

Ep #313: 8 Ways to Think Like a Runner



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Jill Angie

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

Ep #313: 8 Ways to Think Like a Runner

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, my runner friend. I have just gotten back from like six straight weeks of traveling all over the place. And it was super fun but also I am so tired. My running and my strength training has been sporadic at best and I cannot wait to sleep in my own bed for the next few months. And my self-care right now looks like going to bed at 8:00 every night with a good book and reintroducing regular strength training to my life because it has been a few months since I've been consistent with it.

And guess what, Andy and I went for a run a couple days ago and my left knee had some opinions. And simple strength training is one of the keys to running injury free, especially if you're over 40. And like everyone, sometimes I let my own life get in the way of my best interests. But we have got our home gym set up again now in the new house, so I'm ready to dive back in.

Anyway, we're not here to talk about my knee, this week I am reprising an episode from a couple years back where I talked about how to think like a runner. And I thought it was important to bring this episode back because so many of us think that our status as a runner depends on a lot more than just the fact that we go out and run.

And honestly, you would be amazed, I know a lot of people who have been running for years and they actually say, oh, but I'm not a real runner. And these are people who have literally finished marathons but they still have a story they tell themselves that they're not legit.

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

Ep #313: 8 Ways to Think Like a Runner

In fact, I asked in the free Not Your Average Runner Facebook group what people's thoughts were about being a real runner. And here is a sampling. Okay, Keena says, "I feel like I only have to be running to call it a run. If I'm needing to do intervals, then I feel I have to qualify my statement, like I ran two miles using 30-second intervals, instead of just saying I ran two miles." Carla says, "I run slower than many people walk, so I struggle with the idea of pace."

Amanda says, "I feel too slow. I feel like even my feet are too fat to be a real runner's feet because they're wide. Or even stupid things like my boobs are too big, runners don't have H sized tits." This one does. "When I schedule my run with my friends I don't even really schedule it as a run, I call it an adventurous gallivanting, which isn't bad, but it's not running."

When do you stop saying you're jogging and say you're running? These things make me insecure. The most embarrassing thing was when I went running and My Fitness Pal recorded my pace as running in place. Like fuck, I'm so slow I might as well be running in place." I hear you, Amanda.

Katie says, "I've run five half marathons and I run four days a week between two and twelve miles and I still struggle. When people say, oh, you're a runner, my initial reaction is to say no. I don't know why, but it's there. Maybe pace, maybe because I'm heavier. I don't really know why, but it's there."

And then Marsha says, "I guess in my mind I equate running with fast or speedy. I have trouble saying, even to my husband, I'm going for a run. I'm really going out to walk and maybe jog a little. Or saying to somebody else I ran a 5K, I feel like I'm giving them the wrong impression."

Now, these are all women who are runners and these are the thoughts that they have in their mind about how they run and they're struggling to call themselves runners. And I think that probably all of us, I have definitely had

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

Ep #313: 8 Ways to Think Like a Runner

a lot of these thoughts, especially way back when I first started running. But I think all of us have kind of gone through at least some version of some of these.

So if you are thinking right now, “I can’t call myself a runner because” and you’ve got one of these reasons, I want you to know that you’re not alone in thinking that way, but we’re going to talk today in this podcast about how you might shift your thinking so that you actually do embrace the runner identity. Because once you embrace that runner identity, it’s really powerful, it’s easier to stay motivated. I swear to God it’s easier to stay motivated, you’re more excited about your run, it’s all good.

And just as an aside before we dive all the way in, this is what somebody said after going through the Up and Running program that I teach, it starts again in September. This person said, “I have never felt athletic in my life. I’ve always been overweight, the one who would sit on the sidelines and cheer everybody else on. But now at age 56 I can call myself a runner and I feel like my entire life has just changed because if I can do this, I can do anything.”

And that is like, that is the runner’s identity right there. It’s like, okay, this is who I used to be, but this is what I’ve decided I am now. So in case you’ve ever been on the fence about joining Up and Running, we’re going to teach you how to think like a real runner in that class, guaranteed.

Anyway, back to our discussion. So feeling like a runner really means you have the thought “I am a runner.” Okay? And it has nothing to do with your speed, or your weight, or how far or how often you run, whether you do run/walk intervals or you run straight through. You get to feel like a runner if you think, “I am a runner.” It is really that simple. But of course the challenge is how do you get to that point, especially if you don’t believe it right now?

Ep #313: 8 Ways to Think Like a Runner

Well, that's a good question. And what I've done is compiled a list of thought patterns for you today for you to practice, right? Because it might not feel natural right away, so we always want to practice new ways of thinking. But these are ways that almost everyone who identifies as a runner thinks.

And I'm not saying people who run fast, or people who run marathons, or people who don't do intervals, or people who aren't fat, right? I'm not saying that those are the thought patterns that those people have. I'm saying everyone who identifies as a runner, regardless of how you run, what your body looks like, how old you are, all the things, okay. And if you think like a runner, you will act like a runner and eventually your identity will become that of a runner. Okay, so it all starts with your thinking.

So what exactly is an identity? Well, the way I define it, and I did not look it up on the Googles this time. I'm just going to give you my definition. An identity, to me, is simply a collection of beliefs that you have about yourself. They're the thoughts that you think over and over and over. And for most of us, our identities start in childhood with the things we are taught to think about ourselves.

People just hand you beliefs when you're little. They're like, here you go, you have a fresh brain with no expectations, here's what you should be thinking, here's what you should be believing. We are taught all of it.

And so when I was a kid my parents were constantly telling me that I was smart. And you know what? I grew up believing and identifying as a smart person. And I find evidence for it all the time in my life. I mean, I do some dumb shit sometimes. But in general my identity is like, yeah, I'm a pretty smart person.

My mom also told me frequently that I was a procrastinator. And guess what I also grew up believing and guess what I also find evidence for

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

Ep #313: 8 Ways to Think Like a Runner

everywhere in my life. So our identities are really shaped, at first at least, by the people around us, okay? But an identity isn't hardwired.

And I think this is where most of us go sort of off track with thinking like, oh, I'm just a procrastinator, that's who I am. I'm just going to have to suffer with it for the rest of my life. No, no, no. An identity is a collection of beliefs that you've practiced for years. And maybe it was something somebody else said to you over and over and over again and you're like, oh, all right, I'm just going to decide to believe them and now I'm going to practice this belief. That's how we get a lot of our thoughts about ourselves, right.

And so it happens very subconsciously, but that is mostly how it works. And it's kind of important to know that's how it works because if you believe your identity is set in stone, you're sort of shit out of luck, right? Especially if the identity you're living with isn't working for you. But if you're willing to believe that your identity can change by practicing new thoughts and looking for evidence in your life to support it, you can start shifting, like right now actually, into a new identity.

And maybe your new identity is becoming somebody who keeps promises to herself or someone who's willing to do hard things to get what she wants. Whatever it is, if you're willing to believe your identity can change, the possibilities are endless. Endless, okay? Now, whatever it is, it's going to take some time to create, but it's totally possible.

Your future identity, or in other words your future self, is something you can create on purpose. You decide who you want to be and then you practice thinking, feeling and acting like that person. Now, right now if you're not running, okay, your identity might be somebody who can't do it. Maybe you used to be a runner and you stopped for some reason and you haven't been running for a few years, you might have this identity of like, oh, I'm a quitter or I'm not a runner.

Ep #313: 8 Ways to Think Like a Runner

Maybe your identity is somebody who wants to be a runner, but believes it's too hard, or she's too fat, or she's too old, or she's too injured. Maybe your circumstance is that you haven't been running for 10 years and you have a belief that it's hard to get back into it. Or that you've never been athletic, so why should you even bother starting?

And if those are the beliefs that are creating your identity, they're leading you not to run, they are leading you to not take the action of running, right? That's your identity right now. That's who you believe you are. The identity that you have for yourself drives all of your actions. I mean it drives your feelings, and your feelings drive your actions to be more specific. But basically, your identity is responsible for your behavior.

And again, sometimes we think that identity is hardwired, that it's not something we can change. But if that were true, nobody would ever start running in their 30s, or 40s, or 50s, or even 60s or 70s, right? For sure, I did not start to see myself as a runner until I was in my late 30s, even though I'd already been running for almost 10 years. I mean, I did some running here and there, but I didn't shift my identity to I am a runner and I am an athlete until, I mean, I don't know, I was probably in my, I think I was maybe 42 or 43.

It was around the time that I did my first triathlon. And I crossed that finish line and I was like, wait, maybe I actually am an athlete. And for 10 years I had been running and doing all the things and fairly consistent at it, but I didn't have the identity. And that is actually the time when I started to run a lot more consistently without a lot of struggle.

So coincidentally, I started seeing myself as a runner and started calling myself a runner in my mind, and that's when running became easier for me to get out the door and really take action. It's fascinating.

Ep #313: 8 Ways to Think Like a Runner

So, how do you think like a runner? Okay, how do you take that collection of thoughts that you have right now and shift them over to beliefs that support your runner identity? Well, the first thing that runners believe is, what do they think? The first thing that they believe is that running is worth the effort? So this is number one, believing that running is worth the effort.

They know, runners know it is hard, it is uncomfortable, and they still do it because it's worth it. All right? This is something that a runner thinks, and I bet you have this belief or at least the ceiling of this belief right now. You're like, I know it's hard. I know it's uncomfortable. It's still worth it. Right? Runners love the results and sometimes they have drama in their head, but most of the time there's not a ton of drama in their head about it being too hard because they're like, oh, I know it's supposed to be hard.

And even if they do have thoughts about it, they're like, wow, this run was really hard today. They don't think, oh shit, something's wrong with me. They're like, oh, today's run was really hard. That's all, okay?

So that's the first kind of way that you can tell somebody has a runner identity, is that they know it's going to be hard, they know it's going to be uncomfortable, they still think it's worth the effort. And they don't lose their shit if a run feels hard. They're just like, all right, that was today's run, didn't feel great. It's like, okay, today's run was harder than usual, but I'm willing to do the uncomfortable things to get the result of having finished a run and having that feeling in my body of having completed my run for the day.

And I think that's where a lot of us go wrong, because we think, oh, running is really hard. It's too much effort for me, it's too hard for me. That's the difference between a runner and a non-runner. A runner is like, yeah, okay, it's hard. So what? And a non-runner is like, no, no, no, it's too hard for me. So that's number one.

Ep #313: 8 Ways to Think Like a Runner

Number two is that runners are always willing to suck at running in the pursuit of getting better. And whatever better, I'm using better in air quotes here, whatever "better" looks like for you. Whether it's working on getting faster or going farther, or just it feeling easier working at the same pace, runners are always willing to suck at it in the pursuit of getting better because they believe that everyone starts somewhere and that improvement only comes with consistent effort and a willingness to make mistakes and a willingness for it to feel terrible sometimes.

They know that a shitty run is still better than no run at all, okay? So the truth is, and we've already talked about this, but there's going to be good runs, there's going to be bad runs, some runs feel easy, some feel hard, some you feel like you're flying and some feels like you're trudging through peanut butter, right? A runner is willing to just have those shitty runs in the pursuit of getting better and they don't make it mean that anything is wrong with them, okay?

They know that to improve, they need to fail. So runners are willing to fail at stuff to get better. And I think a lot of us aren't willing to fail, right? We're like, if I can't succeed, I don't want to do it at all. And what we're really saying is, well, I want it to be easier than it is and I want to guarantee that I can do it, right? I don't like this unknown shit, where I have to try and find out. I want to know. And if I have to put in the effort, right, if I have to put in too much effort, I'm not interested.

I mean, that's all fine and good. But then don't sit around and say, oh, I wish I could start running, because those two things can't exist in the same space. You're either willing to embrace the failure and embrace the suck, or you're willing to say, I don't want to do that because I'm not interested in embracing the suck. And there's nothing wrong with either choice. If you're like, I'm not interested in embracing the suck, that's fine. That's fine, there's no judgment, but you can't have both, okay? It's either or.

Ep #313: 8 Ways to Think Like a Runner

A non-runner will kind of sit in the middle and straddle the fence and be like, I want to do it but it's so hard, right? So if you want to start thinking like a runner and embrace that identity, you've got to stop. You've got to either be willing to suck at it or you're going to decide you're not going to do it at all. All right? That's a little tough love for you.

Now, number three, runners are proud of what they've accomplished, even if they're dead fucking last. Even if they started and didn't finish. Even if they trained for the whole race, but didn't show up on race day. If they're slower than every other runner they know, right? They're still proud of it. They take pride in running, getting out there, pushing themselves out of their comfort zone.

They know that the real accomplishment is not finishing the race, but the person they need to evolve into to train for the race. Finishing the race is just icing on the cake. So runners are proud of who they become as a result of running. Runners are proud of the work that they've put in to train for a race or to just become somebody who's a consistent runner as part of their lifestyle. That's where they're super, super proud, right?

And they totally get to be proud of their finish lines as well, but the finish lines aren't the main thing for a runner. The finish line is the celebration of all the hard work that came before it. And that's what runners are proud of, okay?

Number four runners like to hang out with other runners, even if it's just online, okay? So when you identify as a runner, you want to be around other runners because they get you. Non-runners don't get us. They think we're crazy. Somebody who really identifies as a runner doesn't say, I run but I'm really slow. Or I do half marathons, but I do walk/run, right? There's none of that bullshit when your true identity is I am somebody who runs.

Ep #313: 8 Ways to Think Like a Runner

You just show up and you say, yep, I run half marathons. There's no qualification. Or yeah, I do 5K's, I'm a runner. You don't talk about your pace and apologize for it. You consider it like, you know how a lot of people are just like, they won't talk about how much money they make. Well, what if you thought that way about your running? Like, my pace is nobody's business but mine, I don't need to qualify anything.

You wouldn't walk up to somebody at your company and say, well, I'm a manager at this company but I don't get paid very well. You would never say that. You would never, ever say that. So I want you to start thinking about your pace as your own personal information. It's nobody else's business, right?

You don't need to qualify anything when you tell somebody that you're a runner. You don't need to worry that you're misrepresenting yourself. You're a runner, full stop. Other people's opinions about it are none of your business. And again, when you hang out with other runners, they actually will get you.

So if you're kind of like, I don't know, if I want to spend time with other runners, they're all better than me, they're all faster than me, they're not going to think I'm a real runner. I want you to stop that right now, okay? Because runner identity, it has nothing to do with your pace or your distance or any of it. It's just all about I am somebody who runs and all of the beliefs that support that thought, okay?

And by the way, the Up and Running crew, they will get you. Okay? You will feel so seen and understood in the Up and Running program. Oh my God, if you are a not so average runner, whether you're a fat woman or you're on the slower side, you're a beginner, the folks in Up and Running, this program, they have got your back, they are your people.

Ep #313: 8 Ways to Think Like a Runner

There are no apologies in that group for being slow, for struggling, for coming in last in a race, nothing but cheers and virtual high fives, okay? And we're starting that class up in September, so keep your eyes and ears open for that upcoming announcement.

All right, number five, runners cheer other runners on. And they love to do this because they know how powerful it can be to get encouragement, especially when you're struggling. So runners are like, hey, I see another runner. Good job, you're killing it. Right? We do that. It's not like, oh, look at them, they're really struggling, I need to give them a pity high five. It's like no, no, hey, look at them, they're running. We're all out here, we're doing it. Right? This is what runners do.

And when a runner hears someone else cheering them on, they don't make it mean anything shitty about themselves. They don't say things like, oh, they're obviously cheering me on because I'm fat or I'm slow or I'm struggling. No, they're like, oh, yay, that person just wished me a good run. Thank you. Awesome. You too. We don't make it mean anything about us because when somebody says good job, keep it up, you're doing great, we just believe them. We're like, yeah, thank you. And then we move on, okay?

And I know there's a lot of you out there that are like, every time somebody cheers me on I get mad because they're just making it worse, right? No, you are making it worse for yourself. If someone is cheering you on, just say thank you, wave, just ignore them, whatever it is. You don't have to make it mean that they're only cheering you on because you're fat or you're slow. Don't make it mean anything.

Don't make it mean that they feel sorry for you or they're patronizing you. I mean, after all, you are the one running and doing the hard work, they're just standing there. For fuck's sake, own your badassery please. They're

Ep #313: 8 Ways to Think Like a Runner

cheering you on because they're like, damn, look at her go. She's doing something awesome. I'm going to encourage her to keep doing it, okay?

Sometimes they don't know the best words, that's fine. We're just going to assume that everybody has the best of intentions, all right? Another little rant for you guys. You didn't know I was going to get ranty in this one.

All right, number six, runners, they also don't expect running to be easy. And by that I mean they don't feel entitled for it to be easy, okay? They're like, yeah, it's going to be hard sometimes. They don't tell themselves a story like, oh my God, this is so hard. Why is it so hard? Why is it so difficult? They don't expect it to be easy. They're not confused when it feels difficult. They don't expect to be perfect. They know there's good days, bad days, mediocre days, and it's all part of the experience.

And number seven, runners ask for help and feedback on their running, right? They know that coaching isn't just for elite runners. Everyone can benefit from a more experienced person helping them improve. They don't say to themselves, oh, I should just be able to figure this out on my own.

No, they ask for help, they're open to it, and they recognize that there are more people out there that might be able to look at what they're doing and say, oh, you know what? Your shoes are tied funny, that's probably why your feet keep going numb.

Or I'm just going to run behind you, I noticed your foot is turning in a little bit. You're a little bit pigeon-toed on that side. I say that because I'm pigeon-toed on one side. And hey, maybe you should work on glute strength to help externally rotate that foot a little bit. Maybe that would help with your knee problems, right?

Ep #313: 8 Ways to Think Like a Runner

Runners recognize that other people can help them improve and solve problems when they're running. They ask for feedback. They're not too proud for that. They get a coach, it doesn't necessarily mean they go out and hire a super expensive coach, right? Maybe they just join a running community or a running shoe store that has a group that goes out or they just ask for feedback, right? Or, spoiler alert, they join programs like Up and Running where we have coaches and a community to do all these things.

And then finally, number eight, runners know that most of the time, and you guys, this is important. I really should have led with this. This should have been number one. Runners know that most of the time, they're not going to feel like running. Nobody wakes up in the morning and goes, oh, I'm so warm and cozy in bed, I can't wait to go outside where it's cold or it's hot or it's rainy, right?

Nobody wakes up and says, I can't wait to put on my tights and go outside and breathe hard and have my muscles get tired. Nobody says that. Most of the time we don't feel like running, okay? And we do it anyway, all right? And a lot of new runners, they start out and they're legit surprised when they're like, I don't know, I just don't feel motivated anymore. It's like, yeah, none of us do. But we keep doing it because, A, we want to get better at running, we're willing to let it suck until we get better. Or we just like to keep commitments to ourselves.

So the point here is that runners don't rely on motivation to get them going. Motivation is awesome when you can create it. And I would say if I waited to go running until I was motivated, I'd probably go five times a year. And on those days, it's funny, the days that I'm actually motivated to run, I think, oh my God, I can't wait to get out there, usually those are my worst runs because I have way higher expectations than usual.

But on the days where I'm like, I don't feel like doing this, my run is almost always better than I expect because I'm not expecting anything. I'm like, I

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

Ep #313: 8 Ways to Think Like a Runner

said I was going to go, so I'm going to go. And then the expectation is like, this is going to suck. Sometimes it sucks, sometimes it feels really good. So runners don't rely on motivation, they don't rely on inspiration, they just get up and go because they said they would, okay?

So, notice that in none of the things I talked about have I said that runners, real runners go a certain speed or a certain distance, or they don't ever walk. I never said that runners are thin or tall or young or athletic. That is not something that is a qualification for being a runner. And that is awesome news for you because it means you can start thinking like a runner right now.

You don't have to have this belief like, oh, I'm only a runner if I can do an eight minute mile. If you do a 20 minute mile, you're a runner, okay? You're a runner if you run. Running is a way of moving your body, it is not a speed. The difference between running and walking is very simple, there's one difference and it's not the pace. It is that when you are running there is a brief moment in your stride, where both of your feet are off the ground at the same time, okay?

And it may be half an inch off the ground, but when both feet are off the ground as part of your cycle for that brief moment, that is running. In walking there's always one foot touching the ground. That is the difference between walking and running. There's no pace. I mean, in most cases running is faster than walking, but not for everybody, okay?

And so I want you to really start shifting your definition of what is a runner from, oh, I have to go this fast or I don't take walk breaks to all of the thoughts that I just gave you. All the eight things that most runners who identify as runners, most of them have these thought processes, okay?

And I also want to ask you, if you began to identify as a runner, how do you think that would impact the way you show up for your workouts or the way

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

Ep #313: 8 Ways to Think Like a Runner

you talk to yourself? If you believed you were a runner would you start showing up differently, right? Would you talk to yourself differently?

To help you figure that out, I want to give you a little homework this week. I want you to create your own runner identity, okay? Write a paragraph about yourself as a runner. Like how you want to show up for yourself, what you'll be thinking and feeling, and what you'll be doing. It might even help if you want to imagine describing somebody else you know who's a runner and what do you think she thinks and feels and does that makes her identify that way.

So you can start there and sort of adapt it to be your own runner identity. And if you do this, I'd love for you to share it in the Not Your Average Runner Facebook group, okay? I want to hear what your runner identity is because I think it is super important to create it for yourself on purpose and then practice it and watch how it shifts how you show up for your workouts, okay?

All right, my friends, that is it for this week. If this has been a helpful episode for you, if you liked it, please share it on Instagram. Let everybody know. I love you, stay safe, get your ass out there and run and I will see 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 to join. I would love to be a part of your journey.