

Ep #282: How to Feel Better About Coming in Last



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

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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, happy fucking New Year. I hope the first few days of 2023 have treated you very well. I am personally excited for this year because I have a ton, a fuck ton of fun stuff planned both for not Your Average Runner and for myself. And, of course, I'll be sharing it with you all year long all the exciting things that we're doing.

But real quick, just as a follow up from the podcast a couple episodes ago when I talked about my deadlift goal, I wanted to let you know how that went. So long story short, two years ago, I set a goal to deadlift 200 pounds. At the time I was doing about 40 pounds, and by the end of 2021 I was dead lifting 100 pounds. And on December 28th of 2022 I made my heaviest lift ever at 235 pounds.

I am so damn proud of this. I cannot even begin to tell you how elated I am. Sometimes I forget, and then I remember and I get excited all over again. And that's partly because 235 pounds is pretty fucking heavy. I'm sort of in awe of my own strength. And I want to see now like how much more can I lift? And I think 250 pounds is within striking distance, probably a few more months. And who knows, maybe someday I'll deadlift 300 pounds. So I'm just sort of like agog at the possibilities of what my body can do at 55 years old.

But the main reason that I'm so proud is because I set this goal, like I said, two years ago. And I just kept going at it until I achieved it. I did not know how long it was going to take me to get there. I was just like, no, let's go. Let's see, right? And honestly, I told my trainer this on Wednesday, on the 28th, when I made the lift, I said, "Honestly, Nancy, I didn't really believe

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that I was going to make it to 200 pounds when we first started.” And she’s like, what?

And I’m like, yeah, when we first started I thought, oh, that’ll never happen. But then I started to see results and I started thinking, ooh, maybe this is possible. And actually I made it to 200 pounds in September of 2022. I did my one rep max test, maxed out at 200 pounds and was like, oh my god, I did it. But I just kept working from there. I wanted to see how much I could achieve by the end of the year.

So here’s the reason that I was successful, the real reason. And it is not because I am amazingly talented or genetically gifted. I’m not, you know, one of those people that’s just naturally strong. It’s not because I had a trainer. It is because I showed up for myself over and over and over, even when I didn’t want to. And lest you think I was perfect, I want you to know I was probably 70 to 75% consistent, not even close to 100%.

But I showed up more often than not. And there were some workouts where I sucked. Honestly, I would show up and I’d just tell my trainer, I am in a really bad mood today and I do not want to do this. And she’d be like, okay, put your gloves on and let’s go, right? And then there were other workouts where I totally slayed it. Where I showed up and we just blew my own mind with how much I could lift.

And then there were times where I didn’t show up at all, right? Where I just said fuck it, I don’t want to do this today. And that was part of that 25 to 30% where I was not consistent. But most of the time I just did my workout. Even if I couldn’t see any progress, I just put my head down and did it. I just said, listen brain, you’re going to have drama, you’re going to have all the thoughts. We’re going to do this anyway, so let’s just go. Like I just got real matter of fact about it.

And over the months, right, over the two years, I got a little bit stronger, and then a little bit more. And then voila I just, again, far exceeded my expectations. And the reason that I’m telling you this is because most of you think that consistency is the same as perfection, right? That to be

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consistent, you can't ever miss a day. You have to be like 95 to 100% in agreement with your training plan or whatever, and then anything less is failure.

And if you have this belief system, you're not going to get a lot of results for yourself. Because what happens is, as soon as you miss a day, you're like, well, I guess I have to wait till next Monday, or I have to wait till the beginning of next month to start because it's got to be perfect, right?

But if you are willing to half ass something, or even three quarters ass it, you will see progress, right? Because the more you're willing to just keep going, even if it seems like it's not working, the longer you stick with something, even if you're not perfect, right, the more likely you are to reach your goal.

And this was such a game changer thought for me, is that I can half ass something or I can three quarters ass something and still see results. And yeah, I might get there a little slower than if I was perfect, right? But I also get to have a life, and I also get to have all my thoughts, and I also get to be a human, which is awesome.

So, I mean, this has blown my mind so much. And I've used this concept elsewhere in my life and I have found that it is so powerful for people, I teach it a lot in Run Your Best Life. So I actually created a whole class around this topic, and it is called How to Become a Consistent Exerciser. And it's not the sexiest title ever, right? People don't wake up and say, I wish I could become a consistent exerciser.

But basically, that's the result you're going to get when you take this class. It's everything I know about becoming the version of you that keeps her commitments, sticks with her goals, right, and just kind of shows up for herself more often than not. And you can actually get instant access to this class today if you go to notyouraveragerunner.com/exercise to sign up, okay?

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Just go to notyouraveragerunner.com/exercise. In fact, if you want to hit pause right now and go register, I will wait, okay? Okay, now you're back, let's dive in.

Today's podcast, this is one of my favorite topics ever. And it was inspired by somebody that I coached in Run Your Best Life a few weeks ago. And it was about her thoughts and feelings around coming in DFL in a race. And DFL simply means dead fucking last, okay? It is a very dramatic way to say I crossed the finish line after everyone else. I was dead fucking last, oh my god. But it's a very common terminology in the running world. It's like, oh I was DFL.

And so I know a lot of you have some opinions about what it means to come in last and so we're just going to talk about it today. Because the thing is, first of all, someone's got to be last, right? Unless you are in some kind of magical race where literally everyone runs side by side and crosses the finish line together, holding hands, singing Kumbaya, right, there's always going to be a first place person, a last place person, and then everybody in the middle.

So last is just a place, okay? Last means you finished, you completed the assignment. And I know that you understand this logically. You're like, yes, I get it. But some of y'all make it mean some things about you when you come in last, or when you think about coming in last. And I think that's actually the more painful part of it, is when you think about coming in last, right, we create a whole lot of drama.

And there's this saying in the running world that DFL is better than DNF, which means did not finish, is better than DNS, which means did not start. So dead fucking last is better than did not finish, and did not finish is better than did not start. And it's kind of the same as saying, well you're still lapping everyone on the couch, right? And I've seen that meme everywhere, okay?

And I don't like looking at it like this because it's basically saying that there is a hierarchy to running, okay, and that someone who does less is not as

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worthy as someone who does more. And it basically perpetuates the belief that running is about winning, or being better than somebody else, or being faster, right? And it means that you can't feel good about your running unless you're beating somebody else, right?

That is literally what this whole hierarchical competition mindset is, is that like you can't feel good about your running unless you're beating somebody else. And I don't know, doesn't that sound kind of icky, right? Like I can't feel proud of my accomplishment unless I'm better than someone else. Fuck that. That is a hell no for me, because when you approach it like that, you're not taking responsibility for your feelings.

You're literally saying your good feelings are dependent on how other people perform in relation to you. And that's really fucked up because if that's really how it worked, there's always going to be one person in every race that has no choice but to feel bad. Not to mention anybody that didn't finish or didn't even show up, like they are required to feel bad as well.

So if our feelings depend on our performance, those people are screwed, right? That's not fair. And this belief that being last is the worst thing ever just perpetuates all of the negative stereotypes out there in the fitness world that fat people are lazy, that they can't be athletic, that they shouldn't be participating in things until they lose weight. And we are not here for that BS, right?

There is no problem with coming in last, all right? And spoiler alert, if you were in a race with 100 people, there is one winner and 99 losers, okay? So if you come in last, you are simply one of 99 people who did not win. I'm just saying, all right? But I know that many of you have this belief, okay, that coming in last is terrible, it's embarrassing, it's the worst thing. And it's not because you sat around thinking, what's the meanest thing I can say to myself about my running?

No, it's because you've been taught this, right? Maybe through running the mile in grade school or hearing other people talk about how embarrassing it is to come in last, or oh, that poor girl that came in last, I feel so sorry, for

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her, right? Or maybe you were raised in a family that believed losing is shameful, okay, a lot of us are raised in competitive families. And so this belief that coming in last, is terrible, it's supported by a lot of other people.

So if thinking about it makes you cringe, it's no surprise, okay? So it's not like there's something wrong with you for thinking that way. You've been taught it, through probably a variety of ways, so of course you think that way, that's normal. But the thing is, coming in last is simply a circumstance and it cannot make you feel any kind of way unless you start mixing it all up with your beliefs.

So let me repeat that, coming in last is simply a circumstance. It is a thing that happened. It is just as neutral as other things that happen. Like how many stop signs you stopped at on the way to the race, right? That's just a neutral fact. How many volunteers there were at each water stop, it's just a neutral fact. It's nothing more, okay? The problem is what you make it mean.

Now, some folks make coming in last mean, hey, I finished, I fucking finished. And they feel pretty happy and maybe they sign up for another race, right? Because they like feeling happy. But some of you, and you know who you are, some of you are telling some stories about what it means to finish last.

Here are some examples, I didn't try hard enough. I don't belong here. Everyone is waiting for me to finish and they're annoyed. Coming in last is embarrassing. And when you tell yourself those stories, you feel discouraged, ashamed, and embarrassed. Yes, sound familiar? These are some of the most painful emotions that we can experience, especially shame. Absolute worst feeling ever, I fucking hate shame.

So it makes perfect sense that you'd be afraid of finishing last if in your mind you equate finishing last with feeling shame, or feeling embarrassed, right? Why wouldn't you just want to avoid that?

So the client that I was coaching in Run Your Best Life said the reason she was working hard on getting faster, because we were talking about some

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speed work for her. She said, well, the reason I'm doing this is so that I won't be last in a race. And she had a specific race in mind that was coming up, she didn't want to be last in that race. And I'm like, whoa, whoa, whoa, let's just back it up a little bit.

I am all for working on your pace, right? It is a goal to focus on, it is something sometimes that gives us a little bit of extra motivation on the hard days. It's fun to set PRs for yourself, right? Getting faster is fun, it's awesome. But also your pace is not what defines you as a runner. And I also don't think of getting faster as improving. A lot of people are like, oh, look at me, I'm getting faster, I'm improving.

Improving as a runner, I don't think has anything to do with getting faster and everything to do with getting your running form nailed down and improving your cardiovascular fitness so that you feel better while you're running. And I don't think getting faster is always an appropriate indication of whether you're improving, because you can get faster but do it in a way that sets yourself up for injury, okay?

So that's just a little bit of an aside. Let's just stop saying that getting faster is the same as improving because there's a lot of ways to improve as a runner, getting faster doesn't necessarily belong on that list. But I get it, especially if you're training for a race like Disney, right, where they have very rigid cut offs. And in this case, I can't remember offhand if she was training for a Disney race or not.

But regardless, if you're training for a race like Disney where they have rigid cut offs and your goal is not to get swept, you may want to work on your pace so that you can be like I don't want to get picked up by the sweep van and not be able to finish. I totally get it. But if your main reason for trying to get faster is so that you won't be last because you think being last means you're going to feel embarrassed or ashamed, right, that's different and we got to talk about that.

Coming in last cannot make you feel bad. It also cannot make you feel good, right? So let's just be clear about this, coming in last doesn't make

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you feel good, doesn't make you feel bad, it's just a thing that happened and what you make it mean is what creates your feelings about it.

That's the great news because no matter what you've been told, or taught, or no matter what your brother-in-law, who isn't even a runner, says about coming in last, no matter how many times your kid asks you if you won the race, you can still decide to think that coming in last is awesome, or at least neutral, okay?

And what do I mean by neutral? Well, it's just a thing that happens, right? There's no emotion tied to it because you're not making it mean anything. Like if you're driving to work and you see 10 red cars in a row, I don't know. Or for some reason you're counting how many red cars you saw, right? You're driving to work, you see 10 red cars on the way, you're not like, oh my god, I saw 10 red cars, that's amazing. Or fuck, I saw 10 red cars, this is the worst thing ever. Right? You're like, no, 10 red cars, that's what I saw. Next topic.

That's neutral, it means nothing. It's just a fact. Okay? And if you can feel the same way about coming in last in a race as you do about seeing 10 red cars on the way to work, imagine how much less stress and anxiety you're going to feel about your training, about race day, about all of it, about talking about it afterwards, right?

Really imagine that, when you think about your upcoming race, if coming in last is truly neutral, there's no worry about it, right? You're just excited to run, to have fun, to do the thing you've been training for. You're maybe even excited to get a new finishers medal to hang on your wall. And I just think, like that's the mindset I have when I train. I don't worry about whether I'm going to come in last. I'm like, It's possible, I could come in last. It's also possible I might not come in last. I don't fucking care either way, right?

I mean, when you train with that mindset, it eliminates a good part of the drama that creates stress and struggle for us. And you can totally get excited about finishing and feel proud and all of that. Like I want you to feel proud about all of that.

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And I totally encourage you to even get to the point where you think coming in last is awesome, we'll talk about that in a moment. But for those of you who think that's way too much of a jump because you're like, it's the worst thing ever, let's just work on getting you to neutral, that coming in last is just a thing that happened.

So how do we get there? Well, first you need to understand what it is about last place that you think is so awful, okay? Because I've asked people this and they're like, well, it's just awful. And like they have internalized that sort of competitive hierarchical belief system way of thinking about running that they just think that it's a fact that coming in last is terrible.

But it's not. It's just a circumstance, right? It's not true that coming in last is a terrible thing, okay? And so figuring out why you believe that it's terrible, instead of just assuming that that's a true thing is the beginning of you being able to shift away from thinking that way.

And so maybe coming in last reminds you of being the last kid to finish the mile in grade school, right? Maybe you grew up in a super competitive family and the loser of every game, every Monopoly game or every game of Sorry, or Connect Four or whatever was mocked, right? Maybe your parents always told you it's not worth doing something unless you're going to be the best.

Maybe you're focusing on what other people will think of you, that they'll be laughing behind your back or be mad because they had to wait so long for you to finish. So those are some examples I've heard from my clients in Run Your Best Life of reasons why they think coming in last is the worst thing ever. But I recommend taking some time and writing about it.

Give yourself 15 to 20 minutes, think about it, mull it over, write down whatever comes to mind. And yes, it might feel a little painful because you're literally thinking the thoughts that create those painful emotions, but it is going to be helpful for you in the long run. Figuring out exactly why the possibility of coming in last is so hurtful to you is going to be the start of telling yourself a new story.

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Now, once you understand exactly what you think is terrible about coming in last, you can begin to challenge those thoughts because I promise you, they're just thoughts. Those thoughts are not any truer than thinking that coming in first is the best thing, okay?

So, if you have a belief system, we're going to use one of the examples of the thoughts I just gave. If you have a belief system that nothing is worth doing unless you're going to be the best, start asking yourself whether that's really true. Okay? Because I suspect you're not the best at everything that you do.

Are you the best at reading books? Are you the best at getting dressed? Are you the best at what you do for work, right? Best is such a stupid useless term, okay? There's always going to be somebody better than you. Always, okay? I mean, unless you're like, I don't know, even that, like I was thinking unless you're a grand master chess player or something. But even then, right, there's always somebody up and coming that's better than you.

And if you're in the Olympics, like, okay, yes, you were the best in that contest, in that moment, right? But are you the best in the world? I don't know. For most things, you can't even define what the best really is. Like how do you decide who the best artist in the world is? You can't, because everyone has a different opinion.

And oh, even if you come in first in your race, that doesn't make you the best runner. It just means nobody faster than you showed up at that race, right? So if we are constantly thinking we need to be the best, I feel like you are cutting yourself off at the knees and missing out on the joy of running.

Being the best, in my opinion, is not even close to a goal worth striving for, okay? I would rather see you give it a twist and say that you are working on being the best runner you can be, okay? So you're not comparing yourself to anybody else, you're just saying I want to become the best runner I can be at any given moment. All right.

So it doesn't matter if you're first, or last or anywhere in the middle because coming in last might be the best runner you can be that day. And you get to

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say I'm the best today, right? Because I showed up, I gave it my all, I was the best runner I could be today and just be done, just be proud of that.

So another common worry is that everyone at the end of the race is going to be annoyed because they had to wait for you. I hear this all the time. Oh my god, people are going to have to wait for me, they're going to be so irritated. First of all, I promise you, the people who are operating the race, have plenty to do while you finish, okay?

There are tables to break down, there's garbage to clean up. Like there's so many things to worry about when you have a big race, nobody is sitting around looking at their clock going, is she ever going to cross that fucking finish line? No. So that's number one.

And number two is it's a race, so they want you to finish and have a great experience. They want you to have fun. They want you to have so much fun that you sign up next year and tell all your friends. They're not mad, they're excited for you. Seeing people cross the finish line is literally why they created the event, okay?

So yeah, they're going to be busy breaking down tables and cleaning up trash and volunteers are going to be doing all that stuff. And then when you come rolling in, they're going to stop and cheer for you and give you a banana and some water and tell you how awesome you are. For real.

I have never come in last in a race and had anyone give me side eye or say, well, it's about fucking time you showed up, right? They're not there to judge you. They're there to give you lots of high fives and cheers, I promise.

And if you have friends and family waiting for you at the finish line, they knew ahead of time what your finish line time would be. You told them I'm probably going to cross the finish line in four hours, might be an hour, like depending on what the race is and what your pace is, okay? First of all, always tell your family and friends when they can expect you. Don't let them guess, right?

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But most of the time, they know when you're going to finish, right? They showed up knowing exactly how long they would be there. They love you so much, they're going to be there cheering and taking pictures. They're so excited for you. Most of them are thinking thank God it's not me. I could never do what she does, she's amazing. And if they are annoyed, well maybe don't invite them to the next race, okay? That is not a you problem, that is the them problem.

And if you are a Run Your Best Life member, you can just use our new member directory to find local friends to come out and cheer for you, okay? That's going to be fun. We are rolling that out at the end of January, brand new member directory for all the Run Your Best Lifers, it's going to be amazing.

Okay, so those are two examples. I want you to keep challenging your thinking about coming in last. And if you believed that coming in last was no big deal, how would you feel and what would you do? Would you sign up for more races? Would you feel better about your training? Would you stop apologizing to people about your pace?

Now, it might not happen overnight, but working on shifting your thinking, just like training for a race, you might have to work multiple times on shifting your thinking. But if coming in last in a race is one of your biggest concerns and it's creating stress or worry for you, I recommend you start doing this work so that you can begin to see it as a neutral experience, right? It's neither good nor bad, it's just an experience.

And then once you've gotten there, you can decide if you want to take it a step further and make coming in last than awesome thing, okay, because it means you finished. You did the thing you set out to do. You trained, you showed up and you did it. And I think that's something to be really proud of.

And just because you were the last one to finish the distance, doesn't take away that you did it. You are one of 100 or 1,000 or 10,000 people that showed up and made it happen. So I want you to focus on that, right? Make your finish mean that you are someone who follows through on her

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commitments to herself, that you're strong as fuck, that you're kind of a badass.

Because here's my take, okay, if you're struggling to see yourself as a badass. When you run an eight or a 10 minute mile, it's easy to show up for a race, honestly. Because you know that plenty of other people are going to be doing what you're doing. It doesn't take a ton of courage.

And this is not to dis those who run that pace. Those who have worked hard to get there, you are awesome too. I'm not taking anything away from you, but the eight minute mile people, the 10 minute mile, people don't have to contend with running alone for a good portion of the race. They don't have to think about whether they're going to get swept, they can be reasonably sure they're going to finish well within the time limit and maybe even win an age group award, okay?

When you're a back of the packer or an end of the packer and you've been taught that coming in last is embarrassing, it takes a fuck ton of courage to show up anyway. It takes a lot of courage to do the mental work on yourself to tell a different story and to feel proud. And I think that work is worth it, because not only do you get to be a badass runner who finishes races, you also get to use those skills everywhere in your life where you might be struggling, okay?

So own your badassery, my friends. And I want to challenge you to sign up for some races this year where you think you might actually be last. I want you to train, I want you to show up and I want you to own it, okay? Because someone's got to be last, right, and why can't it be you?

Seriously, why can't it be you? Why are you so special that you cannot be last? All right, really think about that. And if you feel moved to do so, I'd love for you to DM me on Instagram and let me know why it can't be you that comes in last.

Okay, that's it for today. Before we go don't forget to sign up for the How to Become a Consistent Exerciser workshop. Again, just head over to

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notyouraveragerunner.com/exercise to join. Again, that's notyouraveragerunner.com/exercise. Go get it. I hope I will see you there.

And that's it for this week, my friends. I love you, stay safe, and get your ass out there and run. I'll talk to you next week.

Real quick before you go, if you enjoyed this episode you have got to check out Run Your Best Life. It's my monthly coaching program where you will learn exactly how to start running, stick with it, and become the runner you have always wanted to be. Head on over to runyourbestlife.com to join. I would love to be a part of your journey.