

Balance365 Episode 42 Transcript

Transcript

Annie: We're bringing back one of my favorite guests we've had on Balance365 Life Radio, Hillary McBride. If you've listened to previous episodes you know that Hillary's work from her book Mothers, Daughters and Body Image is referenced frequently and if you haven't had a chance to listen to her first episode, make sure you catch that when you're done and here's a tip: grab a tissue.

Hillary is back today discussing women and aging. As Hillary notes in this episode, we tend not to think about women and aging bodies because we tend to not think about aging women. Unfortunately, we live in a culture that hyper-values youthfulness and when we do see older women in the media they're almost always being praised for looking younger than what they really are.

Hillary is a therapist, researcher, speaker and writer and on today's episode, Hillary provides a much needed counter narrative on aging women as an opportunity to explore, experiment and awaken, rather than disappear. We also discussed how sharing and resharing this new story about aging women can provide younger generations a message of hope and inspiration for what it means to be an aging woman in our world. Enjoy!

Hilary, welcome back to Balance365 Life Radio, I'm so happy to have you.

Hilary: I am so happy to be with you ladies, really such a joy.

Annie: Your podcast episode will go down as like the first podcast I ever cried on. Which is, you know, we talked about this, like I'm not a crier so it was big for me. It was like a pivotal moment in my podcasting history.

Hillary: Wow.

Jen: I think it's also still our number one most downloaded episode as well.

Annie: Yeah, it was full of gold, so we're bringing you back because you, the last time you were with us, we were talking about your book, Mothers, Daughters and

Body Image which we can link on the show notes. It's an amazing, amazing book, super easy to read, full of stories and research to back up the stories and the experience that so many women, Jen and I have had some experiences that women in our community have had and that echo the experiences of the women that you work with are having but you are shifting just slightly into kind of a new realm, not so much mothers and daughters but tell us about what you're looking into now.

Hillary: Yes, so actually I'll name this as an addition, an addition to what I've done already to see the full picture, because I think that when we think about women's relationships with our bodies, we often think about young women. We forget that women's tension with what does it need to be embodied in this world is something that can actually increase as they age. We tend to not think about women and aging bodies because we tend to think about aging women, this kind of invisible population.

We don't really see them in the media and when we do see them in the media they are praised for having appeared more youthful than they actually are, so there is this trend in how we think about women's relationships with our bodies towards youthfulness. Not that there's anything bad with being young but that's actually just not the whole story about being human. There is so much more to being human than just being young and when we hyper-value that quality then we miss the opportunity to see and understand and enjoy and value the complexity and the richness that comes with aging.

So in my program of research, which is what we could say is the academic term for how the thread that runs through all of the academic and clinical work that I do, I'm looking at women's relationships with their bodies across the lifespan so I've looked at young women and I've looked at women and their changing relationships with their bodies through pregnancy, in the postpartum period and women's experience with their sexuality when they're becoming this young adult person but for my doctoral research, I'm actually looking at women's relationships with their bodies around the time of menopause and as they age, because we see these really critical points where eating disorders emerge for women and they're in puberty, they're in kind of young adulthood when people are entering university and we see them postpartum and then again at menopause.

So we there's something that's happening at those significant points of developmental transition that we have to say, "Why is more pathology showing

up here? Why? What is happening at these points of transition that more suffering is emerging and women are hating and trying to punish and disappoint and shame their bodies into appearing certain way?

And it seems that in each of those developmental transitions that they're all what we would call biopsychosocial. None of the significant transitions in the lives of women are just psychological or just in their bodies or just in their relationship with other people. It's this whole purse and change because we know from research in the fields of embodiment, stuff that I covered in my previous books, that what happens to the body happens to the self, what happens to the self happens to the body, that this idea that we are a mind and our body is just this vehicle or a taxi for the brain something that we know is a really outdated way and harmful way of looking at the self.

So we see that when women age and their bodies change, there can be a sort of crisis, a crisis of "Who am I? I am no longer, perhaps, desirable. I'm no longer an object for to be desired by somebody else. I'm no longer youthful. I can't do or perform physically in the way that I want to and so, who am I in the world?" Especially for people in your community who are fit. What happens when there's pain with physical activity? What happens when there's issues of mobility and fitness has been a way of coping and surviving and feeling joy and power in the body?

So at this significant developmental transition where women are changing in their psycho social identity, there tends to be a lot of shame and fear about the body. With menopause we see the redistribution of weight. We see women have changes in terms of levels of sexual arousal, often difficulty with sleeping and the sense of feeling like the body is betraying them.

Even things like hot flashes that you can't necessarily control in public, kind of outing you as an aging woman. So I'm looking at specifically at women who negotiate this transition towards more freedom, towards more embodiment, towards more love and compassion and self and I'm really excited about the results that I'm finding because I think that there is this overwhelming narrative of pathology of the aging female body.

Actually up until about the sixties, if you look at medical literature and I mean the sixties was not that long ago, the postmenopausal female body was actually considered to be a kind of useless male body.

Annie: Oh wow.

Hilary: Because theoretically, the female body was seen as having a function of reproduction and if you no longer have a reproductive function, kind of, what's the point of having you around?

Jen: Right.

Hilary: So when we think about that line of philosophizing about the aging female body, it's no wonder that there is shame and frustration and a sense of kind of wrestling with the body as it ages, but then also, I mean, like I was saying, in media we see aging as a problem to be solved. Solve aging, fight aging, fight weight gain that comes with menopause and women are told that it is something that needs to be fought and conquered as opposed to something that is an opportunity and an invitation to experience transformation as a full self and because of how we in our culture are so afraid of body changes that are kind of "outside of our control" when our bodies just naturally change, we don't really know what to do about that.

So I'm really excited about the stuff that I'm finding for these women and of course, there'll be books and articles and interviews that come out later when I'm fully have all of my results written up but the message is hopeful that we as women don't have to be afraid of aging, that not every woman hates her body as she ages, but we just don't really know enough in the popular media right about what to do, how to get there?

Annie: Yeah.

Jen: Absolutely.

Annie: So already some of what you've said has like a lump in my throat. What is it about you? Your voice, your demeanor, or I don't know. So I guess my first question is, I know you said menopause is and I know women experience menopause at a variety of ages but is aging something that you've specifically put a number on through your research or is this just like a feeling of getting older, a general fear of aging, is this or is this a specific age range that you're looking at?

Hilary: So I'm looking at any woman who's been a few years out of menopause and that can vary because menopause, like you are saying, hits at different

stages and it's not, for women who are pre-menopausal, as I've learned from my research, like, I'm an outsider advice is not my lived experience yet, I'm a younger woman, but I thought of it as like a thing that happened and then I started researching aging women and it's this kind of unfolding that happens and there are these little markers like "Oh, my period didn't come this month" and it comes with it this sense of like "Oh, I wonder if that season of my life is over." And if a gradual change process that happen sometimes over a few years and sometimes over some decades, but aging, we would say, the aging population for women is anything kind of as fertility starts to ends.

Jen: I started feeling this actually recently because my youngest went to school. And I found myself with this feeling of maybe a bit of fear, maybe a bit of anxiety, maybe a bit of like, what is next?

Hilary: Grief maybe even too.

Jen: Grief, totally. Lots of feelings and I just, I didn't have any words for these feelings and one day it just dawned on me that I am entering a new stage of my life and that can be scary, uncomfortable. It depends what your mindset is, right, where what you just said earlier was that all I know about getting older is that it's something I have been programmed to dread and so it's sort of I had to dig into these feelings and try and change my narrative around it.

I mean, there are some great things about my kids all being in school now but it does mark the end of an era for me. And yes, so I'm, you know, I mean, I don't think I'm near menopause yet but it's, I think it's about the stage of your life sometimes, more than the age, right, as far as what's happening and what you're moving through?

Hilary: Yeah, well there are all of these micro developmental transitions throughout your life span, like, "Oh that was the last time I breastfed my baby."

Jen: Absolutely.

Hilary: That was the last time I dropped a kid off at school or that was my last day with my kids at home or wow, that was the last time I saw my parents fully functioning before they moved into assisted living, like there are all these things that mark that age is just a part of life and that the developmental stages take us into and out of different experiences. I think for women in particular there is this

complex narrative around aging because, and we call this like the double standard in women's literature around aging, that men who age are given status and are seen as having wisdom and maturation, like I think of the narrative of the Silver Fox, is distinguished, whereas women are thought of as actually being less valuable or frumpy or invisible at best.

Jen: Right, absolutely.

Annie: We have a another podcast that we did with Amanda Thebe and she's a personal trainer who specializes in training women that are going through menopause and she is echoing exactly what you're saying that a lot of these women feel forgotten and there's so much misinformation and confusion and just not talked about. You know, like, it's, you know, talking about periods used to be so taboo and now we're, at least in my community, we seem to talk about that more. Pregnancy, postpartum stages but menopause is still seems like it's kind of like, it's coming along but we got to like do some more talking about it.

Hillary: Yes. Yeah, yeah and the invisibility is such an interesting thing, because in my research, and this is echoed in the body of literature about women's experiences of aging is that invisibility feels actually, for a lot of women, like freedom. All of a sudden, I don't feel like I have to play the game to be valuable anymore. The invisibility gives me permission to show up in the world in a way that I want to show up and I get to really leave behind all of the things that other people put on me that I kind of took on as a badge of honor or as an expectation and I'm really coming into my life and realizing that I get to take responsibility for who I want to be in the world but the invisibility is a kind of superpower in a way.

And a lot of women feel like the invisibility allows them to feel safer as they move through the world because if they're not as much of a sexualized object then they don't have to worry about the same kind of threats of assault or objectification and dehumanization of being objectified as a human and so there is this like freedom to just be a full person in a way that some theorists say that men get to experience throughout their entire lives.

The invisibility of the kind of sexualized objectification is liberating and for other people the invisibility is extremely anxiety provoking, it actually increases appearance management behaviors. "So I'm invisible? OK, I'm going to work extra hard to adhere to or to align myself with appearance standards so I'm going to do more to manage my appearance than I ever did before to try and earn my

enoughness because the world has told me up to this point that I'm valuable if I look a certain way" and so if I'm outside of that certain way of appearing, women can sometimes feel even more distressed. And again, other women feel totally free in a way that they never did before.

Annie: What would you say, do you have any thoughts on the pros or cons or is it just person specific about those appearance management strategies like all the anti-aging stuff, the clothes, the cosmetic, you know, all the things, do you have any thoughts about how we're using that? Is it good? Is it bad? Is there a line that it's crossed when it's maybe harmful and what do you think?

Hilary: Well, I mean, I really identify with the political values of the feminist movement and would say that there is a pathologization of the natural aging process for women and that causing one to fear aging can sell products. Causing women to fear what their body naturally does and the beauty and the cycle of transformation throughout their lifespan has capitalist gain. There are people who benefit off of women hating their bodies and trying to punish or restrict or change how they look to the maintain appearance ideals so I think I always want to think about like why am I doing something? If I'm using a product, why am I using it? Am I using it because sort of like contingent self-worth that's hanging on this, like if I don't use this, if I don't change how I look, if I don't manage wrinkles that I'm actually not valuable or beautiful?

Are we trying to manage or appearance because it feels like an invitation toward self-expression and then I might even say like, then I would use different words and I would say that's not really appearance management, that's more, yeah, self-expression and the freedom comes with knowing who you are and how you like to show up in the world and not seeing the body as a thing to be restricted or managed.

Jen: As we say often to our community, it's not necessarily about the what you're doing, it's the why and the how you go about it.

Hilary: Yeah, absolutely and I have to remind myself often, like, I think I might be doing this for a good reason, yeah this is because I want to but if we start to deconstruct that a little bit and think about why, the question that often helps me guide my choices around my appearance that I often ask other people in clinical work is "And what would happen if you didn't?" and sometimes we can trick ourselves into thinking that we're choosing something because we want to but

then we ask ourselves, "What would happen if I didn't?" there can be a disproportionate amount of the fear that emerges that tells us like, "Oh, there's there's something more going on here than just liking to look this way."

There's actually a distress that I am not valuable or that I'm not going to be attractive and the only way that I know that I'm count in this world is if I'm perceived as attractive. So there's a lot of politics involved in this whole conversation were having about how women feel about their aging bodies and sometimes we buy into the story so much that we think that we actually really to do buy the story.

Annie: Right.

Hilary: And don't realize that we've been sold something that actually benefits other people and keeps us sucked into a loop that then ends up harming other women too because we're not presenting to them that there is possibility-

Jen: What's real.

Hilary: Yeah, what's real and "Hey, guess what younger ladies, you don't have to be afraid of aging because guess what? I'm here and it's so good. It's so so good."

Jen: You are describing my journey with my pubic hair.

Hilary: Yes. Yes. Well, preach.

Annie: That, I was not expecting that to come out of your mouth.

Hilary: Tell us more.

Annie: But I kind of like it.

Hilary: Yeah, yeah it's so good. You've got kids and they're going to see your naked body and they're going to think that that's the normal adult female body but when you present a modified version of the body that's what kids think is the healthy normal adult and then they grow up and see the normal and thinking that the normal is the aberration not that aberration itself.

Jen: Exactly and I really, I tread that conversation carefully because I want women to do things for themselves. I want intrinsic motivation. I do not want

women to feel, I don't know if the right word is shamed but shamed into taking a certain path because it's the best one for their children, do you know what I mean? So that is a tricky, tricky conversation to have but the absolute truth is that our children are watching and learning and they are doing what we do, not what we say and and that's just the truth, that depending on how you choose to live your life, that is what your children are seeing as normal and you have to decide, you know, if you're OK with that, like are you OK with that?

Hillary: And let's take us beyond children for listeners who don't have kids, let's think about how anybody who goes before us in any capacity gives us the model of what the potential future could look like. So when we see fear of aging and shame about the body and needing to control and manage and restrict and disappear as an aging woman then anyone who is younger looks at that and doesn't see a narrative of hopeful joyful embodiment in aging. It just doesn't exist so how do we believe that that's even a possibility? What's fascinating about the journey of being a researcher and learning from these incredibly wise, powerful, perhaps even rebellious older women is that it's given me a story that I didn't have before which is that I can actually have hope for-

Jen: Absolutely.

Hillary: -Myself and the generation of women who I'm a part of after me because until doing this research I didn't actually know that that was possible, kind of like with my research for my first book Mothers, Daughters and Body Image, I didn't know that young women could love their bodies, it wasn't a story that I'd actually heard very much of so anytime we create opportunities for counter narratives to be told and then publicly told it actually inspires a whole new possibility for what it means to be a woman and what it means to age and be thriving in our world.

Jen: A lot of women my age, in my generation, the only example we have of aging is women trying to press the pause button at 29 and denying their age or lying about their age, you know, and that's, I mean, that's a whole, that's what, I mean, that really is what young girls see, lying about their age, lying about their weight, not wanting to put their real weight on their license, like it goes on and on and on. There are very few examples of women in our society living their true authentic selves and being honest about it.

Hillary: What's fascinating about the sample of women who I have been interviewing and having really rich conversations with for my data for my

dissertation is they keep giving me these metaphors. So one of the questions I ask is "What's a metaphor or an image that represents your experience of becoming a postmenopausal woman, of aging as a woman?" and I keep getting these really transformative, like really deeply spiritual images, so one woman said it was like a tree fell and I thought that the tree was dead and then I started to see that there was all of this beautiful new growth coming out of where I thought the stump was. That I thought the season of my life was over but actually I'm realizing that something is just beginning and it's my story, not all the stories that I was told I had to adhere to you or another woman saying it's like coming out of the chrysalis and she said that when she thinks about this stage of her life it's like a shaking off of all of the things she was told she had to be and actually the true self is emerging.

So when I think about the stories I've been hearing of aging, I totally agree with you, Jen, I've been heard like "Oh, I've been 29 for 30 years" or I mean, you know, "It's my 30th time celebrating my 29th birthday" you know stuff like that and I'm getting these stories that we often aren't told like, "Oh no, no, no, it's it's just starting" and yet we put so much energy into fighting something that is really the emergence of perhaps the true self or a healthy relationship with yourself or a way of being in the world but isn't about the obsession of controlling or fixing your body and actual freedom.

Jen: Absolutely. I love how you talked about entering a stage of your life where society is not objectifying or sexualizing you as a person is giving women this freedom which I think is amazing, while also think it's very sad at the same time that we have to endure that and that is when a lot of women will find their freedom when they stop being objectified. Yeah, that's just a really interesting piece of this conversation.

Annie: Hillary, I have a question. I'm just listening to you talk and something that I've experienced, I have never ever felt any anxiety about getting older. Like it wasn't like I turned 30, I was not like "30!" I'm not fearing 40, I'm 35, I feel good but sometimes out of the blue it like hit me that I'm running out of time. And like I'm peaking in my career too late, that I missed the boat and I don't know if that's a fitness industry thing because it seems like all, you know, our platform is so visually based with social media and being online or if it's the fitness industry just hyper values youth and youthfulness but have you run across that like there's this career oriented like I'm running out of time, I don't have enough time to do all the

things that I wanted to do or I I'm going to reach a certain age where my opinion doesn't matter anymore and I know that's not true because I see stories of Brene Brown or I just watched the Iron Lady, you know, like I hear these stories about women that came into their career with such success and gusto later in age so I know that that's not the only option but have you run across anything like that?

Hillary: Yeah and the only pushback that I would give to that argument is great, Annie, you thought of 2 people. But the story is that OK, great, we can think of 2 people but where the rest of them? Where are the rest of the women who are of that age? And so there either hasn't been an opportunity for women to feel that they can or were in occupations or ways of being that kind of suppressed or silence or cause the aging woman to disappear so the dominant overwhelming narrative is that that's not a thing that you could do, that your time will be over and I think that's both cultural and kind of in the subculture of the fitness industry and then even more so for women and I think that there is a confluence of factors that would cause that anxiety to come out and great we can think of 2 women, I mean, I would have been like, "Yeah, Brene Brown." Oh and I would have had to think a little bit to do the Margaret Thatcher one.

Annie: Margaret Thatcher didn't come to mind?

Hillary: Not immediately. Not my first go to.

Annie: I've been on a girl power kick lately.

Hillary: Yes exactly. So we actually have to dig a little bit for the stories. We have to dig for the counter narratives of aging women who come into thriving success in their public careers later in their life and again, I mean there's a theorist who does something called the relational theory of work who talks about how the work that women do that is most successful is often not the most visible. So the woman who is maybe "more successful" in her relational careers is taking care of her kids and her marriage and her aging parents and is juggling all of these balls but that's not a kind of "work" that our society privileges and values and says actually matters and has social worth.

So how do we define meaning? How do we define work? How do we define what is socially valuable? And then all of a socio cultural things that feed into that make it, I think, make it really normal for that anxiety to come up and I think I think about this developmental transition of aging and as being extremely

existential and there are four, using Yalom, he's an existentialist who was really influenced by logotherapy that Yalom has these 4 pillars of, or the 4 fundamental concerns of existing and one would be death, obviously, aloneness or ultimate aloneness, am I alone in this world and I understood? Meaning? Right, so what is. What is it that makes a meaningful life and then the tension between freedom and responsibility. How do I show up for myself and Yalom would say that we are actually only fully free when we start to take responsibility for our life. Just think about how when a kid is not making choices and they don't have freedom to decide what they're eating, you as a parent take responsibility for them when they're sick, so you have the freedom to choose for them and you take the responsibility for them. The task as of adulthood is to come into responsibility for our own lives and to think about who is it that we want to be and then all of those factors influence each other. So who do I want to be but there is a time limit on existence and so how do I realize my full experience and expression of selfhood while also not alienating people from me and doing it in a way that feels meaningful but within time constraints of the 85 year life and you're at a point where you're showing up in your life and you're doing the things that you love and want to do but with that can also come this fear of like "But how does that fit in the timeline of existence?"

Annie: Yeah.

Hillary: It's existential.

Annie: I have big goals for us in our community and I'm like "I need all the time. I need, yeah." Wow. OK So. you've shared a lot and I want to save some time to discuss what can we do? Like, in your research, have you found any anecdotes to how to fight this fear of aging in our culture?

Hillary: Exactly. Yeah so the first thing I would say is I don't know if we need more things to fight but perhaps we can notice our fear and we can notice that our fear has been grafted into us by our culture and maybe isn't something that we always need to adhere to or obey but we can notice that it's there and we can start to experiment in dialogue with our fear, "Why is it that I'm afraid of aging. Is it because I know that I won't have time to do all the things that I want to do or is it because I was told that I'm not the valuable if I've aged." So being curious about our fear, starting to explore the fear but one of the things that shows up in the research over and over and over again is 2 things. When women get educated that there is less mystery and there is less fear about the unknown.

And two, women need other women when they go through the transition of aging. There are no rituals for aging women and I've interviewed women from Aboriginal and indigenous cultures and communities who would say a ceremony for women who are young girls who are entering it like fertile years and have had their first menstruation and there is ceremony to say "This is how you do this well. Let's gather around you, let's hear from the people who gone before you to tell you what comes with this honor and privilege of becoming an adult woman" but nobody does that for aging women.

So women find their own circles and rituals like book clubs and walking circles and spiritual communities where they are gifted the status of an elder as a way of being able to pour into other young women's lives so I would say, find a community of women that you journey with, that is something that we need just to be well across the lifespan but especially when things are changing and we're not sure what's coming next and to know that that can demystify your experience and you can feel less alone because you know that you're not broken if something starts happening for you but my goal, ultimately one of my goals for my research, is to have another book and like I was saying, to make public the results but I also want to create perhaps women's circles for women to talk about aging and to hear from older women elders, the crone, if you will, who hold this experiential knowledge about being well and being free and to have traditions and circles where we can learn from the women who have gone before us and to realize "I don't have to be afraid." But that we didn't learn that fear in isolation, that fear was given to us socially relationally and so we need to unlearn that fear socially and relationally as well.

Jen: So much programming as women.

Hillary: Exactly and deprogramming.

Jen: Right.

Hillary: Deprogramming and again, like I said, you didn't learn the things that you're afraid of on your own and you will not unlearn them on your own.

Jen: Right.

Hillary: The most healing thing for me in my journey of eating disorder recovery was to join a group of women who a primary source of identity was not shaming the body or modifying the body but actually was around thriving as a full self.

And that reminded me that there is another way of showing up in the world and so having these communities around us who can give us a new identity, you're not just sitting around with women talking about the thing that you're doing to try and control your aging skin but actually are perhaps politically engaged or are doing social and charitable work and mentoring young girls. Find a way of connecting with other women as you are aging to give back.

Jen: This is why our community has become so important to so many people and just there was a conversation that happened the other day and it was going sideways, there was some diet culture ideas being introduced into this thread by maybe women who aren't very active in our community or who are maybe new to our community and finally one of our moderators, you know, politely commented and shut down the thread but before she did one of our longtime community members was able to say "You can literally talk about this anywhere on the Internet. This group is unique that no other group talks like this and that is why these ideals being introduced here are not welcome in this group." And community is so, so, so important.

Hillary: Yeah.

Jen: And we struggle to communicate that to our audience. But once you get it and you see it, you know it.

Hillary: Yes.

Annie: And it's so contagious. I mean, you know, just like you said, Hillary, I think we've all experienced that, like, to be in a circle of women either in person or online and have one woman kind of shut down the narrative like, "No, we're not going to talk about our bodies that way." It's like the whole group stops, you know, like and it can be tough to be that first person to say, "No, we're not doing this we're not allowing this anymore but it's contagious and it's life changing."

Jen: And even having our Balance365 women come on our podcast to say, I mean this goes back to diet culture, but you know, I kind of, I live, we live in a bubble. We live in the Balance365 bubble and it is but I sometimes forget how

bad it is out there and how many women are still walking around this earth just ashamed, ashamed of their bodies, ashamed of aging, ashamed of not being productive or bringing, you know, value to our society in whatever way.

I forget that that all still goes on and it's just so amazing to even feature some of the women who have joined Balance365 and just to say "There is another way to live and this is what it looks like and it's not even a look, it's a feeling and like that is so possible for every single person" but what do they say if you, belief is the start of any kind of transformation.

So if you can't find the belief then you're never going to go down that journey so it was so important to keep featuring, you know, the women, the women that say we have in our community, or women that you are interviewing, obviously, because they're there and that's what we need to see more of, not what not to do, we need to see what is possible.

Hillary: What to do. You're so right, yeah and it creates hope for the future. It creates a new vision of existence and I think it it's a mental health intervention on a wide scale because if we can live without fear, if we can live without shame, if we can live without anxiety about the experience of being human and think about what else we can do with our energy.

Jen: Absolutely.

Hillary: It's mental health and it's also a political intervention as well to say, like, there's actually so much more for us to do in our world than to be preoccupied with shaming or changing our bodies. There is, go ahead.

Jen: Well, I was just going to say, in Balance365, we have women that they didn't even understand how much time and energy they were diverting to their appearance until they weren't doing it anymore.

Hillary: Exactly.

Jen: And like your whole world opens up, like, I could not have founded and grown this company if I was still deep in diet culture. I mean, it was me getting away from that that was able to grow the community that we have and that is what, you know, is so amazing about it.

Hillary: So think about that in terms of the aging woman as well. If you decided, like, I'm out of this game, that doesn't work for me anymore and was never meant to be something that liberated me from or toward something, I'm out of the game. So who do I want to be in this world?

Jen: Absolutely.

Hillary: And it seems that aging women have this invitation to really explore and experiment with the freedom of self in a way that young women are often restricted into these very narrow stories of being a woman. So I think there being like a rebirth that happens as women age but that's not the story that we're told and so we need to, as you're saying, we need to keep telling this new story so that we actually look forward to the awakening that's going to happen and perhaps even draw it closer to us to the present.

Jen: Absolutely. It's self exploration is what it is and that's exciting, right?

Hillary: Yeah.

Annie: Who doesn't want to be a part of an awakening, I mean-

Jen: Sign me up.

Annie: Put me down, like, yes, please. Yeah.

Hillary: I'm thinking about titling the book that I write about this Menopause as Metamorphosis.

Jen: Oh I like it.

Hillary: So it's like a spiritual, physical, social, political, relational embodied awakening that happens for women as they age and it sounds, honestly, like I can't wait to get there.

Jen: I want to give a shout out to Amanda Thebe who we had on our podcast earlier to talk about you know the this Invisible Woman and the aging but she runs a Facebook group called Menopausal So Hard so I just wanted to give that shout out in case anyone listening is looking for a group of women to connect with who are, you know, pursuing health, wellness, fitness but also need a positive, encouraging place where women are showing up and being seen in that community because she's just such a fantastic leader in the fitness industry.

Annie: And she's living it herself and she's very open about her experience with her changing body and what that's looked like for her.

Jen: Last year she did a photo shoot and she posted photos after and she just talked very openly about her hesitations when she first got the photos back and she saw that she is getting older and she saw the lines on her eyes and she decided to post them anyways as a celebration of her age and I just thought it was amazing so I feel very lucky to know Amanda Thebe just professionally in the fitness industry as someone to look to to say that you can have a, you know, a thriving career and still have tons of purpose as you age.

Hillary: And I'd love for there to be more conversations publicly about women and aging and conversations and podcasts and events and conferences and workshops for aging women to feel like there is something to look forward to and to support that unfolding and awakening.

Annie: Let's put that on our list, all of our lists.

Jen: Let's do it.

Annie: The the of, the four, Lauren included but the four of us are going to get together-

Hillary: Oh, we're going to do it.

Annie: At some point, I can feel it and it's going to be amazing, it's going to be lightning. Yeah. Is there anything else you want to add or share with us in your research, your work, your findings with our listeners.

Hillary: Yeah I think that I shared the heart of it, there is going to be so much more to be more to come and so many more conversations as the research continues to unfold. I've started doing a series of retreats for women called The Sacred Feminine around women connecting with a sense of sacredness in themselves. We're often told in Western and often Protestant influenced communities you need to leave your body to find something sacred, you need to get out of your body, it's far away, your body is bad, it's a problem and actually there is some really cool traditions to draw upon which lead us towards ourselves, towards our body and so I've been doing these series of women's events and retreats where women get together again and not shaming spaces where we focus on experiencing the sacredness within us and between us and

how that connects us to the broader community and to build a new story about what it means to be a woman. So if anyone's interested in those, I often post about them, I've got some coming up, lots in 2019, and for anyone who's interested in eating disorder work, I just came out with a textbook in July called Eating Disorders and Embodiment which is looking at, again, changing our relationship to our bodies and any kind of dysfunction from the body up instead of using thoughts to kind of control, changing thoughts, looking at how do we craft a new experience of feeling fullness and aliveness and goodness in the body and actually as a scientific and empirically validated form of treatment for dysfunctional relationship with the body. So the most things are going on.

Annie: Both of those sound amazing and I'll grab links to put in our show notes so they can access those easily. They both sound great.

Hillary: Thanks so much, Annie.

Annie: Thank you so much. Jen anything you want to add before we pop off?

Jen: Just that we hope Hillary will come back and discuss boy and body image-

Annie: Yes. Yeah.

Jen: That's, I have three boys and I know, Hillary's been leading some men's retreats actually which, anyone listening should also follow her on social media to see all the amazing work she's doing and yeah, we would love to have you back to talk about that because that is definitely a topic that is not, just, people aren't talking about it enough and I think in 20 years we will be sorry unless we start talking about it now.

Annie: You're always welcome here.

Jen: Yes, always. We love you.

Hillary: So much love for your two and I'm so glad to know you and enjoying with you in this way and I can't wait for our next conversation.

Annie: Thank you so much, we'll talk soon, OK?

Hillary: OK, bye.

Jen: Bye, Hillary.