triathlons, they're even worse. You are lucky if they offer an XL. And their idea of an XL is really small.

My first triathlon I was destroyed because I worked so hard to train for that race, I finished dead last, it was in the middle of a huge rainstorm. I was so proud of myself for not quitting, for finishing that race, for all the training I put in. And then I couldn't even wear the shirt afterwards. And I ended up losing a bunch of weight after that race. I got down to a woman's size 14 and still couldn't put the shirt on. So it was so discouraging. See, now I'm getting all wound up.

Here's the thing, okay, the facts here, the circumstances here are that my body is a certain size and there are things in the world that I want to access that don't accommodate that size or don't accommodate it without me asking for help or something extra. Okay, those are the facts and I can make it mean a lot of stuff.

I can make it mean that the world doesn't want me, or that I have failed because my body doesn't fit in this world, or that there is something wrong with me. Right? Those are thoughts I have about the facts. And when I think those thoughts, I feel terrible. I feel shame, guilt, embarrassment, anger.

And when I have those emotions I do not show up as my best self. I hide. I don't ask for what I need or what I want. Or I lash out and I speak angrily, right, I'm just rude. Or I put myself on yet another diet so that I can fit into the world, right?

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And none of those actions is how I want to roll because you know what the results are when I hide, don't ask for what I want, or when I lash out at people? I don't get what I want, either because I'm afraid to ask because I'll lose my temper, and we all know what happens when we put ourselves on yet another diet.

So what I want to do with today's show is to help you work through the thoughts that come up when you bump up against that circumstance of your body versus the world, and help you come up with ways of asking what you want or need without feeling embarrassed or ashamed. Okay, sound good? All right, let's dive in.

So, first of all, we need to touch a little bit on the concept of anti-fat bias or another word for it is fat phobia. Anti-fat bias is the term that I prefer because I think fat phobia makes it sound like there's a bunch of people who have a phobia about fat people and I think that that's actually pretty rare.

I think people just, you know, we live in a society where we are taught that being fat is terrible. I don't think people have a true phobia about it, they just don't like it. They're biased against it. So I like the term anti-fat bias.

But anyway, what that is is the obvious and not so obvious, the more hidden biases against fat people that has its roots in the belief that being fat is a moral failing and that it is the fault of the individual. Okay? Anti-fat bias is extremely common and really strong in Western culture. Also in some Eastern cultures, but mostly in Western culture. And it's also linked to a lot of other systems of oppression, such as anti-blackness, racism, misogyny, the list goes on.

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So humans have set up this belief system, set it up really well, that being fat is one of the worst things you can be. And that you should be really, really ashamed if you're fat. And it's all your fault. And if you're not actively trying to lose weight, you're basically just a terrible person. Right? We are taught this both, obviously, with the words of the people around us, and in a more subtle way from the messaging we get from the media and so forth.

But from a young age this is embedded into our view of the world. And it's even worse for women, right? Because women are also taught, actually, everybody is also taught that a woman's appearance is part of her worthiness, a huge part of her worthiness. That it's the job of a woman to constantly be attractive for the male gaze, right?

So if you are a fat woman, not only are you fat, which is this terrible thing, but now you're going against what you're supposed to be as a woman, which is constantly trying to be attractive to your partner. I do not care for this. And then to take it one step further, when you're raised in a society that values thin bodies above all others you're, of course, going to be trying to figure out constantly, how can I get one of those bodies, right? And that's what we call internalized fat bias or internalized fat phobia.

So you yourself may have either conscious or subconscious beliefs that your body is wrong and that you should be trying to change it. And that your life would be so much better if you could just lose that last 20 pounds or 100 pounds, or whatever it is. I know I've had those thoughts many, many, many times in my life.

So is it any wonder, given how we are taught and socialized, that we struggle with accepting our bodies as is, right? That we are constantly judging how we look and finding it lacking? Is it any wonder we are always saying, "I need to start getting in shape," or, "I need to go on a diet" or "Oh



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God, if only my thighs were smaller, my life would be so much better.”  
Right?

We've all been taught that it is not okay to be fat so it makes perfect sense if you feel shame when you need to ask for an accommodation for your body size. I mean I've been working on my body image for 40 years, and I still feel twinges of shame because that shit runs deep.

Now, the other piece of the puzzle here is how women in particular are socialized to put everyone else's needs before our own. Especially if you're a mom, right? Now, yes, if you've got kiddos there's going to be plenty of times where you want to put them first. I understand that, I agree with it, I get it.

But that mindset, right, the mindset that you come last tends to show up in a lot of other places too, right? Like at work, or at the gym, or with your significant other, right? We put ourselves last all the time. And then when you have this thought that everyone else's feelings are more important than yours, guess what? When it's time to ask for a bigger robe at the spa you're going to be thinking, “Oh, I don't want to bother anybody. I don't want to make a scene. I'll just make do with what I've got.”

So there's this trifecta of things that happen when you're a fat woman. First, you're taught that it's not okay to be fat. You start to internalize that belief and weaponize it against yourself.

Then as a woman you're taught you need to be always looking your best, and that usually means trying to fit into smaller jeans, right? Or else somebody's going to say, “Oh, she's really let herself go.” Bullshit.

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And then finally, you're socialized to believe that your feelings are the least important in any situation and that you should always be putting other people first.

Okay, it's a lot. It's a lot. So y'all know how the self-coaching model works, right, from episode 33 of this podcast? We've got circumstances which are the facts in the world, right? We have thoughts about those circumstances, we have opinions and so forth. And those thoughts drive our feelings and our feelings drive our actions.

So in this case, the circumstances are simply the size of our body, the accommodations available to us in whatever situation we're in, and the existence of this anti-fat bias in the world, both internal and external, and the way we are socialized as women. Those are our circumstances.

Now, in the case of the spa and the robe I don't think they were deliberately trying to be harmful, right? I think that it's just that smaller bodied folks who have never been larger don't even realize that this bias exists. Or they don't realize that they're not being accommodating or inclusive, right? Because if you've never had the experience of being larger, you don't necessarily think about what it's like in a different body.

I mean, it's the same as if you're white and you don't understand the experience of Black folks and you just sort of assume that racism doesn't exist because it's not in your face, you've never actually seen it happen. It's not like you're deliberately trying to be harmful, hopefully.

But not being aware of the human experience and not being curious about the human experience that other people go through means you're going to be pretty ignorant of how you can help make things are equitable and right,

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and you're going to stay comfortable in your little bubble where things are stacked in your favor, right?

So now this isn't me bashing people with smaller bodies, or saying everyone who isn't fat is ignorant and harmful, okay? I'm just bringing awareness to the fact that when you are interacting with other people, it is helpful to understand that there's lots of different types of bias out there and making sure that you're not directly or indirectly contributing to it would be really awesome. Thank you very much.

Anyway, it might seem like, well, what's the big deal if you just don't ask for what you want or what you need when you're fat, right? Especially if you can just make do without drawing attention to yourself or just not go to the event or do the thing. And I understand why you might feel that way, because when you're fat, drawing attention to yourself is risking people speaking their judgments out loud, it highlights your own self judgment inside your head and none of that feels too great, I get it.

But here's what happens when you don't speak up and ask for what you want, okay? Others don't realize that there's a gap between what's available and what's needed. If you don't speak up, people don't realize like, oh, I'm not accommodating everyone. Okay? You can't fix what you don't see. So speaking up and asking means that you can bring awareness to the problem, and maybe you pave the way for people coming after you to have an easier time of it.

Now, not speaking up also means you are forcing yourself to fit in, figuratively and literally, to something that doesn't work for you, right? Which reinforces the internal belief that either something is wrong with you, or that you don't matter, okay? Or that you're not wanting, that your needs

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and wants aren't as important. And the more you keep quiet, the more you reinforce your own pattern of thinking.

And other people around you who might be experiencing the same thing will actually benefit from you speaking up, like your kids for example, right? And conversely, if you keep quiet, your kids and other people around you will learn that they should keep quiet as well. So you got to be the change you want to see in the world.

It starts with you. This is literally why I say I help fat women start running, okay? I am normalizing the fact that fat women run. I'm normalizing the fact that we use the word fat because it's just a word, right?

And me speaking up and saying that allows other women who might not be as comfortable with that, to say, "Oh, you mean, it's okay for me to be a runner? It's okay for me to just show up in the body I have right now?" Like fuck yeah it's okay. But it takes people speaking up. And so if you're willing to be the change that you see in the world, change starts to happen.

Now, asking for what you want can also be such an empowering action, even if you don't get it. Even if you ask and somebody says no, because it takes courage to ask and you are training your brain to do things that are uncomfortable. And that is a really powerful thing, right? It's something to be proud of.

And all of this, I think, in the running world is especially important if you are a fat runner and or a slow runner. Because the running world hasn't quite caught on that there are lots of fat people who run and also that there's a lot of people in general, fat and otherwise, who runs slower than a 15 minute mile or slower than a 12 minute mile even.

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So every time you don't say something about a t-shirt that doesn't come in your size, or every time you see a race you really want to do but decide not to sign up because you're not going to make the cut off, the problem continues, okay? Because change doesn't happen without some sort of stimulus. We can't just expect race directors to magically know that their shirts don't fit or that their cut off times are not inclusive if we don't say anything.

So here are my three steps to help you ask for what you want most effectively, okay? They're pretty simple, I'm going to go through for them right now. Number one, notice. Okay, notice the facts of the situation, notice your thoughts and emotions about those facts.

The facts, I'm going to tell you what the facts are. The facts are your body, right? Not your description of your body, but just your actual body. And the thing that you would like done or provided to accommodate it. There is nothing more, there are no other facts here.

They should give me a larger robe is not a fact, it's a thought. My body doesn't fit in here is also not a fact, it's a thought. So you've got to separate that out. The facts are my body and the size of the robe that I would like, okay? Or the size of the race shirt.

So take the facts and your thoughts, separate them out, notice the emotions that are created by those thoughts, right? Are you feeling the emotion of shame, fear, anger? Try to name them. Actually take a moment to name those emotions.

It helps if you can write all of this down, if you can grab a piece of paper, type it into your phone, whatever. And of course, breathe, do not forget to breathe. Always, when you're in a situation like this take a breath, take a

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moment, okay? Let yourself kind of unclench a little bit, just a little bit if it's possible.

Okay, so number one is notice the facts of the situation and then separate it from your thoughts and your emotions. Number two is once you know how you're feeling now, you've named that emotion, okay, I'm feeling shame right now.

By the way, it's very powerful to name the emotion because it kind of takes away the power a little bit. You have to step aside from the experience of the emotion to actually look and say, "Oh, look, I'm feeling shame because I'm thinking that my body is unacceptable, right?" That's very different than just being in the moment of the shame and then acting from there.

Okay, so once you've figured out the facts versus your thoughts and emotions, okay, named that emotion, I want you to decide how you want to feel when you make the request, okay? Because if we're going to ask for what we want, I want you to kind of take it slow and think, "Okay, when I am speaking the words or typing the words into the email, how do I want to feel? What emotion do I want to experience?"

This is an important step because if you're in the space of guilt, or shame, or anger, your request actually might not be super effective. Whether you're writing an email or asking in person, if your brain is overwhelmed with thoughts about how awful the situation is, you are much less likely to be able to clearly enunciate what you want and it's going to feel horrible while you're doing it.

So I want you to think about how you want to feel. What is the emotion you want to be experiencing when you make your request? Do you want to feel

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calm, confident, compassionate, neutral? Whatever it is. And then what would you need to be thinking to feel those emotions?

Maybe it's something like my body is not the problem here. Or it's okay to ask for what I want. My needs are just as important as everyone else's. I matter. My body is acceptable exactly as it is. Think of what thoughts you're going to need to be thinking to create those emotions, calm, confident, whatever it is, right? And then work on, like get yourself as close to that desired emotion as you can. And of course, keep breathing, lots and lots of calm breathing.

All right, now number three, once you're feeling calm or confident or whatever you decided is the best place, emotional place for you to come from when you're asking, think about what you're going to say. Don't just blurt it out, take a hot minute and think about what you're going to say.

Now, I will say, if you've been socialized as a woman you are probably going to be attempted to apologize first for asking. I'm so sorry, but can you get me a larger robe? I hate to bother you, but this race shirt doesn't fit, do you have a larger size? And ideally, you wouldn't apologize first but, well, because first of all, there's nothing to apologize for.

But if you're socialized as a woman it might be really hard to avoid it. And I don't want that to be the block between you asking for what you want and not, okay? So if it helps you ask for what you want, if it helps you to throw in that, "I'm so sorry, but..." or, "I hate to bother you, but..." go ahead and do it.

But either way, take a few moments to create the words in your head before you say them, all right? Maybe even practice them a couple of times before you ask. If you're writing an email you get to take all the time you

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need, right? You can write it, walk away, come back later and re-read it before you hit send. But give yourself time to say it the way you want to say it and practice it, all right?

And there's lots of ways to ask for what you want, okay? The fewer words you use, the better, right? Please get me a larger robe. Or, hello, it seems that this robe isn't large enough. Do you have a larger one? Or hey, great shirt, it doesn't seem to fit me, do you have a larger size? Come at it from a, assume that that person is going to be on board with giving you whatever you want. And ask as if you were asking a friend, right?

You don't have to show up and be like, "Your shirts don't fit me," right? Because that's what happens when we show up from a place of frustration, or shame, or anger. "Your shirts don't fit me, what the fuck is wrong?" Right? It's just like, hey, this shirt doesn't fit, do you have a larger size? Right?

So come at it from that place of just stating the problem, the shirt doesn't fit, and what you want, do you have a larger size, okay? Keep that in mind as you're creating the words that you want to use.

So quick recap, those three steps that we talked about are to separate out the facts of the situation from your thoughts and emotions. Work on creating a more helpful emotional state, whatever that looks like for you. And then from there you formulate your request, okay? And make sure the request is simply, this is the problem and this is what I would like as a solution, right? This is the problem, and this is the solution I desire, can you provide that? Keep it simple, as few words as possible.

Now, here's the thing, there's always a chance someone's going to say no, right? I asked for a larger robe, they were like, "Sorry, we don't have one."



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I've asked for larger race shirts many times, they don't often have a bigger one, okay? The race director might not be willing to accommodate your race pace, you might call or email the race director and say, "Hey, can I start early because I think it's going to take me longer to finish." And they might say no, right?

So be prepared in advance for a denial and know that it has nothing to do with you personally. Okay? And maybe you want to keep working towards getting what you need, you want to keep asking. Figure out a different way or a different solution, right? There's nothing wrong, like a no might be no, but it might be an invitation for further discussion. But if you don't ask in the first place, you will definitely not get what you want and you won't get any better at creating the courage to do it, okay?

So asking for what you want is a powerful skill, my friend. It's going to feel awkward at first, that's totally okay. It's normal. You're going to practice, you're going to get better at it, right? Other people are going to be like, "Damn, look at her, she just asks for what she wants. Like who does that?" You do, and you're teaching other people to do the same.

So whether you are fat and you're asking for something that you can use so that you can use a service or use a product, or you're asking for something totally unrelated, maybe you're not fat and you're asking for a different type of accommodation, the steps that I outlined above still apply. Okay?

So, number one, separate out the facts of the situations from your thoughts and emotions about it. Number two, create a more helpful emotional state, whatever that looks like for you. And then number three, think ahead, formulate how you're going to ask for it, and keep it simple. This is the

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problem and this is the solution I'm requesting, can you provide it? All right?

Okay, my friends, I hope today was super helpful for you. And of course, if you loved this, please share it on Instagram. Please do. And as always, I love you, stay safe and 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](http://notyouraveragerunner.com/upandrrunning) to join. I would love to be a part of your journey.