

## Ep #289: What Fat Women Shouldn't Wear



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

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, hey, runners. So this week I was planning to talk about how to run as your future self and how that can make you a much stronger runner. But then I saw this ad on Facebook and I decided to put that topic off for a week because I have some opinions to share with you today. So buckle up.

Now, this ad that I saw was a targeted ad for me because I have clicked on lots of clothing ads, on both Facebook and Instagram, from companies that make clothing for fat folks, and most people will call it plus-sized clothing. So it's not a surprise that this ad showed up in my feed, but oh my fucking God, when I saw it I totally lost my cool.

Now, the title of this ad was things that should not be in the closet of plus-sized women. And the subtitle was personal style advice. And then it showed four different fat women wearing different outfits, listed all of their measurements, and provided commentary on what each of these women should and should not wear. And I'm like, seriously, are we still doing this? Because the whole idea that there are right and wrong ways for fat women to dress is just wrong. It's bullshit.

Now, you might be thinking, well, okay, Jill, just scroll on by if it makes you mad, right? And I could totally do that and save myself from feeling so pissed off. But here's why I'm calling it out, because telling a fat woman what she should and shouldn't wear, especially on a medium like Facebook where you're kind of scrolling and you're sort of getting this messaging almost subliminally, right, as you're kind of cruising by. This messaging

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perpetuates the fat-phobic and patriarchal beauty standards that we have all been conditioned to believe.

Now, it is bad enough that most societies put more value on smaller bodies, and that larger people are subtly, and not so subtly, encouraged to make themselves as small as possible. Fitness industry, I'm looking directly at you. But to top it off with saying well, okay, if you're fat, that's fine, but you should still be dressing a certain way. You should still be trying to make yourself look smaller. That is the opposite of body positivity. It's bullshit.

It's basically saying, well, if you have to be fat, at least you should make the best of it. It implies that smaller is better. And I have a big problem with that, and so should you. Now, the first issue is that there is no right or wrong way to dress a fat body. For real. There's no right or wrong way to dress a fat body or a thin body or any body. Okay? Fashion is simply a way to express yourself. It can be as creative as you want.

Sometimes your fashion decision might be to wear sweatpants, a hoodie, and a baseball cap. I go there a lot. Sometimes it might be wearing a skin-tight dress and stilettos, and anything in between, right? Sometimes fashion is about comfort. Sometimes it's about making a statement, and that statement can be anything you want.

What fashion is not, however, is a requirement to make your body look smaller or to conform to the proportions of whatever body shape is popular at the moment. There is no actual rule that says you need to avoid wearing horizontal stripes because they make you look bigger. I dare you, go to the dictionary, go anywhere, anywhere that's like some sort of regulatory agency and there's no rule, okay?

There's no rule that says you should always be trying to disguise your belly or that you shouldn't wear a bikini to the beach if you're fat. Now, I get it, you might feel uncomfortable doing some of those things. But it is not

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because you're breaking any rules. It is because you have been socialized to believe that smaller bodies are better and that you should try to hide or disguise the parts of you that don't conform to the standards of the world, your "problem areas." And that if you don't try to hide them, you risk other people having negative opinions about you.

So I do want to point one thing out, something to think about, there actually is no clothing that will magically make you look like the size you think you should be, unless maybe it's Spanx. And for Pete's sake, if you want to wear Spanx, that's fine. But I can't even imagine trying to literally squeeze my body smaller just so that other people will approve of it.

But honestly, aside from Spanx there really is no clothing that's magically going to make you look like the size you think you should be. It does not exist. Everyone who sees you knows what size you are, even if you only wear vertical stripes, even if you only wear black, right? Even if you only wear a V-neck or whatever the thing is, right?

So let's be clear on that, you are not fooling anyone into actually thinking you are a socially acceptable size. You are kind of deluding yourself into thinking, well, maybe I look five pounds thinner and that's better, right? No. So the whole concept of you know what fat women should and shouldn't, where, it's just dumb is what it is, right?

It is simply one more way to police women's bodies. And here is the worst part, usually that call is coming from inside the house because we have been told for so long that smaller is better, that we have internalized it, we have created rules around it, these made-up rules that we believe are fashion do's and don'ts. We are policing our own damn selves for making fashion mistakes.

But if there actually were right and wrong ways to dress, if we could actually prove beyond a shadow of a doubt, everyone would agree this is

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the right way, this is the wrong way, there would be no such thing as fashion. There would be no evolution of style over the years, right?

Just think about how public opinion on women's bodies and appearance has shifted just in your own lifetime, right? One year it's popular to have thick eyebrows, the next, women are plucking them all over the place. So if there were right and wrong ways to do it, if there were a right and wrong way for your body to look, if there were right and wrong ways for you to dress your body, we would always be the same, right? We would be stagnant, right? There would be no evolution of what's in fashion and what's not in fashion.

But that's not how it works, right? Because fashion is a made-up thing that continually changes because a bunch of people say this is what's popular now. So this idea that when you are fat you should be looking for clothes that make you look thinner, is just part of all the other shenanigans, right? It is not a thing. You are under no obligation to make yourself look thinner, to try and contour your body with your clothing so that it complies with whatever the popular body shape is at the time, right? It's not a thing.

Now, if you want to do that, if you want to use your clothing to create the illusion of a certain shape or a smaller body, have at it, right? I'm not here to tell you don't do that. It's fine. You do you. My point is that you are under no obligation to do so when you see a post or you hear somebody talking about, like, oh, she shouldn't be wearing that. You need to hide your problem areas. Fat women shouldn't wear bikinis or fat women shouldn't wear horizontal stripes, or whatever it is.

Those rules are bullshit. They were created by the patriarchy to ensure that women play their role, okay? And when you comply with them, you are furthering the whole system. And I get that it might feel uncomfortable to suddenly just start wearing whatever you want without concern about whether it's flattering, right? Because you've been taught your whole life

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that there are certain ways you should present yourself. You've been taught that not having a smaller body is something to be ashamed of, right?

So of course it feels awkward and weird and uncomfortable to shift into thinking that your body is not the problem. It's normal to feel that way. It doesn't mean there's anything wrong with you. When I first started wearing bikinis, I wore them around the house. Then I ventured out into my backyard, right? I didn't even have a pool, so the bikinis never actually saw any action. I just wore them to see what it felt like to have my stomach exposed, to go out in the sunlight with my stomach exposed, okay?

And then I ventured into wearing them to a friend's pool, it was just me and her. I knew that nobody else was going to be there. I was like all right, I can do this, right? And then I kind of really got my courage up and one day wore a bikini to the beach, totally covered up. And as soon as I sat down on the beach I uncovered, but then if I had to get back up I covered up again, right? I was very cagey about the whole thing.

And nothing happened, right? Nobody pointed out to me that like, ma'am. The fashion police did not show up and try to tell me that I was horrifying. And then one day I was like, all right, I'm going to do it. I'm going to wear a bikini to a pool party. So we went to a small pool party, I was very nervous. Literally not one other person said anything to me about wearing a bikini. I had a super cute hat on, I got a lot of compliments on the hat. Everyone else was wearing bathing suits, too.

So we were like, in the pool, all of us wearing our bathing suits. It was just a non-issue, right? And that's when I realized like, oh, all of this nonsense has been me telling myself I'm not allowed to do this, because nobody else really cares, all right? And so after that, it was on. Bikinis anytime I went swimming. So freeing, so much more comfortable. I almost regret the years that I spent wearing black one-pieces that covered everything up and they

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had like tummy control panels and all that, because now I'm just like, no. It's a no, I wear what I want.

Same with running gear, right? I used to run in baggy shirts and sweatpants. And then over time I learned to embrace leggings, but still with the baggy shirts, right? And then I kind of started moving into tank tops, but they were still baggy. But then I started finding fitted tank tops. And I started to realize that the more fitted my running clothes were, the easier it was to run. And then I embraced running skirts. And then I started running without a shirt when it was hot out.

And it didn't happen overnight. None of this has happened overnight, right? It's been a journey of at least 15 to 20 years for me. There have been sideways looks from a few folks through the years, right? I'm not going to say that everybody's been like, good for you. I've definitely had people kind of look me up and down. And I've just, you know, I've actively worked on rejecting the belief that fat bodies should be covered up, that fat bodies should be made to look as small as possible.

When I've actively worked on rejecting that belief, I've started to not care what other people think, right? I'm just like, oh, we just have different belief systems, and that's okay. Also, it's none of their business.

So if I want to wear horizontal stripes, I go for it. If I want to go running in a running skirt and a sports bra with my stomach rolls on display and my leg cellulite visible, it's happening. Because my body and your body are not something to be ashamed of, or something to hide. Nobody else gets to tell you how to do it. You are in charge, okay?

Now, before I go, another little mini-rant to share. A lot of women like to use the term plus-sized to describe themselves because it seems less "offensive" than the word fat. It almost seems kind of neutral, right? I think most people would say, oh, plus size is a neutral term. Because everybody

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knows what plus size means, right? Plus size is a fashion industry label for clothing that is a US size 14 or higher.

So when you say you are plus size, you're giving people an idea that your body fits clothing that is a US size 14 or higher. Now, obviously a 14 in one brand and a 14 in another brand are completely different, right? And plus size is anything 14 or higher. So it's 14 through as high as the sizes go, okay? So it's a pretty broad label. But it's something that people understand and it seems neutral, right? It seems less angsty or less offensive than the word fat.

Now, some brick-and-mortar stores have a plus size section, it is usually very far from the front door. But often they only offer their extended sizing online, if at all, right? And very often the plus size selections are more expensive, right? Because they're like, it's more fabric. The thing about the concept of plus-size is that it's an afterthought. It's like, well, we have all of our regular stuff for the normal people. And then we make this plus size stuff, they call it extended sizing, right?

It's another way to kind of cover up the fact that they're making it obvious that you are different, that you don't fit in, okay? That you are something that they have to accommodate, all right? I fucking hate this approach because I think it others people who are a size 14 or higher. And also it makes it so that you have to work harder to get cute clothes that fit and feel good on your body, right? And again, you might even be charged extra along the way.

So calling yourself plus-sized, yes, I get that it might seem less harsh or less awkward than saying I'm fat. But using that term means you're also buying into the systems that continue to highlight society's issue with fat bodies, all right? So if you're uncomfortable with the word fat, and I've worked real hard to make myself comfortable with it, which is why I use that word all the time, because I want to help normalize it for other people.

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But if you're uncomfortable with it, there are other ways to refer to your body that don't support fat-phobic systems, okay? Here are some examples. Thick, larger bodied, plump, voluptuous, chunkalicious, solid, weighty, fluffy, well endowed, right? There's a million ways you can describe your body that doesn't buy into a fat-phobic system.

And by the way, I'm not going to get into it today, we'll save that for another podcast. But the words overweight and obese, also part of that whole fat-phobic problematic system, all right? Yes, they're medical terms. They're based on very faulty systems. Please don't use them to describe your body, even if your doctor does.

Anyway, whatever word you choose, whether you decide you're going to call yourself fat, you're going to dive in and you're like, that's the word I'm going to commit to, or whether you want a word that feels a little bit lighter to you, or maybe has some fun or creativity to it, I'm all in. I just want you to remember that your body is not a problem. It is just a human body, and your size is no indicator of your value and worth as a person. And you are under absolutely no obligation to make your body look a certain way so that other people will feel comfortable with it, okay?

And your fat human body, my friend, can do some pretty badass shit, like running. Okay? So let's just remember that. That is it for this episode. Short and sweet.

I love you, stay safe, get your ass out there and run and I will talk to you next week.

Real quick, before you go, if you enjoyed this episode, you have 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](http://runyourbestlife.com) to join. I would love to be a part of your journey.

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