

Ep #300: Surprising Lessons from 300 Episodes



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.

Hello, my running bestie. I am so fucking excited to be here with you today because it is a very special day. It is the 300th episode of this podcast and, wow, I can't believe it. I just can't believe it. It really seems like just yesterday I was recording the very first one. I was not sure if anybody would listen, and here we are well over five years later, going on six years, and still going strong.

And it has been quite an evolution. And today what I'm going to do is tell you a little bit about that journey and then I'm going to tell you about the 300th episode giveaway after that. It's huge, so make sure you stick around.

Now, when I first started this show I was a different person than I am right now. I was really afraid of using the word fat too much. I mean I used it occasionally, very occasionally. But I didn't want to offend people and I was still somewhat struggling with my own thoughts about being a fat woman. I had, and honestly still have as most of us do, but back then I had a lot more of it, which is internalized fat phobia.

And that's what happens when someone is raised with the belief system that being fat is a terrible thing, that being fat is somehow a moral failure, and that it should be avoided at all costs. And when I say at all costs, I mean like starvation diets, whatever, right? That fat is the worst, you should do whatever you can to avoid it. I was raised in that belief system. And it's not like my mom literally told me being fat is a terrible thing, but she communicated it in so many ways, both spoken and unspoken.

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Things like talking badly about her own body, which was at her heaviest maybe a size 12, okay? Fascinating. Sometimes she would take food out of my hands when she thought I had had enough. She'd be like, "That's enough for you," and she would take it out of my hands. Sometimes she would buy me clothes for Christmas that were a size too small, and she knew it, but I would show her like, "Oh, it doesn't fit, we need to return it." And she'd be like, "Why don't you keep it as a goal outfit?"

She even bribed me. The summer between my sophomore and junior years at college she said, "If you can get down to 150 pounds," which at that point was losing 25 pounds over a three month period. She's like, "If you do that, I'll buy you a CD player." And for the record this was like 1986, and so having a CD player was actually a big fucking deal. Now it's like CDs, what are CDs, right? But it was as if she had promised to buy me the newest and best iPhone, right, if I lost 25 pounds and got down to 150.

She still thought 150 was too heavy for me, but she thought it was in the realm of acceptable weight. And I did it. I ate nothing but Diet Coke and like three Snickers bars a day. I ate next to nothing. I was smoking a pack of cigarettes a day because I was 19 years old and that seemed like a good idea. It gave me something to do besides eat. And then I would ride my bike for miles and miles and miles every day trying to burn off calories.

And it was not pretty, right? And I did get to the goal weight, I bought a whole new – My mom actually bought me a whole new wardrobe. I stayed at that goal weight for exactly one day before I started gaining it all back. And by the next summer I weighed even more than I had the summer before at the start.

And that roller coaster, I mean it started when I was a preteen, it kind of gathered steam when I was in college. And it continued probably until about 2018. Like really, really recently. And 2018 is coincidentally the year that I started this podcast and that's really what I kind of want to talk about

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today, is my own personal evolution from believing that fat is a terrible thing to being completely comfortable, as comfortable as you can be as a fat woman in a fat phobic society, and the role that this podcast played in that evolution.

So I do want to be clear, I don't have any resentment towards my mom or anyone else in my life, and there were a lot of them, but anybody else in my life that helped me create this belief that being fat is shameful. Because it's not their fault, right? We are all operating in the same shitty fat phobic belief system. It's like if you're a goldfish, right, imagine you're a goldfish and you live in a fish bowl, or you live in the ocean is probably a better example.

You're a goldfish and you live in the ocean and you haven't been eaten yet by a bigger fish, you're not thinking, "Oh, here I am in all this water, I wonder if there's anything else out there." No, your whole world is the water. Literally you don't think you're in water because water is not a concept. Water is just what you exist in, it's your baseline reality. And it does not occur to you that there are other options.

And that's what it's like when you are raised in a fat phobic environment, is that you're just like, "Oh, no," just like the fish is like, "Water is the truth. The fish doesn't even recognize that it's water, it's just this is how things are. We who are socialized this way, as believing that fat is terrible, we're not presented with options. We think this is the option. We think this is how things are, okay?

So you're socialized to believe that being fat is terrible. And then if you're fat, of course, you are going to feel some level of self-loathing, right? Because you know that fat is disgusting and embarrassing, but you're fat. So how else are you supposed to think, right?

And so this is kind of the conundrum and this is what the whole concept of internalized fat phobia is and why people who are fat have a lot of

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self-loathing and a lot of negative thinking about themselves, is because they're like, "I know, this is bad to be this way, but I don't know how to not be this way." And so they're stuck, right?

And it's painful. And I think, for me, I started sort of unraveling and unpacking thoughts for myself kind of around the year 2009, 2010. So, almost coming up on 15 years ago I started recognizing, like wait, maybe there are actually other options to believing that fat is terrible. And I was kind of like, huh. I played around with it and I started sort of deliberately retelling to myself, just within myself not to other people for sure. But I started deliberately retelling my personal story to myself about fat being bad.

But even as I was doing all of that, I was still focused on weight loss. I was like, "Yes, I can be fat, I can do athletic things. I can still be a worthy human. But I also need to lose weight." Right? Like it wasn't even I'm choosing to try to lose this weight. It was, this is a thing I have to do. I have to get on it, right?

So I had spent, this is 2009, 2010, and I had spent the last 40 years thinking, being told, and then of course adopting that as my own belief system that I needed to lose weight. So it was a goal that I didn't even question.

And I kind of liken it to at least in my family going to college, right? There was never, "Hey, Jill, would you like to go to college? Would you like to pursue a trade? Would you like to do something else? What do you want to do with your life?" It was, "No, you're going to school."

And I didn't question it either. I was like, oh, that's just what you do. That's just what you do. In my family, that's just what you did. And so I never questioned the goal of going to college. I just went. I just went and I did it. I never questioned the goal of weight loss because I believed that weight

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loss was the thing that I was supposed to be achieving, right? That I always needed to be working to get my body to be as small as possible.

It never worked. It would work for a hot minute, I would get down to like – The lowest I ever got was that 150 that one year, the summer between junior and senior year, sophomore and junior year. But then I'd gain it back and then maybe I'd diet my way down to 160 and then I'd gain all that back. And then I'd diet my way down to 170.

And so my lowest weight kept creeping up and I was failing at maintaining the weight loss. I was really good at starving myself for like three months at a time, but I was really failing at this goal. And the more I failed, the more I wanted it. And so, again, in 2009, 2010 I started unpacking this belief that maybe it's okay to do things when you're fat. Maybe I'm still a worthy human when I'm fat. Maybe I can still be an attractive person when I'm fat.

But I still had that drilled-in belief system that weight loss should be my goal, okay? So, I mean, that's really how powerful diet culture is, that I'm like, fat is not a moral failing, but I should still not be fat, right? It's such a conflict in the brain and it creates such pain and suffering. And honestly, to this day I still have thoughts about going on diets. At least once a week I'll see somebody that I know that's lost a bunch of weight. And I'll think, "Oh, maybe if I tried her diet," right?

And I'll watch my brain just jump right back into that way of thinking. And then I remind myself that the 9 million diets that I've gone on through the years have not resulted in permanent weight loss for me. They've created a lot of disordered eating that I'm honestly still healing from and just trying to just figure out a way to eat in a way that just feels good to my body and doesn't have anything to do with weight loss.

So I remind myself, like, hey, that diet didn't work for you. None of the other diets worked for you. Please don't do that again. So I still have to remind

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myself of that at least once a week, okay? So if you're one of those people that's like, "Yes, I'm done with dieting," but then you still have thoughts about going on a diet, you're normal. You're just so programmed to believe that that's what you should be doing, that it makes perfect, perfect sense that you are continually having those thoughts popping up.

And I promise they do, over time they do sort of chill out a little bit. Or at least when they do pop up, you can be like, "I see you," right? And you can be like, "Nope, not this time." But anyway, let's kind of back up a little bit.

So in 2010 I started retelling my personal story. I was still focused on weight loss, but I wasn't anymore believing that fat was bad. In 2013, I wrote a book. I wrote a whole ass book about running while fat. And in that book I used a lot of euphemisms for the word fat; curvy, plus size, chunky, fluffy, right? Lots and lots of euphemisms because I was becoming comfortable with the concept of being a fat athlete, but it still wasn't in my comfort zone to call myself fat all the time.

And so I used a lot of words that I thought would be non offensive and all that kind of stuff. And in that book I also, in the introduction to that book I wrote about the obesity epidemic. And I cringe now when I hear those words because I think most of the medical establishment and the pharmaceutical industry has completely fucked us over by promoting the idea that all fat people are unhealthy and they need to be fixed. That obesity is some kind of epidemic, right?

And so if you've read that book and you thought to yourself, "Oh my gosh, this author is a little bit fat phobic." You know what? You're right, because I did still have a lot of that thinking in my brain and I didn't know any better. So I apologize for that. We're working on rewriting and reissuing that book to make it a lot more size positive. But anyway, there's a ton of helpful stuff in the book.

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A ton of helpful stuff. Like I can tell you, every day I get letters from people, messages from people who are like, “I read that book and it changed my life.” So it’s still a great book, but it shows you where my brain was at the time, right? I had evolved part of the way and I actually was starting to kind of believe that maybe it was kind of cool to be a fat athlete, that maybe it was a little rebellious.

But I was still a little bit ashamed of being fat. And I was hoping to someday figure out how to not be fat. And all the while using the word fat as little as possible, obviously. So that was 2013 and that’s basically where I stayed mentally until I started this podcast. And I really thought that this show would be just all about helping plus-size women start running, right, that was the tagline at the time.

And that I would teach all the tips and tricks I know to overcome the challenges of running while fat, help women feel more comfortable in their bodies, more confident. And for sure this podcast does all of that. But the more I talked into this microphone, the more I talked to other fat runners, the more I connected with the fat athlete community, I started to own being a fat running coach.

I mean I started to lean into it. I started to call myself a fat running coach. And I became, you know, this podcast became a voice for fat women who are resisting the belief that being fat is bad. And so over the past couple of years I’ve gotten a lot louder and a lot bolder with my ideas and my language. And I have transitioned from being a running coach for plus-size women to actually, again, calling myself a fat running coach and advertising that I help fat women start running.

And this podcast has literally helped tens of thousands of women start running and change their thinking about their body. And I’m pretty fucking proud of that. I mean, seriously, one of my goals as a human is to leave the

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planet a little bit better than I found it. And I think check mark, I feel like I have made at least some progress towards that.

But I want you to know that talking to you every single week has changed my life. Because talking out my ideas, talking to those of you that I've interviewed on the podcast, all of the amazing people that I have met as a result of creating a podcast for fat women, fat phobia no longer lives rent free in my brain. I mean, it truly doesn't. Because I talk about this week after week after week, I have changed the narrative in my head permanently, right?

Fat phobia, again, no longer lives rent free in my brain. Sometimes it does try to Airbnb a room for the night. I mean, I'll be honest, right, those thoughts do try to come back in. I am very quick to show it the door. And I attribute a lot of that to speaking up, right? To speaking out and committing to talking into this microphone every single week about being fat and about how you can be fat and fit and the mindset around all of it.

And can I just say, feeling of rebellion from saying I'm fat. I'm a fat running coach. You don't hear too many people say that. I help fat women start running. And I reject all of the fat phobic bullshit that most of the world believes. Well, saying all that, it is amazing. It is intoxicating. It is so, so powerful.

So I want to say thank you for being here and helping me on my journey. And you might not even realize that you helped me, but by being a listener of this podcast, you've been part of my evolution just like I've been part of yours. So I think it's just beautiful, it's a beautiful thing.

Now, please don't get me wrong, this evolution has been a bumpy ride, right? As most evolutions are. One thing I didn't expect is that coming to terms with the fact that losing weight won't suddenly make my life perfect has been a hard process. It has been like grieving, okay? Because for

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almost five decades my entire worldview was based on the very patriarchal, not to mention fat phobic premise that thinner is better. And so I've always had this paradigm in my mind, if I could be thin, my life would be better.

And giving up that belief is like, you know, if you're somebody who buys lottery tickets, it's like stopping that weekly lottery ticket because you're like, I'm never going to win. It's like giving up hope. And it really has felt like grieving. It has felt pretty awful sometimes to kind of come to terms with like there is no smaller body out there waiting for me that's going to magically make my life better. I just have to make my life the way I want it in the body that I have right now.

And whatever body I have in the future, that's just great. But I have to come to terms with being content and being loving and compassionate, and being happy in the body that I have right now and giving up this dream of the other body. And again, that's been hard and it has felt like grieving because if you think, "Oh my gosh, there's no there that's better than here," it's like, well, then what's the point? If here's sucks, what am I supposed to do?

And so that's a lot of the work that I've been doing on myself, is recognizing there isn't better than here. Okay, so I am going to learn to love here and be cool with it. And once you get to that place and, again, that's a continuing evolution. But once you get to that place, it's a relief after you get through that grieving process.

So basically, and how I've done that, I wish I had sat down at the beginning of this journey and thought, I'm going to write down step by step every single thing that I've done to get from point A to B. I didn't realize where I was going. Now I know. But I think that the key to it, the thing that I did most repeatedly is continually choosing the way I wanted to think about my body and my life, and continually opting into those thoughts, right?

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Like just when I notice the old fat phobic thoughts coming up, when I notice the old thoughts of like, “Oh, if only I was then my life would be perfect,” I’m like, no. I just bring myself back around, over and over and over again. And it’s a process I still repeat to this day.

I know this doesn’t sound sexy, doesn’t sound exciting. It definitely does not sound as fun as going on a diet and being in a smaller body someday, because we are so programmed to believe that that is the solution. But I promise you, the solution is not the smaller body. Because if it was, then all thin people would be happy and all fat people would be miserable. And that’s not the case.

So, again, I still have those thoughts because I’m human. So if you’re working on the same thing and you feel frustrated sometimes because you’re still tempted to go on a diet or you have thoughts like, “If only I was smaller, my life would be perfect,” I want you to know that it’s normal and you are not doing it wrong. Okay? You have a human brain, that’s how they work.

But one of the absolute best things that has come out of doing all of this work on my beliefs about being fat, is now I question everything. Like, okay, if it’s true that being fat isn’t a bad thing, what else have I learned that isn’t true? Are carbs actually not the devil, right? Maybe it is okay to wear a crop top when you’re fat or a bikini. Maybe running while fat doesn’t destroy your knees. Maybe, this is one of my favorite ones, maybe I’m not lazy or irresponsible, maybe I just have ADHD.

I have been questioning all of the beliefs that I have about myself that I’ve been taught for my whole life. I’m like, what if I’ve been wrong about all of it? And that I think is, like that skill and that willingness to look at every single belief and say, “What if I’m wrong about that” has been one of the most powerful questions that I’ve asked. One of the most powerful

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questions that I can ask myself and has led to some really amazing self-discovering and a lot of really, really good growth.

And it's kind of like, you know, you always thought you weren't athletic. And then you started running and you did a 5k. And after that 5k, you're like, wait, what just happened? Wow, if I did that, what else can I do? And then you start looking around and you think maybe I'll do a 10k, maybe I'll do a half marathon, right?

Once you kind of smash one of the legs out from the table of whatever belief it is that you have, once you take one of the legs away by saying like, "Okay, well, I'm not supposed to be athletic, but I just ran a 5k," then the whole thing comes crashing down because you start to be able to see that maybe it was just an illusion.

So the more that you question your own beliefs, especially those that you've believed for decades, the more you can see possibilities and options instead of closed doors. And that has been a beautiful discovery for me. It has literally been a direct result of doing this podcast and, again, talking to you every week, and telling you my thoughts about things and really questioning my own beliefs. It's been amazing. And I hope I've inspired you to do the same.

And one more thing, maybe two more things that I didn't really expect. In hindsight, of course it happened exactly the way it was supposed to happen. But there were some longtime listeners and clients who have been really upset and angry with me for leaning into the word fat and for being a lot more open about my own personal journey.

And when I talk about how fat is just a neutral word, when I talk about how the diet industry is very, very harmful, I was kind of like, yeah, everybody's going to agree with me except the trolls, and they're different. But I was surprised because not thousands, but a handful of listeners and even some

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clients were like, “We don’t like this version of you.” And so I was surprised by that.

But also, I realized like, hey, everyone’s journey is their own. And just like I have my evolution, not everyone else is following the same path. Not everybody else wants to go down that road with me. And that’s okay. And yes, it hurt to realize that there were folks who wouldn’t be coming along for the next phase, but I also wish them the best. And I am very grateful for the time that we did spend together.

And then the other surprise, it shouldn’t have been a surprise but of course it was. As I have evolved my message, there have been a lot of people, mostly on Instagram, I will call them naysayers, maybe not trolls. But just people who are like, “No, no, you’re wrong.”

And they say things like I’m glorifying obesity. I even have a couple of people who have said that I should be arrested for promoting the message that it is okay to run while you’re fat. I’m like, of all the things people should be arrested for, helping fat women to start running is not on that list. I feel like we’ve got some other issues that the judicial system needs to worry about.

But I was kind of like, wow, I should be arrested for this? But hey, again, not everybody’s on the same journey. And it showed me and helped me continue to evolve my own message. It showed me that fat phobia is alive and well, and that not everybody believes that it’s okay to be fat, so definitely have more work to do.

I have done several podcast episodes about these various topics because I want to be an opposing, a loud opposing voice to those folks who perpetuate fat phobia, especially in the fitness world. So all this to say, these 300 episodes have been a wild ride, my friends. I could not have predicted where this show would be now almost six years after it started.

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We have almost 50,000 followers on Instagram at this point. I am excited to see what the next 300 episodes hold. And I am so grateful to you for being here, for listening, and for helping to spread the message that being fat is just a body type, it is not a moral failing, and that athletes come in all shapes and sizes.

So thank you, my friend, I appreciate you so much. And as a small token of my appreciation I have partnered with Skirt Sports to do a giveaway of a \$300 gift card that you can use for anything on their site. Seriously, no strings attached. The entry period is from May 11th to May 15th and then we're going to draw a winner.

You can enter to win this card at notyouraveragerunner.com/skirt300, okay? That's notyouraveragerunner.com/skirt300, that's skirt 300. All you got to do is put in your first name and your email address. Again, notyouraveragerunner.com/skirt300. You can enter from May 11th through 15th, and then we're going to draw the winner. We are also going to have the link in the show notes.

But that is not all we've got for you. We also have a 30% off discount code just for podcast listeners. That code is NYAR 30, okay? NYAR30, all caps, and it is good from May 11th to May 18th, so for one full week, at skirtsports.com. Okay, 30% off from May 11th through 18th using the code NYAR30, make sure you use all caps, okay?

I love my Skirt Sports gear. If you follow me on Instagram, you know that's literally all I seem to ever wear. It's cute, it's comfortable, it's functional. If you look at my Instagram, again, you can see a lot of the different styles they offer, especially for the next week because I'm going to be kind of showcasing some of my favorites. They go up to a very generously sized 3X.

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And Skirt Sports, some of you may know this and probably most of you don't, but they have been a big part of my own journey to body acceptance. Because several years ago I was a model for their very first swimwear line. And it was surreal because there I was in a fat body wearing a swimsuit with a photographer, a professional photographer, not just a husband with an iPhone, and like half a dozen other women in bodies of all shapes and sizes.

And guess what? It was so fun and I actually loved the photos. I'm going to see if I can dig one of them up because this was several years ago. But I will always be grateful for that experience because it showed me that I can wear a bathing suit and be photographed in it and be splashed all over somebody's website and even some print ads and not die and actually and maybe even have fun.

So again, I'll always be grateful for that. And I will always love wearing Skirt Sports gear. So make sure you register for that \$300 gift card at notyouraveragerunner.com/skirt300. You can register until May 15th. And then use your 30% off discount, the code is NYAR30, all caps. And then you can shop anytime from May 11th to May 18th.

Okay, my amazing friend, thank you so much for being here and for being you. Until next week, I love you, stay safe, and get your ass out there and run.

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.