

Ep #296: Strength, Diet Culture, and Finding Your Strong with Christine Chessman



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 runners, this week I have a very special treat for you. So, a couple months ago I was on the *Find Your Strong* podcast with Christine Chessmen, who is an amazing fitness coach and Pilates instructor. She helps women over 40 move more freely, embrace their bodies, feel strong and take up some fucking space. And we're doing this podcast in two parts.

So the first part was on her show, and I'm actually going to replay that interview. She was interviewing me, I'm going to replay that today on this show. And then in a few weeks I'm going to share my episode where I interview her. And we're just going to have some fun with it.

So Christine is a total badass, and I really do want to introduce you to her work. So, again, that's why I'm sharing the conversation we had on her podcast. And then, again, in a few weeks you'll get part two. And in part two of the podcast, we're actually going to talk about things like recovering from compulsive exercise, strength training and a whole lot of good stuff.

So you can find Christine on Instagram at Hello Fitness Christine. So make sure that you get over to Instagram and follow her because, A, she shares a ton of great fitness tips for women over 40. She's fucking hilarious. And all of her links are over there. So if you are interested in finding more about how you can work with her and all that good stuff, all that information is over on Instagram at Hello Fitness Christine.

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Now without further ado, here is the first interview with me and Christine.

Christine: Welcome, Jill.

Jill: Hi, thank you so much for having me.

Christine: Oh, you're so welcome. I'm so excited for this conversation. So I'm going to hand the floor over to you. Tell us a little bit about you and why. So what is your why for doing what you do?

Jill: Oh my goodness, that is such a good, juicy question. I think my why sort of changes from time to time. I mean, 25 years ago when I started running, my why was because I wanted to lose weight, right? Because I'd been conditioned and socialized to believe that you have to be thin to be acceptable.

And then I sort of just fell in love with it. And then my why became, huh, let's see what's possible for me. Let's kind of push my boundaries. And I found that becoming a runner, especially being a runner in a fat body, which is somewhat of a rebellious act. At least it definitely was back then, it's less so now but. But still, it gave me this feeling of confidence and just this kind of deep belief in myself that I know what's best for me and that I can make the best decisions for myself.

So it sort of allowed me to drop a lot of the rhetoric that we hear from the traditional fitness and diet industry. And it allowed me to just kind of see myself as a human instead of a body that needed to be manipulated into looking a certain way. So I think that's one of my why's, is because running and strength training, I do a lot of lifting as well, just makes me feel powerful and strong and confident.

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And I mean, there's a lot of other little why's along the way. I don't know, because it's fun, because I like to get out in the sunshine, because I love that feeling of euphoria after you're finished with a particularly good workout. But mostly it, yeah, I think it's for the confidence and the power that I feel within myself when I am consistently exercising and respecting my body that way.

Christine: And this, I mean, I just love what you're saying. And for me, I think many of us have started off running to either maintain weight, lose weight, burn calories and become something different. And that's what I find so incredible about running, that you start to realize that you're enjoying it, that you get an amazing feeling afterwards. And that's kind of what I'd love to bring to my audience, especially because I have a number of women that I work with that just think they're too old to run.

Jill: Oh goodness.

Christine: They're too fat to run. They worry about their knees. They worry about how they're going to look. They want to go early in the morning or late at night. What would you say to those people, Jill?

Jill: Oh my goodness, so many things. First of all, you're never ever too old. I just saw this, there's a woman I think she's American, I'm pretty sure she's American. She's 102 years old and she just set a record for the fastest 5k for a person in that age range. And it wasn't, I mean, it wasn't like she was running a 30 minute 5k, but it was like about an hour. So this 102 year old woman is like, you know, the article that I read was so cute. It was like a 102 year old woman sets a blazing record for the 5k.

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And I was like that is, to me, if you're 102 years old and you're still out there on the track and you're still running 5ks, there's no excuse for somebody who's 40, 50, 60, 70.

Christine: Yes.

Jill: And I've worked with runners in their 70s. One of my clients did her first half marathon. She started running in her late 60s, and then she did her first half marathon shortly after her 70th birthday. So I don't think there's any such thing as too old. And as far as the knees question and you, I mean, I know I'm preaching to the choir here.

Christine: Great question.

Jill: I think the thing is, and this is using my own body as my evidence, but I have arthritis in both knees. In spots it's bone on bone. My meniscus is quite ragged, I've seen the pictures, it's not pretty. And I'm well over 100 pounds "overweight" according to medical standards. So I have all of the reasons that I should not be a runner because I will destroy my knees.

And I did have a lot of knee pain until I really started strength training, until I really started paying attention to my stride and making sure that my joints are supported. And so now I have all of these risk factors for knee pain and I don't have it. Because as I've discovered over the years, the knees are not, like running doesn't destroy your knees.

Running actually builds bone density, stimulates growth. And so if you have knee pain, nine times out of 10, it's because of a muscular imbalance or something and not because you have "bad" knees. And so I think this is a myth and, gosh, I sat in a doctor's appointment. This was 2018, so about five years ago. And I was struggling again with a little bit of knee pain.

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And I went to see an orthopedic surgery surgeon who said, if you don't stop running you're going to need a knee replacement within the next five years. You need surgery right now. I want to put a scope in your knee and clean out the debris and blah, blah, blah. And I said, oh, okay, all right. So can we get this wrapped up within six to eight weeks, because I am going to be training for a marathon. And he just looked at me and he said, this is not a good idea for you at your age. And then he looked at me and I realized he was going to say weight, and then he stopped.

And I was like, oh, okay, this is not my doctor. And I said, oh, thank you so much for your opinion. And I left and I went and I found a non-surgical sports doctor and worked with him to kind of rehab all of the structures around all the muscles around my knee. And I never needed surgery or any of those things.

And so I think it's a myth that is perpetuated by certain parts of the medical industry that being fat is going to destroy your knees. And I'm like, nope, because I know plenty of people who are not in larger bodies who have knee pain and it has nothing to do with that. So I realize I'm kind of rambling on a little bit.

Christine: No, please.

Jill: But oh my gosh, on Instagram if I had a dollar for every troll that said you're going to ruin your knees, I would be a very wealthy woman.

Christine: It just gets me, it's the misinformation also the doctors do not have training. And the BMI is such, we can talk about the BMI for quite a long time. But it just angers me on behalf of any person in a larger body who goes to the doctor with any issue, that the first thing they're told is, oh,

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you need to lose weight. So the actual issue that they're coming with is not addressed.

Jill: Yep.

Christine: But I can't tell you how angry it makes you. In this country it is incredibly pronounced. I don't know what it's like in the US.

Jill: Yeah, it's to the point where – And I think a lot of patients who are in larger bodies, they don't get the medical treatment they need because they are afraid to go to the doctor because they know they're just going to be told you need to lose weight. And I just feel like that's so lazy. Like, okay, so you're not going to actually look into it, you're just going to take one look at my body and say, "Okay, you broke your arm, it's probably because you're fat." No, it's because I fell down.

Christine: And the most shocking thing is there's actually no science behind it.

Jill: Yeah.

Christine: And there's no evidence behind it. And it's just almost a tick box exercise that the health service in our country have to sort of, that every conversation they have, they have to mention BMI and the weight. I don't know, but we'll go off on that tangent.

Jill: It's infuriating.

Christine: It is infuriating. But what is also quite interesting is that runners, so people that start running, this is one thing that you said about the strength training, yes, you're preaching to the choir. I know a lot of runners

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so I teach a couch to 5k program myself. And a lot of people go too fast. They start off and they only run.

They only run and they don't add in the strength training. They get injured quickly. They lose their mojo. They stop running and they've been disillusioned and disheartened because they've tried so hard. They've turned up every week, they've been consistent. And yeah, then they think their bodies are letting them down when actually, Jill, tell us how these people can turn things around.

Jill: I mean, well, if everybody would just lose weight, then we wouldn't have any problems, right?

Christine: Yes, lose it.

Jill: Yeah, so I actually just did a review on my podcast of the original Couch to 5k program, which was, I think he started it in 1996. So it's been almost 30 years that it's been out there. And now there's a lot of other versions, but the original program was nine weeks long. And it went from zero running to running a 5k in 30 minutes in the period of nine weeks.

And I tried that program so many times and I kept failing. And I thought what is wrong with me? I must be too fat, right? That was my immediate conclusion. And then over time I realized like, oh, actually, this is crazy. If you can go from zero to nine weeks and run a 5k in 30 minutes without stopping in those nine weeks, you were not starting from the couch.

Christine: Yeah.

Jill: That is inaccurate. But I think that the whole belief that running, I think people start running and they expect that it should be easier or they kind of

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compare themselves to people who have been doing it for years. And there's also this belief that if you're slow, that you're not a real runner, that you shouldn't talk about it. I have clients who will first start out with me and they'll finish a 5k and it'll take them 50 minutes to finish a 5k. And they'll be like, well, I'm so embarrassed about my time. I'm like, come on, you finished, right? Everybody has to start somewhere.

And so I think the key is to start, I always say to people, do less than you think you can do so that you'll have someplace to go, right? So that you can build an actual progression and so that you can test the waters and see how your body is going to respond. Because if you go all in and try to run for 30 minutes in the first few weeks, that's a recipe for injury for most people, especially if you're over 40 and you're experiencing perimenopause and your hormones are shifting and the way your body feels and interacts with itself is changing.

I'm postmenopausal now, but for about five years there were aches and pains that had never existed before. And I know it was, like in retrospect it was hormonal. But I thought, oh my gosh. I had all kinds of thoughts like, oh look, I've gotten too fat and now my body hurts all the time. And it's my fault for being fat, right?

It's amazing how we always come back to the weight, when in reality we need to give, especially as women, we need to give ourselves much more grace with the changes that our bodies are going through.

Christine: Yeah, and that's it.

Jill: I don't even know if I answered your question.

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Christine: You absolutely did. But it's interesting how those thoughts always creep back in even though I've done an awful lot of work over the years on sort of accepting my body and coming from an eating disorder background. But when I'm really stressed those thoughts come back, they creep in. It's getting easier to push them away, but they're still in the background there.

Jill: Yeah.

Christine: And we just, exactly like you said, just need to be more gentle with ourselves. But on the subject of couch to 5k, so I am with you on this because I lead a couch to 5k for the local council. And I've changed it because I can't stand it. I think it's week six, where you're suddenly going from running eight minutes to 20.

I'm like in what world is that okay to be running for eight minutes just a bit and with all the breaks, and now we're going to run for 20. I just said, no, we're not doing that. So I checked that out completely and added a few weeks to the program and kind of changed it up.

Jill: Oh, good.

Christine: But it's still, I really do agree with you, they need to call it something different because it ends up 30 minutes of running.

Jill: Yeah.

Christine: 30 minutes is not, that is a fast time on anybody's scale for a 5k. If you've been running for years and years and years, that is still a very good time by an average kind of measure. And to expect a new runner, and that's the measure that they have. So they think if they run a 5k and it takes them an hour, they knock themselves down and they get disillusioned.

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And I think that's a really good point, because Couch to 5k is really quite popular here. But a lot of people then get switched off of running.

Jill: Yeah. It's not accessible to most people.

Christine: Yes.

Jill: It's literally not accessible to the vast majority of people at which it is aimed, right?

Christine: Yes.

Jill: It's like let's help people who don't run start running. And let's create a program that makes them all feel terrible about themselves while they're doing it.

Christine: So they never run again.

Jill: Yeah, exactly.

Christine: I always tell people exactly that, start slow. And start slower than you think you should be running because I always say time on your feet, build up time on your feet. And don't think about your speed, we can work on speed after we get that basic 30 minutes on your feet. And I never start to talk about that distance, because it doesn't equate. But how would you talk to somebody who had maybe been through Couch to 5k and was feeling a bit disillusioned? Would you just invite somebody to come work with you? Is that the best?

Jill: Well, yeah, for sure. Always, always come work with me.

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Christine: Of course.

Jill: I think that, for me, the lesson with Couch to 5k when I've failed at it and when I've seen literally thousands of other people fail at it as well, it's not you, it's the progress.

Christine: Yes.

Jill: It's just not the right program for you, for most people. I mean, it was written, when it was written it was a 26 year old man, right? So he was young, he was not larger bodied. And so he wrote a program that I think made sense to him. And he wrote it from the perspective of wanting to help his mom start running. And I've seen pictures of his mom, she's absolutely adorable, but she's a tiny little thing, right?

And so I think it's like so many things, like when we think about the history of the BMI and how it's been completely misappropriated for what it is now. I think Couch to 5k is the same thing, right? At the time it was written, it might have made sense for a certain population, but I don't think the way it was written is relevant now, but it hasn't been updated.

But I think other people have come in, like myself and yourself, with ways of adapting it and teaching running in ways that actually is inclusive and is helpful for people. And I think one of the differences between Couch to 5k's approach and how I teach running is that I actually make it clear to all my clients that there is never any expectation that you will have to run the entire time.

I mean, I use the run walk approach for everything, for all of my distance runs. Because it kind of feels good to me. It allows me to go faster overall, because I've tried running without stopping, and when I started the interval

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approach I got faster, which is so counterintuitive, but it's true. I tested it out on my ex-husband, like he can run a 19 minute 5k. Or he could 10 years ago, right? He's in his late 50s now. Maybe he still can, I don't know. But yeah, he's like a super fast runner.

And I said to him, "Listen, just try a half marathon with me. Try it using the run/walk method and see what happens." And he ran his fastest half marathon ever.

Christine: Wow.

Jill: And this was a guy who could run, I think he was normally like a little over two hours and I think he broke the two hour mark on his half marathon, or maybe he did in one. I don't know, it's irrelevant. Anyway, he ran his fastest half marathon ever. So I kind of feel like one of the things that I want to do is re-educate people that run/walk is just another way to be a runner.

Some runners are sprinters. Some runners are long distance runners at a slower pace. And some people do the run/walk method. And it's all valid. It's all just different ways to approach the sport of running. And I think when you give somebody the permission to not have to eliminate those walk breaks and be able to just kind of like continually take those walk breaks, it means that they, first of all, that they no longer have to beat themselves up for not being able to run straight through.

But also I think it gives them the ability to become a runner, to become that 102 year old woman setting a record for a 5k. And so that's, to me, my main differences between Couch to 5k and myself are, hey, you can do run/walk all the time. And there's no need to try.

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This belief that as a runner your main goal should always be trying to get faster, I think is also harmful, right? Because, first of all, at some point, and usually somewhere in your 50s, you're going to be as fast as you're ever going to be. So are you just going to quit then? Or are you going to say like, okay, well, I can still keep running. I might get slower over the years, but it doesn't, you know, if getting faster is your primary driver and your primary goal as a runner –

Christine: Where do you go?

Jill: Yeah, where do you go from there? So yeah, so I think that I'm going to stop talking now because I'm just going off on a rant.

Christine: I loved how you do – No, no, no, please, I love it. I loved how you drew the parallels there between the origins of the BMI and the Couch to 5k because actually absolutely because the BMI was obviously never meant for, it was based on a white, young European male population.

Jill: Yes.

Christine: Never meant for an individual measurement. And we can get into that, but the rest is the origins of the BMI, et cetera, et cetera. But with the Couch to 5k, I think, yeah, I think exactly that. It's the speed element which people get obsessed with. And it's also the run/walk, it's the resistance to the run/walk.

Jill: Yeah.

Christine: My husband, he'll go out and he can't stop. He said, "Oh, I ran four miles without stopping." And I was like, "Why didn't you stop?" And he's very proud that he didn't stop, and I think we get so hung up on that.

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And actually, my fastest marathon, I've done four now, but my fastest by far was when I stopped every mile.

So I had this thing that every mile when there was a water station, I stopped and took the time to walk and have a little sip of water for enough time that I felt, okay, I'm a bit recovered, I'll go again, every mile. Stopped every mile. And people think that sometimes breaks their stride, but I think there is a real resistance. It's almost like, no, I can't stop. I shouldn't, I shouldn't. You know, we should all over ourselves, don't we?

Jill: Yeah. I do think that concept of breaking your stride, what it breaks is your belief that you're doing it, right. Right? Like, if you're not stopping, then you can keep believing that you're doing it right. And people are like, if I take a walk break, then I'm interrupting my flow. I'm like, actually, you're letting your body recover a little bit so that it can go even faster on the next interval. But okay. But I really think it's a mental thing. I don't think it's a physical thing at all.

And right, you've experienced it yourself, it's a very powerful tool whether you run for 30 seconds and walk for a minute or whether you run for a mile and walk for a minute. Whatever feels good to your body, that little bit of a break is powerful. And I think it's like, to me, I think it's a mental advantage because in my mind I'm like, "Oh, I only have to run this far and then I get to take a walk." Right? It's like a little treat at the end of each interval.

Christine: Even on my training runs I go a mile. So I know where all the markers are so I run to the next marker. And I would have your podcast in my head and it was just like, stay in the mile that you're in. Don't think about the next 12 miles, just stay in the one that you're in. And that really actually helps because it is that sort of mental battle. If you can say, no, it's

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okay to stop. It's okay not to have the fastest time. It's okay just to listen to my body and do what I'm able to do today. But that is hard.

Jill: It is hard, right? Yeah, because we are socialized to believe that winning is everything and if you're not first, you're last. And I'm like, no, don't agree with any of that.

Christine: And tell me about things like apps like My Fitness Pal, Strava, et cetera. We have, I don't know if you have Strava, but Strava is a running app that I used to be part of. And I took the decision to just put all of that to one side and not use any running apps because I very much looked at my time per mile. I looked at how much better other people were doing than me. And other people would look at me and go, "Oh, Christine, you're running a bit slower." And I just went, nope.

Jill: Yeah.

Christine: So for me, I just, I can't do it anymore. I need to just not look at time and just run. But I wonder how that is for you? Do you track your runs?

Jill: I actually do, although I don't have my, I use Garmin. So I use the Garmin Connect app. And I don't have it set up to be for other people to be able to see what I'm doing. It's just for me. So there's no social aspect of it from that perspective because I just, I don't know, especially as a running coach, I know people are going to be like, "Oh, what's she doing? What's she up to?" And I'm like, listen, I want to take away as much of the comparison as I can.

But I do, actually, I'm a spreadsheet nerd, so I do take key points of my data out and put them into a spreadsheet so that I can look and see, like watch my pace over time and compare it to the weather and the elevation.

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And then I'll actually, I also use this thing called an Aura ring, which tracks my sleep. And so then I can notice, like, oh, look at that, today I was running a little bit faster and I actually got eight hours of sleep last night versus, right?

So I kind of look at it just as a State of the Union kind of data. So I don't really get wrapped up in my pace or anything like that as far as like, oh, it's not getting faster. Because I am at that age where I'm probably not going to get, I think I've peaked as far as my pace.

Christine: never say never.

Jill: But my pace is not really, it's not an interesting data point outside of looking at it as a whole body picture of how I'm feeling physically. And if I notice that my pace is, if I'm getting slower over time, then I'll be like, oh, let me look at the rest of my routine. Am I eating the way I want to? Am I sleeping the way I want to? Is this an indicator that I'm overtraining or that I'm neglecting some other area of my self-care?

So from that perspective, yes, I do look at my data. But I don't get too wrapped up in getting faster or anything like that. And also, if I'm training for a race, I'll look at the data and be like, okay, what's your mileage load looking like for this week? Are you overdoing it? Or are you under doing it? Can you add some more miles?

Christine: Yeah, and I think that's a very, if you can do it. I think for some people it can be triggering depending on their relationship with movement. So I definitely had a compulsive over-exercise, I had that relationship with movement for many, many years. So I took a real break from running because it was the one, I was doing marathons, as I said, and I got to a

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point where I wasn't sure if I was doing them for a punishing reason or for an enjoyment reason.

And I took quite a lot of time out. And to be honest, I missed the long runs. I missed being out and just having that headspace and just being out in nature away from the kids. Sorry, kids. Yeah, but just having that time, just that process time and just, I don't know, there's something incredible about being out there.

Jill: There is some sort of weird leg/brain connection too, that I think like when you're moving your body, whether it's going for a long walk or going for a run or a hike, that allows you to access different parts of your mind that you might not normally have access to. And also it just calms everything down.

So I love that you recognized the aspects of it that were triggering that sort of compulsive tendency and said like, okay, what part of this activity can I retain that gives me the benefit? And what part is, right? Because apps and watches and everything is a very recent development and people used to just go out and not have a phone with them, and just go out and run. And they didn't even have a Mapquest so that they could do the distance ahead of time. They just had to figure it out.

So yeah, I love that. And I think it's important to recognize, so if you are somebody who has that tendency, and I think all of us have that tendency because we've been programmed to think that exercise is not just, I mean, yes, some people, I think use it as punishment. But other people use it as a requirement or part of a "healthy" lifestyle that includes tracking all your calories and all of that.

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So it's normal. Even if you don't believe that, you're still getting bludgeoned with that messaging every day, like billboards on the road. You cannot get away from it. So I love that you figured out a way to just pull the piece out of it that was triggering so that you could still enjoy the activity.

Christine: Yeah, and it's something which takes a while, doesn't it? So I always talk to clients about that as well, about whether data for them is helpful, because for some people it is really helpful, as it is for you. And I think not everybody, it's not helpful for everybody, but it's just working out the best way forward for you.

But I was interested in asking you about goals and if you have any specific ones. So you teach people to be more consistent exercisers, but what about yourself? Are you ever lacking in motivation? Or do you just get up in the morning and you are raring to go?

Jill: I would say, five out of seven days I am not motivated.

Christine: interesting.

Jill: But a lot of times I'll wake up and I'll be like, "I just don't want to do this today." And what I tell myself is like, just go out and walk for 10 minutes, or just do something for 10 minutes. And then usually, once I get moving, I'm like, "Oh, yeah, that's right, I actually like doing this activity."

And then some days I'm like, "Nope, not feeling it." And I go home. And I think, for me, the challenge has, like the more I've allowed myself to not feel guilty about missing a workout, the more consistent I've become with my workouts.

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Christine: Is that a practice thing, Jill? Have you practiced that, not beating yourself up?

Jill: Yeah, for sure. And so, for sure, I just repeat to myself that adherence to a training plan is not a moral victory, right? It doesn't make me a better person if I do all the workouts, and it doesn't make me a worse person if I don't. So I think repeating that, but also recognizing that when I skip a workout for whatever reason, whether I think it's a valid reason or not a valid reason, when I skip a workout if I kind of dive into feeling guilty and beating myself up, it is far less likely that I will do the next workout.

And so managing my thinking around my workout schedule and creating that consistency has been less a matter of making myself do it and more a matter of allowing myself to not do it sometimes and avoid the guilt. Because the guilt is what really creates the problems. It's not missing the workout, it's all of the thoughts and feelings that you have about it afterwards that make you miss the next one and the next one and the next one.

So now I'm just like, oh, look, I didn't workout today. Oh, well. Right? And I refuse to make it mean something about myself. And that, I think, has been the most powerful thing. The most powerful way to create consistency is to stop the beatings and just allow myself to be a human.

Christine: And I think it's so interesting that we attach that value, that moral value to what we're eating, and we attach it to how we're moving. And it's made exercise a chore, a punishment for people. And a lot of people sort of think about exercise along with dieting, dieting and exercise.

So they attach, you know, if they've had a troubled history with dieting in the past, exercise has often been part of that. So some people either go full

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on with the exercise and other people can shy away from the exercise because of that negative association they have.

Jill: Yeah.

Christine: So how would you sort of talk to somebody – I'm asking you all these questions, I feel like you need to invoice me because I'm learning a lot about mindset et cetera. But what if somebody had stepped away from movement entirely, didn't think they had a runner's body, which is something I hear all the time, and wasn't a consistent exerciser apart from when they were dieting.

So now they're trying to leave the dieting alone and thinking about getting back into exercise. What would be the first step for them, Jill?

Jill: I mean, I would say start playing around with different types of exercise and see what lights you up, right? Like it might be rock climbing, it might be salsa dancing, it might be walking. It could be a million different things. And find what feels good and joyful to you. And then do it in small quantities instead of like, oh, I went to the rock climbing gym and I had a great first rock climbing workout. So I'm going to sign up for a year's membership and I'm going to do it three times a week.

It's like, no, but bring it back. Just like with anything else, like I do with running, allow yourself to sample it, allow yourself to start slowly. Don't have any expectations of how it's going to be, just come to it with curiosity. And then, again, this concept of just telling myself to do 10 minutes of some sort of movement.

Christine: I love that.

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Jill: And so I live in a four story row house, and so sometimes my 10 minutes of movement is literally like running up to the first floor and then coming back. And getting laundry and bringing it down to the basement, sometimes that's my 10 minutes of movement.

Christine: Yeah.

Jill: Exercise doesn't have to be formal, it doesn't have to be a whole big thing. It can just be moving your body. And there is no right or wrong exercise for anybody, right? It's just what feels good to you. And the thing that I've, just to bring up rock climbing again. I've been told before, I've only been rock climbing one time, I thoroughly enjoyed it. But it's probably not something I'm going to do a lot of.

But we're always told that there's such a thing as a runner's body, or there's like a rock climber's body, or there's a swimmer's body. And actually, if you have a body and you engage in those activities, you have the body for those activities, right? So I think counting yourself out from something like running or cycling or whatever it is that you're interested in because you say I'm not built for it is like, no, if you've got a torso, you should be good, right?

Christine: Yeah, if you can walk.

Jill: Even if you don't have traditional limbs, even if you have, actually, I think some folks, I've seen runners that either have one artificial limb or two artificial limbs or somewhere in between. And they're like, oh yeah, I'm so much faster with these blades. But anyway, I'm being silly here. But yeah, if you have a torso, you have a body that can participate in pretty much any kind of sport. So just go try what you want to do. Just go out and figure it out.

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Christine: 100%. And you know the reverse of that, which I find really interesting, is that a lot of women do not want to strength train because they're worried about getting bulky. So it's not about them not having the strong woman's body, it's about them not wanting that body. And I think it is, let's just bust that myth that actually it takes a hell of a long time to build muscle. And you don't get bulky.

If you're a woman it's incredibly hard to get bulky through strength training, unless you're doing a bodybuilding program, which is intense and takes many years to hone et cetera.

Jill: Right. And your nutrition has to be so, you know, you're eating nothing but like eggs and chicken and broccoli, right? And those powders. It does not happen, spending even an hour a day lifting heavy in the gym, you will not end up with that physique, it's just not a thing.

Christine: And as women, when we're hitting perimenopause we are losing muscle mass at an accelerated rate when we hit 35 and above. So actually, it's almost like that maintenance. That's what I always tell women. But the fear is real, you know?

Jill: So funny.

Christine: And it's like, actually this is the best thing you could do for your body. If you want to keep running, if you want to do the stuff you love, add a bit of strength training in, let's get resilient.

Jill: And it's like, okay, do the strength training. And then if you're like, oh, look, I am getting bulky, okay, so stop strength training as much because muscle will go away pretty quickly if you stop maintaining it. So it's not like, oh, well that's it, I'm jacked and I'm going to have to be this way for the rest

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of my life. No, after about a week you're going to start to notice it fading away.

Christine: Oh my goodness, it's that thing that's being scared to take up space. So I find that I talk about that a lot. But it is that we've always, traditionally we've done movements to make ourselves smaller, to shrink ourselves. Whereas strength training is not about shrinking yourself. It's about taking up space and building muscle. And I think we're quite resistant to that. So I find it so fascinating.

But the joyful movement thing, this is the last thing and then I'm going to shut up. The joyful movement thing is interesting because I talk to clients about the fact that I want them to do what they love, but sometimes to keep doing what they love a little structure, gentle structure is needed in the sense that if you want to keep running and you get a bug for it, it's quite good to do a bit of strength training. Protect the knees, protect the joints.

And I think it's that little caveat that I always add in that I do think find what you love. I think the most important, as you said, the most important exercise is the one that you like doing.

Jill: Yeah.

Christine: And just maybe sometimes to keep doing that, you need to add in other little bits.

Jill: And I think, like me, for years I avoided strength training or I would do it under duress because I thought it was boring. And then I just figured out ways to make it more fun. I added a little like self-competition, I would set goals like, okay, I want to deadlift 200 pounds. And then I would just start working towards that and tracking my progress towards that. Or like the

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gym that I go to has these really fun group strength training classes that they're just enjoyable to go to.

Christine: Nice.

Jill: Or even I have a Peloton, and the Peloton app has these little, they're like little snacks of strength training, like 10 minutes of strength training for runners or something like that. So I think there's so many ways to incorporate that structure into your life in a way that brings you joy and that also doesn't feel like, "oh my God, I have to do this for an hour three times a week?" It's like no, you can do little snacks of it here and there. Have fun with it. It's all good.

Christine: And what I say to women is strength training can look different for everybody. So it could be twice a week for 20 minutes, fabulous. That's amazing, it doesn't have to be in the gym lifting barbells. I love a kettlebell, so that's my strength training. I don't enjoy so much going to the gym, even though I'm a trainer. I quite like training from home, outside with friends and classes.

So I think you don't have to think of it in one way, strength training can look different on everybody.

Jill: Yeah.

Christine: Right. Thank you, Jill. And I will definitely have to have you back, but I really appreciate your time today. So thank you for joining us.

Jill: Thanks for having me.

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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 to join. I would love to be a part of your journey.