

- Melody: [00:03](#) Hi, I'm Dr. Melody Moore, founder of Embody Love Movement®. Welcome to One Love Fits All™. I am so excited to offer you this conversation between myself and Anna Guest-Jelley. Anna is, besides being a wonderful human being and my friend, the founder of Curvy Yoga®, she also wrote a book by the same name, Curvy Yoga. She's also the founder of Curvy Life, which includes her blog and a podcast, live retreats and other ways to be a part of something that integrates body acceptance and the practice of yoga on and off the mat. Anna is a writer. She is a leader in this conversation and so many others. I really look forward to bringing you this conversation where she and I talk about body image throughout the lifespan, body image and body image acceptance throughout pregnancy and postpartum ness. We talk about her journey in the yoga community of being one of the founders, really of this movement of body positivity. What it's like to live in a larger body, to go to the doctor's office and advocate for yourself, to go to a yoga studio and advocate for yourself and to be inside of family dynamics and doing the same thing. So this is a juicy conversation. It's a sweet conversation. It's also packed with tools from Anna about how to be present and alive in your life. I really hope you enjoy it.
- Pura Fe Sings: [01:36](#) (music) True freedom involves the understanding of our true human spirit within. It dispels the lie of inadequacy and helplessness who are we? Powerful beyond measure. Who are we? Power of the creator....
- Melody: [02:01](#) Welcome my friend Anna Guest-Jelley. You are one of the very first people, I don't know if you know this, that I was just telling you that interviewed me ever that had me on your podcast when I first found it in body love movement. But you're also one of the first people who donated. I don't know if you are aware of that. But it was someone from the yoga community that wasn't like a friend from, from my personal life or something like that. And it was such a kindness and such a gift that you wrote a check and said "I support your mission". So thank you for that. Oh my gosh. Thank you. I had no idea I was one of those early donors. But so happy to be because I think I told you at the time, or since, that I just feel like what the work that you're doing is so important and very complimentary to Curvy Yoga® and I feel like we need to be in community together around this. Absolutely. So thank you for that. It was actually a sponsorship for a One Love Fits All™ event years ago. Maybe that long. I remember that.
- Anna: [03:00](#) It was 2013 or something like that.

- Melody: [03:03](#) I know. And so here we are today and I'm so excited to talk to you. You're at such an exciting stage in your life and
- Melody: [03:13](#) you've written a book. I know it's been out now for a couple of years, but when this book came out, which is called Curvy Yoga, which is also the name of your organization, along with Curvy Life, I thought this book is necessary and it is so timely. I am so grateful that this is here and that you wrote it. So can you talk a little bit about the offering of the book and then I'll ask you about the process.
- Anna: [03:38](#) Yeah, thank you. I really felt like I was a book that I had wanted to read. So I had been looking for a book like that for a long time, that kind of wove together a person's story. So what did yoga mean to them? And then walks people through a process that would weave together both yoga and body acceptance so that they weren't separate. But really how do you integrate them together in your life? How does yoga contribute to body acceptance and vice versa? Because for me personally, they just go hand in hand so beautifully and I really think about both of them as a practice. So that's the intention of the book is how do you make this concrete? Because that's so important to me. I never want to be offering anything that is just sort of, I don't know, words that don't have any, uh, action behind them that people can bring into their life. Yeah.
- Melody: [04:36](#) And so the book has practices embedded within it.
- Anna: [04:40](#) Yeah. It has different practices for body acceptance and it has curvy pose modifications and some ideas around practicing so that it can be hopefully a resource for people to go back to in the future too.
- Melody: [04:55](#) Okay. So I want to talk more about how all of this came to be and how this body of wisdom came to be. But selfishly, what was the process of writing a book like for you?
- Anna: [05:05](#) Oh my gosh, it was wonderful and horrible all at the same time. So I think like a lot of people who are writing a book, it's sort of seems like one project when you start and then ends up turning into something else. So when I did the book proposal, I had an outline and chapters and I was like, I'm ready to write this. This is great. So when I got a publisher I was like, okay, I'm going to sit down and write it. And I have been blogging and writing other things for a long time. So I wasn't brand new to writing, but as I was writing the book, I was like, Oh, the original structure doesn't work. It's not really what I want to be sharing. I had written the proposal a year or two before I ended up going

through with it and getting a publisher. So things had just changed in how I was thinking about everything. So I feel like it's a process of being open to what is coming in the moment, which is, you know, very yoga as well.

Melody: [06:06](#) I was thinking that when you said it, that it became something other than what it was originally. And I was thinking the parallel process of a yoga practice in that and also, at least for me and the journey toward body acceptance. Like I thought it was this, but it's this. No, it isn't, hold on. And I love how you say body acceptance in itself isn't an end. It's not like the point of body acceptance is not body acceptance.

Anna: [06:36](#) Yeah. I feel like the point is really living your life on your own terms and having your, I mean, I just think back on my dieting days, like all the time, energy, money, angst, all of that that went into it. And having that back now to funnel into family, friends, what I want to do in the world, the way I think I can make the best impact, just is so empowering. And I really want that for other people. Not because it feels good to say I accept my body. Though it does. Um, but for that kind of next thing that comes along the way.

Melody: [07:17](#) And I would imagine this is true for you. It is for me, the unburdening of the cost of shame. You tell a story. I know a really old blog, I think it's old, about being a child and being taken to, I think it was Weight Watchers I'll let you tell the story, but seeing a teacher and what that brought up within you, a teacher from school. Can you talk about that?

Anna: [07:40](#) Yeah. So I was going to Weight Watchers when I was like 10 years old and I was the only kid there. It was just me and a bunch of middle aged women. And they have you, or they, you know, advise that you kind of like go in the least amount of clothes that you can. So I'm in like a tee shirt and little bike shorts, ready to get on the scale. I do. I kind of go through the line and then I go to sit down because it's kind of like, I don't know, you weigh in and then you have a meeting. So I'm waiting for the meeting and I see my middle school math teacher who was still my teacher at the moment. It wasn't even an old teacher and I was, I mean, you could imagine. I just wanted to die and I felt too embarrassed to ashamed to tell my mom like, Oh my gosh, my teacher's here, I want to leave. So I just tried to like huddle in the back. But my mom was like, Oh, you lost weight this week. Like tell the leader, she's nudging me. And then the leader sees me and is like, Oh, do you have something to share? And I'm like, no.

Anna: [08:50](#) They made me and my teachers saw me and we locked eyes and I was like, Oh my God, I cannot believe this is happening. And yeah, there's just so much of that shame. Like you said to be there. Even though in retrospect I'm like, there was a lot of kind of messed up family stuff happening there that I was even there in the first place. That was my next question, what were you doing there? But at the time, of course I just internalized it completely. Yeah, this is me. This has to be about me. Yeah, totally. Can you talk about your journey of how you shifted away from that kind of shame and self be into acceptance? Yeah. Well, I wish it would've been at 11, but it wasn't. It was a while later. So in my mid twenties for some reason I don't really even know why I did this.

Anna: [09:48](#) I can't remember. But I decided to tally up all the different diets I had been on in my life and I came up with 65 different diets and something like Weight Watchers I had been on multiple times. So there was something about just seeing that number that was really stark and I was like, Oh my gosh, I am always looking for the next diet, the one that's gonna work. And the 66th diet is not going to make a difference. It's not the paradigm that I need to be operating in. So that's when I started to seek out information about other ways to be in bodies and found fortunately, intuitive eating therapist and started doing that work and it all just kind of unfolded from there. And when did yoga come into the picture for you? I was already practicing yoga, so I started right when I went to college, late nineties.

Anna: [10:53](#) And so I had been practicing for, I don't know, eight years or so when I started to find body acceptance. And in yoga it was the first movement I had done that I'd ever enjoyed, that I didn't do just to burn calories and lose weight and totally begrudgingly. And I just kind of always felt like I'm just gonna hide back here in the corner. Hopefully no one will notice that I am like the only big person in the room and I'm just going to make my body do whatever. And that was kind of more doable at 18 than it is now. You know, I could sort of force myself into things. I just, the teacher would give instructions like, lay your belly on your thighs in this forward bend. And I was like, I don't even have to move to do that, like done and done.

Anna: [11:45](#) So I would hear those things. And in the mindset I was in at the time, I just felt like, Oh yeah, well everyone else here is then, when I lose weight I'll finally kind of get it with yoga. And then once I started on my body substance journey, those things started to dovetail my mind. And that's when I was like, Oh, I think the problem here all along wasn't actually my body, which

is what I was waiting on. But rather that teachers just don't know how to teach bodies like mine.

Melody: [12:17](#) Yeah. And so you became the teacher that teaches teachers how to teach bodies like yours.

Anna: [12:21](#) It sounds meta when you say it like that, but it really is, you know, I was thinking about how, and I'm curious your take on it, having watched, is there such a thing as like the field of body positive yoga, the field of larger bodied yoga growing, but it seems like in the past decade that has been happening exponentially compared to what it was 20 years ago.

Melody: [12:49](#) And I consider you to be a founder of this movement in so many ways.

Melody: [12:54](#) What is it like for you to see it grow in the way that it has?

Anna: [12:59](#) Yeah, it's really incredible. It's been, you know, when I started Curvy Yoga®, there was very little conversation about it, particularly online, which is where I was mainly having the conversation. And when I started at Curvy Yoga®, I felt like I can't be the only curvy body person who wants to practice yoga. I'm just gonna start blogging, see what happens. And immediately, so many people were ready to have that conversation that, you know, blew me away. I was just like, Oh my gosh, this is amazing. And my intention with Curvy Yoga® has always been for people to make it their own. And so certainly many of the people who are in the field are not directly connected and trained with me.

Anna: [13:44](#) You know, some did, some didn't, but it's more like the fact that there's all these teachers out there doing it in their own way and sharing a message with students who I can't reach and they share in a way that, you know, it's just, I feel like we, there's more space for people to find what really works for them. That is so important. Yeah. Yeah. How you know, going back to something you just said about being in a yoga studio and feeling like the biggest one in the room and wanting to hide away, how do you encourage teachers, especially teachers in thinner bodies to be inclusive, just upon greeting and when have you gone to poses and things like that, but people can sign up for a Curvy Yoga® teacher training if they'd like to.

Melody: [14:26](#) You have so much content out there, but how can people be inclusive and their way of welcoming and in their way of presencing students in the room?

- Anna: [14:37](#) Yeah, I mean I feel like the basics of greeting people is important and just kind of making people feel supported and seen. One thing I always caution teachers when they are meeting new students in bodies is to not immediately assume that they're brand new beginners, because that happens a lot and then people feel put off because they're like, I'm not a beginner, I've been practicing for a long time. Or if they have it's fine. But I like to have teachers just say something like, tell me about your yoga experience and that just opens it up for people to do whatever works for them. Yeah. And letting people show up as they are and tell you what they're looking for, what they need without assumptions on your part. So for you, um, you then founded curvy yoga. When was that? 2009.
- Melody: [15:34](#) Happy 10 year anniversary of Curvy Yoga®. Thank You. And for people who aren't familiar, that have been somehow living under a rock this entire, what is it?
- Anna: [15:47](#) It is, I like to describe it as body affirming yoga for people of all shapes and sizes. And I'm really intentional with that language of body affirming because I know that I was having a conversation several years ago all the time where people would say, I'm interested in body positive, but I don't feel positive about my body. And so I like to
- Anna: [16:12](#) welcome people into a kind of body neutral space and see where things go for them from there. Because I mean me too. I also don't feel positive about my body all of the time. And of course body positivity is much broader than that, but it's kind of like what people hit first thing I think sometimes.
- Melody: [16:30](#) Yeah, I really love that. So the word affirming just means you're welcome, you're included.
- Anna: [16:35](#) Yeah. Right. Your body just exactly as it is is great in this moment. It's just what you need to be here.
- Melody: [16:43](#) And I think it's really important and you point this out on your website too, just on the main welcome page that that body acceptance is not an end within itself, but also it's not something that you obtain and then check the box and then now here I am in my body-accepting mind and heart walking through the world with ease.
- Melody: [17:05](#) Like it's not like that. It's imperfect and it's a grind sometimes. And what is that been like for you and why do you feel like it's necessary to make sure to point that out?

- Anna: [17:16](#) Oh my gosh, I really feel like it is seasonal. It changes with your life, what's going on with you and the more space you can create in your own life for that to be, it's not even that it's okay. It's that it just is, like this is just how it is with body acceptance. It is part of the rest of your life. That's how I think about it and that's how I think about my yoga practice too. When I take that long view of yoga, I think, okay, if I want to be practicing yoga when I'm in my seventies what's that gonna look like? If I want to practice yoga, I just had a baby a few months ago, right after having a baby, what does that look like?
- Anna: [17:56](#) And it is obvious to me when I take that long view that it's going to be changing. Sometimes I'm going to practice more or sometimes less, sometimes more intensely, sometimes less intensely. And that translates for me to body acceptance because I just think, Oh yeah, it's the same, you know, it's just going to be different and things are going to come up. And what I have noticed in my own journey is that it's not the negative thoughts never come up. Though they do definitely come up much less often. But when they do, I can recognize them and have tools to work with them and that is everything.
- Melody: [18:31](#) It is everything. What are some of those tools that I think a lot of folks are like "tell me the tools. I have the negative thought, so what do I do?"
- Anna: [18:39](#) For me, this one seems so simple, but honestly just saying, Oh this again to that thought makes me kind of call it out rather than believing it as truth without acknowledging that it's happening, which was the first, you know, 30 years of my life, so now I'm like, Oh this and then I feel like it's an opportunity to be curious, why is this coming up?
- Anna: [19:08](#) What else is going on? And usually I'm stressed or tired or sick or something like that. And then I can be like, okay, this is not actually about my body, so maybe I need to wear more comfortable clothes today or go for a walk or whatever would feel supportive in that moment. But just acknowledging it is huge. And then I'm a journaler. I know everyone's not, but I like being able to just kind of put pen to paper about what I'm thinking what I'm feeling, what's going on. And then I would say the other thing that I like to do, I mean besides yoga that's probably a given, is just think about what would make me feel supported in this moment. And I actually keep a Google doc so that I can find it on my laptop, on my phone, wherever I am that says, when you're feeling bad about your body, here's what to do.

- Anna: [20:04](#) Because in the moment it's hard to remember that you have tools that you have resources. So now all I have to do is remember that I have that Google doc and sometimes it takes a minute to remember to, but it's really helpful for me. What are some of the things on it? Some of the stuff I just said; reaching out to a friend. Some of it is just kind of shifting the energy, spending time with my dog. Oh, I could add my baby now that she's here. Different books or things that I could look at, stuff like that is on there. And then I have a, I have one for anxiety and I feel like I have another one. But anxiety and body image are the big ones that go to.
- Melody: [20:47](#) I've actually never heard that. That's a brilliant idea to keep a Google doc because you're right in that moment it's a little late to resource and put together the emergency kit.
- Melody: [20:56](#) It's like you're in the crisis at the time.
- Anna: [20:59](#) Exactly. It's just such a relief even knowing that I have that available, like, Oh yeah, I can go look back at it, because I would often find that it wasn't until hours, days, etc. later that I would remember like, Oh yeah, I forgot that I could journal. You know, it seems like something you would remember, but you just, it's hard to remember when you're in the moment.
- Melody: [21:22](#) Yeah. And since you are a journaler and a writer and I know you and I really met because of a mutual friend Jenn Loudon who's not part of this summit, but who is part of both of our lives. She really works a lot with prompts. Do you just free write when you journal, especially if you're encouraging somebody to journal about working through negative body image or do you have specific prompts you work with?
- Anna: [21:46](#) I usually just free write, just kind of sit down and see what comes up. But I will do some, what's coming up right now is a big one for me that I like to work with just to kind of see and then that lets me go a little bit deeper than whatever is on the surface. Because sometimes I think like, Oh it's my body and then I keep writing for a minute and it's like, Oh it's five other things actually that were underneath it. Because I feel like through my history of dieting and negative body image, I would displace a lot of hard things onto my body because it seemed easier to control my body than these things that were maybe chaotic or difficult. So trying to just kind of drive a little wedge in between those things is really helpful.
- Melody: [22:31](#) Yeah, I think it's so important that you just said that.

- Melody: [22:34](#) I find that to be the case for me and for a lot of people that I get to be the therapist of. That it's almost become for me a red flag. Something's happening that you're not aware of some upset or emotional turmoil. If I'm hating on my body, like I know it's not that this is the same as it was yesterday and the day before that. And even if it's a little bit different, it can't be that. I can almost use feeling badly about my body as a little cue to self investigate.
- Anna: [23:08](#) Yes, I feel the same way. Yeah. It's so helpful when you see it as a red flag of something else going on rather than a red flag that something's wrong with your body. I feel like that is such a liberating thing to have in your pocket, in your back pocket really.
- Melody: [23:26](#) Yeah, that's right. Um, so you just had a baby. Sweet girl. How has having her, I have so many questions about that. But one thing is how has having her challenged, shaped, I don't know, helped to create the way that you think about your own body image and raising a daughter?
- Anna: [23:53](#) Oh my gosh. Well, number one, I had to go back to weekly therapy immediately because it just brings up everything and that's a big part of it. So I feel even more committed to modeling because I know what a big role that plays as a parent. I know what that was like for me as a kid and I am, I already for a while have not talked negatively about my body. I really try not to talk that much about my body in general. So I just am so like, okay, that's what we're going to do as parents is just you know, live life in our bodies and not really have to have a lot of commentary about it. But it does. Yeah. Bring everything up.
- Melody: [24:39](#) Did pregnancy challenge your own body image?
- Anna: [24:44](#) You know, it's funny. In some ways I felt really great about my body. I was just like, for me, my belly has always been my most insecure body part and I'm much more comfortable with it now than I used to be. But being pregnant I was just like belly's out here. It's fine, it's great. So in some ways I feel more comfortable in my body than I did before I was pregnant and had a baby, which I wasn't entirely expecting. Some things have definitely changed in my body and I am just trying to notice that with curiosity, with kindness and not make it mean anything, especially anything negative. It took a long time for me to get pregnant. So I'm also just like, my body's amazing and I had this baby and that's great.

- Melody: [25:40](#) I so get that. Did taking a long time to get pregnant, sometimes called infertility. I don't know if you latch onto that term or not. Did that process challenge your relationship to your body in any way?
- Anna: [25:55](#) Oh God. Yeah. But it's also so, it's difficult navigating that all the time, but particularly in a fat body, it's just assumed like, Oh, if you just lose weight then you'll be fine and you'll get pregnant. And it's like, mmm. Like all medical issues, losing weight is not the panacea that doctors would like it to be. So one of the really big challenges was just staying on my own side when I was getting that advice from doctors. So my husband Nick and I went to a fertility doctor when we lived in Nashville who was like, okay, here's what you should do. You should have bariatric surgery, then you should come back and get pregnant. I was like, dude, I'm already 36 at the time.
- Anna: [26:44](#) Like how would I even have time for that? Not to mention that I would never do that. So it's just like not letting myself buy into that and be like, no, instead I'm gonna fire this doctor and get a different doctor. That's what's a lot of kind of wherewithal in that process to not, especially when you're hearing that message a lot.
- Melody: [27:04](#) Yeah, we actually talk about that workshops in Embody Love Movement® workshops, of the harm that happens in doctor's offices.
- Anna: [27:12](#) It's wild. Yeah.
- Anna: [27:17](#) Can you say anything about how you advocate for yourself, not just in that instance, but in general and how you encourage others to do so. Yeah, I like to think about how I would like the interaction to go and what my boundaries are before I go into something like that. So we can just take a doctor's visit as an example.
- Anna: [27:38](#) So if I'm seeing a new doctor, you know they have the paperwork, so I'll write on there I subscribed to health at every size. I don't want to talk about my week, here's what I'm here to talk about. So I just try to lay it out there first and then I really treat the interaction as an interview in the sense of if I'm not jiving with the doctor, then I'm just like, okay, it doesn't have to be personal. I don't have to take what they said to heart. I can just be like, Hmm, the information is this doctor is not for me and move on. I've had so many doctors in the past that I stayed with even for years when they were telling me things like, one time I had a broken ankle that was not found and the doctor

was like, you should just go on weight Watchers, but if you want to you could go to an orthopedic doctor. And I was like, I do want to. So then I went to the orthopedic doctor and he was like, Oh yeah, your ankle's been broken for six weeks, so it's just like I was about to cuss. It's probably not allowed on this summit, but it's nonsense.

- Melody: [28:45](#) And to be told, why don't you try this thing you've tried? Oh, exactly. Just making this assumption about you. So many assumptions within that.
- Anna: [28:58](#) It's like, are you telling me I'm fat? What?
- Melody: [29:07](#) Do you do any work with medical professionals like professionally to help them to inform them at all?
- Anna: [29:13](#) No, I haven't done that, but now that you mention it, I'm interested.
- Anna: [29:19](#) Yeah, I mean my sister's under nurse practitioner so I'm always like in her ear, but otherwise no.
- Melody: [29:25](#) You did mention health at every size and if folks aren't familiar with that movement, can you talk a little bit about what that is? Yeah. It's really this idea that is radical but not radical, that you can find health in any shape or size in
- Anna: [29:42](#) your body and that just by looking at someone or seeing their weight or whatever, just to not tell you anything about their health. And of course we are not getting this message anywhere from the medical establishment in particular or it's very rare. There are some health at every size informed practitioners and I love you guys, we need more of you. But yeah, it's really coming from that perspective of what is actually going on with my body and not just saying, Oh to everything from strep throat to a broken ankle to more serious medical conditions that the answer is just lose weight.
- Melody: [30:24](#) Yeah, I think it's a powerful movement and I agree with you. Not enough people know about it. Subscribe to it, advocate for it. One of the things I encourage clients to do a lot and do myself is you don't have to be weighed. You being weighed has nothing to do with your broken ankle or your strep throat or whatever other illness or malady you're going in for, your annual physical. You have a choice about that,

Anna: [30:50](#) Yeah. Yeah. Just remember, you have a choice really about a lot more medical decisions than it would seem sometimes.

Melody: [31:00](#) That's true. So much to ask you, but maybe we won't stay in the realm of the medical field. Okay. So back to being a mom. Yeah. What's it like so far for you?

Anna: [31:15](#) Okay. So even though we tried to get pregnant for a long time, I was always a little ambivalent about becoming a mom. I wasn't sure if I would be a good mom honestly. My husband and I had been together for 15 years. I always knew that you'd be a great dad, but I was like, I'm not sure. I had a lot of mom baggage from childhood, et cetera. Um, and I, all of my girlfriends are really open about their experiences of mothering. So I've heard all of the really hard things, which is, you know, wonderful, because I feel like for a long time women didn't feel comfortable sharing that. But what ended up happening is that I felt like, Oh, it's going to be a nightmare. Like it's going to be so terrible. And then eventually I'll learn to like it. And when my daughter was born, I was so blissed out and in love with her. And I think because my expectations were so low, I've just been like, I love every minute. The sleepless nights. I mean, I could sleep more, it would be fine. But yeah, it's just been such a joy and such a surprise that I feel so much joy in it already.

Melody: [32:26](#) I love that. Yeah.

Melody: [32:29](#) You sent me a picture of her. So I know how adorable she is and see how you fell completely in love with her at first sight. And what a beautiful metaphor for all of it, for all of life. That having those expectations be, I don't even want to say low, just not really having them to be any particular way that then you allow yourself to greet what arrives with awe and wonder and have this availability to be in love with the moment because you didn't color it up beforehand with it being attached to a particular outcome.

Anna: [33:07](#) Yeah, I think that's true. That was really true for me with her birth. So I had planned to be at a birth center with a midwife, without any much medical intervention. And then things shifted. I ended up needing to be induced and had a C-section. And what's interesting is that the entire pregnancy I really strongly felt like I should not attach to any outcome. I should just roll with what happens, you know, I have this plan, but really my bigger plan is just to go with whatever's needed.

Anna: [33:41](#) So when all of those things changed, people were like, "are you okay?" You didn't end up doing your birth plan. I'm like, I did do

my birth plan, which was to just roll with whatever. And it was all perfect and worked out great. I love it.

- Melody: [33:56](#) Yeah. And I would imagine that's a gift of being a yoga practitioner of a couple of decades plus.
- Anna: [34:02](#) Yeah, I think so for sure. Because you do get that in your bones, I think, as you're practicing yoga, that really being present for what is.
- Melody: [34:14](#) Yeah. How has your body image changed over the course of your life? That's too big of a question. I realize that. I actually mean your adult life.
- Anna: [34:31](#) I think I used to spend a lot of time thinking about my body. So what did it look like? What should it look like? What did it do, what should it do? And there was a lot of being external from my body and almost just like seeing it. And what I feel like has shifted is I spend so much less time, it feels like almost no time, but not entirely, thinking about my body and so much more time living in my body. And the difference that I noticed in my day to day life is that I'm just living life. I just, you know, before we got on, put my daughter down for a nap. I came down here and I didn't have an inner narrative about my body, which I would have had in the past for sure. I have had for many years and that feels so huge in comparison to how kind of small it sounds like, Oh, I just live my life.
- Anna: [35:33](#) But that's big. It's big to live your life.
- Melody: [35:37](#) It's everything to live your life. It is, it really is. Yeah. To actually be awake to the experience of being able to live your life.
- Anna: [35:47](#) Yeah. It's such a gift.
- Melody: [35:48](#) Yeah. Why you, why do you feel like this has been, Curvy Yoga®, Curvy Life? Why do you feel like this has been your Dharma, if you consider it to be that.
- Anna: [36:01](#) I do and you know, I'm not entirely sure. I feel like I have followed a path of curiosity and conversation and didn't come to any of this intending it to become what it has. Thought when I started Curvy Yoga®, like we talked about, I was just like, Oh, I'll just teach a local class. You know, I had a full time other job. I will start blogging and see what happens. And it all has just unfolded pretty organically.

Anna: [36:33](#) And so I think for a while I felt like I needed a clear answer. Like, why am I the person to do this? And now I'm just kind of in a space of, I don't have to know. I just need to stay with wherever the curiosity is leading next, which is both my own. And then also, you know, what's coming up for people and conversations in our community.

Melody: [36:58](#) Yeah. What's next for you, Anna?

Anna: [37:02](#) I don't exactly know. I'm feeling way more energized and excited about Curvy Yoga® and my work than I have in a little while. And it's funny, um, there's something about that birthing energy that is so creative that I'm just like, Oh, that energy has just spilled out into every part of my life, including my work. So I feel, uh, re-invigorated and you know, one of the things that we added this year is Curvy Life.

Anna: [37:31](#) Like you've mentioned a new arm of curvy yoga to really talk about the off the mat practice and how you know many of the things that we've been talking about here today. And I'm very excited about that because I feel like the yoga gets people into the door of Curvy Yoga® but also of embodiment, a relationship with their body. And then where do we go from there? And that's kind of the next part probably. How do people get involved in Curvy Life?

Melody: [38:01](#) What is it?

Anna: [38:03](#) So it has a lot of different parts, it's got our blog and our podcasts for sure where we're talking about these topics. And then this year we did a program, it's still ongoing, called the Curvy Life Intensive where we invited people who had been practicing yoga for awhile and maybe are feeling a little like, what's next? Or what am I looking for? Wanting to go with a little bit deeper. And so every month we explore different themes together. We have a live call and we're going to have an in-person retreat here in Portland, Oregon at the end of the year. And that's been really fun for me because I'm also showing up as a participant in a lot of ways, in the sense that I'm living this stuff and bringing what's happening for me in the moment into the conversation.

Melody: [38:47](#) Yeah.

Melody: [38:49](#) And what a fun experience that is.

Anna: [38:52](#) Yeah. It's so great.

Melody: [38:54](#) And I love the way, I've mentioned how you talk about body image in and of itself isn't an end and neither is the practice of yoga. It's not about... I had a client the other day say, but when I get that hand stand and I was like, no, no, no, no, no. Nothing happens when you get the hand. That's it. Nothing, nothing will occur. That you say, and I so agree with you, I think it's so important that yoga Asana isn't an end either. Right. But really it's an opening. So it sounds like you've created and curated Curvy Life to elucidate that and to help folks off the mat really be able to be in curiosity, to be in presence, to be in self-inquiry in all aspects of life.

Anna: [39:42](#) Right. And to really bring those things together in a way that I think they already kind of organically exist, but to make space for the conversation for people.

Melody: [39:52](#) Yeah. This other whole aspect of you. You also co-edited Yoga and Body Image. Yeah. One. That I was grateful to have a chapter in. And what was that process like for you and what's it been like since, because that's actually become a movement in itself.

Anna: [40:14](#) I know. Yeah, it's pretty amazing. So Melanie and I who co-edited the book, Melanie Klein. We started talking about that book and I think 2010 and it came out in 2014 so we had this several years conversation where we just felt like,

Anna: [40:34](#) the conversation around yoga is really about the body in so many ways. But at the time I felt like people weren't very much talking about body image and it's like this is a huge part of what's happening for people in yoga classes. Of course, their body image is coming up in lots of different ways. But Melanie and I didn't want to just write a book from our own perspective as two white women. We wanted to bring in a wide variety of voices to share about their own experience with yoga and body image. Just like you did, where people could hopefully find some footholds in someone's story to feel like, Oh, maybe there is a body image aspect to yoga and ways that you can work with your body image. And Melanie and many other people have really taken that ball and run with it in such beautiful ways. And it's kind of like what you're talking about with Curvy Yoga® where it's like, Oh, a seed is implanted and then people get to take into their own lives. Like to me there's nothing better than that.

Melody: [41:36](#) Yeah. I love, I travel the country and teach and I love being in a new studio and seeing a Curvy Yoga® class on the schedule and...

Anna: [41:43](#) Oh, that's so cool. Yeah.

Melody: [41:47](#) Yeah. It's really incredible what you've created. What would you say to, and this is probably something that's been up for you, um, since having Hazel, what would you say to that 11 year old girl entering the Weight Watchers meeting, um, that you wish you had known then about her sense of self or her sense of herself and her body?

Anna: [42:10](#) Yeah, I mean the first thing that comes up is just you're okay just as you are, you know, I really didn't feel that at the time and I feel like that could have saved me a lot of time and therapy bills to know that. But, you know, of course looking back now I feel like I just want to let that 11 year old that still lives inside know that I see this experience that you've had and I'm holding your hand on this journey and we're going in a different direction.

Melody: [42:46](#) So sweet.

Melody: [42:47](#) Yeah. Yeah. It's, so I think about that too, how we're Russian dolls and we have ages, all aspects of previous or former iterations of self within us.

Anna: [43:00](#) That's a good way to put it.

Melody: [43:03](#) And so that little 11 year old in there still needing for me to be reminded often. Okay. Yeah, that's right. I've got you. Any other practices or tools that you want to share, including this one, but add anything else if you'd like. What is, because I read this so I know, what's your daily practice?

Anna: [43:30](#) So it really changes from day to day and in some ways that is my daily practice is adapting to what is needed in that day. And let me just tell you that took so long to get to because for so many years I felt like I need to do an hour a day, I need to go to class every day, you know, at a studio, on and on and on with the shoulds and the to dos. And did that ever make me have a regular practice? No, it did that. All it did was make me feel bad. Like, Oh my gosh, I'm not a real Yogi because I'm not doing this. And what I have found over the years is that, number one, very few people have that sort of daily, really intense yoga practice. Everyone, well not everyone, but many people are feeling like they should, but they're not doing that. And so I feel like let's just give ourselves permission for it to be okay for yoga to adapt to your life because you know, it's kind of like the longterm thing I was talking about earlier where I just feel like your yoga

practice is going to adapt to your life whether or not you are okay with it. you might as well work on becoming okay,

Melody: [44:45](#) And letting that be the practice.

Anna: [44:49](#) Yes. Right. So then it's really a very internal thing where I'm checking in every day and seeing

Anna: [44:55](#) what do I need in my body and that has in turn informed my body acceptance and my relationship with my body because it really is this check-in that I have every day where even if I've been, you know, tuned out from my body for whatever reason, for part of the day, the day before or whatever, I usually do this in the morning. Then I can see like, Oh yeah, I'm really feeling like my neck wants to stretch or that I need some time for quiet or today I have a lot of pent up energy, I really want to move it. And so I just kind of let it all flow and be however long it is. So some days I have five minutes, some days I have an hour and want to do that. Since Hazel was born, I've been going to in person classes more often than I have in a long time because it's just kind of nice to get out of the house and have that space held.

Anna: [45:50](#) Yeah, just letting things change, which is life.

Melody: [45:54](#) Exactly. Yes. You get to do that. Yeah. I read that and I loved that. I felt similarly over, just over time. And I can see the double edged sword of something like that it. I'm one of those people who had 20, well 18 years ago, 15 years ago, a daily practice. You know, a seventy-five minute daily practice. And I can see now the harm I was doing to myself in that. That's a commitment and a reach toward perfectionism, right. That's not yoga and it's not beneficial. My friend Rosie Molinary taught me recently this word margin, that one of her words for this year is margin. Like having this spacious, I thought you'd like that because you're a writer.

Anna: [46:40](#) Oh and I love Rosie. So I'm like all ears.

Melody: [46:43](#) All over it. Right. Tell me more about margin.

Melody: [46:46](#) Having the spaciousness in your schedule that doesn't have to be so back to back predicted and contrived and hacked. Um, which of course made me think of the margin on the page. Like, yeah, there's this, there's this room here that if we're in a conversation and it's flowing and it's connected, I don't want to be like, I love you and thanks for just sharing with me that really

intimate, vulnerable thing. But my yoga practice starts in five minutes. It's ok to be a little bit more, return to I think the roots of humanity and cultures before we were driven by capitalism and have margin, have some spaciousness. And it sounds like that's what you've been,

Melody: [47:30](#) you've learned to be more committed to in your practice and letting it be organic and letting it be letting it arrive as you need.

Anna: [47:38](#) Yeah, no, it's funny that you bring up that idea of margin. I love that idea. Because in late 2014, right when that book was coming out, early 2015, I burnt out so big and I felt like, okay, I've burned myself out doing yoga, doing too much yoga stuff. And I had done it before and I had done it when I was working for an employer and you know, then I was working for myself and I was just like, Oh. So the issue was not entirely my former employer. I have a role to play in this burnout scenario and I felt like I'm either going to have to quit or I'm going to have to pull back and really pretty radically change my life.

Anna: [48:24](#) And that's what I did. It's not what I anticipated doing. in the past when I had burnout, I would like give myself a break for two weeks or something and then jump right back into the same pace. Then Nick and I talked a lot about it and really talked about what are our values as a family and we have a family motto now, which is simple life. And so I really live by that, which is not packing my schedule, prioritizing my family and my friends. Because prior to that, if somebody would have asked me, you know, what's most important to you? I would've said like, Oh my friends and my family, my self care, whatever. And then when I looked at what I was doing, it was none of those things. It was just all dizziness. So that spaciousness has really informed and changed me the last few years and I 100% think that yoga prepared me for that.

Melody: [49:23](#) Yeah. And for you, was it difficult to get out of the perspective of more is better? Yeah.

Anna: [49:33](#) Well, because also I found myself growing a business, which is not something I had ever expected to do. And you know, there's so many messages about how to grow your business and go, go, go, go, go and, you know, try to reach for these various goals. And for awhile I did all of that and eventually I felt like, what am I doing? Like these aren't my values, this isn't what's important to me. I don't want to be inundating people on social media five times a day or even once a day usually. I want to model a little bit of breathing. Like it's okay if people don't hear from me every day. I mean, they don't need hear from me that often at

all, you know, so just I started living by a do less, do it better and trying to take the work deeper and that has been really a beautiful unfolding the past few years because it lets me stay with the programs that we've been offering now, some of which have been offered for seven, eight, whatever years. And see where they can go rather than just being like, Oh, here's something onto the next thing, which is what I used to do.

- Melody: [50:47](#) Yeah. Same. And the burnout's real.
- Anna: [50:49](#) Yes. So real.
- Melody: [50:51](#) So it's not sustainable, so nobody really benefits.
- Anna: [50:54](#) Right, exactly. Yeah. Then you end up like, are you going to stop doing something that you love? Like you might have to, because you're so burnt out or you can try to take a different way.
- Melody: [51:07](#) And trust that.
- Anna: [51:07](#) Yeah. And it's scary because especially when you're making that shift, it's hard to know, can I trust that I'll be okay. That the business will be okay. Whatever you're facing. If you have less space then, I think for me it was an incremental change in a lot of ways. And that let me see like, Oh, I'm doing a little less of this. Everything's fine. It seems like no one noticed, so I'm going to keep on. But I like to remind myself that people are thinking about me basically never, you know, they're thinking about their own lives so they're not noticing.
- Melody: [51:47](#) Yeah. I have to always, um, just kind of laugh when folks write, I'm taking a break from social media. You won't see my feed. I'm like, okay, thank you.
- Anna: [52:02](#) Oh my gosh. I feel the same way. Yeah. Like it's fine.
- Melody: [52:05](#) Just go take your break. Everybody's all right. Everyone's alright, and one of the benefits I've learned that comes from stepping back and creating space for myself is it allows other people room. Yeah. Not that I've taken up all the room, but maybe in ways, right. That certainly has happened to me and my journey within Embody Love Movement® over a decade of time. The more I get out of the way, the more brilliant, powerful, talented, like other people step in and show up in ways I never could. I don't have their lens or I don't have their ability and I can see there are so many gifts by making room for myself, not just for me, but people who are reached by other people. So all

the way around, like part of the trust building has been that for me, I don't know, experience like, let me lean back because...

- Anna: [52:54](#) Yeah. I felt that way over my maternity leave. I took three months off and it was so incredible to see people come in and we made space for teachers' voices in new ways. And Liz, who is amazing and runs Curvy Yoga® with me was really, you know, stepping into even more leadership and it's just, it's amazing to see those things happen.
- Melody: [53:22](#) Yes. All right. Speaking of time and
- Melody: [53:25](#) not being back to back, I think I've taken enough of yours, I don't know how long she naps for, but I know she's going to want to be greeted by you and she gets up.
- Anna: [53:34](#) Yeah, probably soon.
- Melody: [53:35](#) There's always so much to talk about with you. I'm so grateful for your work and the world that Curvy Yoga® is available that people can sign up and become Curvy Yoga® teachers can be part of Curvy Life. Can hear your podcast. I was saying to you earlier I think the first podcast I ever did was yours.
- Anna: [53:54](#) I love that.
- Melody: [53:56](#) However many years ago that was. I love it too. I think I even showed up like on live, like on video and you're like, no, no. I'm like, I'm ready.
- Anna: [54:06](#) I'm sure I was like, Oh gosh, I feel so bad. I didn't tell her ahead of time.
- Melody: [54:10](#) Yes. A podcast is something you hear. We get to learn. I love it. Yeah, so thank you for being a part of this summit. It feels so full circle in so many ways. You're such a pioneer in this community and I'm just thankful for your time and for you.
- Anna: [54:29](#) Thank you. I feel the same. Thank you for all of your great work and I'm just so glad to know you.