

- Cheryl: [00:00:04](#) Hi and welcome to the one love fits all online conference benefiting Embody Love Movement. My name is Cheryl Donnelly and I am a faculty member for Embody Love Movement . I am so excited to offer you this conversation today with myself and Linda Sparrowe. I've had the pleasure to get to know Linda this year and she is a true Yogi that is deeply wise and she's also so much fun and just a joy to spend time with and get to know. Linda has had a long and varied career as a writer, editor, speaker and mentor in the holistic healing arena with a special emphasis on women's health as the former Editor-in-Chief of Yoga International magazine and past Managing Editor of Yoga Journal, Linda has been instrumental in bringing the authentic voice of yoga to thousands of practitioners and teachers. Linda is on the advisory board of the Yoga and Body Image Coalition and has contributed a chapter in the book Yoga and Body Image. Her talks and practices on body image, women's health and anxiety and depression appear on Yoga Anytime and YogaU online and she has authored several of her own books on various women's health topics. Her heart's work today is co-leading retreats for women touched by cancer, and she also leads workshops for women who are facing a number of challenges from body issues, pregnancy, anxiety, depression, and menopause. I am so excited to share our conversation with you about befriending our aging body and I really hope you enjoy it. Thank you so much for joining us.
- Intro song: [00:01:51](#) Pura Fe Sings: 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....
- Cheryl: [00:02:23](#) Hi everyone. I'm thrilled to be here this morning with Linda Sparrowe. I thought before we even get started, we take a minute to ground. I know my morning has also been a little crazy today, so I want to give everyone the opportunity to just take a minute to find our seat. If you're sitting, if you're listening to this driving, maybe mindfully, just bringing your attention to your breath. If you're sitting, possibly closing your eyes and finding your sits bones. And I invite everyone just to begin to the breath as you take a nice inhale through the nose and exhale release and we'll do that again. One more nice deep inhale
- Linda: [00:03:20](#) [quiet]
- Linda: [00:03:22](#) And exhaling just beginning to get into our bodies and just noticing how just those few breaths can help us settle and prepare for this beautiful conversation we're going to have

about body image and specifically how our bodies can gracefully and beautifully age and how we can embrace the entire process of aging.

- Linda: [00:03:54](#) [quiet]
- Cheryl: [00:03:54](#) So just noticing how your body's feeling today and acknowledging how we're showing up to this conversation without judgment. Just noticing
- Cheryl: [00:04:07](#) [quiet]
- Cheryl: [00:04:07](#) And then I invite you to take one more nice deep breath.
- Cheryl: [00:04:14](#) Exhale, release and gently open our eyes. I always feel a little bit better too.
- Linda: [00:04:24](#) Me, too. Thank you.
- Cheryl: [00:04:25](#) So Linda, I thought I wanted to share with everybody how we met and it was exactly a year ago, I think it was a year ago this week, and we had the opportunity to be together at an Off The Mat Into The World five day leadership training. So I, I'm so honored to be able to interview today, interview you today because I remember when I was an assistant with Hala, Seane and Suzanne at that training, I was so blessed to have you as part of our participants. You were there as a student and I think that really speaks to so much of your work over the last few decades of being a lifelong learner. And I got to experience your wisdom from the role of student. So I'd love to just speak to maybe that for a moment of how we as yogis, as women, as professionals, are always learning how we're always growing.
- Linda: [00:05:25](#) That's for sure. I mean, wow. I can't even imagine, first of all, I can't even imagine having me be the only thing that I have. You know what I mean? I mean you know, I have a certain body of knowledge and I think perhaps as I've grown and, and gotten older, some of that knowledge feels like there's, there's a wisdom component coming maybe from a deeper place, which, you know, is, is part of the process, right? It means that there's just so much stuff out there that I'm interested in and that people are doing in innovative, supportive, new ways that I want to embrace. I wanna I wanna know, you know, and especially now with so much going on in the world, we can't afford to just stay in our little space and go, no, I got this, but I don't have this. No, I want that impetus. I want someone to say, keep going and here's a path that maybe, you know, here's part

of the path maybe that you hadn't thought about. You know, here's language that you may be using that may actually not be helpful, may actually be more harmful. And have you thought about that? You know? So there's just so much, so much out there to take advantage of and to embrace. And I feel so privileged that I am able to do that.

Cheryl:

[00:06:52](#)

Yeah. You know, I also feel extremely privileged that I've had this body of work come into my life and I've learned so much, especially around languaging. I think our languaging is so important when you, when you, when you said that we were at the Off The Matt training and in that instance we really are addressing social justice on so many levels and the languaging and what I've learned as far as how I'm showing up in the yoga studio and with my students and as a facilitator. I think the more that we give ourselves the opportunities with all this information that is out there to really just dive in. And I, you know, I learned a long time ago, I didn't know what I didn't know or I think that's one of the sayings. And I, as I've embraced being a lifelong learner, I think when it's, one of the things that I love so much about this work is I'm constantly trying to just find new people to study with and learn and grow. And it really, I think, helps in this work of yoga and Embody Love Movement and just bringing these practices in this type of work to people. For some, that might be the first time that they're, you know, a part of this conversation.

Linda:

[00:08:14](#)

Absolutely. Absolutely. And you know, I think it's a wonderful opportunity that we have around language and what, I've discovered is also that language gets in the way because the way I speak about, or to myself, it can also be really not only unskillful, but really hurtful. And so, you know, so I learned, first of all, how to have more inclusive language with my students. So, you know, I teach a lot of teachers too in that whole whole arena. It's like, how can we show in a more conscious, generous patient way? But then I got to thinking, listen how we speak about ourselves. No, I have a bad hip. You know? It's like, what is wrong with my shoulder? It's like, wait a minute, you know, you know, you know, I look at somebody, I go, God, my belly doesn't look like that. What is, you know, okay, so I'm going to start this new regime starting tomorrow I'm going to be, and it's like, Whoa, wait a minute. There's no connection. There's no love there. There's no, let me just feel what it is that I'm feeling, you know, without that denigrating language, just let me, and it's not that I'm, that I'm pushing away what I feel yet because I want to feel it all, but I want to feel it all with a little more tenderness and you know, a little more patience,

- Cheryl: [00:09:48](#) You know, that conversation, the language that we use for ourselves and our own bodies. That's really, I feel at the core of the work that we share with Embody Love Movement in the work we do. It is, and I know that this, this is work specifically that you've been doing for decades and I'm really excited to have this conversation today because as I was researching your work, I want to just speak to the idea of this is the conversation you've been having for a very long time. Longer. I feel like I'm still brand new. I'm a baby to this movement. And I would love to speak to what it is that brought you to the work of body image and women's health because this I know has been a passion of yours for decades. So one of the questions that we're asking our speakers in our conference this year is why you, what brought you to working with women specifically women's health and body image?
- Linda: [00:10:49](#) Well, it's interesting because what brought me to yoga actually when I came at the practice of Asana, of the physical practice of yoga through meditation and also through academics. I mean, I was, you know, my graduate work is on the Sutras and the Vedas and all this juicy stuff, but I also was,
- Linda: [00:11:12](#) I went to college and I weighed 86 pounds. Yeah, so not the super healthiest way to be 18 and you know, hitting the beach and Santa Barbara. And so I wasn't, I wasn't in my body. I didn't like my body. I didn't eat well, not so much because I wanted to be a certain look, but I didn't know how to nourish myself. I didn't know how to love myself. And so I went through college, I, you know, did my thing. And I met a man by the name of Raimun Panikkar, who was a, was perfect east-west. His mom was a former nun from Spain. His dad was a former Brahman priest from India and he was this Malcolm, you know, and for whatever reason, he took a liking to me. I took some comparative religion class from somebody and he used to walk with me in mission Santa Barbara and he would chant and he would talk to me about, about language and, and the vibrations of sound.
- Linda: [00:12:20](#) And, and I just fell in love with that whole process and I realized that it was healing because it was the sound and the connection to my own body that I feel that I was actually appreciating what was happening in my body. So in the 90s, really early nineties '91, '92, I came to yoga journal and they had Iyengar classes every week and I hated Asana. I hated it. They wanted my body to do all this stuff and they would put me in. This woman was like really rigid and she'd put me in this poses and then she would sort of scold me for not being able to be strong. You know, I was still really thin and not very together and, and I

really, I couldn't do Asana. And, and so then we met this. So we brought another teacher and she had the Kripalu heart with the alignment of Iyengar and I loved her and I trusted her with my body and she would, she would just bring me into poses in, in a way that was tender and, and, and connected.

Linda:

[00:13:34](#)

And I really thought, I can do this. I really can do this. It's like a conversation I was having with myself. Right. Because it was, it was a gentle conversation. So then I, I was an editor for a long time and we did a ghost, wrote a book for Yoga Journal called yoga basics, like worked with his publisher in New York. And they said to me, well, what do you want it to? We want to work with you as well. What do you want to do? And I just said, you know, I want to really dive into yoga for women's health because it's a lifelong... It can be a lifelong companion for us. So what would that look like? And nobody had ever done it before, you know? And I wasn't super well versed back then in Asana. You know, meditation was my thing. So Patricia Walden said, I'll do that with you. And so super fun,

Cheryl:

[00:14:28](#)

You know, and I've been, so I'm going to give you this is the book, The Women's Book of Yoga and Health and I'll say I, this book was written in the early nineties and yet there is so much wealth and goodness and I've been reading it and I want to talk a little bit as you, as we segway now into this part of the, into this part of the conversation. I myself am a woman who is in my mid forties and I am going, I am in peri-menopause I and I am in, I'm in the throws, I am there. And, but I also have a daughter who's about to enter. I have a 12 year old daughter. And so, and I'd love to, I'm gonna share a little bit about some something you wrote in the book and I wanted to discuss the topic of body image and aging, but I want to start the conversation with about how you frame the different stages of a woman's life.

Cheryl:

[00:15:26](#)

And this is what you wrote about. And I think do you mind if I read this a little bit as we get started? Okay. So this is on page 209 if anyone has the book. You talk about how when women's bodies change and you write "In order to effect a change, a woman's hormones must heat up causing great agitation and discomfort. All of a sudden her normal routine doesn't work anymore." You talk then about when everything calms down, the body gives birth to something new and stronger. And a young woman- capable of creating life, which is post puberty, a mother, capable of nurturing life- postpartum, or a wise woman capable of guiding life all around her, which is post-menopause. And if women honor themselves during these times and take care of one another, then each metamorphosis gives rise to a new, more powerful voice.

- Cheryl: [00:16:22](#) And when I read that, cause I'd be reading your book not only for this work but also for my, I've been diving in to really learned about my own body because I feel as a premenopausal woman, we don't have, this is not a topic that's talked about still. In 2019 this is something I do not have a lot of women in my, my mom mom already passed from early Alzheimer's. And so I have don't have that guide. I don't have that female guide to guide me through. And this is a conversation I've had with other women that when women face these changes alone,
- Linda: [00:17:00](#) they do. Yeah, they are powerful changes.
- Cheryl: [00:17:06](#) So the first question I have before when reading when I was reading that passage is I would love for you to introduce what you write about and what your work has been about. The three stages of change from when they cause you. I think you even, you compare what women go through in premenopause, menopause to puberty.
- Linda: [00:17:24](#) I do absolutely. Because it's in some ways it's the same process. And for those women who have been pregnant, same process, it's, it's not so much that women have hormones, duh. Yes. It's the fact that they go a little crazy. In these times of our lives, they heat up and, and the fluctuations are what really have us reeling right. And so for example, in puberty, in puberty and post partum or post or pre-menopause, sorry particularly our bodies are trying to find their way and if suddenly all of this agitation, all of these, it's heat really. And I don't have to tell you if you're in perimenopause, you about heat. It's the same if it's same in puberty with young women. So my, my daughter was a ballet dancer and she ended up being a professional ballet dancer. And she didn't go through puberty until late, just as she was ready to start auditioning for ballet, the ball world and her body didn't, it was gaining weight.
- Linda: [00:18:40](#) It was getting boobs. I mean, she was trying to figure it out. And I kept saying, what I know to be true is that if your patient, your body will find its way back to stasis. It will find its way. It will find where it needs to land. And it happened for her in a way, thankfully for her that she went on to have a career. But you know, it's in that place where the body's going. How about this? Oh gosh, how about this? I need that extra weight because I need the fuel. I need to be able to move through this. And the, and the healthier we are and the more patience and generosity we give to our bodies, then the easier these transitions are, you know, same in perimenopause. I remember going through and thinking, I have looked the same my entire life and suddenly I don't know who is this? How do I, how do I manage this? And

one way I got to thinking about it is same with pregnancy is my body is bringing weight around my middle for a reason.

- Linda: [00:19:57](#) And the reason is, is that as my adrenal stop producing hormones, I need to get that estrogen somewhere. My brain needs it. You know, my body needs it. Where do I get it? I get it from fat cells. You know, I get a modicum of it from, from adrenals. So I need, my body is not doing this to piss me off. It's not doing this to go "watch me you bitch". I mean, honestly, what it's doing is I'm doing this because this is how your body's going to be able to get through the heat of this moment, of the heat, of this transition. We're transitioning from one, one place, one stage of our lives into the next. And every stage we know from, you know, if we raise kids, we know the stages from like even six to seven year old into eight,nine that's a big transition.
- Linda: [00:20:52](#) If they may act out, they may do crazy shit because they don't know where. They don't know where they belong. You don't know how to connect. Our bodies are doing the same thing. We're in this place where 12 and 13 years old all already. I have to say that, that I did this class one time with these young girls in the Mission District in San Francisco. And a put me for some reason with kids who were in nine and 10 all the way up to 17.
- Cheryl: [00:21:20](#) Oh, that's a big range.
- Linda: [00:21:21](#) Right? And I remember saying, so who could tell me something really fabulous about themselves? And all of these nine and 10, 11 year olds say, I rock. I'm like the awesomest, right? I played baseball. I do... The 14 through 17, not a word, could not voice it. Even if they felt it, they wouldn't know the voice.
- Cheryl: [00:21:44](#) I know I do a lot of work for Embody Love Movement. We also work with young girls, teen girls. We have curriculums for young girls and also older women. And I do a lot of work with girls and we really see that light bulb, that light bulb really goes off around 11 to 12 years old where they have so much confidence at nine and 10. And then all of a sudden society's messages- what it is that they're learning about how they're supposed to perceive their bodies. And that's right. When their bodies are about to go through these.
- Linda: [00:22:19](#) boobs leading, they going, what the hell is forced? You know? Right. And
- Linda: [00:22:24](#) Society is saying that this is changing our conversation. Yeah. Like I remember when I was 11 and my dad, maybe I was 10, my

dad said to me, you can't play baseball out in the yard without a shirt on anymore. I go, why not?

- Cheryl: [00:22:41](#) I know.
- Linda: [00:22:42](#) And so suddenly the very things that are creating, you know, moving us into the next stage are suddenly
- Linda: [00:22:52](#) An albatross, there's got really wrong.
- Cheryl: [00:22:54](#) Right. And it's also, I find too and it's so important for, for any moms or parents or women that work with young girls around this topic of when women, and I'm sorry, when young girls start going into puberty, they're gaining weight. We just discussed they're gaining weight physically and yet the message they might receive from their loved one is that gaining weight is bad.
- Linda: [00:23:19](#) Talk about your diet. Right. And it's the same thing that goes on during perimenopause.
- Cheryl: [00:23:26](#) Oh yeah, exactly. And I also, so many, I work with a lot of women and I received so many questions to I'm and of how do I talk to my daughters about their weight? How do I talk to my daughter about her body size? I don't, and many times these are the daughters that are entering into puberty. And I'm curious what your response, if you hear that question from women or moms or female guidance about how do we talk to our girls about their size, their bodies. I mean what would you,
- Linda: [00:23:58](#) Oh, hard. Because you know what I want to know is how's your body feeling? How are you feeling in your body? You know, and, and I do explain your body's not doing anything wrong. It's not trying to piss you off. It's not trying to be anything other than it is and it's just finding its way. And so we need to go through this sort of pre-stage if you will, to get to the other side. So we need to be patient. We need, you know, do we need to diet? Hell no, but we need to fuel our bodies with things that we can digest. And those things are, you know, healthy foods perhaps. Obviously, you know, all, all of the things that, that we have juice up our, our lives and also we need to, to infuse, we need to, to give it loving attention and emotional and mental sort of words and conversations and loving support that it can digest.
- Cheryl: [00:25:08](#) You know, you, you write on page 211, and this is, I think this can be said for any age, whether it's pre pre-puberty women that are pregnant or also aging women that are entering the aging process. But as I started to care about myself in a deep

and gentle way, my health problems began to disappear. And the fog finally lifted. And this was in regard to women that are aging. But I think for all ages, and this is what I teach the women that I'm, that I'm sharing this work with, is when we treat our bodies like the beautiful vessels that they are, and we really begin to change the relationship we have with the physical body and work with compassion and work with love instead of that negative voice, that language and that we discussed in the beginning of our conversation, everything could shift.

Linda:

[00:26:02](#)

And it does. Absolutely. And you know, there's a, there's a set of, what do you call it? The six perfections in Buddhism called the paramitas. And what interests me is that it starts with generosity, then it moves to discipline, then it moves to patience and it goes on to sort of what Joan Halifax calls, wholehearted enthusiasm, determination, you know, meditation and then wisdom, which is a deep sense of knowing, which we'll get to when we were talking about older women. But, so what interests me in this is what I've told my kids is it doesn't start with discipline. It doesn't start with determining, I'm gonna, I'm gonna change my body, I'm gonna mold it into what I want. It starts with, and it's bookended by generosity and patience, this determination. And so we teach in yoga all the time the sense of bringing the mind back to experience. It's not the sense that that we are determined is like, and we're judging and we're like bringing stuff, you know, I am determined that I'm gonna feel good. It's just gentle. Just come back just come home. What does that feel like? Just to be home. And so I know that that we're going to be talking about this, but so yoga, okay can either fuck us up.

Linda:

[00:27:37](#)

Right as Melody knows, it's like that's my language and it's true. What it can do is be such a companion, such an ally for this journey, you know? And the allyship comes for me. We make space enough for all that we are. And so that is actually finding a personal practice a teacher, of community that allows us to move into that space of, and sometimes it happens with our eyes closed so we don't have mirror first. We don't have ways of going, that's really mean, you know, which also by the way happens when you're older as well as when it's younger, you know, but it's had sense of you and I together, let us find what works right in this moment. And wow, you know, these arms that I hate or whatever this body part is, I think just held me up. I just put my full weight on these arms and down dog or I rocked a handstand with help, without help and Whoa, well it's kinda cool, you know, worried about the flab under my arms or the fact that they're whatever they are. It's like me and my arms were in it, you know? And so it's that sense of generosity,

enthusiasm and support that yoga can bring us. Because what yoga ultimately for me, the meaning of yoga ultimately is to find space and freedom.

Linda: [00:29:15](#) [Inaudible]

Linda: [00:29:15](#) And space for everything that we are. Everything. It's like this table that we set inside and we invite everything that we are to the table. Now. They're going to be certain times when there's part of me that I can't look at and I might not be here. And so I say, you know what? I see you. I love you. There's space for you and I can't talk right now. But that's okay because I want, I even want to know my traumas, my, my pain to know that I'm not trying to get rid of it. I'm not trying to banish it, I'm trying to be in relationship to it so I can know it.

Cheryl: [00:29:56](#) I would, I would, and I would love to discuss, I would love to, this is a great segue into discussing how we as women can use yoga as a tool to help us be, I know in the Yoga and Body Image book. I know you were a contributor and the name of that article I'm pretty sure was Befriending Your Aging Body, Coming Home to the Body.Can Yoga Help or Hinder? And that was in the book Yoga and Body Image. And I personally can resonate so much with what you just shared . I came into Asana through a very physical practice. I had an amazing trainer and I did a wonderful, it was a great, beautiful introduction. I was at the time a marathon, half marathon runner. I was a triathlete. It was, you know, it was all about, it was all about the physical.

Cheryl: [00:30:48](#) And so I can, so I relate so much when I meet women who are there for the physical practice and who are conditioned and used to this idea of physically demanding so much of our body for what it is we're hoping to attain. I always had these expectations. I had these goals. This was in my thirties. I, I was a little late comer. I practiced yoga. I was introduced in college, believe it or not, at SUNY, at Newpaltz, which I think you're familiar that anyway, but so I can so resonate with the physical and how some women, that's their introduction, that's what brings them into the rooms. Okay. But I also know at the time how sick I was, how sick and how hurt and broken my body. I was not taking care of myself. I was not honoring my body. Those that looked at me from the outside, they probably thought that I was because I looked a certain way.

Cheryl: [00:31:53](#) But I, I was, I was hurting. I was, I was hurting inside. And it's still my, my evolution on my mat I discovered through Melody, Melody is our, is my mentor, my guide, and my friend. And she taught me that what was being taught to me by the yoga

studios I was visiting, I was being shamed by my teachers. I was being shamed because of what I had in the middle. I was being shamed for not being able to get into certain poses. I had no idea. I, and, and this, and I, I speak to this, there's so many yoga studios that I, I'd love to visit many different yoga studios. And this is happening all across where I live and I find it to still be, I know Melody has called it the bastardization of yoga.

- Linda: [00:32:49](#) Yes. Yeah. She loves that. I, I call it that all the time. I said, I know you've said other things, but it's, it's true. You know, I, and I think first of all, we don't actually want to bypass the fact that yoga is a physical practice, right. But when I consider yoga to be is a body based meditation practice first and foremost. So there are times if we approach yoga as a body based meditation, there are times when rocking a strong practice.
- Cheryl: [00:33:30](#) Yeah. Awesome.
- Linda: [00:33:32](#) Right? And what we don't want to do is we don't want to bypass and get into this spiritual seven chakra bullshit stuff and forget, Oh, sorry. And forget that.
- Linda: [00:33:43](#) No, but I, yeah, and I think many women can resonate exactly with what you're saying, right.
- Linda: [00:33:48](#) We have a body, we are in relationship to this body. Where we give our power away, is by believing that a teacher in the class somewhere with a whole bunch of people that I wish I looked like or whatever knows more about our bodies and we do, you know, and, and does not give us the opportunity and almost the permission that we crave when we're younger or even when we're older, to make those decisions for ourselves to feel what it is that we're working on, to feel it in the body saying, yes, this is this helpful is is this a hindrance? Where am I in this? You know, I have a story that just still really pisses me off when I think about it. And that is that one of my mentees, a young woman from Brown and in my life I, I mentor a lot of young women.
- Linda: [00:34:43](#) I mean young women now or like women in their forties because I'm so old. But you know what I mean? Oh my gosh. So anyway, this young woman from Brown University which really having a lot of trouble, a lot of struggles, a lot of struggles with herself worth her body. I mean everything and in abusive abusive relationship, she was in. So, but she was in, she was a really accomplished, her body was strong enough, she could be a really accomplished yoga student. So she wanted to go to this class, and I won't tell you the style because I don't think that

that's fair. It's more gossip, but it was a very it's like a power yoga, very heated practice, strong Vinyasa practice. So we went and at one point she went into child's pose. The teacher walked over to her and he says to her, he looks down and he says to her, what are you doing? And she said, I'm doing child's pose. And he said, we're not doing that right now. And she said, well, I feel like I need it. And he said, you're just being, you're not, you're not being true to your body. You're just being lazy. Get up.

Linda: [00:35:52](#) So at the end of class, and I have a little bit of a reputation in the yoga community, so for whatever that's worth people know my name. So anyway, we finished up and she goes to, and I said to her how did that feel, and she was really upset. So she goes to the receptionist person at the desk and she complained and she sat and I was kind of in the background and she said, this is what happened to me. And woman said, you have to understand that this is a real senior teacher and he knows your body sometimes better than you do. So I said, I'm sorry, could you really just say that?

Linda: [00:36:31](#) And she said, Oh, Oh my gosh, I know you. And I said, I am just, it was like everything encapsulated right there in that moment that I saw are our challenges in the younger community. Yeah, it was crazy. It was crazy. And so, but so I see that all the time that we either give our power away or somebody imposes their power onto our experience. And I also see that yoga teachers struggle because we are now turning out a kazillion little, 200 hour yoga teachers who really have a desire to give back a desire to teach. Do I think that they're, they're ready to teach. I don't, but that's a whole other conversation. So they come into the world and they really do want to teach and there are a million of us. And so how do you rise up? Right? So we have created these things like Instagram photos then and you know, videos and I want to be on the cover of this magazine and you know, this is how I'm going to get people to notice me.

Linda: [00:37:48](#) You know, I'm going to be in, in, you know, have online little Asana things. All of the stuff is not denigrating them. It's just saying that this is the only way that they know how to find it. And so as teachers, we are also asked to look a certain way, dress a certain way. And for some they think that that's the way you inspire your students to look like you could rock any pose and anybody gives you, you know, you're thin, you're white, you're whatever you are, as I say, your Lululemonised. Right. And that actually gives us, as teachers, that's a lot of pain around that.

- Cheryl: [00:38:36](#) Yeah. You know, this isn't going to conversation of the way that yoga and has become really capitalized and it's really it's hurting many, many individuals when we feel that there is only one representation of what a Yogi is or who a Yogi is.
- Linda: [00:39:04](#) It's true. And what it does for us as teachers, if we buy into that, students come to our class and we don't know what to do with them the are not what we signed up for, you know, what do we do? And if we have, if we're really struggling with our own image and we're really struggling with how we feel about gaining weight, not gaining, I mean, you know, getting older, having wrinkles, having bags and bags whenever, if we are really struggling with that and cannot accept it in ourselves, how the hell do you think we can accept it in our students? And so you know, and and so we bring a lot of pain and suffering in ourselves and to our students.
- Cheryl: [00:39:50](#) And we create trauma in the yoga room because I'm speaking again for those that are watching and a part of our conversation today, there might be yoga teachers out there or you might, you also may be teachers in the classroom, you might be educators. And when we as facilitators, teachers, as we start using languaging, when we're in a powerful role and we're using languaging that's tearing ourselves down, what message are we sending to our students? And I know that here I have recently been on a quest to find inclusive yoga classrooms, inclusive yoga spaces because I really want to practice somewhere that I feel and those around me feel accepted. And I say that more as a woman who's getting older, a woman who might not be the typical size of a Yogi. And I know how I know what it feels like to be in a room and listen to a teacher before, before the class even begins. And listening to conversations about what they ate or what their body size is, or possibly what you diet or what. And I don't think others realize how impactful those conversations are on the students before classes even started. Or maybe you're in a classroom and maybe you're in a business environment. But that languaging that we use about ourselves is heard and felt all around us.
- Linda: [00:41:25](#) It really is. It really is. And you know, I've, I've heard teachers actually give advice to women who are, you know, maybe heavier than they think make sense for themselves. And they're talking to their teacher and instead of the teacher saying, you know, here's some practices that maybe will help you land a little bit more kindly in your body. They say, Oh, well, this diet that I've been doing helped me, you know, and, and I drank this juice. I mean, it was like, no, that's not, not for teaching yoga, you know?

Cheryl: [00:42:00](#) And, and I would love, I would love to share because I know I also, I, I gravitate toward the teaching women that are intimidated by a large studio, women that are maybe a little nervous about not fitting in. And I'd love for you to speak to because I know some of your work, some of the most work that you're most passionate about is bringing you bring yoga to cancer survivors. Correct?

Linda: [00:42:26](#) I do. I do. We do. And we've been doing this, gosh, 13 or 14 years. I have a a five day retreat that I do called Courageous Women, Fearless Living. It's a retreat for women, touched by cancer, primarily for women who are in, in that journey on that journey. It can also be for their caretakers who also need support, sometimes hospice workers. So it's the whole spectrum of from diagnosis to close to death and and recurrence and you know, remission and everything in between. So they come to some Pella mountain center and we stay alert together for five days. And the image is that they come frightened wigs on with as much clothing on as you can possibly think of to hide whatever the scars and you know, whatever they've got to hide. They don't really want to sit too close to one another because what if your in remission and I'm in recurrence, you certainly don't want to sit next to me, you know, so I mean there's just lots of heartache and fear going on.

Linda: [00:43:40](#) The end of five days we're all bald and then tank tops and in each other's laps and, and the women who are in stage four actually are the most vibrant and joyful. And I mean, I've just learned so much and yoga is a huge part of that. Yoga dharma is a huge part of that and the Buddhist tradition and Tibetan dharma is also a huge part of it. Dancing and art. It, it's, it's a really, really an amazing retreat. And so afterwards and, and the yoga itself I start out with,

Linda: [00:44:10](#) With just coming into the body. Yeah, you know, and it's not that we all lie around in bolsters and whatever because cancer treatment shown up for cancer, it's fucking hard. You gotta be strong, you gotta be determined, you've got it. And then you need to be kind and soft and vulnerable and generous, all that stuff. So anyway, we do this whole practice and over the course of five days we even sometimes get into as we get comfortable and start trusting each other, we might do a little bit partner on not a big partner, yoga kind of girl, but we might do, you know, some connections, some ways of connecting with one another and then we might do practices where part of the body can, can we move into this little Vinyasa from the part of the body that you feel has betrayed you? It might not even be there anymore, can you, can you move from that?

Linda: [00:45:04](#) And what does that feel like? And then can you move from the feeling that your body feels that you have betrayed her? What does that feel like? And so we're just, it's this really wonderful just sense of discovery. And so they get all excited and at the end and, and, and it's also very practical, you know, it's like moving my body and feeling what's there and doing these poses. So they, then they go home, they're so excited and they go into a yoga class and they say, Oh, it's gentle. Okay, I'm going to that yoga class. They walk in, first of all, you know, they don't feel super comfortable because again, so much of, you know, it might be in their, in their world, in their community that the yoga studio really caters more to an athletic population. And so gentle yoga for them may be completely different and there's nobody that maybe is a little more therapeutic. So they go in and they just give up. "What was I thinking I'd could do yoga". And so then it's just feels that much worse, you know, to be in this body and to not to be able to, to really use yoga as a way of, of being in the world, you know. So what we've tried to do now is we're working on it a little bit is to find ways of bringing the practice home. Because honestly, we all need personal practice in way. It doesn't become personal until you bring it home. It just does.

Cheryl: [00:46:47](#) You know. I, yes. I'm.

Cheryl: [00:46:51](#) My own personal practice, I feel has truly saved my life and has healed me. And I, I believe, I truly believe in the healing powers of yoga. And I look at my, even my Vinyasa as a moving meditation and

Linda: [00:47:09](#) It's a moving prayer, you know?

Cheryl: [00:47:11](#) Yes, yes. And, and I, I, I will give my Seane Corn where the work of Sean has brought spirituality and prayer back into my life through my practice and I will forever, forever be grateful to her for that. And I think there's also a lot of tools out now, and I'm sure you probably share this with your, your really are, I love YogaAnytime, love Yoga Anytime. And I know you have a beautiful series and I watched a few of them. The body image, body love. And I know Melody was season three. And I think that there's so many ways that women can find teachers and bring the practice now into the walls. Absolutely. It's huge. It's really, yeah.

Linda: [00:47:57](#) And I will say this over and over and over again, but personal practice does not mean that you have to have a 90 minute practice exactly the same every single day. Otherwise I would never have a, I would never do it.

- Linda: [00:48:11](#) And I would feel even worse about myself because I would promise myself and I'd never do it.
- Cheryl: [00:48:16](#) Yeah. You know? And then I know I'm also, I'm a perfectionist. Me too. And it's part of my, I'm part of my characters perfectionism and it's something I've been healing from. So I used to have this idea that it had to be an hour. It had to be, but I now if I could literally, if I could sit on my mat or maybe not even my mat, maybe it's a cushion, you know, on the floor for a few minutes and just find my breath. Yes. That's my practice for the day.
- Linda: [00:48:48](#) Every day when I wake up, I do a little pranayama and then my question to myself, and sometimes most times I'll go into like a yin pose. My inquiry is how am I doing and what do I need to find more joy? And then that informs what else I do. If you know I hardly ever do Asana in the morning. I can't, you know, and you know, I going to be 70 years old next year, which is like seriously. And so my body feels most open and available to us now from like 4- 6:00 PM I like that time because my, you know, I'm a writer and, and I also work with, with mostly with women who want to write their own books. And so I co-create with other women. So by around four o'clock, my mind is kind of mush and I need to get into my body and it could be 10 minutes, you know, I mean, I wrote that book, Yoga at Home and I was like and so pleased and surprised at how people share their personal practices.
- Linda: [00:49:57](#) And they could be, they could be seriously five minutes, an hour and a half. You know, one woman says she just kind of moves around the floor until she finds where she wants to land, you know, and, and these Yoga Anytime and Yoga Glow and places like that, when they have 10 minute practices. And you may find as you do these practices, 20 minute practices, you may go off on a tangent, you, your body may go, Oh no, I would rather linger here for a while. Oh, does that feel nice? Or you know what? This is not feeling good. I'm going to do this instead. So you make it your own, even when you can, giving, you know, when you, when you have a teacher to kind of guide you. Okay.
- Cheryl: [00:50:38](#) You know, and I would love to begin to come to end our conversation talking a little bit about how we are, how our body image really changes, but evolves as we age. So as I know, I'm in my mid forties. I recently at my shoulder recently, I had a rotator cuff surgery a few years ago. So I'm starting to feel the effects of the body changing. And you've spoken to it a lot, this, this call on how your physical body has really changed and developed over the years. But I feel, and I'd love to hear your

thoughts as I aged my body image has gotten so much better. I, I really, I'm finding such peace and acceptance and love and I, and I want to bring, I want to just carry your thoughts also because, and I think a lot of it in me until you talk about it a little bit before, there's a patience though, this type of work, this transformation.

Cheryl:

[00:51:46](#)

And I want women to understand that this does not happen overnight. This and I, and I try to explain that to women, especially when I'm working with them for the first time at an Embody love workshop like that. For me, my Embody Love workshop was the first initial idea that, Oh wow, my languaging is so important. It was all brand new to me at that point. But when it's become my personal practice, it's become part of my home practice. And I think as we begin to transform and change the way that we talk to ourselves and what we're feeding ourselves, what we're listening to, what we're eating, what we're reading, all of it. So I'd love to because, and I'd love for you to kind of give some women some practical tools and what they can do at home or what they can do in their own private practices to begin to give a little get, have a little bit more of a love for their bodies.

Linda:

[00:52:47](#)

Well, I keep saying that it's important. So at first when I was thinking about this this morning, I was thinking that when I got to a certain age I felt like what I see in the mirror and how I am as a person, there was a big disconnect. You know? Like I walked past the looking glass and go, Oh shit, that's me. Whoa, that's pretty cool. For some women. You know, I used to think, and I still think that there's a certain amount of, I don't want to even say grieving, but a certain way that we need to say goodbye to certain parts of our lives. So I've been thinking about that for a while. It's like, you know, we move through these stages and each stage has its challenges and its wisdom, you know? And, and so I used to think that I, like as I went into perimenopause, I had to give away the sense of, of making my mark in the world and, and being, you know, that's, that's my feeling in the stages of coming into our own.

Linda:

[00:53:57](#)

It's like we're out in the world and we're saying, yes. You know, when look at putting our mark in that world, whatever that Mark and whatever that gift is that we have. So I used to think that, okay, once I get in to perimenopause and move into menopause, I have to kind of say goodbye to that and move into some sort of, you know, guidance, wisdom, whatever. And I remember this woman sent me, cause I wrote this book it came out I think in 2000 and I can't even remember, but obviously you know, 40 and this woman I was talking to about this whole

like moving into the wise woman year, she goes, don't ever fucking call me a crone. Okay. So she got us, you know, aging is not easy. So I said okay, so I have to say goodbye to all this stuff. And then I realized that every time I enter into a new decade, it's really quite beautiful because I bring,

Linda: [00:54:57](#) So Iyengar says that pre pubescent girls and post menopausal women got it going on because we know we don't have to worry about all these hormonal fluctuations because you can rock whatever you wanna rock post-menopausal, you know, so if you need and you know your body, you've been with your body. I have now been with my body for almost seven decades. I know her, you know, am I disappointed sometimes when I look in the mirror? Yeah, sometimes. But also I feel like it, so I just have to say this because it's like true confessions. So I've been doing this one forever. It took me a really long time to say out loud how old I am. Wow. One time.

Linda: [00:55:54](#) I think part of it is, once again, it's partly my being in yoga community and the publishing arena with many, many younger, younger women and many younger women who are, I mean I have friends from, from people who are 20 whatever to people who are 80 and so, and not just like mentor, mentee, really close friends of mine for all eight in all ages. But nonetheless, he was like, it's hard to that I am this age and I really worked at it and then I, and I didn't know my place in the arena of this work. Like I don't know what that means to be me in this work. Right, right. Yeah. And then I had a grandson and I fell in love all over again in a way that I had forgotten the intensity of that love. And I realized that it, it sadly became really clear that I as this person am playful.

Linda: [00:57:03](#) I am all of the things that have led up to me being at this age in this moment, I'm still playful. I'm still, I still am curious. I still am. And perhaps, and, and perhaps because I've been doing deep practices, the ancient practices of yoga for so many years of I don't start getting it now, honey this and this and hang it up. So at this point I feel like I can abuse my playfulness, my curiosity, my courage, all of that. Perhaps with a sense of Yogic, you know, the deeper yoga teachings of patience and generosity and, and true love for whatever I am in this moment ever. I look like it's, it's this sense of honesty. God, all I care about is as spacious as you know. It's like Erich Shiffman always said we'd go moved into stillness. We can discover the truth of who we are.

Linda: [00:58:13](#) And I know at this point that all of these other external trappings that we, we grieve and we try to fix and we try to

mold it into something else, into my little Lulu lemon outfit or whatever. I'm trying to do none of that. I mean, yes, we feel it, we feel it all. But at the end of the day, all that really matters is that we have this capacity, this infinite capacity to love, infinite capacity, to give that love to ourselves and to give that out into the world. And that is our Dharma and it doesn't fucking matter what else we do. Our practices that our teaching as teachers, as practitioners, all of that is in service to the truth and in service to what this capacity and what we are able to hold and our capacity to be able to pour the suffering of all humans is not a capacity to feel like we that we have this this conceit that we can fix it. It's not about fixing. It's a be able to understand that your suffering is mine. And that may be for this moment, I have the capacity to take that from you just for a little while and I have the capacity to break, to offer to you a sense of love, ease, whatever might gift those in this moment to perhaps give you a little bit of ease on that journey through menopause, through puberty, to know that if I am anything, perhaps I am a Testament to the fact that we come out the other side.

Linda: [00:59:59](#)

I don't know.

Cheryl: [01:00:00](#)

No. Yeah, I, I want to thank you that that was such a gift. Just listening to your wisdom. And I do believe that it's a gift and it's this work and being able to share this work with others, it's truly, it's, it's becoming, it's a gift from me. And I think that many times, and I know you probably so can resonate with, I teach when I need shoes, when I need to here. And.

Linda: [01:00:36](#)

You teach in a way that is, it's not, I have to say, cause we always talk about having no judgment. You have plenty of [inaudible].

Linda: [01:00:47](#)

Yeah, let's get rid of every day. It's the hardest part. I tell people the fact that I teach body positivity and I, and I own it when I stand up in front of a group of women, I'm like every day it's a practice. Every day it's a practice. When I get up and what yoga teaches us is not that that's necessarily going to go away, but that Perhaps.

Linda: [01:01:12](#)

There are times when we notice it a little more often or a little quicker and we notice it with, with affection. My, my students know this. My, one of my favorite passages, I think our favorite phrases, I think melody knows it's too, my phrase is, isn't that interesting guess, you know, it's like, isn't that interesting that it's here again? And so what I, what I want to teach and what I love that you teach is not, is I own my process, I own my path, but I also want the gift of saying there might be an easier way.

There might be through language, through own internal conversations with us that we know that what we have is so beautiful, so precious and we are so privileged to be able to, to spend time with ourselves in a way that we can say, Oh, here we go again.

Linda: [01:02:11](#) It wasn't that a thing that I, I'm up against this again. But the more that we can feel our own struggles and accept them with such generosity and such a love means that we can then offer that love in that patients and that devotion and really have people understand that Hey, really are beautiful and all it's all our practices is uncovering that beauty and uncovering that relationship that we have with our, that we, that we are invited to have with our bodies in that relationship. You know, we have these conversations that are just bring us more love and more depth and more understanding of ourselves and hopefully of others. You know? So you are really blessed to be able to bring this work to others, right? That big and they get that, you understand. And so we're not bypassing, we're not pretending that we don't feel this stuff.

Cheryl: [01:03:15](#) Oh no. Oh. And that's what I love about. And, and I think that's why as many times, but yeah, cause people, I own the fact that this is, this is my work to every day, every day. And, but yet when we are given our time to really be with ourselves and when we begin to really have that relationship with ourselves and learn to love and hang out with ourselves, like I think as we, you know, I know it's something I love and I know you probably, I love hanging out with just me and I'm, and, and it's that relationship and being able to see all of it. The dark, the light, the shadow.

Linda: [01:04:01](#) Yes. And you know, Hala Khouri said something that I thought was super important and that is we do spend a little time and it really is important to find a relationship, a loving relationship with themselves, but also what she was saying is we also learned to love through relationship. Yes. And so one really important aspect of yoga is that coming together. And being able to learn. Women learn from one another. Stories we've heard for one another's experience, and we can laugh together because some of this is just so incredibly absurd.

Cheryl: [01:04:44](#) Yeah. I'm so glad you brought that up because yes, the connection I've made connections and bringing women together to just to really discuss and laugh about all of this on these more deeper, meaningful topics. I really love bringing women together and just kind of supporting and embracing and challenging each other. There's nothing, there's nothing like a

group of women in a room and doing this work, doing, doing just art, this work. It's, it's, I, yeah, it really, I would love, I, I want to thank you so much for giving embody love movement your time. Oh my gosh. I love this movement in the world. I just am just feeling so much love for this conversation we've had today. I love spending time with you and that I would go to, I would love for you to share with our, with our community. Do you have any projects you're working on right now? Anything you'd like to share where people can find you?

Linda: [01:05:49](#) Let's see, what am I gonna keep? Right now while I'm doing a couple of things, but I think the most important thing for me is to help women in particular, but it doesn't always have to be women, but I seem to resonate that way. Women tell their stories to women to put themselves onto paper. You know what I mean? Yeah, no, I'm working on and I won't have it really done until toward the end of the year. But so many people have said that, you know, doing one on one stuff, it is difficult and expensive and all that. So I'm looking to do, to really create an online community, almost like a writer's group, but really a women's group where we can support one another and I can really support and help you birth what it is that you want to bring into the world.

Linda: [01:06:44](#) So that's going to be coming and Seane Corn is a person who is really pushing me to do this cause we had such a great experience working together and, and so that's my path anyway that I've been working with authors for many, many years. So I want to do, I definitely want to do that. And then I've been working on or I've been teaching this program. It's a 300 hour teacher training, but it's also for people who just want to explore their path and a deeper way of how to really live what it is that we practice. Like really, I think another thing that I seem to be known for is to bring the deeper teachings to bear on our real lives in such normal, practical heart created ways, you know, so that it doesn't feel lofty, doesn't feel like I have to sit down and read whatever. But it's a way of deepening the relationship we have for ourselves. And so that's probably gonna I'm just finishing up a course and I may actually do that to that next year. I actually, I personally looked at that. And do you do that? Is that going to be online? It's in person and online, on person.

Linda: [01:07:56](#) In person up North. In Rhode Island.

Linda: [01:07:58](#) It's Rhode Island. I saw that.

Linda: [01:08:00](#) Yeah. And that's only because it seemed to be important to that group that we'd be yoga Alliance. I'm sanctioned. It's not particularly important to me. So I might I might, I really want to do something online and at this point you'll is destined, apparently sanctioned online. And I'm not actually flat out, I'm not interested in teacher training programs anymore. I mean never was, but I'm interested in deepening the conversation and so that's all I really care about, like really deepening the conversation. So that's something that, that I'm hoping to do online later on in life.

Linda: [01:08:42](#) Awesome. And I think, I think next time I see you, I think we're going to be at Seane's book launch together in Manhattan. Why am I so I'm so excited for her book and I can't wait. It is amazing. I can't wait.

Linda: [01:08:59](#) That we had together as, as friends and then as colleagues, it, it could not have been more wonderful.

Linda: [01:09:08](#) Yeah. So it was so, so hard and

Linda: [01:09:12](#) So amazing. Oh my God. We actually created, develop this thing out of Seane's heart, out of Seane's wisdom out. It's, it was just so much fun.

Linda: [01:09:24](#) I'm, I'm, I can, I'm just so excited to read it. And for everyone that's watching, it's launching. Oh, by the time we watch it, it's going to have already been out. So it will be available at Amazon in your local bookstore That's it. Revolution of the soul. Revolution of The soul. Yeah. Check it out. Thank you so much for your time today and I just am blessed to have your part of my life and to be part of our movement and Embody Love Movement. Thanks you for your wisdom and your,

Linda: [01:09:57](#) And we're pretty close in proximity, so maybe we could do something together.

Linda: [01:10:02](#) Oh, I'd love to that. Definitely. I know we are. We're both New York girls, so I think that can get to them too. Bye. Bye.