

Speaker 1: [00:00](#)

Melody: [00:04](#) Hi, I am Dr. Melody Moore, founder of Embody Love Movement and I am so thrilled to share this conversation with you. Between myself and Maris Degener. Maris is the star and featured human on the Netflix film. I am Maris. Netflix made a film about this young woman because she is powerful and she is inspiring. And together we have a conversation to share with you about how to navigate social media, how yoga can be used as a powerful therapeutic tool for healing and for recovery from an eating disorder or from any other way that we disconnect mind and body. We talk about perfectionism and comparison and ahimsa and so much more. I'm so thrilled to bring you this conversation. Please enjoy. Let us know how you feel and the ways in which you are inspired by Maris

Pura Fe Sings: [01:08](#) 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: [01:33](#) I'm just delighted that you're here, Maris.

Maris: [01:36](#) Oh, I'm so happy to be here. Thanks for reaching out. Thanks for having me on.

Melody: [01:40](#) Absolutely. So you are an activist, a yoga teacher, a person in recovery, and so many other things because you're a human being. That's complex, whole and healing. I would imagine. Um, there are so many things I want to ask you. So you are, how old are you now?

Maris: [02:01](#) I'm 20

Melody: [02:03](#) And you started teaching yoga. At what age?

Maris: [02:06](#) I went through my training when I was 15 and started really teaching around 16.

Melody: [02:11](#) So I have to tell you this, like inner critic in me came up this judgment and in me came up when I heard she's teaching and then I saw you teach and I was like, Oh, okay. She's got it. And what I mean by it and what I witnessed, which I know is just a small, small portion of what what you offer was a soulfulness and a place of what I saw was, Oh, she's not just teaching alignment. She's not just teaching asana and how to burn some calories on a yoga mat and make and approximate shapes. She's

teaching a soulful way of reconnecting mind and body. And that's the healing. That's my experience of the healing practice of yoga. And so I was just thrilled to see, Oh, she's got it. And I, I would imagine you've had some incredible teachers in order to have cultivated that kind of way of teaching. Who's influenced you so far in your journey?

Maris: [03:04](#) Well, you know, who I always look back to as my initial teacher and my lifelong teachers, Jenny Wendell, who founded Just Be yoga where I first found yoga and I went through my training and I teach now, she has just been someone who has always taught me that, that soulfulness, right? That there's so much more than what just happened in the downward dog, that it's a whole body and, uh, a whole soul experience. Um, but you know, Jenny co-led my training with is still my lifelong teachers, Jessica Micheletti and Malia Hill. And you know, there's so many more names I could call in, but those are kind of my, my core, my, my grounding.

Melody: [03:49](#) Yeah. I love, I learned from one of my teachers, Nikki Myers, to start anything with thanking our teachers and I, and I see the importance and then wisdom in that. So, so thank you for that. Um, so how did you find yoga? Let's start there. What brought you to this practice?

Maris: [04:07](#) So it's interesting that you, you kind of mentioned, Oh, you know, she's not just teaching yoga that, you know, burns calories or is alignment, but, you know, I found yoga because I wanted to burn calories. So I, you know, I was, uh, hospitalized for an eating disorder when I was 14, a freshman in high school. Um, and after, you know, a few months of bed rest and partial bed rest, I like went to my doctor, like, how can I move again? What will you let me do? Because I just felt like I was crawling out of my skin and she said, well, you know, you can try yoga, it's just stretching. And um, I remember kind of rolling my eyes and thinking like, Oh, that's, that's just hippie stuff, right? That doesn't sound like the intense calorie burn I want, that doesn't sound like a hit class or whatever. And I was like, well, you know, if that's what I'm going to get, I'll take it. And I ended up just wandering into Just Be, it was their first few months of being open. They were still getting off the ground and I found something that was so much more. So, you know, in some ways I'm, I'm grateful that my eating disorder wanted me to go find a way to burn calories because it accidentally, it accidentally led me on the path that I was meant to be on.

Melody: [05:28](#) Yeah. I feel the same way I started practicing yoga. Um, you were 2, 18 years ago for the same reasons really like that, that

seems like something that will help me tone and be in shape and get more flexible and more strong. Um, and, and what I've learned is that yoga does us, it gets into us despite any other, um, angling to try to have an outcome, um, that because of the practice itself we find our way home. So what was your experience with that? How did yoga become something that became therapeutic for you? Because I heard you say in I Am Maris, in the film, that the hospital say being in the hospital saved your body. But, um, actually I have the quote, I think something like that, but something like yoga saved maybe your life or your soul or your spirit. So how did that work for you?

Maris: [06:25](#) Yeah, so the thing about hospitalization for an eating disorder is that it's their job to preserve your body. Right? And like that's your anchor into this lifetime. And you know, they only have a certain amount of time that they can keep you in that setting. So, um, in that hospital setting, you know, they're tracking your vitals, they're checking your bone density, they're making sure your heart's working, and that's their focus and that's their realm. And they do it beautifully from what I witnessed. Um, but their job isn't so much to really dive deep into the, the therapeutic process of recovery, uh, you know, just because they have such limited time with you and they, they planted some seeds. Right. You know, we met with psychologists and psychiatrists and, um, you know, they, they actually brought in a meditation teacher one one day, which I literally slept through.

Melody: [07:19](#) Yeah.

Maris: [07:21](#) Um, but you know I left basically like, alright, I have a meal plan, I've gained some weight. Um, but I don't feel like I'm quite healing yet. My body's healing and that's bought me some time to start to tackle all these other components of healing. But something is really lacking here. And you know, before I even went into the hospital, I was seeing a therapist and I was having a lot of trouble accessing my emotions. Even in that setting. I was having a lot of trouble articulating how I was feeling. I was having trouble confronting things that I had buried or suppressed. And what happened is when I found yoga, I was connecting to all these things that felt disconnected. Um, so, you know, I was, I was in one sense, you know, reconnecting to my body. Um, but I was also starting to confront these emotions that were getting pulled on. And that was something I had never experienced before in a way that felt so safe and so open to exploration. Um, but it really was an invaluable offering from the practice that to this day continues in that same form of being able to understand what's happening, being able to really

witness what's happening without judgment or expectation of fixing it.

Melody: [08:45](#) Yeah. How did you learn that? Because that, I feel like that gift of that tool in particular, the recognition that you can experience anything and not have to fix it and not have to make it go away to be with it. How did you, how did it, for people who've never practiced yoga maybe that are watching, how did that are like how in the world would making a shape help you be able to, how does that work?

Maris: [09:14](#) You know, and I went in with that same, you know, view of it. I was like, it's just stretching, right? That's how my doctor framed it to me. You know, my doctor's body Yogi, so how would they know? Um, but this, this practice is so much more and I'm just so grateful that I happened to wander into a studio that puts so much emphasis on the fact that there, there are eight limbs to this practice and what we do on our mats is just a tiny little way to experience that. And so my teachers, you know, they, they gave me copies of the yoga sutras, they gave me the yamas and niyamas. And from that, that foundation, I was able to view the asana practice, the physical practice from that, that lens. Uh, so you know, my teacher gave me the yamas and niyamas and I first read about ahimsa and I remember looking at it, cause it said ahimsa, nonviolence.

Maris: [10:07](#) That's the beginning of the practice. And I was like, Oh, I got that one. Like don't punch people in the face, right? Like they teach you that when you're like three years old and I edit it. I was like, Oh, Oh I'm, I'm being violent to my body. I'm being violent in the way that I think towards myself. And then I was able to take that, that just moment of realization on my yoga mat and again, you know, so grateful to my teachers that they weren't there trying to beat me into perfection. You know, they were there to say, let's just observe what's happening and then maybe try on a new way. You know, just the way that you would modify a yoga pose. Right. You know, Oh, this doesn't feel so hot. Let me, let me put a block under here. Let me out a strap, let me do this. Let me take a little bend. You know? They were encouraging that as a way to change our experience in the world. And I was just very lucky to have that parallel set for me very early on that I can use them, the physical practice as a mirror for all the other healing I was doing.

Melody: [11:09](#) Yeah. Do you remember the first time you cried on a yoga mat?

Maris: [11:14](#) Probably day one. I mean, you know, I, I felt like I was just crying through my first year of, of practice because, you know, you, I

don't know what your experience was or whatever, anyone listening experiences on their yoga mat. But for me it was this first time that I was seeing my whole self, because I had gotten very good at compartmentalizing, right. I'd gotten very good at, okay, this is the perfect student and this is the imperfect body. And this is, you know, I was so good at that. Um, and this was the first time that it was all integrating. And to see all of that laid out for me was, you know, it was heavy. It was, it was an emotional weight. And so, I dunno, I was probably crying from the very first practice,

Melody: [12:01](#) from the first, I had some video from some magazine call and interview me about why do people cry and yoga. And I was like, how can I explain this? Because it's not intellectual, you have to actually be on your mat and allow the tension to release so that the feelings can emerge and then see it. Were you ever frightened, like all this, you had been so great at compartmentalizing and it sounds like repressing and not expressing your emotion. Was it scary or terrifying then all of a sudden it started to, to come up? Or did it feel, did it feel like it was contained in a way that it could be allowed and feel safe?

Maris: [12:34](#) You know, I, I think it was scary. You know, I, I can't remember exactly how I was feeling, but you know, any kind of shift or transformation can have fear with it. And, and just knowing my reactions, even today, these big moments of change or shifts, um, I feel fear come up. Um, but my teachers are so masterful, like creating a safe space that I, I felt like it was okay to be expressive. And you know, something that I think is so beautiful and somewhat unique to the practice of yoga is you're on your own mat, right? So like you have this little section of the world that is just for you. And I think that is something that, um, that does make, it does have an impact on how safe we feel in the practice.

Melody: [13:22](#) Yeah, I do too. I often say we have to keep our eyes on our mat and yoga and our body on our mat and our experience on our mat and yoga, like when we eat, especially at a table where we might be seduced into comparison like around our family or friends, whatever we have to stay on our plate. Um, and I think there are just are so many, and I know you've learned them, but I'm curious about the lessons you've learned and the, and the drawn parallels from your experience on your mat into your experience and your relationship with food. Can you talk about what that's been like for you?

Maris: [13:55](#) Yeah, I mean, you know, to me, yoga is any moment that we're, we're mindfully present with intention, right? So that was not

something that was in my realm of eating before yoga eating was either kind of this like mindless abandon or it was like, Oh, screw it. Or it was this rigid control that that wasn't rooted in intuition. And as I was practicing yoga and as I was learning to untangle myself from ideas of perfection, right? So I kind of came onto my mat, like, alright, teach me how to do the perfect triangle. Teach me how to do the perfect warrior two. And then learning all these nuances that, you know, bodies need different things. I think that naturally translated onto my plate. You know, I, I kind of went in like, alright, what's the perfect way? What's the way I can control this?

Maris: [14:48](#) What's the way that I can be rigid? And the practice softens me into, you know, what's the way for me right now in this moment and what's the intention for this moment? Because you know, we hear all the time like healthy foods and not healthy foods. Um, but you know, context is so relevant to that. Right? You know, if my intention is celebration and connection, you know, maybe the birthday cake is the healthy choice. If my intention is, you know, nourishing my bones and myself and my, you know, my organs, you know, maybe that, that salad is the healthy choice in that moment. And I think yoga gave me the, the ability to see all these different contexts and appreciate the, the, the value each of them bring. But it was definitely a gradual process. Just like my, my yoga practice gradually shifted from how can I burn calories to what it is today.

Melody: [15:46](#) What do you make of that? There's an interesting parallel here too, about what's presented as healthy and what's presented as not healthy. Um, basically based in capitalism and who's gonna make the money out of, out of that sale of not enoughness or out of fear. Um, it seems like the yoga community itself, and I'm curious about your experience with this, especially since your film has come out and I would imagine, uh, you're meeting more people and having more conversations like these. Um, what's your experience of the way that the yoga community, the yoga media sells yoga and do you think it's healthy? Do you think its okay..

Maris: [16:27](#) that's a can of worms. And that's a good one. I think it's, it's so important to, to be discussed and brought up and I don't think it's discussed quite enough, although I am seeing it more. Um, but you know, yoga has become commercialized largely in the West. And, you know, I, I see it and I'm, I'm so hyper aware of it right now as, uh, more companies are reaching out to me and as more, uh, you know, people that are interested in business fields are reaching out to me. And the thing that I, I am kind of torn on is on one hand I want everyone in anyone to land on

their yoga mat. You know, even if it's not with that, that understanding of what yoga is, because I came to my yoga mat not understanding all of what yoga is and if there's a chance for that shift to happen.

Maris: [17:17](#) I think that's an incredibly positive thing. On the other hand, we, we see this perpetuation of, um, one singular idea of what a Yogi looks like or what a yoga practice looks like. And you know, even just earlier today, I was, you know, watching some video on YouTube and I got an ad for, I think it was yoga insurance, something like that. And it showed this scan of a yoga class and it was all thin, white, beautiful women. And of course there's nothing wrong with a thin white, beautiful woman practicing yoga. But you know, when I look around my classes, that's not what it looks like. You know, there's all these different bodies and people and identities and you know, I, I just get frightened. That's the perpetuation of that image, right? That's so good at being sold and so good at being shaped down into a product, um, that, that could scare people away from, from practicing yoga.

Maris: [18:11](#) You know, people who don't fit that one singular image, uh, which is such a, a broader issue, right across all sorts of things that are being made into products. Um, but the fact that it's, it's a discussion I think is, is just step one. And if we can continue to understand, you know, that there's the yoga that we experience as a, a full mind body soul practice on our yoga mat. And then there's also this, this product that's being sold. And I'm wondering if, if there's a way that we can continue to, um, take that, that product and help at least use it, at the very least, use it to guide people to that, that whole experience.

Melody: [18:56](#) How are you navigating this, this landscape of being approached by companies? How, how are you locating, um, your center in the midst of all of this?

Maris: [19:06](#) You know, I, I always like to think of what, what yoga really is, right? Like the yoga isn't the, the flashy yoga pants or the yoga mat, right? And so if, if I'm approached by some someone or something, some entity that is solely interested in a product, something to be sold, and particularly something that is sold as this will elevate your yoga practice, this will make your yoga practice complete. Um, that just doesn't sit with me as something that is integral to the practice or embodies the practice or gives back to the people that have allowed us to experience this practice. Um, that's an easy no for me. Um, but you know, when I am able to be in conversation and listen to the intentions of the people who are wanting to explore this

relationship, right in a, some kind of business capacity, if I see that they're interested in discussing the full eight limbs, if they're interested in discussing, you know, service to the community and the fact that yoga is more than a physical practice, that that allows me to tap in for at least a conversation and see what the interest is.

Maris: [20:22](#) Um, but it always has to come back to does this serve yoga? Because my, my job is to serve yoga. You know, I'm not this, you know, teacher that knows all and, and thinks that I've created, you know, Maris yoga, TM, um, I am a vessel for a practice that has given me so much. And so any kind of relationship that I enter into has to ultimately be giving back to this practice.

Melody: [20:49](#) What is it like, what is it like in your inner work, um, to, to consider why me? Why am I the one that has the, has had been companies call me and ask if I want to participate in lending my name to their product, um, why me? Why am I the one that went through teacher training at such a young age and have a film made about me, etcetera. What's it like when you sit with yourself and that inquiry?

Maris: [21:18](#) That's something that I've been brushing up against in the past few months since the film was released on Netflix because that was a big turning point where all of a sudden I looked around and I was like, well, there's a lot of eyes on me. A lot more than there used to be. And I think it's something that I am still very much in the midst of and tingling. But when I brush up against what usually shows up as doubt, right. You know, why? Why me? Who am I to think that I get to be a teacher of this practice? Who am I to even think that I get to be a student of this practice. I consider the alternative and the alternative to me practicing yoga, right, is me not practicing yoga. And ultimately I, I truly believe that practicing yoga saved my life because unlike anything else I had experienced, it allowed me to feel without seeking perfection and it allowed me to explore myself without beating myself into a box.

Maris: [22:22](#) And you know, I just can't imagine a life without yoga and ultimately I want more people to experience yoga because yoga allows us to access difficult and challenging conversations, right? Just like that bad capitalistic view of yoga, right? Me being present to the ideas of nonviolence and service and all these different things, self study that allows me to have those conversations. So yeah, I think I'm just trying to stay present in that understanding of the alternative is not practicing yoga and I really believe that yoga allows us to have a perspective that changes our world and changes the world as a result.

Melody: [23:07](#) Do you feel like this is your Dharma, this path?

Maris: [23:11](#) I do. You know, and, and if, if living in purpose means being an imperfect, you know, representation of someone navigating this world as, as a person who just wants to be of service and help others. Um, I, I think that's, that's what I'm experiencing.

Melody: [23:32](#) Does it feel like a relief to allow yourself to be in an imperfect person navigating this world when it sounds like for much of your life the attempt was, um, by the way, I say this as a, as card carrying member of perfectionist, anonymous, that the attempt was perfection. Um, does it feel like a relief to be able to allow yourself that kind of just humanity?

Maris: [23:57](#) Yeah. You know, I, I grew up always chasing perfection. You know, I grew up in, uh, a community that was so focused on, you know, being this, this kind of role model child, you know, basically being groomed to go off to a great college, um, which, you know, in and of itself was a privilege, right? I had access to education and things like that. Um, but I was also given this image of you have to be the perfect student and the perfect athlete and be in all the extracurriculars and you know, to do it all to the absolute best. And I, I just translated that into every, every fiber of my being and every action that I participated in. And so to now realize that I can have an impact and have a very meaningful life and, and do good with the time that I have right now, um, while at the same time not being perfect.

Maris: [24:53](#) But that's absolutely a relief and I think one of the biggest lessons that I've learned is that people really connect with imperfect people because I, I really think that almost none of us believe that we are just like absolutely flawless and perfect and have it all figured out. I mean, if you do, please let me know because I would love to know how you did that. Um, but when I hear someone who pretends to have it all figured out, I don't connect with them in the same way. Like, I want to know that you're human. I want to know that you're sharing the space with me and that you, you in some way understand where I'm coming from. And so giving myself permission to be that, that imperfect leader or imperfect connected for us, I think it does allow me to access conversations in any way.

Melody: [25:36](#) Does that come up for you in your um, ideal recovery and the perfect recovery from an eating disorder? Because most everybody, me too, um, that I know who's ever struggled with disordered eating or even just negative body image. It's not a like one and done. Okay. And now I'm better recovery. Mark hit, I'm good. It's, it's a lot more Rocky than that. Yeah.

Maris: [26:01](#) Oh absolutely. And you know, like even when I was in the hospital, I was like, I'm going to be the perfect patient, right? Like I'm going to shut my mouth and eat. The food they put in front of me is I can get out and go right back to what I was doing before that I really want to be doing. Uh, and I think, you know, I, I have definitely had ups and downs and recovery just like I think anybody, but it's, it's been, uh, it's been invaluable to be able to learn how to view those, those downs, right? Those, those lower points as just opportunities to collect data, you know, like, Oh, this, all these different things contributed to this outcome that doesn't feel so good. So I know a new way to take care of myself. And that's not always how I, I viewed flip flops or whatever you want to call them. You know, I viewed those as failures, which meant I wasn't perfect. And so to be able to shift that perspective has absolutely made a big change in my recovery.

Melody: [27:01](#) Yeah, I learned this meditation I was just telling you about my friend Rolf Gates. I've learned this meditation from him, um, that it says a lot more than this, but one of the pieces is I'm allowed to be a human. I'm allowed to be a learner in this lifetime. I'm allowed to make mistakes. I'm allowed to get it wrong. And I just find it to be so it's so simple, but it's so profound because that's constantly, the case, at least it is for me. There's like constantly getting it wrong, constantly making mistakes and being able to walk in compassion and be held, held and compassion is everything that can, I think keep us moving forward. And I, I witnessed that in you several times throughout the film, um, where this moment where you go to college and then you have this noticing like you said, this data collection of I, I'm noticing I'm, I'm returning to some old behaviors that, that I don't love, I don't feel proud of. And you did this thing where you out and talked to someone about it. You called a friend, is that right? Probably a really different way of doing it. That, that your bravery in, in you're allowing yourself to be vulnerable was probably the thing that allowed for you not to go into some kind of relapse.

Maris: [28:19](#) yeah, absolutely. And, you know, I think that being able to draw it into the light and you know, in some ways, you know, my old self would say admitting I'm not perfect, right? Admitting that I quote unquote failed. Um, that was just a whole new way of being, you know, in or out of recovery. And I think that that's a lesson that I really had to learn. You know, that I wasn't just gonna go through life. I'm the perfect recovered person. Now you're perfect at everything. Right? That was the goal. Um, that, you know, I could experience things that were challenging and

experienced behaviors that I wasn't proud of and, and still be worthy of love and acceptance throughout. So, yeah.

Melody: [29:10](#) Yeah. My guess is you've made a lot of mistakes because you've gained so much wisdom and to me don't really just get there on our own, right. It's through life teaching us and bringing us lessons of like, okay, I see that and I, there has to be a course correction. So when I hear you speak, I'm like, she's got it. And I can see, I can hear like, Oh, you understand systems of oppression. Okay. You also get this like machine that is the yoga industry. You also get that makes me think you've had to bump up against some things and it hasn't always gone well because Oh yeah,

Maris: [29:42](#) you know, I've been wrong about so many things and I'm sure I'll look back in a year and be appalled at some things that I currently think. You know, that's just the process of being human, like you said. And also the processes of being in a world that has more information accessible to us than ever before. You know, I mean we are constantly in communication and interaction and uh, you know, we're able to see things from new perspectives every single day I think in a way that we've never experienced before as a society. And so I think it's, I think it's wonderful. I want to be wrong because it means I'm learning and it means that I'm growing and evolving and being wrong isn't easy, but it's something that I, I have learned to view through the lens of curiosity. And I really think curiosity is in many ways the anecdote to perfectionism because you can't be perfect and curious at the same time. Right? Perfect is clinging onto a single moment and curiosity is being willing to look at different possibilities

Melody: [30:47](#) and be open. And you said something so important there that this is a time it's really different than we've ever experienced in society before. And I'm curious, you're someone who grew up with social media, um, what do you feel like, I don't even know what to ask you about that. So how do you feel like that impacted you? What do you feel like when you see people who are a couple of decades and more older than you that didn't have that experience, what do you wish that they knew and understood about what it was like to have access to social media your whole life?

Maris: [31:24](#) You know, I think that, you know, when I, if I'm to look at it just through a single lens of body image, because I think that's a really digestible example. Um, you know, when I was very little before social media was really a thing. I can remember standing in line at the grocery store and seeing these magazines that

were just tearing apart women for their appearance, like nothing else, but how they looked in a bikini. Um, and I can remember brushing up against those single instances, but being able to say, because of things, you know, my mom had said to me or other people have said to me, Oh, you know, they, they airbrush that, or Oh, you know, that's wrong and exploitative. Like I had this strong idea in my mind of that's a magazine back to single industry. As I got older and those same phenomenon were occurring in the social media sphere, it was suddenly far more inescapable.

Maris: [32:16](#) Right. And I mean, I see it today, right? We have now entire lives that are curated in, in, you know, seeking this perfection that had been sold to us in a different package before. And I, I can't even imagine what it would be like to be a young child because I know like 10 year olds, 11 year olds, 12 year olds that have Instagrams or whatever, and to be seeing entire lives curated in this way and to not be able to get away from it, right. Every, almost everything we do now is online. You know, you know, I look at my brother who's in high school and they do homework online and their homework is to go watch this video or do this. Right. It's wonderful in many ways, but in all facets, the facets of their life, they're connected to this never ending source of information.

Maris: [33:09](#) And I can't, I can't imagine what it's like to not be able to come up for air. You know, like, yes, they can unplug and step away, but you know, then the phone buzzes and then her mom calls and then their own, you know, then they're on this screen and then they have homework. So they open up their laptop. Um, you know, I, I think that that is just something that is needed to be taught. You know, just the same way that we need to teach news literacy just the same way we need to teach scientific research literacy. I think we need to have a way to teach children how to untangle what is real and what is being sold to them as an image of perfection and a product of perfection. Um, I think that is, that is a skill that is undervalued or maybe just not even viewed as something that should be taught, but it's becoming more and more relevant as time goes on.

Melody: [34:05](#) How do you manage that for yourself since you have a growing social media following and this wisdom, how do you present yourself on social media to not incur more of, um, children thinking that's the perfect life and I want to have that thing.

Maris: [34:24](#) I mean, that's, that's the constant challenge, right? Because it's, it's so natural, right? You know, you're not gonna share the picture of the random leftovers you threw in a Tupperware

before work, you're gonna share the picture of this beautiful meal that you curated. Um, like it's just this natural highlight reel effect. And so I think it does take conscious and deliberate effort to, you know, constantly call out that effect, you know, remind people of the fact that what you're seeing is a very small sliver of an entire lifetime. Um, and then also to, to encourage critical thinking in your followers. And that's something that I feel more passionate about as time goes on. But also something I've tried to plant the seed of throughout my entire time online, which is, you know, don't be afraid to unfollow people. You know, even if they are a good person.

Maris: [35:18](#) If your relationship to their online presence inspires negative or critical thought in you, you don't need to follow them. That is, that is your right to cut them out of your digital life. Um, and to just encourage people as they're scrolling to say, Oh, you know, that is, that's fake. You know, I, there are many instances or what we see is fake. And I think that it's, it's a good and healthy skill to have, to be able to recognize when something is not in your best interest or when something is being painted in a very specific light to evoke a certain reaction from you. Um, and I think those are skills that I, I try to encourage, I try to promote.

Melody: [36:03](#) how do you know, how do you, what's the indicator or what are the indicators for you of this is not in my best interest. I better unfollow or I better set a boundary around this relationship.

Maris: [36:15](#) You know, going back a little bit earlier in our conversation, we talked about, you know, unique needs, right? Whether in modifying a yoga pose or what's on your plate or any kind of life choice. Um, I think that when we start to override that, that intuition that we all need different things and we start to think, Oh, they did that, so I should do that. Or Oh, they look like that. So I should look like that. Any way, any iteration of that. Um, I think that's a really good sign that, you know, we're overriding what we know is, is right and true and healthy for us to mirror or mimic what other examples someone has said

Melody: [36:57](#) yeah, that's a good one. Um, somebody said, I think it was Theodore Roosevelt and one of the warriors I was telling you about earlier that helped co-found and body love movement told me this and I was like, I love it. That "comparison is the thief of joy." And isn't that so true that whenever we're in that mindset, by the way that social media is, we're consistently bombarded with images and perceived stories that might steal our joy. What, what do you tell? I get asked this a lot. I'm like, I don't know what to say to you. So I'll ask you instead, you might

know. What do you tell parents who are raising teenagers? Um, and even like you said, 10 11, 12 year olds, pre-teens.

Maris: [37:43](#) Sorry, my boyfriend just came home. Let me tell him that he can -- "can I have quiet for like a few minutes?" Thank you so much.

Melody: [37:50](#) Yeah. Um, what do you, I'll just re ask that question in case they want to like edit or something. Um, what do you tell if you're, if you've been asked this, what do you tell parents about how to help their kids, their preteens and teens navigate the landscape of social media?

Maris: [38:10](#) It's interesting because I study psychology at school and I just took a class on child advocacy, you know, in the developmental realm of psych and I did my final literature review on how social media affects children's mental health and how parents can, you know, be advocates for their children, how they can be healthy influences on their children. You know, what we found is that social media definitely can have a negative impact on children's mental health, right? For the reasons we discussed around comparison. And um, you know, the fact that it can feel isolating even though we're connecting, you can feel like you're just alone with your own little box. Um, but what we found is that in the literature, at least that I reviewed and we discussed in, in my, you know, research is that parents can partially mitigate those effects just by being active participants in their children's online lives.

Maris: [39:07](#) You know, that doesn't mean they have to like share a joint Facebook account or you know, their parents need to review everything that they're posting, right? But just becoming engaged in what is becoming it a new sector of children's world, right their online world. Um, it can, it can help in a way that I think, um, makes children feel understood, right? Not just rejecting what is becoming a normal part of life as, Oh, that's just bad for you. You know, I don't even want to look at that. Um, but respecting that it is something that is important to them as a mode of communicating. Um, but also showing that you, you care about how it makes them feel. Right? Engaging in those conversations about how to critically assess what you're looking at. Like, Oh, did you know that that could be Photoshop? Oh, did you know that? You know, those are things that can become the little dialogue in their head as they engage with social media. And you know, just like any other form of parenting, you know, what you say becomes their inner dialogue. Um, I think that the ultimate takeaway isn't just reject it entirely. Just try and get them to completely eliminate it, but

to engage with it and become an active participant. I, I think that's invaluable.

Melody: [40:33](#) I love that this was your paper and I happened to ask you about it and I was going to ask you about, and I was going to ask you what you're majoring in, but you just said it. So why psychology as a psychologist? I'm so happy to hear this. Why psychology?

Maris: [40:50](#) Psychology just felt so natural to where everything in my life is going at this point. Um, you know, with having so much respect for my therapist and for, you know, people who are integrating the spheres of yoga and mental health. Um, I was just as a curious person, so interested in learning the, the, the kind of inner workings of, of how all sorts of healing can happen. Um, but I also just felt like if I am going to be someone that's an advocate, someone with a voice in this community, uh, I wanted to feel like I had some kind of grounding in, in education, in things that I could vouch for, not just on a personal level but on an understanding of, of science level. That felt important to me on a, an ethical front. Um, but I'm so lucky that at my university at Santa Cruz, we get to pick, um, you know, not just a major but a theme of the college that we're in. And so I got to choose social justice. And so that just melded so beautifully for me of psychology and the way that we can take it into, you know, activism, you know, practical application to the world around us. And so that has been a, that's how I've integrated, you know, this, this whole yoga world that's been going on outside of the four walls of the school and, and taking it into my academics.

Melody: [42:20](#) What's next for you, Maris?

Maris: [42:24](#) Uh, you know, I'm, I'm so, you know, we talked so much about social media and online connection, but I'm, I'm really craving in person connection. So I have some retreats and some workshops that I'm, I'm working on and I'm so excited to get to collaborate on with my teachers. Um, but if I'm dreaming big, the next big thing would be a book. You know, I just love writing and, and books have touched me in so many ways, so I would love to be able to, to have my own,

Melody: [42:50](#) I have no doubt there are many, many books in you already and more to come. Yeah. What's your, I'm thinking of like, if I were watching this, I'd be like, Melody asked her this. I have so many things that I keep thinking, I don't know. What's your practice? What is your practice, your sadhana look like these days as a college student who's also teaching yoga and doing other things

in life. How do you, how do you integrate in any kind of meditation, yoga, any lens of practice?

- Maris: [43:21](#) Something that I picked up this past fall, I assisted a teacher training with Just Be and one of my teachers, Jessica, gave me the five minute meditation journal. And so it's in the morning and in the evening you write down things you're grateful for, you write down intentions, you write down, um, you know, affirmations. And it's something that has been so helpful for me to have a way to begin the day in a way to end the day. Um, well, you know, at the same time embodying that idea that it's not perfect, right? It's just, it's just checking in, beginning and end and it's a fresh start the next morning and a new page. Um, that's something that I think has been great for me too, to eat or even on those days that I can't get on my mat for 75 minutes. Right. You know, it's just another way to, to remind myself that this practice encompasses so much more and it can show up in small daily doses. Yeah.
- Melody: [44:22](#) Um, okay, last question. I promise I'll let you go. What would you say now that I'm at this age and this ability and in, and with the kind of, um, wisdom that you've gained through the experience that you've had, what would you say now to your 14 year old about body image or really about self image?
- Maris: [44:44](#) Mm. You know, I, something that the yoga has taught me that shifted so much in my life is that nothing we do is to fix us cause we're not broken. You know, it's just to reveal all the worthiness that's already in there. And I think that that would be the, the little nugget I want to give my 14 year old. So, right. You know, there is so much to be learned and there's so much transformation waiting for you, but you're already worthy. You know, you're already worthy of love and you're already enough.
- Melody: [45:22](#) Thank you for that. That was beautiful. I really appreciate your time and your willingness not only to be in this conversation, but to be the presence that you are on social media. The willingness and the vulnerability it took to make that film that I know has been an inspiration and, and a reflection for other people in recovery from anything, not just eating disorders. That there's another way and it's possible. Thank you for being you and thank you for being here. Really appreciate it.
- Maris: [45:51](#) Thank you so much.