

# Ep #21: Starting a Cultural Revolution with Dr. Kate Browne



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**Jill Angie**

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## Ep #21: Starting a Cultural Revolution with Dr. Kate Browne

Welcome to *The Not Your Average Runner Podcast*. If you're a woman who is midlife and plus sized and you want to start running but don't know how, or if it's even possible, you're in the right place. Using proven strategies and real-life experience, certified running and life coach Jill Angie shares how you can learn to run in the body you have right now.

Well hello, my rebellious runners. You are listening to number 21 of *The Not Your Average Runner Podcast*. I'm your host, Jill Angie, and I am beyond excited for today's very special interview with Dr. Kate Browne. She is a powerhouse in the body positive athlete space, and she's one of the most inspirational people I've ever met. She also has the best hair and I'm super jealous of it.

Now, for those of you that don't know Dr. Browne, or Kate, as I like to call her, she's a writer, a speaker, and a multisport athlete who's affiliated with the body positive fitness alliance. Her 2015 TEDx talk, *How I Found Real Fitness Inspiration: Saying No to Fitspo*, shows how marketing tactics of the 19th century freak show industry influenced the fitness industry today.

She's also the founder of Taking Up Space, which is a self-care advocacy project that promotes inclusive marketing in the health, wellness, and fitness industries. She is dedicated to helping athletes of all shapes, sizes, and abilities, find their place in the world and thrive. And you all know that is something I can get behind.

Now, I'm going to have all the details about how to get in touch with Kate, follow her, or even work with her, in the show notes. Or you can just go to [katebrowne.net](http://katebrowne.net) to find out more. That's Browne with an E, by the way.

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And Kate is also going to be teaching a class to my Run Your Best Life community on June 5th. And this is going to be a class about how to find your own space in athletics, how to be a body positive advocate both for yourself and for other people, and just in general like, how to become an athlete in an atypical body and feel really, really good about it.

So if you are interested in taking that class, again, it's on June 5th and it's available to members of my Run Your Best Life community. So you - if you join Run Your Best Life between now and June 5th, you will get access to attend that class live and it's going to be not just a lecture but interactive. So the folks that are going to be there are going to be able to ask Kate any questions that they want and really learn about body positivity and how they can make it work for themselves.

Okay, well without further ado, here is the fabulous Dr. Kate Browne.

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Jill: Okay, welcome everybody to the *Not Your Average Runner Podcast*. Welcome to all my rebellious runners. I have a super special guest today. Her name is Dr. Kate Browne, and we are going to talk about running and body positivity and just inclusivity when it comes to fitness and feminism and pretty much everything else under the sun. So Kate, do you prefer to be called Dr. Kate, Dr. Browne, Kate, Katie?

Kate: I thought about this a lot, so the first time Dr. Kate Browne is fine, but then after that Kate is just the way we go.

Jill: I love it. Okay, so we're just going to call you Kate. So welcome, thank you so much for joining me today.

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Kate: I'm so glad to be here, thanks for having me.

Jill: I know, we've been meaning to do this interview for a while, so I'm glad we finally, you know, kind of managed to find the time to do it. So what I'd love to get started with if it's okay with you, to have you sort of introduce yourself to the podcast listeners and like, let people know about your magic.

Kate: Oh, that's so nice. Well, my story is for a really long time - I started dieting when I was 10 years old. I was on Weight Watchers because I was the biggest kid in all ways in my class, and you know, my parents loved me a lot so when the pediatrician - they still do - but at the time, when my pediatrician said she's got to go on Weight Watchers, they said, okay, that's the solution. And it was for bullying, really. Not just being off the chart but also because kids were making fun of me. So the solution to that is always, well then you need to change. So I started on Weight Watchers when I was 10, and for the next, I don't know, 20 years or so, my whole life revolved around dieting. And when it came to exercise, it was exactly the same thing. It was something that I only did - you know, I'd read a ladies magazine because I've been reading ladies magazines since I was 10. I would read the diet of the week and I would read the 10-minute abs and all of these things. And so I learned that exercise was something that you do to torture yourself because you have a bad body. So you always have to change. And so that's how I grew up and just these like, spurts of, you know, home fitness things because - this is interesting, I think we're going to talk about this later too - but I always exercised at home because I didn't think that I belonged in any - in a gym or any fitness community. So it was like a reward I would get for, I don't know, torturing myself, then I could go to the gym, or then I could be out in public. So that's kind of how I started with diet and exercise. And then when I was in graduate school, I started researching the freak show. You know, it's a really abrupt transition. Like, the old timey freak show because I loved the idea of having a weird body

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and then putting that on display somehow. And what I found out was that the way they would pitch these unusual people is they would make up a story about their lives. So they would say, you know, Myrtle Corbin has four legs because her mother was in a farm accident and she's this freakish person. And I started looking at fitspo, or fitness inspiration in the same way. They were telling me a story about this unusual body with the added pressure that I should be like that. Nobody was saying, "You should be like Myrtle Corbin, she has four legs and is really cool." But they were saying, "Here's this model with super visible abs and she's sweaty all the time. You should be like her." So when I put those two things together and realized it was just a story, I asked myself a question, "Well, if that's just a story, maybe I can tell a new story. So what would happen if I pretended that I belonged in these communities?" So the very first fitness group that I joined was roller derby, because my husband said I have big hips, so okay.

Jill: So that's what one does, I guess.

Kate: Yeah alright, sounds good to me. So I skated very poorly for three years, and then that just sort of - it built from there. The confidence I got from derby was - it brought me into running and weightlifting, and I consider myself an exercise generalist now. I'll try anything. I've been bouldering this year, in Boulder, Colorado, so bouldering in Boulder. Yesterday I went to a barre fitness class. You know, the like, barre...

Jill: Yes, that's no joke.

Kate: Yeah, it is for real. And it's the confidence that I got from just saying, "Well, I belong in all of these places that I can go try lots of different things."

Jill: Gosh, I just love that so much, right? And I think like, it stems from that just - like, you rewrote your story. You're like, okay, I've been told my whole

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life that I need to change to fit in, when in reality, I can just decide to fit in. And I don't need to change - and nobody needs to change. I can just fit in.

Kate: Yeah, and it sounds - you know, if you're thinking about that for the first time, it sounds really like, well, you can't just decide. You can't just show up. No, you really can just show up.

Jill: You really can. It's so - like, once you really get that, you're like, oh, well everything changes.

Kate: It really does.

Jill: Everything changes. Gosh, I love that so much. And I - okay, we hadn't talked about roller derby before, but now I want to know everything about roller derby because I kind of have a girl crush on every woman who's ever done roller derby.

Kate: Same.

Jill: Because it's so badass, right?

Kate: Yeah, it's really great, and I - you know, I went to a practice. I guess maybe I have a high tolerance for just doing stuff than - without planning. But I showed up to practice and they said, "Do you have skates?" And I said no, and they said, "Well, you need to go rent some." So I did the old like, roller rink rental skates, and then I had to ask somebody how to put them on because I had never - because that was the thing, I had - I didn't go to any skate parties or pool parties or anything when I was a kid because it was just be small and hide and stay away. So I didn't have a lot of these like, 10-year-old roller rink experiences. So I had to get somebody to help me tie my skates, and then the first thing we did everybody was like,

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"Okay, so now we're going to circle up." And I said, "How do I get to the ground from here? Can somebody hold my hand?" So embarrassing. But yeah, what I learned from doing roller derby is it was a whole new like, space to be in because the more space you take up in roller derby, the more successful you will be because the whole point is you have one person - for those who don't know - you have one person who skates left, and then a bunch of other people, they're trying to get around. And like, get around these people that are here. So the people here - I guess it would be better this way - the people here have to be wide so that the person gets blocked behind them, which means you get a lot of like, squatting down low, wide legs, like, really getting in. And like, the bonding thing of you have to know where your teammates are. You know, like, touching them. And that had never been a part of my concept of exercise, which was we - even if we're doing things together, this is my personal space bubble and we do step aerobics, we all do it the same way and we never touch each other or talk to each other and we're all just separate. So to be in an exercise space where it was not only allowed but encouraged to be vocal, take up space, get in each other's way, have that physical contact, was just amazing.

Jill: I mean, that must have been just such a like, I want to say mind fuck, but more of a mind shift really, where yeah, like, that - like, where it's not just only acceptable to take up space but like, encouraged and I mean, there's so few sports that are like that.

Kate: Yeah, I mean if you can imagine any other social environment or sport environment where you have your coach yelling at you, "Get in her way, get low, get your butt in her face," that does not happen anywhere else. And I think that, you know, it's an intense sport. It's not for everybody, but I would recommend that everybody go watch a bout. Just see what is happening in that space and just see how it all works in terms of empowering women.

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Jill: Right. Well, and do you feel like - I mean, there's the physicality of taking up space, right? But don't you think like, even when you're overweight and you take up space physically, we mentally try not to take up space, right? Like, there's this whole...

Kate: Sure.

Jill: Right, so like, talk a little bit about what it was like to learn to take up metaphorical space maybe is a better way to put it.

Kate: Yeah, well, and it is in so many different ways, and my project, Taking Up Space started as the ramp and stair exercise club. So if you watched my TED talk, you'll hear me reference it that way, and that's because that started - I was with a women's only running group that I'm a part of, and we were running, and somebody said something about well, I can only run with this group because I'm afraid of running by myself. And it wasn't a physical safety thing, she was just afraid of people yelling things at her or you know, just being uncomfortable exercising in public. I said, "Well, that's just - that's criminal. I just hate that." Because if you can't get out there, you know, that's hurting you. That's not hurting the people that are yelling things at you, which does happen. I'm not saying it doesn't. I've been yelled at plenty of times. But if that keeps you from being out in the world, then that's a problem. So the rampant stare exercise club started as a meet up locally for athletes to get together and just be out there. And I realized later that ramp and stair exercise club was a very bad name for anything because it's very academic, it's definitely a thing that someone in grad school would do, and there's a homophone problem because everybody thought stair meant stare like, with your eyes. But what I really was talking about was equal access of ramps and stairs like in a building. Not everybody got that.

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Jill: I immediately think of like, a skateboard park. I don't have that kind of coordination, like...

Kate: Right, you go I don't want to be a part of that. But when I thought about - I was like, okay, so what are we actually doing? And I sat down and thought about what access means and I thought, well it means that we're allowed to be in the same space together if we have access to it, so taking up space is something we do in lots of different ways, physically, mentally, with our ideas and our words, and you know, just a lot of women feel like they have to hide not just to be like, squish - I don't know if you do or have done the plane thing where you smush to the side to not touch anybody.

Jill: Yup, especially if there's a man next to me. That just like - men know how to take up space.

Kate: Yeah, they're like, here's my arm. But in our voices, I find this a lot with women that they are quiet or they don't say the things that they might want to say because those ideas and that voice - they feel like they can't take up that space. And to me, it's all about - it's not taking more than you need necessarily, it's not being out there for the sake of being out there, but just saying this is who I am and this is where I am in the world.

Jill: And with no apologies. Not, you know, "Oh, I'm sorry I'm loud, or I'm sorry -you know, too boisterous." Because I used to say those things. I'm just really loud, I'm sorry. You know, I'm just like, fuck that shit. I'm loud and I swear a lot and I really don't like - if you don't like it then that's awesome, right? Right? I know. And it's so freeing to like, no longer think that you have to apologize for who you are because yeah, I mean, I just feel like that's such a waste of energy.

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Kate: It really is, and the more I realized how much energy I was wasting worrying about what other people thought of me and then trying to shape myself in whatever way to be the kind of person that was more palatable, ugh.

Jill: Yeah, oh, I love that. Trying to be the kind of person that's more palatable, right? Like, we're flavors. Yeah, oh gosh, that's so good. So alright, I think this is probably a good time to - I'd love to hear what you think about what the words body positive mean to you and then also what does feminism mean to you.

Kate: It's a great question.

Jill: They're kind of like, separate questions but then of course sort of maybe.

Kate: Yeah, no, to me they're totally the same question really because to me, feminism has always been a way of thinking about the world. It's not something you are or are not or check off a box like I am a feminist, or this thing I did is not - I hear a lot like, I wear makeup so I'm a bad feminist. That's not even what that is.

Jill: Just no.

Kate: And I think it drives more division than it brings people together because it's like, well that's a feminist thing to do and that's not, so we are not the same kind of person. I also think there's a really specific context where feminist these days - or not these days necessarily, in times past, is the new - hipster is what has replaced is. You don't want to be called a hipster even though you really like bespoke woodcrafts. But I'm not a hipster. I love the handlebar moustache, not a hipster.

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Jill: I like handcrafted bacon and...

Kate: I love bacon and bourbon in a festival. What? So I think the same thing has happened with feminists. You know, maybe in the 70s and 80s, that was a really countercultural radical way of thinking that you did not necessarily want to be associated with but you agreed with some of the ideals. You just didn't want that label. If you take the label off of feminism and make it a concept that you use to think about the world in an equitable and fair way, thinking about access, what do power structures like the patriarchy and late capitalism and racism and homophobia and transphobia, what do those power structures mean for people who fall outside of that? That's all it means. It means looking at the world in a different way and taking on other people's perspectives. So body positivity to me is the exact same thing. It's not a thing we do or not do, or we're going to separate somehow. In fact, I take the positive part of body positivity to mean presence. So like, if you have a strep test and you test positive for strep, that means there is the presence of something. So body positivity means the presence of all the bodies. And the thing I'm really like, if it were a catchphrase, this would be mine. Body positivity is a right and a responsibility. It is the right to take up your own space and the responsibility to make that possible in whatever way you can for other people to do the same.

Jill: I'm like, literally getting chills right now. I mean, good lord, like, that is just - like because it's less about what we look like and being okay with our flaws and stuff, and more about just like, I have a body and it's my right to take up space with that body regardless of what it looks like or what size it is, and it's my responsibility to make sure that other people who aren't necessarily seeing that they have that right, make sure that they get the change to do the same thing.

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Kate: Yup, and a lot like feminism, you know, there was a - what we call in the academic circle - second wave, which is about the 70s or so, where the focus was on equal rights. That's what we hear a lot. Feminism is equal rights, men and women. That's good, that's a good first step. Well, now we're in a place where we're thinking about okay, well the experience of being a woman is different for different people of color, indigenous people, people with different economic states, so we need to think about this in a more holistic way and how these experiences affect lots of different kinds of people. Same thing with body positivity. Loving yourself and being okay and accepting your body is great. I love that, and that's a wonderful first step. The next step is to think about how things like fat phobia and body shame affect people who are not like you.

Jill: So I'd love to hear a little bit more about your TED talk because for anybody that's listening that has not seen Kate's TED talk, it's called - what's it called again? How I Found Real Fitness Inspiration, I think, right?

Kate: Yes, Saying No to Fitspo.

Jill: Saying No to Fitspo. Right, because I think - so here's what's so fascinating, like, the flipside of the body positivity movement is the fitspo movement. So can you tell us a little bit about your talk and some of the really important concepts in there? Because I was watching it and I'm just like - I was like, I was not getting angry at you, I was just getting angry. Who's thought that like fitspo is, you know, something helpful for them. So tell me everything.

Kate: Yeah, we covered a little bit of it, I talk about my story and I talk about my research in my, you know, coming up to find that I actually do like exercise and I think a lot - something that a lot of people struggle with is the idea that exercise should be painful because you're bad, or maybe you

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can't say that necessarily but you know, I have to do this exercise because I want x, y, z result. And once I started thinking about it in - and again, a positive way, not necessarily in a feel-good way, but in the addition of exercise to my quality of life, I've been able to maintain an exercise practice for over three years, which is unthinkable when you think about like, the 30-day ab challenge. If that's the most you do for a little while. That's not a consistent practice. So it has added a lot of value to my life and I talk about - you know, I said my degree is in English, it's about rhetoric, so persuasion, and I studied weight loss success stories and these fitness inspiration memes for the work that they do teaching people how to live. So we see these images, and you can tell a whole story - a weight loss success story with two pictures. A person standing in pants - actually, it's only one. A person standing in big pants tells a whole story, and it's not just the story of oh, they must have lost a lot of weight, which may or may not be true, all you need is a person in really big pants. But that's the story about it, right? But also, it tells us that that person is a good person. So now we want to be like that person, so what did they do? They lost weight, okay, so we're going to do that too. And these transformation stories, before and after, get retold all the time, and that's what's coming up in these fitness inspiration memes. I'm looking at this extraordinary body doing an extraordinary thing like those yoga poses that are impossible to do, like, oh, well I'm going to get there. I'm going to do yoga and I'm going to do that. And so, we take that as inspiration like a positive, but it's actually making us feel bad about ourselves. So I talk a little bit about what I perceive as the inspiration gap, which is if you're here thinking that you have a certain kind of body and life, and you want to get here, if this part, the after part makes you feel bad about yourself, you have fallen into the inspiration gap. Because it's very possible and I support the idea of using words and images, memes, in a way that is inspirational, but it should make you feel like you're going to get there, that you're already a good and whole person who's just going to add a little something more by pursuing this goal or looking at these images.

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Jill: Right, because if the goal that you're going after makes you think like, I'm somehow less than good because I don't have that goal, then that's not a goal worth having.

Kate: Right.

Jill: Yeah, one of my favorite fitness memes that I saw when I wrote my first book, it just enraged me because it said strong is the new skinny, right? So basically - okay, skinny is pretty much unobtainable for so many people, so now not only do you need to be skinny, you need to be strong on top of it. And then it was a picture of a woman who had maybe 4% body fat, she had eight visible abdominal muscles, she was doing a one-handed handstand on a platform, right? And like, next to nothing. I'm like...

Kate: That's weird.

Jill: She's not - like, it was just so much wrong with that. but I was seeing it everywhere on Pinterest, like, strong is the new skinny and then there's this woman and I'm like, stop, just stop. It's not inspirational to anyone.

Kate: My favorite is sweat like a pig to look like a fox.

Jill: Oh my gosh, right okay, so because the pig is somehow bad.

Kate: Right, right. I have some work about that like, in my dissertation where I talk about how, you know, we tend to use animal metaphors when we're talking about fat people. So like, make them monstrous and weird. We can talk about that in another show. But the other thing about the words and the images, they work together in a specific way. So you could take the same text, like, strong is the new skinny and put it over a fat person running on a treadmill. That's a totally different message than the woman on the

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platform doing the push up. So sometimes these are used - there's one I saw, it was like a fat woman in - she must have been in a triathlon, she was in a kit, you know, on a bike, and the text over it was like, it's never too late to try or take the first step, or something like that. Basically implying that this is the beginning of her journey, which is what we always tend to think about fat people is that if they're exercising, they're always at the beginning of a journey to what? Make them thin.

Jill: And here's what's so funny. I am almost positive I know the exact woman that's in the meme because I've seen it, and this is not the beginning of her journey. She's been a triathlete for 10 years and like, I mean, I'm pretty sure it's Krista Henderson.

Kate: I was going to say, is it Krista?

Jill: I think it's Krista Henderson, yeah, and like, that's - she's a very accomplished athlete, and like...

Kate: Well, if you know anything about any kind of fitness journey, you understand that you don't go out on your first bike ride in a tri kit like, in the middle of the road. That's not the beginning. And those are the signifiers that we're looking for, right? Like, all we need to see is the fat person and we understand that that is beginning. Instead of looking at, oh wow, that is a really experienced cyclist, let's go with that as our signifier.

Jill: Yeah, right. And it is just this whole - our whole society seems to be - we're taught, and I know I was taught this by my own mother that being overweight, even - I mean, she put me on my first diet, Nutrisystem - fucking Nutrisystem, right? I was a freshman in high school - so that was actually my second diet. The first diet didn't work, didn't get the results. And so I was 140 pounds - right? And she's like, "Alright, we got to do

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something about this." And I'm like, but I'm a size nine. So tiny. I was so tiny. And - but you know, she had this whole story that like, if you're overweight you're just a failure at life I guess. It was never explicitly said but the message I took away was that just being fat is bad. It's just bad and it's like, the thing to avoid your whole - nothing else, like you shouldn't steal, you shouldn't murder, and you shouldn't be fat. These are the things, right? The trinity of things that you shouldn't do. And I think it's really hard to undo that programming. And so just maybe you've done the same thing, but in the past five years - I mean, I just turned 50 and I've - you know, probably the past eight to 10 years has sort of been a major shift for me from the I have to lose weight to be an acceptable human to I get to do whatever the fuck I want, right? And along the way, I kind of realized that the programming I was getting - and it started probably when social media got really popular. I was subscribing to all these Instagram accounts of all these like, thin women, right? I wanted to be motivated to be like them, and it was exactly what you said. It made me feel bad because I didn't have whatever that was. So I was like, okay, how can I reprogram my brain? And so I just started following Instagram accounts of women that looked like me, and it blew my mind. Like, within probably three months, like, I just looked at them like, oh, that's normal, and it's like, stop feeling terrible about myself. This is magic.

Kate: I actually just had a fitness model follow me on Instagram, and I went to her account and - why? She was doing that broke back pose, you know what I mean, where you're like - like, no one stands that way.

Jill: Don't go that way.

Kate: My favorite part though was she used the hashtag lift heavy shit, you know, and when I looked at the picture, she was like this, with a 15-pound dumbbell. And I'm like, that's not what that means. But it's just people aren't really thinking about this. They're just, okay, fitness is this. If I want to be fit,

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I do this and then do these things. And I just really briefly - talking about the programming and the conditioning, I think that there is a slippery slope to saying, you know, my mother taught me this or my friends or family or aunt or grandma, whoever it is in your life, and they may still be sending these messages to you, but remember that diet products have been advertised in newspapers since 1870. We are on generation five or six or seven of this being the primary operating way to be a woman. So I don't blame anybody for those reaction of - like I said, my parents loved me a lot. They were trying to do what was best for me.

Jill: Right, that's a good point.

Kate: And my mom was my Weight Watchers leader for a while. So...

Jill: Ouch.

Kate: That was weird. But we still have this - it's a primary bonding activity among women to talk about diets. It's like the default. We don't know what to say to each other so we're like, "I guess I'll have some salad because" - the diet talk thing. And I think we can do better for female friendship and female bonding. So that's part of why I believe so strongly in body positivity is not an individual pursuit. It's for everybody because it's really lonely to go out there and say - can you imagine walking into a room like, especially of just acquaintances, and having nothing to complain about, about your diet, or your body, or your exercise? And in fact, this is level two, go in there and say, "I'm feeling really good about my body today, guys. I just feel amazing." Like, you cannot do that. It is not socially acceptable. But the more women we have and bring into this space, the more acceptable - I mean, that's the world I want to see where I can walk into a group of friends and go, "Don't I look great? And you look great too. I love this. I love everything about what we're all doing here."

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Jill: Like, that's my utopia as well. Like, I teach people that when somebody compliments you, don't argue with them. don't tell them all the ways they're wrong, say, "Yeah, I agree, you're right. Thank you for noticing. I am amazing. My ass does look banging in these jeans." Right? Because when somebody compliments us, we're immediately - you know, we're just kind of conditioned to say - because we have all these - all of our own like, insecurities about our appearance, so when somebody compliments us we're like, "No, no, here's how you're wrong."

Kate: Right.

Jill: Let's just agree with people and say thank you for noticing.

Kate: And yeah, I think that really goes back to our conversation about inspiration because when we are - this is part of the inspiration gap too. When we're basing our inspiration on what other people look like, that's an immediate like, you've just fallen in the gap. Because I think you understand better than others maybe, that in running, there is no runner's body. We have aspirational runner's body, people we look to and say, "Oh, they - they are good." But when your body is an example of what not to do, that takes your sport in a really different way. So you know, I'm a runner, I run a lot. People are always talking to me about form and like, "Good job, keep going, you'll get there." I don't have the kind of body that people go, "Oh, if I run, I will look like that. Yay." But I saw a friend of mine had a - she's a runner too and she posted some picture on Facebook, and the comment from one of her friends was, "I should take up running so I could have legs like yours." What about me? I'm - don't you want my legs? Come on. And so, we have these like, this is this kind of body and this is this kind of body and we're just going to all get there.

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Jill: But I mean, it really goes back to what you said about body positivity is it's so important for people with the non-traditional bodies to get out there and show everybody that like, runners come in all shapes and sizes. Like, people come in all shapes and sizes, athletes come in all shapes and sizes. Runners come in all shapes and sizes. And it's like, one is not better than the other. I mean, the one with 4% body fat is probably a lot more likely to run a four-minute mile, but that's not the only goal of running.

Kate: Exactly.

Jill: Like, being fast is not necessarily - I mean, it's the goal for people who are in the Olympics, right? But like, I would say like, the other 99.9999% of the population, like, why does being fast have to be a goal? Like, it fascinates me that like, there's that. And it may be just because we're competitive as a society, right? I think it's just sort of human nature. And so it cracks me up when people say, "Oh, you know, how was your race? Did you win?" And I'm like, yeah, fuck yeah, I won, I showed up, I finished. I got my medal. Yes, as a matter of fact, I did win, right? I didn't have a podium finish, that's a totally different discussion, right? So funny. So can you tell me a little bit about - I know you have a Facebook page and I know you have just kind of body positive women called Taking Up Space, and we talked about what taking up space means, but like, what kinds of things are you doing with that page? Like, how are you interacting with people? Like, what kinds of outreach do you have?

Kate: Yes, so I post a lot of my own writing and then sharing from other people. Just my goal with that is two-fold. One is to share writing or articles or content that brings a different perspective. So what is it like for trans athletes in a gym? It's a different kind of experience. What does it mean to have an accessible fitness space? Again, if you're not thinking that way, you might want to learn to do that. But also, to share my own story and being a model for people who look like me or not, but just to be another

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presence in the fitness world to say this is what an athlete looks like, and to really help people - I'm all about self-love, and I feel like that gets a little misconstrued too about, well then you have to feel positive about yourself all the time. No, no, no. Self-love and self-care to me is the ability to be kind to yourself and make decisions from that place instead of a place of I'm bad and I have to fix myself. So one of my favorite quotes of all time is from Audre Lorde, who was a black feminist lesbian poet, and she says that self-care is not an act of indulgence. Okay, this is not a quote. I'll send you the image so you actually have the quote, but it's basically saying self-care is not an act of indulgence, it's an act of self-preservation and that is an act of political warfare. So what that means is for all those people who don't want me to exist because I am fat - I am not black - but fat, black, whatever kind of identity you have that is undesirable, by caring for yourself in a way that allows you to be and be happy, that is a direct challenge to all of those institutions that want to keep you down. So that is what I do on Taking Up Space. I bust out Audre Lorde quotes all the time.

Jill: But honestly, like, that - like, when you put it that way, when you say like, just standing up and taking your space up in a world of, you know, entities that don't want you to exist or at least not exist the way you are, like, that is an act of political revolution. It really is. I mean, it's not just about you taking up your space, it's about staking a claim for everyone. God, I love that so much. So what is Show Up for Summer about? Because I saw that on your Facebook page. We're recording this on the cusp of summer. I know.

Kate: So excited. So Show Up for Summer is a challenge to diet bikini summer body season. So for all those people who see it's - I see all these memes all the time, and they start early now. It's like, March that we're getting summer body memes. And last year, I said I need to do something about this. I cannot let these memes pass me by. So I started Show Up for Summer, which is a six-week challenge, and it's a free challenge, and it's to

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help people take back that summer-ness. I remember so vividly having all these summers in long sleeves and pants and just being hot and miserable. Not because that's how I wanted to live, but because that's what I thought I deserved. And I missed out on so much. You know, from 10 to 30, no pool parties, no swimming unless it was like, in a backyard somewhere, no public pools kind of things, and I want to save as many people as possible from feeling like they can't get out and do the things they want because they're waiting for some kind of better body. And whether that's going to the pool, swimming with your kids, I'm thinking about all the moms out there who - like, they're in their clothes on the sidelines and their kids are in the pool and just the like, "Can you come in the pool? Come swim with me." "No, I'm not going to." And again, not because they don't want to but because they feel like they can't. So I did the program last year and it was just an email series, and I thought, "I'm great. But I'm not everything to everyone. I don't have the skills to help everybody on what they need to get through this journey." So this year, I've brought in my adventure squad, and they are - they have expertise areas in all kinds of different things like fashion, fitness, I have a registered dietician who practices from a health at every size perspective, we're going to talk about travel. So that everybody in Show Up for Summer can feel supported in what they need to start or continue on this body confidence journey that starts this summer.

Jill: I love that so much. I love that so much. So people can sign up for - is it an email series again or like how can people interact with this?

Kate: Yeah, so if you sign up [katebrowne.net/showupforsummer/](http://katebrowne.net/showupforsummer/), I'll get you the link. If you sign up there, it'll be a six-week email series that starts May 13th, which is in a couple days from when we're recording this, but even if you sign up after the 13th you'll get all the emails and then in each email, there will be a video interview that I did with our experts about their particular expertise and then how you can work with them on that. I also have as part of the program, my self-love squad, which is a Slack group.

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So that's more - so the email series is great if you're a self-study kind of person or you just want to explore this on your own, but if you really love sweaty selfies and like, sharing outfit pictures and you don't feel like you have a community to do that, maybe your friends and family aren't quite on board, the self-love squad is the place for you because we're always posting cat memes and outfits and talking about books we read. It's really great.

Jill: Oh my gosh, I will be joining all of this immediately. Well because here's the thing, like, this year, I bought my first two-piece bathing suit, bikini, since I was probably 10. So it's been 40 years since I've had a bikini, and then I like, put it on and was like, damn. So I was like, I'm going to take a picture, and I put it on Instagram like, everyone needs to see all of this amazing...

Kate: That's so good. I haven't gotten mine yet, I think I need to go find the right - I just haven't found the right one yet.

Jill: Okay so wait, I got to tell you, swimsuitsforall.com is...

Kate: That's what I keep hearing. That's the place to go.

Jill: I've never ordered from them before and this is my first time. I think I saw a - I saw like, a really cute little YouTube commercial that they did with Lizzo and that - you know that good as hell song?

Kate: Yes, I do, it is my power jam.

Jill: Exactly. So they did a whole commercial to that and I was like, I'm all in. I want all those bathing suits and I want to ride a jet ski with Ashley Graham because damn. Like, she was having fun. So I would say - that's

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where I would check out. I mean, I ordered a bunch from Lands' End as well, but I used to love them but I'm just finding that there's way too much coverage on their bathing suits. I was like, there's not enough of me showing.

Kate: Yeah, you know, it's steps, right? And I'm sure there are people who - I talk about in the intro for Show Up for Summer about setting a visibility goal, which is a little different than what we're used to thinking about health and fitness practices and habits. But for visibility, it's like, getting more comfortable being seen. That's really just it. So you know, if you are like I was a couple years ago in long pants and everything and saying, well go out and put a picture on Instagram of you and your bikini, that's not going to happen.

Jill: Right, and that's scary. That's scary.

Kate: So maybe stepping it up is - you know, a lot of people go to weddings in the summer so - and it's always like, I want to be in the back. So maybe your visibility goal is for the next wedding you go to, to be in the front of some of the pictures. Or not cringing when the pictures come out and you go, "Okay, how bad is this going to be?" and really enjoying that. Like, look - so that would be instead of going, "How bad is this going to be?" Maybe reframe that thought to we are having so much fun here. I love that I have a picture with my sister at her wedding. That's what I want for everyone. I want that feeling of connection without cringing.

Jill: Right, and here's the thing. Like, the pictures that we see of ourselves like, we're so focused on what we look like in that picture and other people look at that photograph of us and say, "God, your smile is just glowing in that picture," or like, "I love how you're so intently talking to somebody else." So maybe you have a frown on your face because you're really

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listening and you're really involved in the conversation, right? Like, there's so many things that you can love about a picture and like, whether or not you have a stomach roll visible is like, so far down, and it's just - like, I like to say when I hear those voices in my head because I still hear them for sure, I like to think to myself like, okay, that's just my conditioning. I don't have to believe it. And there's nothing that's gone wrong that I do have those thoughts come up, right? Like, I think it's normal to not be 100% in love with yourself all the time, but you can be - I'm totally going to mess up her last name - her first name is Sonya and she wrote that book called *The Body Is Not an Apology*.

Kate: Oh, Sonya Renee Taylor?

Jill: What's her name?

Kate: Sonya Renee Taylor?

Jill: Yes, yes, thank you, that's her. Because I just ordered her book and I just listened to an interview with her, and she talks about how there are plenty of days where she doesn't, you know, love her thighs as much as she wants to, but she still is like, I'm committed to loving the person that doesn't love her thighs. Like, it's just so brilliantly said. You know, you don't have to be like, excited and happy about your body all the time, but that's different than rejecting it and saying it needs to be changed.

Kate: Right, yeah, and I think if you apply that to anybody in your life that you love, you know, you're not over the moon thrilled with them all the time. But you're not going to sever that relationship because they made a mistake or because there's just that one thing that really irks you about them. You know, you're approaching them from a more - again, holistic, kind of this person I love, I love this person, me, even though every once in

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a while, - I tried to do that this morning. I thought I was going to do an Instagram post about shorts because I still, you know, struggle with wearing shorts sometimes because I have what I think are really weird thighs. And so, I was taking pictures, I was in my bike kit because I biked to work today, and I was taking pictures of my legs, I was like, I can't use any of these, none of these are weird enough.

Jill: You're like, they're too normal.

Kate: They are. I might still post them anyway but I was like, this is not what I was going for. It's like, well maybe it's just because I'm not that weird. Like, maybe I've gotten to a place where what I thought was so unusual and the thing about having a weird body is - which we all have weird bodies, by the way.

Jill: Bodies are just weird.

Kate: Just weird. If you think yours is particularly unusual, that's really isolating because you're like, no one has ever felt this way and no one has ever been as gross as I am. So then you feel alone. But the more you like - with Instagram and finding different people to follow, the more variety you have and the people you see, like, we're all just weird in other ways. I love to go to Nordstrom Spring Trend Show. It's one of my favorite things. And the thing I love most about it is the people who come out in their outfits are beautiful and their makeup is - and their hair, they're just gorgeous like, fashion model people. And then I did this exercise one day where I was like, do they all look perfect? No, they do not. Not even with their makeup and their hair and their perfect outfit. Like, everybody has unique features that you can play with, you know, with makeup and hair and all that, but there's not a single person who's like, "Ah, that is the epitome of a human and everybody else deviates." No, we're all unique in all different kinds of

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ways and instead of - I think we should talk more about how we're all different and weird things about us instead of trying to say - again, the division. You're this kind of person and I'm this kind of person, and we're all separate.

Jill: Yeah, I completely agree because there really is - people think, "Oh, I have to have the perfect body." I'm like, there's literally no such thing. It's just...

Kate: Yeah, they're like, where's your point of reference? Can you show me? Because even if you said, well I want - I don't know if you did this as a teen, I certainly did but like, I wish I had this person's forehead and this person's nose and this person's whatever. You didn't do that? That was just me? Okay.

Jill: I just wanted to be Jennifer Aniston, really. If I could just be her.

Kate: Yeah, so then you take your celebrity person and you're like, well they are just the most perfect beautiful human in the world, and now especially with the internet, I bet we could go find at least 100 flame pages of Jennifer Aniston, even in the 90s, right? They'd be like, Jennifer Aniston in the 90s was gross and had weird hair. But no, she's beautiful. What? There's always going to be bad stuff to say if you really want to try and find it.

Jill: And even those people don't look like those people. That's what I love, right? I - like, here's what's so fascinating to me. Like, I grew up in the era of Madonna, like, way back in the day. I had her first album when it came out.

Kate: Wow.

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Jill: On a cassette. So I mean, she's almost 60 years old, and most of the pictures you see of her, she's like - they're posed and she's made up and so forth, and I saw a picture of her recently, like the paparazzi had taken it and I was like - I watched myself go, "Damn girl, she's aged. She's really let herself go." And I was like, stop. How about like, this is what she always looks like, and it's not like, presented to us to be easy to consume. She's just like a normal human being. Actually, she's kind of a superhuman, but like I mean, I don't know if you've ever seen her perform live but like, she is fit. There are like - watching her run around on like - damn, she works out like crazy, she must. But yeah, it was really fascinating to like, watch my own brain start criticizing her for not looking like her. And I'm like, no that's not how any of this works. So it's just - we're just conditioned to think that way. So it's good to give yourself options.

Kate: Absolutely, and it's a great first step to just start noticing when you think these things about yourself or others. You don't have to do anything about it, but just go, "Oh, okay, well now I'm thinking about this, or when this happens, I feel this way." Like, I know an automatic reaction for a lot of people is when you sit on a couch to reach for a throw pillow.

Jill: Yes, I need to cover my abdomen so people don't know I'm fat.

Kate: Right. I hear that with purses too. I didn't know this, but you could do it with a big purse. I don't know. I don't carry a purse, but you could do that. So if you just notice like, when these things happen or when you start feeling bad about yourself, and then once you figure out, some patterns will start to come up like, "Oh, I always feel down on myself when I'm around this person. Maybe I need some extra support when I'm around this person."

Jill: Yes. Or maybe just not be around them.

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Kate: Or just not, yeah.

Jill: Because I do think there are people in our lives that we - you know, that we don't realize that we're getting messaging from them that's really negative. Like, I have - I used to have a close friend that spent so much time criticizing every aspect of her body while I would sit there and go, "I would love to have your body." Like, she was just beautiful and just so well put together and always dressed so nice and she was really pretty and I watched her like, get a nose job and a boob job and I'm just like, this is not what I want to - this is not - it was like the Instagram thing, right? Like, I don't want to watch somebody that I think is so gorgeous like, critique themselves and just - because then I'm thinking, well, I don't look like you so I must be awful, right? I would have those messages. So yeah, I was like, I just really need to spend...

Kate: I can guarantee to everyone watching this right now, there is at least one person in this world who thinks that exact same thing of you. That they do not want to see this beautiful, dynamic, gorgeous person in their lives feel bad about themselves.

Jill: Yes, oh, so beautifully said, right. Well, on that note, I think we should wrap it up because I like, I don't think we could have said anything better about just the whole concept of like, loving yourself and paying it forward to other people. So okay, so real quick, how can people get in touch with you? Again, I know we've sprinkled it in throughout, but like, let's get the whole highlight. For you guys that are listening, this will all be in the show notes. The links will be there, but if you're too anxious to go there...

Kate: Go now. You can find my Facebook page, Taking Up Space with Kate Browne, and I don't know what the link is but just search Taking Up Space with Kate Browne. You can also follow me on Instagram at

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takeupspacewithkate. And if you want, you can go to my website, katebrowne.net, and there's where you can find all the information about Show Up for Summer and my email address if you want to reach out and say hello, which I would love for you to do.

Jill: I love that. So what is your email? Your email address is on your website?

Kate: Yes.

Jill: And it's Browne with an E.

Kate: With an E. That's very important.

Jill: Yes. Unlike Brené Brown, unlike the other Dr. Brown.

Kate: Right. Sometimes I like to call us the doctors Brown.

Jill: I know, so good. So good. Yeah, and you guys show up - sign up for the Show Up for Summer email series and...

Kate: Yes, please do. The last thing I want to say about Show Up for Summer is that I have a goal to reach 10,000 people, which sounds like a lot, right? But that only represents 0.02% of the total number of people who go on a diet every year. And to me, that's a really significant number because what I'm trying to do is not that - the change I'm trying to affect this year is not that great, but that also means that if you are going to sign up for Show Up for Summer or you know someone who is, that means that the majority of people in their lives or your life are not on board with this idea. So it is very lonely. We are changing the tide, we are having a cultural revolution and it takes everybody to do that. So I really hope that everybody

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signs up for Show Up for Summer. Get me to that 10,000 goal so that I can say that 0.2% of the 45 million people that go on a diet every year are ready for a change.

Jill: Oh my gosh. I'm already going to sign up today, and that means you only have 9999 to go.

Kate: Yay.

Jill: We could do like, the beers on the wall song. I don't know if people do that.

Kate: Well, they will do now.

Jill: Yeah, no, I think that's an amazing goal, right? And it's all – like you said, it's body positivity is not just about yourself, it's about making the space for other people as well. So I mean, I applaud everything you're doing. I'm grateful to know you and I'm so excited that we had this chat today.

Kate: I am too, thanks everybody for watching and thank you Jill for having me.

Jill: Yes, thank you.

Well hey, that was fun with a capital F. I hope you enjoyed our chat. And if you want to get more of Kate's magic, you can find her at [katebrowne.net](http://katebrowne.net), and of course that's Browne with an E. You can also find her on Facebook, under [facebook.com/takeupspacewithkate](https://facebook.com/takeupspacewithkate), and Instagram at [takeupspacewithkate](https://instagram.com/takeupspacewithkate). You can sign up for the Show Up for Summer challenge at [katebrowne.net/showupforsummer](http://katebrowne.net/showupforsummer).

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And of course, all those links will be in the show notes at [notyouraveragerunner.com/21](http://notyouraveragerunner.com/21). And remember, if you really enjoyed our talk today and you want to hear a live lecture from Kate and be able to interact with her, join Run Your Best Life this week and she's going to give a class to all the members of that group on June 5th.

And I would love to have you there, I would love for you to get to meet Kate and really interact with her and learn a lot more about what she does and how you can apply it to yourself. So I hope you'll join us over there. you can do that at [runyourbestlife.com](http://runyourbestlife.com) and that's it for this week. I will talk to you next week. Bye.

Thanks for listening to this episode of *The Not Your Average Runner Podcast*. If you liked what you heard and want more, head over to [www.notyouraveragerunner.com](http://www.notyouraveragerunner.com) to download your free one-week jumpstart plan and get started running today.