

Ep #310: Body Image and Diet Culture with the NYAR Team



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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.

Jill: Hey runners, so this week I'm so excited because I have got the whole Not Your Average Runner team here to talk about body image and body confidence and all things body. Each of us on the team of Not Your Average Runner is a woman in her 40s or 50s, we're in probably a 10, I would say about a 10 year age range, which means we all grew up with some diet bullshit and body expectation bullshit coming at us from all over the place. And we're going to talk about it today.

We're just going to lay it all on the line. And each of us has had different experiences, so there's some similarities, there's some differences. And we just want to share our perspectives on how our own lives have been impacted by all of this craziness that is out there in the world that has impacted us as women.

So, I know you all listening can't see this, but I can see everybody here on my screen and I'm just going to go clockwise and I'm going to start at 12 o'clock with Elle Dee. And Elle Dee, could you give us a quick introduction about yourself?

Elle Dee is one of the coaches in the Run Your Best Life program here on the NYAR team. And tell me, tell our listeners, what did you think about your body when you were younger? What thoughts did you have or what expectations did you have? And where do you think you learned that from?

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Elle Dee: Well I am Elle Dee. I am a southerner, and this is about to be actually relevant to this discussion because one of the things that I remember, probably my earliest memories about how women or females should present themselves and what they should look like. And it's funny, I mean the biggest thing was about hair, what your hair should look like. And definitely a lot of emphasis on body and on weight.

And I remember hearing people talk about, oh, that woman is too fat, or that person needs to lose some weight. And this has been a near constant throughout my entire life. Interestingly where it really shows up for me is the workplace. And it'll just come slap you in the face out of nowhere.

I was once going to a restaurant with other colleagues and one of the colleagues said, as a woman was walking by said, oh, her thighs are jiggling, she needs to step away from the buffet or whatever. But it's almost been like a mere assault at every turn. So I'm here for this podcast, let's break it all open.

Jill: Well, okay, so I kind of want to dive into that right now, but I also want to dive into it later. But I'm making such an angry face right now because nothing gets me angrier than women criticizing other women for a body part, especially someone's thighs jiggling. Like for any reason, but like for fuck's sake.

I'm assuming the person that was saying this did not have a "perfect" body, but yet I get why we do it because I, in the past, have done it myself. And I was thinking of an example of that earlier today, I'll share that with you later. But I get why we do it because we're just taught to just criticize everything and nitpick everything.

And so if we nitpick ourselves and we criticize ourselves we don't feel good, but if we criticize somebody else we're like, at least my thighs don't

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look like hers or at least my butt isn't as big as hers, right? And it gives us a little moment of feeling better about ourselves, but it solves nothing, right? It solves nothing.

But it feels like an assault. We're assaulting ourselves and then other people are. It's like it's just constant, it's a constant barrage. So I think assault is the perfect word, and thank you for using it. And that's fascinating, so for you it's more about what you're hearing other people talking about themselves and about other people that feels so difficult and assaulting to hear.

Elle Dee: It is. As I got older people went ahead and felt free to share some things with me personally.

Jill: How nice. How thoughtful of them.

Elle Dee: Exactly.

Jill: Yeah, gosh, it's mind blowing. Okay, Jen Lamplough, another one of our Run Your Best Life coaches, same question.

Jen Lamplough: Hi. So I'm Jen Lamplough, I'm one of your Run Your Best Life coaches. And so I've been working with Jill since 2016, first as a client.

Jill: Seven years.

Jen Lamplough: I know, I know, it's crazy.

Jill: Oh my goodness.

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Jen Lamplough: And I became a coach with her in 2018, I think, which still is crazy, I know. So great, five years now. It's been one of the greatest joys of my life, not only because the work is fun and working with these amazing people is so fun. But it's really helped me in not only my running journey, but my personal journey.

And I was on my first diet, I think, when I was 11 or 12. And I wasn't even a "fat" kid. I'm really muscular and I'm really strong and I have Eastern European genes. I have thick thighs and a bubble butt and all the things and big boobs. I started getting boobs in the sixth grade. The boys called me Dolly Parton and snapped my bra. You know, that fun time. But I was probably five, maybe 10 pounds more than the majority of the girls.

And I remember in the seventh grade we all had to get weighed for the Presidential test or whatever. And, of course, they did it in front of everybody in the gym. And I remember, I literally will never forget, how old are you in seventh grade, 12, right.

Jill: Yeah, give or take.

Jen Lamplough: Something like that. I weighed 99 pounds. And I remember bawling thinking that I almost weighed 100 pounds. And all the other girls weighed like 75 pounds or 80 pounds or 85 or whatever. It wasn't even that big of a difference, but I remember being so devastated that I almost weighed 100 pounds. And I was like, oh my God. I just felt so awful because weight has always been a thing in my household and talking about weight as a child.

And now, not shockingly enough it's kind of back at it because my mom has moved in with me. And she's working really hard at being more body positive and things like that, but she's 85 and it's ingrained. And she's a woman of the 50s and women of that era, their looks and their bodies were

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pretty much their only commodity, right? A lot of them didn't go to college, and they didn't have jobs like we do and they weren't in powerful positions if they had jobs. And so their commodity was their looks.

And at 85 she's still talking about needing to lose weight and going on a diet, and oh, I need to stop eating sugar. And oh, I was bad today when she eats. And I'm just like, oh my god, if I'm still having this conversation at 85. And it's funny because in my household now we don't talk like that and we don't comment on people's bodies, good or bad.

Bodies are bodies and they're neutral and we don't talk about people's bodies. And fat is not an insult. And so when she started saying these things in front of my son who wasn't used to hearing them, he said to me, he's like, "Mom, what's a diet?" And I was like, oh, it's just the way people eat. You know what I mean, it's nothing major. So I had to have a talk with her and be like, hey, we don't talk like that in this house.

And the other day I just sort of gave her a lecture about herself because she was being so mean to herself. And I was hearing it about myself too, like in her voice. And I finally told her, I'm like it's really unhealthy, like mentally unhealthy for you to talk to yourself that way. I'm like, just give yourself a little grace.

But I heard it all in a voice in my head about myself, too. It's literally since, I mean, my whole life even though I wasn't a fat kid. I'm a fat adult, but I wasn't a fat kid. I started kind of really gaining weight in high school. Not terribly, but it was really more college. But yeah, it's just like I remember my mom taking me to Weight Watchers for the first time and putting me on SlimFast at 12 for the first time. And it was all she knew, because she was doing it too. And she just didn't want me to go through what she felt like she was going through.

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And yeah, it's been a lifelong journey with unlearning that stuff. And so it's so funny because I think with this group I've done a great job of unlearning that stuff. But to have it brought back up now I was like, oh, I have to continue to work on not letting it affect me and not regressing to past feelings and trying to help her because I want her to be happy.

I don't want her to be miserable all the time about these last five pounds she needs to lose at 85. You know, when I'm 85 I'm going to be smoking cigarettes again and drinking martinis. I can't wait to turn 85 because I'm going to start doing all those things again and I can't wait. I'm not going to be lamenting about five pounds.

Jill: And I think the story you just told is similar for a lot of women in our age range. I have a similar story too. My mom was obsessed with her own weight. And like you said, she was born in 1926 and her appearance was her commodity. That's it, right? You had to look your best and take care of your man because that was it. That was what you had to offer, right?

And I think she tried to raise me with those same values and I was like, no thank you. But also I was listening and paying attention and internalizing all of it even though outwardly I was like, this is what I'm going to do in my life. And I wanted to live a completely different life, but I had still internalized a lot of that.

And it's like I want to call it deprogramming because I think it's almost like a cult. You are literally taught and brainwashed from the moment you're born that your body defines your worth, your parents define your worth, your weight to find your worth.

And we get it messaged that way in different ways, but it comes down to that. And you have to be deprogrammed from it because even still, I'm 55 years old and I still look in the mirror sometimes and I'm like, oh God,

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what? What is that, right? And for fuck's sake, who cares? I'm losing my words. I get so angry about this.

I'm going to move on over to Jen Madden now, who is the Not Your Average Runner business manager. And yeah, Jen, same question.

Jen Madden: Hi. So, Jen, as you were talking – All these Jens – I was like, yeah, that's so my story. So I always joke that I was just born fat, I was a 10-pound baby. And my mother delivered me naturally, God bless her, right? Anyway, she also put me on my first diet at age 10.

So pretty much everyone in my family is overweight and has some sort of, you know, we're just heavy. We're Eastern European, we're heavy folk. And at age 10 my mom was like, "Listen, you're getting fat so we need to put you on a diet." Because she didn't want me to have the same struggles that she did.

She had struggled with her weight her entire life. So she thought she was doing me a service because, again, at that time we just didn't know the dangers of dieting and how they don't work. So she put me on a diet and instead of it "fixing" me, it set me up for pretty much the next 30 something years of disordered eating.

I obviously was taught that my body was broken and it was something that needed to be fixed. So I was on a mission like, I guess I've got to fix this because if not, right, subtle messages that we receive of not being lovable, not being attractive. My mother even made a comment about my dad like, thank God your father liked curvy women because I probably wouldn't have found a husband. Those were the messages that I received.

And so then you're like, oh, well, I don't want to have that. So I spent the rest of my life trying to fix myself. And I did every single diet. And even if I

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was on a diet and somebody else was talking about it, I was like, well, tell me about that diet, because maybe that's the one that's going to be the trick, right? And so you're like jumping and then you get so confused because all the food rules are different depending on the diet. So then you're like, I don't know if this is a good food or this is a bad food.

And then, of course, I threw in exercise because if you're dieting, you also need to be beating yourself up with exercise. So I would over exercise, burn myself out. I was constantly sore, but again was trying all the things from Tae Bo, I know some of you can relate to that. I mean, come on, right?

Jill: I did Jazzercise at one point.

Jen Madden: So did I. And I was so good at it. It's so embarrassing to think back. I was into Jazzercise.

Jen Lamplough: Ours was Denise Austin step aerobics.

Jen Madden: Denise Austin.

Jill Lamplough: Step aerobics.

Jen Madden: Denise Austin was always like, "Whoa!"

Jen Lamplough: Yeah, she'd always say, "Squeeze your buttocks." I'd be like, fuck you Denise.

Jen Madden: Hey you, Denise, shut up. Oh my God. So I did all of the exercise programs, all of the diets. And then I reached a point I was doing CrossFit, I was starving myself to death, and shockingly I still wasn't losing weight. I actually had this recent realization that I was doing all the diets

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like forever and I still was never smaller than a size 14. I had this fantasy that maybe this was going to be the next thing that was going to get me into, I don't know, single digits. Never happened. So I stopped, right?

And so I was like, I'm going to be fat for the rest of my life because I can't keep doing this. So that's when I started to really untangle a lot of the diet culture. I stopped over exercising. I walked, I did yoga, I started to dabble in intuitive eating, which I say dabble because with diet culture it's so ingrained that it's hard to just go into intuitive eating. And to this day I've been practicing intuitive eating and just really listening to my body for years. And I still have like, "Oh, that's a bad food." Right? It's just so ingrained.

But I have done a lot of work to undo this programming that I've had that has just been destructive. And I'll tell you, freeing up all that mental energy has allowed me to open up my world into so many other things that I never thought even was possible because I was so focused on the next diet, the next exercise program. It's a waste of energy. It's a waste of a life.

Jill: And it's such a distraction, isn't it?

Jen Madden: It is.

Jill: It's like, I mean I know this is kind of like a weird conspiracy theory way to put it, but I feel like it is kind of like if the patriarchy keeps you focused on shrinking the size of your body, you can't fuck around and try to stand up for yourself or change the trajectory of how women are treated in this world. You can't do any of that if you're obsessed with how many calories you're eating and how many calories you're burning and all of that.

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Jen Madden: Thinking about the food that you're going to eat or that you did eat and exercise. How many calories did you burn during your exercise? Yeah, absolutely.

Jill: And it is, I feel like we've just been bamboozled our whole lives.

Jen Lamplough: And pitted against each other, quite frankly.

Jill: And not only that, we're bamboozling the next generation, right?

Jen Lamplough: Yeah.

Jen Madden: 100%.

Jill: We just keep passing it down, it's like the ultimate cult. I've been obsessed with reading about cults lately and I'm just like, oh my God. That is in truth an actual, honest to God legit cult. There's many, many leaders. I don't care whether it's Paleo or Weight Watchers or what have you, this belief that you can't start your life, that you can't live your life, that you're not worthy unless you're small.

And this is not to say that, like I'm not anti-weight loss, I'm not anti any of that. If you want to lose weight, that's fine. But it's the obsession with I have to shrink my body so that I can be accepted, so that I can feel good about myself, so I can feel attractive, so I can find a partner, all of that stuff. None of that hinges on having a small body, but we're told that it does in obvious and not so obvious ways. And then it's maddening, it's maddening.

And I feel like when I started to wake up to it, then I'm like, oh, I can never unsee this. I can never not see how this mindset has driven my entire

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existence. I've created so many problems for myself with this mindset that I'm trying to uncreate now.

But I'm curious, where has feeling less than about your body, where has that – I mean, there's the obvious things like, well, I don't want to wear this outfit or I might not want to go to this event or something. But where has it shown up for you in your lives, like feeling like your body doesn't measure up?

And that's it, feeling like your body doesn't measure up because I think that's what it comes down to. It honestly doesn't matter what size you're at if you have a belief that your body is not good enough the way it is. You could be a size 22, you could be a size two, right? And the thought that your body is not good enough is going to impact everything. So where has that showing up for you guys, gals?

Elle Dee: I'm happy to start. Interestingly, the places that I have worked, and I've worked in nonprofits, I've worked in corporate, I've worked in all kinds of different places. And I generally find I am the largest woman in the building. The places where I work do not hire people that look like me or that are the size that I am.

And when we bring people in to interview at different places, like I said, at all kinds of different scenarios. If someone is heavier, like we've had heavier men come to interview, generally not the women. But heavier men are at least selected to come to the interview, there's always some comment about their body. Always some comment about how they're heavy or whatever.

And sometimes it even shows up in places where you would not expect, like you're out exercising. I was with a cycle group and I'm just standing there talking to a friend, a runner friend ran by so I was talking to a runner

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friend like, oh, hey, what's going on? Are you training for something? Blah, blah, blah.

And one of the male cyclists came up and just interrupted the conversation. Didn't even say, oh, hey so and so, what's up or whatever. Just interrupted the conversation, looked at her, and she's an Ultra runner, and said, how much do you weigh? And I was just like, what in the world? Where am I living?

Jen Madden: What's that have to do with anything? Yeah.

Elle Dee: Yeah. And this is less than a year ago that this happened. As much focus as there is on weight in the workplace, outside of the workplace, maybe even in running, cycling it is an absolute obsession. I have never seen people so obsessed with weight. You know, they've gained a pound, they've gained five pounds, they've lost five pounds. I mean, it is just crazy. And sometimes it can be more subtle than that.

And we're going to talk about social media, I'm sure, but the social media pages where I'm on that are cycling pages, men of all body types, shapes and sizes are on there. Only the women who are thin or who are, I won't say thin, but I will say of a body weight that's less than larger are the ones who post. And so it's this kind of thing of you don't ever see yourself in these groups. You don't see yourself being represented, so you say to yourself, not unreasonably, oh, I'm not going over there because I know that's not for me.

Jill: Yeah, and I think that obsession is what – And the funny thing is, it's the smaller bodied people that are openly obsessing over it because I guess it's socially acceptable to obsess about your weight publicly when you're already at the acceptable weight. But if a fat person was like, oh my gosh,

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I've gained three pounds or whatever, people would just not be interested in hearing that.

But it's that kind of obsession over weight and body size and how it ties into performance that I think makes it an unwelcoming space for somebody who doesn't look like that. It makes it very unwelcoming because you're thinking, well, if this person who weighs 120 pounds is talking about how fat she is on the bike or how she needs to lose three pounds so she can set a PR, and here I am and I weigh 220 pounds, how am I possibly going to be welcomed? Like they're going to laugh me right out of the club.

It just sets us up for feeling disincluded before we even have a chance. We exclude ourselves before anybody has a chance to exclude us?

Jen Madden: Yeah, I would say, for me, the workplace as well. I think younger, definitely I was never athletic and so the typical gym class horribleness was definitely part of that. But then you think like, oh, when I grow up people will be better. Little did I know they're just kids and adult bodies.

And so I worked in corporate for many years in a male dominated industry. So I mean literally they'd be talking about a woman and the first question would be, is she hot? And, again, somebody said this earlier, it doesn't matter if you're really fat or really skinny, they would make comments to the point that there was one woman who was very thin. And it's because she had an eating disorder that she was recovering from, but they had no qualms about making a comment about what she was eating or not eating.

And then for me, so then you're hearing this and so you're like, oh, well, there's obviously an acceptable appearance that I don't match, so I should work on that. So I felt it was like my job to let people know that I knew I had

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a problem and I was fixing it. So I would talk about the diet I was on or the exercise program I was on.

We actually even had, which was a nice benefit, we had a personal trainer that we could work with. And I worked with a personal trainer with the ex CEO, he and I would work out together. And he thought he was being kind, but would offer me lots of advice on what I should be eating and shouldn't be eating. You know what I mean?

And then actually when I wasn't losing weight somebody was talking to my cousin who worked at the same job as me. They were like, well, do you think she closet eats? Like, does she stuff her face? I was like, who cares? And why is my life your business?

Jill: Why in the world is any of that any of her business? Oh my God.

Jen Madden: And I love that my cousin had to tell me this too, but that's a whole nother issue. But yes, it was like the lesson in, you know, everybody's body is up for discussion, which is the most absolutely ridiculous thing. We have nothing else to talk about except other people's bodies? I mean we see it everywhere.

Jill: Yeah. But you're right, that is very prevalent, is that everyone's body is up for discussion, especially if you're fat. Especially if you're fat. Because if you're fat, then obviously you're doing something wrong.

Jen Madden: You're a lazy glutton.

Jill: Yeah. And I want to say to anybody who's listening to this and you're fat and you're thinking, well, the reason I'm fat is because I'm doing something wrong, I just want you to practice not thinking that anymore because as Jen

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just told us, she was starving herself and was never smaller than a size 14, right? You can do all the workouts, you can starve yourself, I know you weren't closet eating. It's like, what even is that? Not everyone's body is able to be a size two or a size four or whatever.

Bodies come in all shapes and sizes. Think about dogs, there's different breeds of dogs. You would never expect a Great Dane to lose weight so he could be the size of a Rottweiler, right? You would just be like, no, you're a Great Dane, this is how you're built, this is your musculature, right? You'd never expect a Great Dane to diet down and be the size of a Greyhound, right? They're just built differently, they have different genetics. Same animal, different body type. And I think we need to start applying this to humans.

Jen Madden: Absolutely because look at the room, we're all different.

Jill: I'm a mastiff. I'm a bull mastiff. I'm muscular and, yeah. But I think that's it, you're so right. Everyone's body is up for discussion, especially if you're fat because if you're fat, you must be doing something wrong. And then we can criticize you, either to your face or behind your back, and we can pretend we're doing it in your best interest. But really what it's doing is making us feel better.

And so I think the sooner that we recognize other people's opinions of our bodies, they're still going to have them, but it really is none of our business. And we can tell people, if somebody wants to express their opinion to us, we can be like, why do you care, right? If you're worried about my health, let me worry about it, that's my problem.

Jen Lamplough: Well people use health as the noble criticism, right? Because they use health as a disguise for criticism like, oh, I'm just worried about your health. And that's where it's still like this socially acceptable

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thing to discriminate on and to comment on and to criticize on, because it's under the veil of health. And I know a lot of people who are not fat who are very unhealthy. And so health has nothing to do with it.

Jill: Honestly, if we just walked around instead of being judged on the size of our ass, if we had to wear our numbers, right, like our blood work on our chest and people could only judge you based on cholesterol and all of that bullshit, which is also not saying that it's right. It's obviously like, please don't judge anybody ever. But honestly, you can't tell what somebody's health is just by looking at the size of their body. But we're taught that we can.

And healthism is a thing, right? Like this belief that the healthier you are, the better you are, the more morally superior. So it has shifted from, okay, you have to be thin to be morally superior to now it's, oh, no, you have to be healthy. And health is where you get to say like, well, I'm healthy so I must be a good person. No, there's a lot of psychopaths out there that are super healthy, right? It does not make you a better human in any way.

But Jen, I forgot the question that we were discussing. How has it showed up for you? I guess how has your life been impacted by your own personal beliefs that you inherited from other people about your body?

Jen Lamplough: For me, and I've talked about this a lot either on this podcast or when we're coaching, it's around self-worth and having to be worthy of whatever love or success or affection or good status, whatever the thing, the worth is. And so I've had a very successful career, I've had a lot of career success because that's where I could shine. And I'm a hard worker and I've always risen through the ranks and I've done all these things. And I'm a published author, and I'm an executive now, and I'm a coach and I've done this and done this and done this.

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My worth has always come from my career success because I didn't believe that I had self-worth just for existing. I believe that now. It's taken me a while to get there. When I was talking earlier about having that kind of hard talk with my mom about how she needs to be nicer to herself, she said to me, she was like, I wish I could love myself.

And it just took the wind out of my sails to hear my lovely, sweet, 85 year old mother who raised five children and lost her husband at 53 and has not only survived, but thrived and has great health and all of these things. And to hear that she doesn't love herself, boy, I don't want to be like that at the end of my life. Not that it's the end of her life, she's probably still got a good 10 years to go, 10 or 15 years to go.

But to be 85 and to be thinking that instead of, wow, look at this family I created, this amazing family of 25 people at this point. It makes me want to cry to think about it. And when I get mad at her about it, I think of that. Because I am like, to be 85 and to not love yourself because of a few extra pounds, what a sad place to be.

And I don't want that for myself. And so my mantra now is I'm worthy because I exist, and it's helped me slow down a little bit too. Like I don't have to do all the things. And I plan to run the Chicago Marathon next year, but it's for a different reason.

And I just, yeah, it's been a real game changer, believing that you're worthy for existing rather than having to prove that you're worthy. And I think about it with my own kid and I'm working on trying not to criticize everything and wanting for him to have self-confidence and to believe in himself and love himself just for existing.

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Jill: Yeah, I love that. Because I think as a parent, when your goal is to raise a child who believes that they're worthy no matter what, I think that's the thing that doesn't get taught.

Jen Lamplough: No, it sure doesn't.

Jill: We're always told our worth depends on behaving or getting good grades or being pretty or whatever. And I even like, I've been thinking a lot lately about the term worth and feeling worthy, because if we tell everybody you're worthy just because you exist, even the concept of worthiness means that there is a flipside of unworthiness. And I think that's it, then we're always kind of like, okay, I'm worthy just because I exist, but what would make me unworthy, right?

I almost want to just take that whole concept out of it, and like you're not worthy or unworthy. You just are and let's move forward from there. But I do think that so many of us have been raised to believe that we are not valuable or worthy as humans for all these reasons. So we have to start by teaching ourselves exactly what you've done, Jen, which is I'm worthy just because I exist.

And then from there, I think we can move on to like there really is no such thing as worthy or unworthy. But first you have to get rid of the belief that you're unworthy so that you can kind of sort of get to that neutral space. It's a lot to unravel, I think.

Elle Dee: Yeah, it really is. Yeah. I mean, if anybody's listening to this podcast and they're saying to themselves, ooh, it's so hard for me to get rid of those messages, it's so hard for me to think differently. One of the things I hope that we'll communicate with you is that this is not anything new. For hundreds of years women have stuffed themselves into corsets and yanked

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themselves to 17-inch waists in the Victorian and well, all through the eras, right? All through the eras.

And even in other societies, there's been an emphasis on what women weigh and how we're going to judge them for that. So the fact that you may be struggling with this is not super surprising. We've gotten thousands of years of messaging on this. And it's only been relatively recently that we as a collective start to say, oh no, we're not doing that.

And so I read something in Runner's World about running and weight, and one of the women there said, listen, there will always be trolls and you must work to ignore them. So that's job one. And sometimes even the trolls will pop up in your mind, right? They will say things to you and you just have to say, oh no, hold it, that's not working for me anymore. We're not doing that.

And so as Jill says, brain, your comment is recognized, you're acknowledged but we're not letting you have the floor. We're moving on from that. And to be fair, it's easy for me to say this because I've got some age now. And now every year I care less about what people think about me. I'm scared. What's going to happen when I get 85? I'm just going to be out here just doing whatever.

Jen Lamplough: I'm going to start smoking cigarettes again.

Jill: I love it.

Elle Dee: All the things. All the things. But even if you want to change something about yourself, that does not mean this is something wrong. We change our hair all the time, it doesn't mean something's wrong with my hair. It just means I want something new, I want something different. But it certainly does not mean some comment on whether or not you get to be part of society, or whether you get to be part of the goals that you want.

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So I just wanted to make sure that if you're listening to this and you're like, oh, it's hard," yeah it's hard. We've gotten thousands of years of messaging on this.

Jen Lamplough: And the thoughts never really disappear. The negative programming is still there, just through the work you learn how to say things like, oh, that's an old thought. I think this way now. Because I'm really, really grappling with that when this is coming up in my household now. And I'm like, oh wait, no, no, no, I don't think like that anymore.

And then to try to like, and I'm not mean to my mom about it, but I try to help her. I just want her to be happy, because I'm so happy. And I'm like, man's this is the happiest I've ever been in my life. And this is the heaviest I've ever been, this is the most I've ever weighed in my life. And I'm like, wait a second, but that does not compute.

Jill: Right, that equation doesn't match up, right?

Jen Lamplough: Yeah.

Jill: you're supposed to be sadder when you gain weight, and happier when you lose weight, right?

Jen Lamplough: Yeah. I know, right? How does that work? So the thoughts will always be there, it's just you learn how to manage them and how to say things like, oh no, that's not how I think anymore, I now think this way. And then the next step of that is then advocating in a way that helps educate other people and maybe help them with their own journey. And or just to keep them from either making comments about people's bodies, good or bad.

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I mean, whatever, there is no good or bad. Bodies are neutral. I don't compliment people if their body looks like they've lost weight or something like that because, I mean, you never know why they've lost weight, first of all. And it doesn't matter because bodies are neutral and we don't comment on bodies in this house.

Jill: Well and I think commenting and saying to somebody like, it looks like you've lost weight, congratulations or whatever, is just reinforcing that belief. And so I think you're right. And I think you can just say to somebody like, hey, you look amazing, regardless. But you don't have to comment on why you think they look amazing or like, oh, did you cut your hair? You look so good, right?

But tying it to somebody's body changing, I don't know, unless you ever, and I'm just putting it out there, if anybody ever wants to come to me and say, "Your butt looks bigger," I will accept that compliment.

Jen Lamplough: Well I'm even careful about commenting to women like, oh, you look pretty or whatever because some women, around gender identity stuff, they don't want to necessarily identify as a woman and to say you look pretty or whatever like that. So I've even just, I've stopped any of it. I'm like, you're awesome and I'm glad to be here with you.

Jill: Actually, that's a great point because I think commenting on somebody's appearance in general is sort of reinforcing that –

Jen Madden: Their appearance is what matters, yeah.

Jill: Yeah, agreed.

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Jen Madden: I think another thing with doing the work is using our brains to find evidence on how our body is supporting us. Our bodies are freaking amazing and they're resilient. I think about all the torture I did to my body through diet and exercise, and I'm like, I'm still good, right? My body still wants to move, it still wants to eat. But we have to work really hard to look at the evidence and how our bodies are just literally supporting ourselves right now.

Our hearts are beating, our blood is pumping. We're able to move through our day, sometimes with a little bit more aches as you get older. But in general our bodies are so resilient, and yet our focus, by default, is to look at all the negatives rather than to look at how our body is supporting us and the good that it's doing instead of constantly nitpicking. But it takes energy and awareness to do that because our brains just want to go to the negative because that's our default, is always on that.

But that was part of my journey, just to recognize my body is freaking amazing. It's keeping me alive. I'm having this conversation right now with you. Thanks body.

Jen Lamplough: And you're not doing anything to make it do that, like your body is breathing on its own, it's pumping blood on its own.

Jen Madden: It's totally just doing it, yeah.

Jen Lamplough: We were watching something and there was a painter who had painted, oh, we were watching the movie Titanic. Did you know I've never seen the movie Titanic? And my son is obsessed with the story of the Titanic and so I'm like, all right, we're going to watch the movie. I'm like, but I'm pretty sure there's naked bodies in the movie, so you're too young to see naked adults right now, so just cover your eyes during those parts.

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But the guy Jack is an artist and he's painting or sketching naked women. And so my son asked me, he's like why do they have to be naked? And so I was like, how do I explain this? And I was like, the human body is perfect. I said, the human body does all of these things and is built to keep us alive and help us move and do all these things. I said for artists to learn how to replicate people, they have to learn how to draw the human body in its bare form.

I said, because the human body is perfect, that's why artists draw people naked. I said, there's nothing wrong with that. I said, it's just not appropriate for you, at eight years old, to see naked women. And so he was like, okay. So we're having this conversation while he has the blanket over his head because Kate Winslet's tits are out in the movie.

Inside I'm crying laughing, but I was like how do I neutralize this as much as possible and not make him feel ashamed about me not letting them see a naked body? You know what I mean? I'm like, there's nothing wrong with it, it's just not appropriate for you at this age. And so it was just hilarious. Like, just hilarious.

Jill: I love that. And I love that you framed it as research. Well, if you're going to be an artist, you have to learn how to draw the body naked.

Jen Lamplough: Yeah, I know. I was dying. I was dying. Well, and it's even funny because in the dating world right now there's, you know, I'm dating now and I have a totally different outlook on myself and my life. And I've talked to people and we've talked about what you're attracted to and I said, well, I don't describe myself as curvy or whatever. I'm like, I describe myself as a Renaissance painting.

And I'm like a Renaissance painting. I mean, it's such a great way to describe it, because it's so true. That's what my body looks like, are those

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women in Renaissance paintings. And what a positive, uplifting, beautiful thing to describe it, for me, at least. And every guy that I've said that to is like, that's so amazing. They love it. So it's been really cool.

Jill: I feel like dating, I know, Jen, you and I have talked about this. Dating can be destructive to your body image or it can be really helpful to your body image, depending on how you approach it. And I think for you and I both found that dating after being married for many, many years and being in your 40s and 50s was actually empowering. And I came out of it thinking like, damn.

Jen Lamplough: Yep. And you inspired me, truly. I've taken your route, basically, and I'm like, oh, this is actually really fun.

Jill: Yeah. We'll have to do a whole podcast on that.

Jen Lamplough: Yeah.

Jill: The one thing that I do – I recognize we have to call this pretty soon, but I do want to ask each of you how, either running in the case of Elle Dee and Jen Lamplough, or just kind of like for in general for Jen Madden, how has that helped you shift your body image to where it is now? So just give me a sentence or two from each of you. And we'll start with Elle Dee.

Elle Dee: Well, I mean, the biggest message I think I've gotten out of all of this is if you do the thing, then you are the thing, right? So Jill always talks about if you run, then you're a runner. And so there's no caveat to that, there's no body image or weight requirement on that. It is if you're doing the thing, then that's your identity.

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And so that's been sort of the thing that takes me through all types of activity, right? If I'm out here Zumba-ing, then guess what? I'm a person that does Zumba. I'm a person that rides, I'm a person that runs. And so I like to think of it that way and not to kind of count myself out simply because I am a certain weight. It just does not matter.

Jen Lamplough: And if you want to run, you can still identify as a runner. I'm getting back to running after being off for a little bit, but I never stopped identifying as a runner. If it's the thing you want, you could also identify as it even if you're aspiring to it, I think. I love that point, Elle Dee.

Jill: Is there anything about the act of running, not necessarily the thoughts about it, but the actual physical act of running that has helped you shift how you think about your body?

Jen Lamplough: Yeah, for me it's around pace. There was always this like, I have to improve my pace, I have to improve my pace, I'm not a whatever. And changing these thoughts and being part of this group, whatever your pace is, it's okay.

It's so nice to take that level of pressure off, because then it just is even more fun and more enjoyable. If you're doing it to Jen Madden's point about punishing yourself for eating or to "burn off calories," or to try to achieve something to make you feel worthy, none of that's fun, right?

And to just be yourself and go out, like I think of Phoebe in Friends, you know that scene where she's running in Central Park with her limbs flailing and this big grin on her face, that's what I want to feel like when I run. I don't want to be beating myself up and crying. So that's what it has changed for me, is running is not a punishment.

Jill: Oh, I love it. What about you, Jen?

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Jen Madden: Yeah, so I used to exercise because I had to fix myself. And when I let that go, I realized again how smart my body is. My body will tell me what it needs. Some days I just need to rest and some days, listen ladies, I'm not a runner, sorry. So my body will never tell me to run, but I had to get over that because I thought I needed to run to, obviously, lose weight because that's what you do.

But my body will tell me when it wants to move a lot. And then it wants to get out there and be really active. And sometimes my body just wants to do yoga. So that's been like such a nice freeing aspect of my journey, is my body still wants to move. And I can trust it to tell me how it wants to move. And it also sometimes just wants to rest. And it doesn't mean I'm a lazy slug if I want to rest. It's amazing, it's freeing.

Jill: I love that. Bodies are so, so smart.

Jen Madden: Yeah, they are.

Jill: And once we start listening to the body and accepting it, rather than trying to shove it into an expectation that somebody else has for us, you get to this point where you kind of let go worrying about whether I need to fit into this or I need to lose weight for that or whatever. And like I get to just be in my body and then it's just the most powerful, empowering, uplifting thing to not have to worry about any of that shit anymore and just be like, this is the body I've got and I'm just going to treat it well and love on it.

And that your body is your partner for life, right? You can shrink yourself down and find a partner that likes the body that you have, but your body is your partner. That's the one you've got. And I feel like we spend so much time trying to change it that we miss out on having a real relationship with it. And so I think the power of doing this work and of letting go of a lot of the beliefs that we're taught from eons and eons of history, the power of letting

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go of that is that we just get to actually appreciate and love the vessel that we're in. And, God, it's really fun when that happens.

Jen Lamplough: It's very freeing.

Jill: Well, thank you, ladies, so much for joining me today. This has been a great conversation. And everybody who's listening, hang tight because I have a few more words I'm going to share after all of our friends here go their separate ways. I know Jen's got to light up the Run Your Best Life coaching call in about 60 seconds. You're seeing how the sausage is made, friends. So we're going to break, but thanks again, ladies, for joining me tonight. As always, it's a deep honor to chat with you.

Jen Madden: Thank you.

Jen Lamplough: Thank you.

Elle Dee: Thank you.

Hey, real quick before you go, this is Jill popping in to let you know that I am teaching a whole ass class on how to become more confident in your body, how to accept your body and maybe even start to love it a little bit. Now, this is a four week class, it's online. It happens throughout the month of August and it is taking place inside the Run Your Best Life coaching program.

Now, if you have ever struggled with your body image, this class is going to be a game changer for you and all you need to do to grab your spot is become a member of Run Your Best Life. Now, we have monthly and annual membership options, there are no long-term contracts, no annoying joining fees. All you've got to do is register for Run Your Best Life, join us

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for the month of August, become more confident in your body and you're going to step into September like a rock star.

So all you need to do to join is head over to runyourbestlife.com, that's runyourbestlife.com. All the information is there and I will see you there.

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.