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Candice Schutter: Welcome back to The Deeper Pulse and the continuation of the 'cult'ure series.

2024 has only just begun, but it's probably going to be one for the books. So it feels imperative that we continue with our examination of what is putting the cult in culture. It's through this combination of storytelling and psychoeducation that we can learn and unlearn together, opening our eyes to how everyday cult conditioning has made so many of us blind to the social systems that are continually shaping our beliefs, influencing and even controlling our behavior.

Ignorance around everyday cult dynamics, it comes with a very real and immediate [00:01:00] cost. Not just for those folks over there who are in this or that group, but for all of us. We are all under the influence in some way, shape, or form; and in this interdependently connected world we're living in, the collective cost of denial is a price that we can no longer afford to pay.

So let's roll right into it. The stories and opinions shared here are based on personal experience and are not intended to malign any individual, group, or organization.

Candice Schutter: We're going to keep our finger on the pulse of diet culture with a guest who's joining me to share with us her artistry and a personal history that I find oh so relatable.

As I mentioned in the lead in to the last episode, I've heard from quite a few listeners who were moved by recent releases on the pod, when Tracy Stamper and I sat down with [00:02:00] Tara Wike for a two part deconstruction of diet culture.

And I just want to plant the seed here that sometime in the next few weeks, you're going to be hearing from a couple of those listeners. Folks who are generous enough to show up and share with us another perspective. Namely, what it's like to navigate the cruel insensitivity of a fat-phobic culture while living in a larger body. What it feels like to be judged, policed and marginalized for the shape and size of your everyday existence. Each of these stories will of course be multifaceted and unique. Despite cult-categorizing rhetoric, marginalized voices are in no way monolithic.

These conversations are still in the works, so you can expect them to roll out sometime in mid February.

In the meantime, however, I'm hoping that this episode leaves us with a reminder of how folks like me, straight-sized white women in wellness and recovery, can use, and in some cases sacrifice, [00:03:00] our unearned privilege to free ourselves *and* make way for greater belonging and inclusivity.

And so today I want to share with you an impromptu conversation I recently had with a dear friend.

Susan McCulley and I met about a year ago, thanks to the 'cult'ure series and this ongoing critique we've been doing of the mind-body fitness organization we refer to as 'the Org.'

Among her many other talents, Susan is a former teacher of the Org practice. And she's since become a vocal contributor both over on Patreon and in the After The Org recovery community, which I'm happy to report a year and a half in is still going strong.

In May of last year, Susan joined Tracy and I for two back-to-back episodes in the ongoing Deconstructing Dogma series over on Patreon. And that's when I really got to know her.

I fell in love with Susan immediately. She's just got that way about her, and she and I actually have quite a bit in common. We share a love of [00:04:00] dance, writing, and learning out loud.

But what I didn't know until recently is that she and I have battled many of the same diet culture demons.

Just a couple of weeks ago, shortly after the release of those two episodes with Tara on the pod, Susan and I reconnected through an email exchange. And she sent me a link to an essay and blog post that she authored on this very topic.

Now, as someone who's both an old school book nerd and a product of this modern digital era, I often find it pretty difficult to read long essays and articles online. I usually speed read, scrolling through the words quickly, sometimes checking out midway through, leaving the tab open optimistically, certain that I'll pick up where I left off later.

Heh, yeah right.

But in the case of Susan's essay, I was pulled in immediately. I drank in every single word, top to bottom, jotting notes in the margins of my mind, [00:05:00] relating, wanting to cry, feeling less alone.

And so of course I was eager to hear more about what it was that inspired this piece. So I invited her to sit down and record the conversation you're about to hear.

It was intended as a Patreon bonus, but at the last minute, I decided to share a portion of our dialogue here on the main feed.

And I should also note that I asked Susan if she'd be willing to read portions of her essay out loud. So you can expect to hear a few excerpts from this piece peppered throughout this conversation, from her essay entitled, *Snapshots from the Body Image Brink*.

Susan McCulley has been a mindful movement leader, artist and writer since 2000. She's the creator of *The Age of Becoming: Embodied Practices Empowering Women Over 50*, a community which offers free movement practices and workshops, connection, community, and more. Her 30 lesson audio [00:06:00] course, *Building Balance In Your Body and Life*,

was published on the Insight Timer meditation app in early 2022. She has two illustrated books, *Buddha Cat: Learning Awareness, Presence, And Self-Care From A Teacher Who Sometimes Barfs On The Bed*. And *Octabusy: Letting Go In A Sea Of Doing*.

So without further delay, welcome Susan McCulley.

Susan McCulley: *When did I start hating my body? When?*

When did I go from being a child, living and moving in her skin, eating until I was full, to a woman obsessed with making her body smaller and tighter? When did my body shift from being my vehicle for living and feeling to a vehicle for shame, punishment, and madness? [00:07:00] When was the moment that I stopped embodying myself and started judging, criticizing, hiding and always, always working to change myself?

Child body memories are strong. Lively leaping from rock to rock, swinging high, wild and windy on playground swing sets. Intently playing in the dirt, on the beach, on the grass, on the driveway, on my perma-scabbed knees.

Jungling on the jungle gym until my hands smelled of metal. Falling off my bike again, so frustrated I threw the stupid thing down and kicked it until I cried. Crying with my whole body in anger or sadness or fear. Crying with every cell and fiber. Letting the feelings pour, rip, tear through, and then pass, leaving me empty and tired and clean.

[00:08:00] Grown up body memories are strong too. Grabbing the fat on my belly with both hands as if I could wrench it off of me. Looking at pictures of models and movie stars, the people who count, who are loved and admired. And thinking, knowing, panicking, that I didn't look anything like that.

Being hungry. Or worried, or anxious, or bored, or tired, and eating too much. And then plunging, crashing, feeling ashamed and worthless. And since I could not stop eating as some strong-willed friends could, working out extra hard or long to burn it, sear it, incinerate it off. And for years, decades, the feeling of bitter futility and deep unworthiness.

When? When did I start hating my body?

Candice Schutter: Welcome Susan. [00:09:00] Thanks for coming today.

Susan McCulley: Oh, thanks, Candice. It's a delight to be together.

Candice Schutter: Yeah, I'm so happy to have you here again. And this was just an impromptu thing. What, we decided two days ago to record this. Does that sound right?

Susan McCulley: Yes. You hit me with some truth bombs on the, uh, the main feed, and I was just like, yes, please. More of this.

Candice Schutter: More of this. And so, yeah, so I had said, those of you who are up to date on the main feed of the podcast. Main feed, by the way, some people have been like, what's that mean? Main feed is basically where the episodes stream that everybody in the whole world can listen to. And then there's the Patreon bonus ones that only Patreon subscribers hear.

So on the main feed, we had Tara Wike on for a two-part conversation on diet culture. And I had said, hey, you know, if, if y'all want us to continue this conversation, let us know. And Susan, you chimed in in the comments. And then I reached out and said, you know, hey, you wanna talk about this? And just do kind of a [00:10:00] beginning follow up to what's going on with this, 'cause there's so much energy buzzing around all of this.

And then, Susan sent me an essay that we're gonna be talking about here shortly that kind of knocked me on my butt in the best possible way around all of this. And I just thought this is just the next right thing to sit down and to talk with you about all the things around all of this. And it's a lot. So yeah.

So tell me why you said yes to sitting down with me.

Susan McCulley: Well, I think that, I wrote the essay that I sent you eight years ago. And I didn't publish it, I didn't put it onto my blog until, uh, it took me six years to, to, to get up the courage to put it onto my blog.

Candice Schutter: Oh, I didn't know that.

Susan McCulley: I had written it in 2016, and I didn't publish it until 2022.

Candice Schutter: Wow.

Susan McCulley: And I thought about why that was. And a lot of it had to do with feelings [00:11:00] of vulnerability, of shame, 'cause a lot of what I talk about in the essay is that I'm kind of presenting one thing, but I know that I'm living something different. And, you know, not feeling that excited about you know, sharing that.

And in the meantime, I have learned so much I have read and listened to and followed so many really intelligent, compassionate teachers and leaders around anti diet culture, fighting against anti-fatness. And what I'm realizing is that the more we can normalize our individual experiences, the more that we can say, this is what I'm noticing. I mean, it's exactly what you were doing with the, the whole podcast around 'the Org.' All of us were in our little bubbles, feeling like we were the only ones. You tell your story and all of us are like, [00:12:00] oh.

Me too.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Susan McCulley: Not perhaps in every single specific, of course. But enough of the feeling to feel like, oh, this isn't just me. And this is something bigger.

And so, that was what spurred me to finally publish the essay. And, you know, now, now two years after that, when you said, you know, does anybody wanna talk about this?

I'm like, we got to. We have to.

Candice Schutter: Yes.

Susan McCulley: So yeah, that's why. And um, that, and because I love having conversations with you.

Candice Schutter: Yeah. I know. It's so great. It was so fun the last time we talked, and it's been a long time. And so it just felt, it felt right. And I, I really thank you for, I mean, just beautifully articulated the sort of the purpose of us being here. And what I really felt shine through in terms of your essay, which we're gonna link to, those of you who [00:13:00] are about, you know, what it was that you spilled onto the page and you waited six years to share.

And it's really, um, your journey and a body, right? Your life in a body. And, you ask the question at the beginning of it, when did I start hating my body? And then there's all these little vignettes.

It's just beautiful in the way that it, that it's presented because it's not like, I'm gonna tell you my body story from start to finish. It's like these snapshots. It's like we just get these pictures into these different moments and your experiences. And so many of them I could relate to. I started highlighting certain sections. And then I was like, this is getting ridiculous, like highlighting so much that I just felt a sense of, you know, I can relate to. And there were a couple that I was like, wow, I don't know what that's like.

I mean, this is where we speak about thin privilege, right? Like, oh, I didn't have that particular experience. That's really good for me to know about. And I wanna hear more about that. Right? So normalizing people of all sizes and shapes and colors, speaking [00:14:00] about their experiences and, um, having these me too moments around all this body stuff.

And I just, I wanna say right outta the gate, this is something that Susan and I were talking about before we pressed record. Just the, and, and Susan used the perfect word, the tenderness that exists around these topics for so many of us. And, I'm really sensing this within myself, and I've spoken to it in the, the two part conversation. But in the culture of the listening culture around the podcast, the messages that I'm receiving.

I'm hearing from people saying, you know, I can relate in this way and that way. I have a story I wanna share. And I'm also, part of this comes from, I have, I do teach a couple of movement classes and I know you're still teaching, right, Susan?

Susan McCulley: Oh yeah.

Candice Schutter: Yeah. So I've been kind of playing with weaving what's going on in the podcast into what I'm doing in my classes. [00:15:00] And this was the perfect month to really roll that out.

And so I've been talking about health at every size and just pointing at diet culture just a little bit in my classes. And the atmosphere becomes very, um, psychoactive.

Susan McCulley: Hmm.

Candice Schutter: In a way, right? Like there's just all this emotional energy present. People who are like, thank you. People who are like, what? People who are having cognitive dissonance.

I, I mean, I can't, I don't know what everyone's experience is. But I just know that there's like a medley of emotions swimming around and a tremendous amount of tenderness. And I feel myself walking on eggshells a little bit in the way that I talk about these things. Because it's so complex. And as soon as I say one thing, then there's a contradiction over here because somebody else's perspective is different and it's just.

It's messy. And I think that's part of why we avoid it, too.

Susan McCulley: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: Is because it's so messy. So I love that you were leading with this sense of let's just be messy together. And [00:16:00] that's what Susan and I decided. We don't have a plan here. We just wanted to do, as she said, and just say like, let's just continue this conversation and we're gonna quote, unquote, screw it up here and there as we figure it out together.

Susan McCulley: Sure. Yeah. Right. I mean, as I mentioned, there are lots of what I would consider authorities or experts on this topic. I am not one of them. Although I, I do have a lot of people that I recommend paying attention to their work. So we could definitely link to those as well.

But I am an expert on my own experience. And I have a, a unique ability to say, you know, I was saying this, but it was, but it was bullshit.

Candice Schutter: Hmm.

Susan McCulley: Um, right. And, so to be able to see sort of the external and the internal. And as you alluded to, too, I too am incredibly privileged in this. I'm straight sized. I'm cis, straight [00:17:00] female, you know, affluent enough to be able to afford food and the time to prepare it, and all of these things that give me incredible privilege.

And so, I am also not saying, as you alluded to too, that, that my experience is everybody's experience. But I think that the more we share what we all go through living in these bodies,

living in this culture, the more we can start to put together other ways of being in this culture and changing this culture.

One of the things I think that happens is that the hierarchical patriarchal society shames these feelings of unworthiness, um, of inadequacy. And we isolate. We get isolated. We get ourselves into a situation where we think we're the only ones. And just like you have talked about in [00:18:00] regard to the Org, that we can feel like we are, we are the problem. We are the crazy one. We are the one who's like too sensitive and or too whatever, or not enough whatever.

Instead of the more we share with each other, the more we see that this is all working as designed. It's all happening exactly as it's supposed to be, so that we are pouring all of our mental and emotional energy into this and not coming together and helping to break it down and change, change the way things are.

And, and it is so ubiquitous. It is so the water that we are swimming in. So there's, there's both this feeling of isolation and also just the enormity, like the places and the ways that this stuff shows up. It just never ceases to shock me.

I was, I in a physical therapist's office just [00:19:00] this week, and I don't think there was a single image on their wall that wasn't straight sized white, you know, fit. And I was thinking, okay, it's a physical therapist office, but still, if you look at the bodies that are in that space.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Susan McCulley: That is, yeah, no. That is like totally not representative. And there's a message there, right? There's a message.

Candice Schutter: There sure is.

Susan McCulley: This is, this is what you wanna be. This is, this is the way. This is the way you should look. This is the way you get better. This is the way you feel better. And I was just in there going, okay.

I hope they send me a survey. Send me a survey about what I think. 'cause I love the therapist. I love it. I'm just love to be able to talk to that, speak to that.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Susan McCulley: Cause I think it's important. Um, so, so yeah, I think, sharing about this is both a way of breaking open the little bubbles that we are self-flagellating ourselves in. [00:20:00] And, also kind of putting our heads up out of the water that we're swimming in and going, oh wait.

Candice Schutter: Right.

Susan McCulley: There's a lot more going on here that we, we can speak to that.

Candice Schutter: Yeah. Yeah. And really like, this is a silly image, but I got the image of almost like Marco Polo. Call and respond.

Susan McCulley: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: With the people around us. Like come up, come up for air with me. Like.

Susan McCulley: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: We're gonna probably get pulled under again.

Susan McCulley: Yes.

Candice Schutter: But let's see if we can come up for air together more and more often, and then maybe eventually we can get out of this mess.

Yeah. Yeah.

Susan McCulley: And, and I think that the more stories I hear, the more I talk about these things, the more I catch it faster in myself. The more, um, I see the pattern and, and make different choices.

Um, the more that I am open to gentle reminders from people who are on the path.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Susan McCulley: So yeah. [00:21:00] But it's, it's definitely tricky. Tender, tricky territory.

Candice Schutter: It It is. It really is.

Susan McCulley: So here go.

Candice Schutter: I love that you said ubiquitous. I just, right before we came to record, I, I was in my bathroom and I opened my little drawer to get out some powder to powder my nose with. And I pull out the powder in a little thing. And every time I put on makeup now, which isn't often, but when I record, I tend to put on a little bit of makeup, which is sort of a dialogue I'm having with myself, in and of itself.

So I'm having that dialogue, which I always do. I'm like, do I really need to put on makeup? So I pull it out and I open the powder thing and I realized as I close it, this thing that I've used many, many times that the title on it, I think it's like Maybelline, I don't know. But the title on it is Infallible.

That's what it's called. Infallible.

And I'm just like, wow, these messages. This is what I'm putting on my face. And I'm, I had just this morning been thinking about my [00:22:00] perfectionism and

Susan McCulley: Oh, me too. I thinking about it too. Yes.

Candice Schutter: Right? So it's like, then I open this thing. And it's like infallible, that's how you need to be put this on and you will be.

Susan McCulley: Wow.

Candice Schutter: Which absurd. But the message of that, like it can't be overlooked, like you said, ubiquitous, how many ways it's like streaming in at us.

It's just fascinating.

Susan McCulley: Yeah, yeah.

And if we unpack that perfectionism. I keep thinking just like the diet culture thing. I keep thinking I've got it.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Susan McCulley: And then I'm like, oh, oh no. I, I don't. I don't have it. It's still there. Um, but it, it, because I think that again, that the reason that that, um, infallibility, that perfection is just so tantalizing as a way of protection. It's a, it, a such a way of protection.

And it's also fascinating if we look at the roots of, um, ideas of perfectionism goes straight to white supremacy.

Candice Schutter: White [00:23:00] supremacy. Yep. That's right. Absolutely. And how they play into privilege is so important. Like if we think even in this sort of container that we're speaking about, like wellness and fitness circles and how the closer you can get to that ideal, the more protected you are.

Susan McCulley: That's right.

Candice Schutter: Right? So it's like, it's so tangible. This isn't just like, oh, the roots of it are in white supremacy, which is a thing that doesn't exist anymore. It's like, no, it's, it's this, you know, I don't know that people in our circle say that. But there is really that sort of attitude that some folks carry into conversations around race and, and, and all of this.

And it's so immediate and it's just, um, more, more disguised.

Susan McCulley: Mm-Hmm.

Candice Schutter: With every generation. But it's the same mechanism operating. And in some ways, I would argue it's more damaging, because it's more gaslighting.

Susan McCulley: Right.

Candice Schutter: Right? It's like that thing that you think is happening isn't even happening. Like we, we appreciate and love all bodies here. What are [00:24:00] you even talking about?

Susan McCulley: Oh, don't even, don't even get me started.

Candice Schutter: I wanna get you started. Go.

Susan McCulley: Right. Yes. I mean, and I do, I do talk about this in the essay to some extent about the paradoxical experience that you've talked about with many people on the, on the pod about finding a practice that seemed different. That spoke in ways that we are so, I was so hungry for. And that I rushed to just like, oh, like all bodies are welcome. Um, you know, how can we move in a way that is loving and caring and compassionate to our bodies? How can we think about them and treat them in all ways compassionately.

And it didn't take [00:25:00] very long to go just below the surface of that to see, oh, there's all kinds of diet, culture, just this, just teeming with diet culture.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Susan McCulley: And it, I remember feeling that, that cognitive dissonance about, wait, if we love our bodies, then why plastic surgery? If we love our bodies, why is nobody over the age of 40 in any of the videos or over whatever weight, you know, um, there's all just one kind of body type. And suddenly it became clear that it, that that was the convenient message or the, the brand, but it wasn't really the practice.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

And in a way, like I can sort of relate to that. Again, the water we're swimming in, right? So it's like, even as a teacher over 20 years, having these ideals and lip service and [00:26:00] myself being hypocritical. It's not like, oh, I wanna make it clear that neither Susan or I, I am sure of this, are saying like, those people who are leading the Org really don't get it. They're really under the spell.

It's like, we all are under the spell. And so I was, was, and likely am in many ways. I'm catching myself in more and more things every day when I'm teaching. When I say, like, for example, today. This isn't about body size, but it is about policing people's energy and emotions.

And I said something about smiling. I sort of advised people to smile. And then I caught myself immediately. And then I said, or not, you know, you might have been told to smile your whole life, so you know what, if you don't wanna smile, you don't ever have to smile in here. And then somebody said, can I give you the bird?

And I said, yeah, you can. You know, we like made a joke of it.

So I'm, it's like, it's so constant.

Susan McCulley: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: Where these messages, I hear myself just like spewing this stuff. And then I'm like, oh, okay, there it is, there it is.

So circling [00:27:00] back to the Org, really noticing how, I think even the message that we were all attempting to deliver, we were delivering the message, but we weren't delivering, we weren't embodying the message because how do we embody the message in this culture? When we have all of this, and this is where I wanna kind of shift to, into your essay a little bit. Where we have a history of thinking and feeling about our bodies that we're bringing into it. And we can't just walk into a room and decide that body love is the order of the day. And we are going embody it and therefore model it to everyone.

It's like, it doesn't work that way, unfortunately. I wish that it did.

Susan McCulley: *Calorie book. I'm ten. I find a well worn green and white calorie counting book in the kitchen drawer. [00:28:00] It fascinates me. I look up all the foods I ate that day to see how many calories I've had. Then I just start reading it cover to cover, noticing which foods are good, that is, low calorie, and which are bad.*

I notice my mother's writing in the margins of additional foods and their caloric costs. Clearly she has spent time with this little book. There's a whole section of tips for successful dieting. High on the list? Smoking. Smoking for goodness sakes. Smoking, the little book says, is a known appetite suppressant and therefore beneficial to weight loss.

I know from school that smoking is unhealthy, but I also know that weight loss is good. Is it more important to be thin or healthy? This, I don't know. I return to that book regularly, [00:29:00] for years.

Candice Schutter: So I wanna talk about this essay, this blog post. Um, I'm really curious when you wrote it in 2016, like what was going on in your life that inspired you to pen this piece? Do you remember?

Susan McCulley: Yeah, it's a good question. I think that I was aware of my disillusionment with the Org. So there was that going on, that I wanted to own the hypocrisy that I was living. There was part of that. I wanted to feel more honest in that way.

The way I wrote the essay, I called it, *Snapshots From The Brink of Body Image*. And the reason I called it that is that for me, memory isn't like a movie. It's, it's like this book of snapshots.

Candice Schutter: Mm-Hmm.

Susan McCulley: And that I have like these little, uh, short very [00:30:00] intense memories, very vivid memories. And I felt pregnant with them. I felt been carrying all of these things.

And as I started to, I started to just write them down, just the little snippets. And as soon as I would write one, I would have three in the, in the wings waiting to come. And so it took me, I, it took me a long time to write it, because it was a process of letting myself remember. As, you know, first unloading the ones that were, had felt heavy. And then just discovering there was even more than I had thought.

So it was, it was really a process of wanting to be more honest with myself and with others. And to give myself some relief from carrying all of this stuff around.

Candice Schutter: Mm-Hmm.

Susan McCulley: And, um, it was interesting when I wrote that [00:31:00] I was right on the cusp of menopause. And this is a time both puberty and menopause are times when women are most susceptible to disordered eating, disordered views of their bodies, disordered exercise and, and the like. And part of that is hormonal. Part of that is that there's such big changes that, in this culture, it just sends us for a loop. And we're just like, holy smokes, I, I gotta get control of this situation.

Candice Schutter: That's right. Yeah.

Yep.

Susan McCulley: And um, and that's true when we're, when we're in puberty, and it's true when we're heading into menopause. So I, I didn't know that at the time. But I think that there was part of me that was like, you know, this has been my whole adult life. And, um, and it doesn't seem to be changing and I know that things are gonna change as I, as I head into menopause.

And [00:32:00] And they did.

Candice Schutter: Mm-Hmm.

Susan McCulley: So that was part of what was happening.

And the other thing that was present for me then was, like racism, misogyny came out from the shadows in 2016. Um, misogyny was a alive. I mean, like not that it had ever gone away.

I don't mean to say that. But I mean to say that it was like, oh, oh, oh, this is everywhere. And so let's, let me process my own internalized misogyny.

And get real, get true about that.

Candice Schutter: Mm-Hmm. .

Well, it's such an inspiring piece. You know, I, as I was reading it, I was thinking, well, one, what I always think when I read a piece like that, like I'm just marvel at people's memories. Because I just, I have all these felt sensations of things that happened, but I can't pull up the files. And so I was just marveling at, at how many moments [00:33:00] that you remembered.

And also, even though I can't pull up, you know, exact parallel experiences, the sensation of them, every single one of them was familiar to me, every single one of them.

Right?

And so you got it out of you in 2016, and then the moment when you decided to share it publicly, like what was that about? And why was that important to you?

I mean, I know you talked about normalizing the conversation. But I'm speaking about you internally. Like was there a shift in your life that inspired you to do that or what happened?

Susan McCulley: Yeah, yeah. So as I mentioned, when I, when I wrote the piece, I was right on the edge of menopause. And kind of right on schedule, about a year or so later, I went into the most disordered eating that I had ever been in. And, um, got sucked into part of what, what just was like, uh, I was really struck by your conversation with Tara was that [00:34:00] the *Eat to Live* book, that she mentioned, um, was one of the many that I absolutely devoured and and bought into. And the whole getting it right. Like what, what's the right thing to do? And what's the best thing to do? Getting back to the perfectionism. But also the patriarchy, almost all of those books are written by rich, thin straight men.

And so by 2022, I had relaxed my grip on a lot of the disordered behavior. And I had also learned a lot about diet culture and anti-fat bias. And I understood things that I hadn't even understood when I had written it.

And so my decision to post it was I want to add my little drop into the [00:35:00] bucket of, you know, this is, this is what it feels like and this is what, what the experiences have been.

And it is interesting to look back and re-read it. Um, there are certain language that I would not have used now that I did then. There's also places where I can see, oh, of course you felt that way, sweetheart.

Candice Schutter: Mm-Hmm. Mm-Hmm.

Susan McCulley: Of course, you did.

I mean, I, when I wrote the essay and when I was living it, there was a lot of the feeling of, you are some kind of crazy thing.

Candice Schutter: Hmm.

Susan McCulley: But, but I realize now there was a, there was all kinds of reasons that I felt the way I did. That I was behaving the way I did. So much of it came down to feeling safe, feeling protected, feeling aligned with some kind of, um, power.

Candice Schutter: Mm-Hmm.

Susan McCulley: And so I, I look at it now and I'm like, oh yeah, I know. I know what was, what was [00:36:00] driving that in a way that I didn't when I was writing it. Um, living. So by 2022 I felt like, yeah, like this, it's important to be talking about this. Because these are the ramifications, the personal ramifications of these larger systems and larger ways of, um, I don't know, being with bodies.

Candice Schutter: Mm-Hmm.

Susan McCulley: And so, it's sort of an interesting evolution, from the living to the writing to the, to the sharing. But I think that they were definitely distinct places. And I certainly realized in 2022, you might get to the end of the essay and I'm like, oh, she's all better now.

Isn't that sweet? She's healed.

And I think that part of what I wanna say now, and which, part of the reason I wanted to share it in 22 was that, [00:37:00] that I was, oh hell no, I wasn't.

Candice Schutter: Uhhuh.

Susan McCulley: No.

You know, they say sometimes when you're stressed, you regress. And when we go back to the patterns when, when our resources feel low. And my resources felt low when I was going through me, through menopause for sure.

So yeah, it's important for us to give ourselves so much grace and so much compassion as we inevitably cycle in and out. Just like you say with, with your language in class.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Well, especially like everything you just said really, I feel like is underscored. And part of the reason why I really wanted to focus some energy and attention on it is that it's such a great illustration of how far back it goes.

It's so easy in these conversations to be like diet culture and the Org and wellness and fitness and that's why I feel this pressure.

But it's like, it's so, it starts so young. [00:38:00] And like I love that the very first, um, snapshot that you offer is you looking at 10 years old. You picking up basically your mom's diet book, right? On like, counting calories. And noticing, what are calories? What's this about?

And it was just so poignant to me. Just my heart was just like so touched immediately. When you described your mom had scribbled in the margins, her calorie intake.

And you're 10 years old. And you're looking at this and you're like, oh, this is how it's done. This is what I must do.

Susan McCulley: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: And I'm sure you've internalized messages prior to this moment. This is just a moment when you see, like, oh, this is the practical way that we do this, that we manage our bodies.

Susan McCulley: Right Right on.

Candice Schutter: Right.

Susan McCulley: Yeah, that's a great point. I'm sure that there were messages before. This was just something very tangible. Um, and it was, I remember having that thought [00:39:00] of like, oh, like this is, this is what we do.

Candice Schutter: Mm-Hmm. . Yeah.

And I know a lot of you out there who are parents are really gonna, um, have all kinds of complex feelings around the piece around like how we learn from our parents, the way that they treat their bodies. The way they speak about their bodies. The way that they eat. The way that they... it's not what they say as much as it is what they do and what they demonstrate in terms of their relationships to their bodies.

And it's just such a complicated thing. Because I would imagine, I'm not a mother. And this is hard enough. Being a cis woman in a body with a lot of thin privilege. It's like hard enough. And the complexities of all the different factors in terms of intersectionalities. And also the factor of if you are a parent of a child and you're working on this stuff in real time.

You know, I read in the opening to part two, the comment from a listener saying that they, for years, thought they were teaching their children about health and they realized later [00:40:00] they were teaching their children about disordered eating. And how they're now making repairs. And Whew. So my heart, I guess when I read that, like my heart went out to your mom, too.

Susan McCulley: Sure. Oh, of course. Yeah.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Susan McCulley: Yeah. Um, yeah, it is really challenging.

I think that, again, everything is so tangled in this stuff that, um, I. There's nutritional science. There are foods that have, I don't know, more nutritional density or whatever you wanna say. That's true. And understanding the impact of different foods on your body, that those things are true.

And yet, and also, every body is different. Some bodies respond differently to different inputs and food. Food is also cultural and celebratory and comforting and a million other things. [00:41:00] But if all we're teaching or learning is, uh, what's in the calorie book or what's in the nutritional label, then we are missing so much of the picture.

Candice Schutter: Mm-Hmm.

Susan McCulley: And as a parent, it's, it's so, uh, I mean, yeah. I don't have kids of my own either. I have two step kids. And oh yeah. I mean, I poured the whole food plant-based thing all over their poor little sweet selves.

And, you know, um, and I think that so much of it is fraught. And so much of it can be uh, additional, like the Buddhist call it the second arrow could be second, third arrows. Of like, there's there's this harm that was done. And then we can self-flagellate. And not only did I mess myself up, but I'm messed my kids up. And I'm glad, I'm glad to hear that the listener is making repairs, 'cause I think [00:42:00] that that is absolutely something that we can do. And acknowledge harm. Or acknowledge misguidedness.

Candice Schutter: Mm-Hmm.

And I love what you said about being really gracious with ourselves, too. Because I'm thinking and noticing in my own path with this, like the pendulum ride. You know, it's like the pendulum ride from the disordered orthorexic fixation on, it's gotta be healthy. It's gotta be pure. It's gotta be clean. To this, like, fuck it!

And, and you know, Tara talks about that a little bit. And how that, from her perspective and her experience. I'm paraphrasing what she said in the podcast around, you know, it was necessary to swing to that other side in order to find the middle, right? Like, I'm gonna let myself indulge. I'm not gonna restrict.

And that's her journey. And for some people that's gonna be true. And that's not gonna be true for all people. And especially if there are other considerations and reasons why, you know, they're not indulging in [00:43:00] certain kinds of foods.

So for me, I feel like I'm in this place where I'm like, okay, I'm not gonna do this micromanaging thing. And also, I actually do feel a sense of self-awareness around certain choices that I do and don't wanna make. Like there are certain things that I just really, I don't want to eat. It's not really a diet to me. It's different. It feels, it's a different qualitative feel than when I'm dieting and restricting. It feels like these are foods that I have had, I've spent time.

It's sort of like a lover that, you know, you've been with that's like, that was fun. And like I went back for more, but never again. That's not for me. It's just not for me. It doesn't work for me. I don't feel good on the other side of it, emotionally, physically, whatever. And so I am abstaining from those things. And it doesn't feel like a restriction.

Susan McCulley: Right. That's right.

Candice Schutter: It's different.

Susan McCulley: Yes, it is different. I love that you're saying that. And I think [00:44:00] that what I, I have been playing with is sort of the, what's my internal experience? And it does feel different.

It feels different to be like, oh, I would love that, but I'm not going to have it, because it's not good. It's not clean. It's not blah, blah, blah, blah. As opposed to, I love myself so much that I'm not gonna have that. And I'm gonna be so freaking happy that I didn't have that. Right?

It doesn't feel like the, the deprivation. And I think that that is really it. We've got to kind of, or for me, I've gotta keep coming back to what is, what's underneath that? What's at the root of that? Is it like, ooh, you know, I didn't move much today, so I probably shouldn't have that. That's very different than, um, that's gonna feel not good on the backside, so I'm gonna make a different choice.

Candice Schutter: Maybe even literally on the backside.

Susan McCulley: Right on. So, so, so [00:45:00] true.

So yeah. I love the analogy of a lover, too. Is like, there are, there's stuff, definitely stuff that I noticed has changed for me, that over time. I mean, there was a day where you could not pull the glass of red wine out of my hand if you wanted to.

Candice Schutter: Right.

Susan McCulley: And, and now I never have it and I don't miss it because I didn't, it started not feeling good.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Susan McCulley: So I'm saying all of that to say to myself, to you, to listeners, for me, what so much of it is, comes to what, what it feels like underneath. What the underneath. What's, what's fueling this?

Candice Schutter: Yeah. What it in service to?

Susan McCulley: fear fueling this? Like, is, yeah, is uh, you know, the perfectionism fueling this? Is, um, or is, is it care? And, you know, desire for well feeling, wellbeing. And I think that the problem is that on the outside, this is, I think it, [00:46:00] or part of it.

On the outside, the behavior can look the same.

Candice Schutter: Yeah. Mm-Hmm.

Susan McCulley: It can look the same. Someone can look at somebody like me who, who eats almost no animal products. And not too much sugar, no alcohol. And they could be like, oh boy. Like from the outside, that looks disordered. And I would say that it is not. Because the choices that I'm making come from a place of this is, this just feels so good in a lot of different ways. And,

Candice Schutter: Including aligning with your values, which is also a consideration, which is why this is all so very complex.

Susan McCulley: That's right.

Candice Schutter: It's not as simple as, my hunger is this, and therefore.

Susan McCulley: That is. That's right. That's right.

And so, you know, so just in the same way that you can't look at the outside of a body and know if it's healthy. You can't look at the outside of behaviors and know if those are healthy. It is [00:47:00] coming from the inside. It has to.

And, and I think that that's part of the reason I, I wanted to share that essay too, in that I am throwing the, the lid off of hiding the true things that were going on under the surface.

Candice Schutter: Hmm.

Susan McCulley: No matter what I was saying, this is the truth of what was happening.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Susan McCulley: And so, um, so that's part of the reason it felt, feels important to share so that we can all tenderly and kindly interrogate ourselves. Or maybe not interrogate that sounds a little harsh. Just like, really, let's check in. Let's check

Candice Schutter: Mm-Hmm.

Susan McCulley: What's, what's going on? And if and when, it's like, I feel, I feel afraid of the ramifications of being in a body that doesn't align with the normative beauty standard. Well, darling, I get that. [00:48:00]

Candice Schutter: Mm-Hmm.

Susan McCulley: That makes sense. Let's, look at that.

Candice Schutter: Mm-Hmm.

Susan McCulley: Rather than trying to solve that problem by what you have for dessert or not.

Candice Schutter: Right.

Susan McCulley: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Susan McCulley: *Deserve. I am fat. I don't deserve a cookie. I don't deserve a massage. I don't deserve sex. I don't deserve love.*

Candice Schutter: Well, that's really the underneath conver, I mean, the deeper pulse, right? It's like that's what we're after is what's really like sort of the subterranean current that's running under all of this? And it's gonna be so specific to each person.

And yeah, we wanna point at this is how we should or shouldn't eat. This is we should handle diet culture. This is how we shouldn't handle it. You know? [00:49:00] This is how we need to talk to fat people. This is how we need to not talk to fat people. You know? I mean, there's obviously parameters around that that we need to think about.

But it's also about what we are, um, embodying for ourselves, our own relationship to our bodies and the way that we project it onto the world around us and then attempt to manage what's going on out there.

And I, if, if you, when you listen to the podcast and you feel that natural urge to tell me what I'm missing and what I'm not seeing and how, you know, it's like I'm open to that. And also, I think we also need to look critically at that impulse instead of just taking what works and what doesn't and integrating it and looking at ourselves.

It's like I've, I catch myself wagging my finger.

Susan McCulley: Uh-huh. Uh

Candice Schutter: At other people's behavior, instead of just really taking the note.

Susan McCulley: Mm-Hmm.

Candice Schutter: And embodying and living it myself. And not making assumptions about their experience and how they need to do things differently. You know, I think it's it's a very.

Susan McCulley: No finger wagging? [00:50:00] Candice!

Candice Schutter: Well, a little bit. Just a little bit, 'cause you know, we are human and it's. But I mean, actually speaking of that specifically, that projection. There's like so many good moments in this essay, y'all, you need to read it. Um, but I made a note of a few that really jumped out at me. And there was one, I think it might be the shortest snapshot in the whole essay that I was just like, fuck, I love this woman for naming this.

Susan McCulley: *Sidewalk judging. As I walk along Boston sidewalks, I look at every woman and judge. Fat. Thin. Fat. Thin. Fat.*

Candice Schutter: When we talk about normalizing and naming these things, we have to bring our shame with us. It's like sitting right next to us. 'Cause like I know that I have done and still do this, like reflexively. And I feel so much shame around it.[00:51:00]

Susan McCulley: Mm-Hmm.

Candice Schutter: And the fact that you named it was just like so ugh, oh my God. And to the point where I've had arguments with myself, where I'm like, so pissed at myself for doing it. But then how it shows up, the reason I brought it up right now is in the projection of like when I walk into a room and I see a woman immediately scan me from top to bottom before she makes eye contact and starts speaking with me.

This like evaluatory thing that we do. Like where do I fit -

Susan McCulley: Which rung is she on? Which rung on the ladder Is she on?

Candice Schutter: That's right.

Susan McCulley: Mm-Hmm. .

Candice Schutter: It's so hardwired into us. And I say hard wired 'cause it's like epigenetically it goes back so far.

Susan McCulley: Absolutely. Absolutely.

And I also wanna own that I, too, still find myself reflexively doing that same kind of evaluative scan.

Candice Schutter: Mm-Hmm.

Susan McCulley: And one of the things I've been playing with in the past year is just noticing [00:52:00] when I do. And when I do, whether I'm saying in my head, dang, she has got it going on. Or if I'm doing something more critical, I say to myself, *all bodies are good bodies*.

Candice Schutter: Mm-Hmm.

Susan McCulley: It's a way for me to sort of recalibrate my brain.

To notice when I do it and have something to go in its place.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Susan McCulley: For years, it didn't, it doesn't, didn't work for me to say, Jesus, Susan, you are... what the hell?

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Susan McCulley: Mean girl. Like,

Candice Schutter: mm-Hmm.

Susan McCulley: crazy. Like

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Susan McCulley: But that doesn't, that doesn't change the wiring.

And so this, having this phrase, *all bodies are good bodies*. It has been so helpful.

Candice Schutter: I love that.

Susan McCulley: And it it hasn't stopped it.

Candice Schutter: Mm-Hmm.

Susan McCulley: But it is, it, it's like, uh, it's, diverting [00:53:00] the stream. Instead of that being a rushing river of judgment and evaluation. It has, it's starting to peel off some of the force behind it.

And yeah. So I'll, I'll report back in 12 years and let you know

Candice Schutter: well, I, right, exactly.

Susan McCulley: how that's going.

Candice Schutter: I'm officially adopting that as a replacement phrase as well. I think it's, it's perfect. All bodies are good bodies. I love that. And I love what the simple, simple phrases 'cause when we're in an activated state, it needs to be really simple.

' And I say activated. 'cause for me, it's like, as soon as I go into that judgment, then I go into the shame spiral that I even had the judgment. And

Susan McCulley: Oh, absolutely.

Candice Schutter: Just this.

And, and speaking of that, you sent me a link to a podcast I listened to yesterday, which is called The Burnt Toast Podcast. We'll link to it. And the title of the episode is *You Cannot Fight Misogyny Without Fighting Fat Phobia*. It's a wonderful interview with a woman by the name of Kate Manne.

And she's the author of a book called [00:54:00] *Unshrinking: How To Face Fat Phobia*. And it's a really great interview. There's a lot of good stuff in it. Discussions obviously about intersectionality, and misogyny, fat phobia. And also, you know, pointing to the history of, of anti-fat bias, how it's steeped in racism. And just, you know, just touches upon all that. And there's, there's lots of resources around that as well.

But one of the things that she presented that I just love, love, love is she also was talking about, as we did on the podcast, there's like the body positivity movement. And then of course, you know where that came out of, which was Black women taking back their power. And then how that was co-opted by white feminism and what ended up happening with that. And so

Susan McCulley: Way to go.

Candice Schutter: That's what we do.

Susan McCulley: That's what we do. We do it.

Candice Schutter: know. And then, um, body neutrality and you know, talking about when that's helpful. And also, Kate was saying that she has this sort of other perspective that she likes to offer folks and she calls it

Susan McCulley: Yes.

Candice Schutter: Body reflexivity. [00:55:00] Body reflexivity.

And it's basically the reframe of *my body is for me*. And I love this so much. And, and to elaborate, she says it's about, you know, saying: *my body is for me. My perspective on my body is the only one that matters.*

Susan McCulley: That's right.

Candice Schutter: My body is for me, my body is for me. I love this so much that today in class I wove it into the class in a few different places. And I just, just kept sort of saying it. My body's for me, my body's for me. I love this so, so much.

Susan McCulley: Me too. Yeah.

Candice Schutter: And I wanna hear your thoughts on this, 'cause I know in some of our banter back and forth, you were kind of speaking to this a little bit, too. You wanna say something.

Susan McCulley: Absolutely. Yeah. I mean, that was the first time I've ever heard it articulated so clearly in that way. Um, and I think it is just incredible genius and transformative to think about that.

And isn't that, isn't that something. [00:56:00] That we are so trained to be focused on how our body is perceived by others, used by others, welcomed or not by others? What happens if it was just ours? I mean, this is extraordinary.

And again, I think that, that like, like *all bodies are good bodies*, it's a great little mantra to have in our back pockets when we go out there in the world and face all of the mess. Having that perspective so clearly said is incredibly helpful. And doesn't mean that there won't be harm done. It doesn't mean that there won't, there won't be painful things. It just, it is a way of reclaiming. And, um, I agree. That was, that was definitely a part that I was like.

Candice Schutter: It's a big one.

Susan McCulley: Oh, mind blown.

Candice Schutter: So good. It's so good.

And it's also like, it's such a process of. [00:57:00] Because it's, it's, it's both and, you know, as we've been talking about throughout the 'cult'ure series, like it's that, you know, inside job and systemic reality, right?

So, so then it's like, like I love the example in the podcast that's given around like, wearing a bra. 'cause I was just like, this is so relatable. Like, I'm going to the store. I don't wear a bra at home. When I'm at home, like the first thing that happens is my bra is off, off, off. Immediately.

Susan McCulley: Free the ta-tas.

Candice Schutter: Right, totally. Freedom to the ta-tas!

Like the pandemic, I probably wore a bra three days in, like two years. Seriously. I never had a bra on. And there's been these moments where I'm like, okay, I'm gonna go to the store. I'm gonna go do a thing. Like in the winter, no big deal, put on a baggy sweater. But like in the summer, right? Okay, I'm gonna go to the store, I have on this T-shirt. I need to put a bra on.

And then I think, I really do have thoughts like, well my body's, I don't use those words, but like, my body's for me who cares? Like I don't wanna wear a bra. And then there's the systemic considerations of like, okay, well, do I [00:58:00] want people to be staring at my chest wondering why I'm not wearing a bra?

The fact that my nipples might be somewhat apparent, that that might be an issue for people around me. Do I wanna take that on today?

Susan McCulley: Mm-Hmm.

Candice Schutter: Not so much. So I'm gonna put a bra on, right?

So it's so complex. And that's like back to we were saying before. It's not, so we should just do X, Y, and Z. It's like, no, we're in the water. We'll come up for air sometimes, but we gotta be in the water most the time.

Susan McCulley: Yeah. It's so funny that you say that. Because I was thinking about that very thing this morning. I'm working at home today. I'm not doing. But I also am going, I went for a walk. I went and I chose to put on a bra, because it feels better.

Candice Schutter: Mm-Hmm.

Susan McCulley: Not because of how I'm gonna present out there. But, but again, from the outside, I'm doing the, the behavior's the same on the outside. But I'm doing, I was doing that a hundred percent for me. Nobody else.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Susan McCulley: So [00:59:00] I think that that's important again, to just remember that, that the external behavior is not necessarily telling you the whole story.

And, I also love what you said, I wanna really highlight this. What do I have capacity for today?

Candice Schutter: Yep. That's right.

Susan McCulley: What do I have capacity to take on?

I think this is so important to really honor this in ourselves and really be gentle with ourselves. There are days where I am like, I surrender to diet culture, or to, to, gonna, I'm gonna wear the thing that I know is gonna get me through without ruffled feathers, and, you know, or any kind of eyebrows raised or whatever. And then there are other times where, yeah, I'm gonna wear that orange dress to that thing. Where I will wear the loud colors. I will wear the sleeveless dress even though I'm almost 60. I am, you know, all of [01:00:00] the things. Because I feel like I have the capacity to stand in that.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Susan McCulley: And I am willing to take that on?

Candice Schutter: Mm-Hmm.

Susan McCulley: It's important to not think, um, I don't know, a liberated free mind would do this.

Yes, sometimes. Sometimes, and sometimes not.

Candice Schutter: Mm-Hmm. , right? Yeah.

That's so, I'm so glad you, you highlighted that. And it feels connected to, and I know we're on a tangent here, but it feels really important. But it really feels connected to why cancel culture is so problematic. Because it very much ignores the systemic complexity that's surrounding the individual and the influences and the cultures that are all like, sort of bleeding together and shaping behavior.

So, you know, there's of course extreme examples where I'm a fan of the idea of canceling someone when like, really extreme things happen. Like. I can get on board with that. But the nuances of like, the way it's applied. Where it's like, this is [01:01:00] how you should behave, this is how you should act like the policing on the progressive side of things. You know, the policing of behaviors and like, this is how we should be now that we know better.

And it's like, yeah, okay. But what world do you live in where there's not nuance? One, where there's not nuance and pressures that I have to contend with and my capacity is limited at times. And two, like, you're really doing a great job of underscoring, just because a behavior is showing up this way, it doesn't mean that it means the same thing to me, that it means to you.

So can we give each other the benefit of the doubt? And the grace? And really that's really the, I feel like cancel culture is sort of this offshoot of the white supremacist perfectionism.

Susan McCulley: Oh hell yeah.

Candice Schutter: So it's like.

Susan McCulley: Purity culture.

Candice Schutter: Thing. Yeah, purity culture. Exactly. It's the same thing. So how can we, not... okay, we're not gonna be pure about our diets anymore, but we're gonna be pure about not being pure about our diets anymore. Right.

Well, how is that different? [01:02:00]

Susan McCulley: It's not, it's not. That's exactly right. It's the same cage. It's just the different size of the bars. Yeah. And I, I love that.

And, you know, it's, it's tough. Our brains love the black and white. Our brains rush to that. And so I have compassion for all of us who want things to be like, clear and clean and all this, none of that.

And the truth is that sometimes the best dinner there is is chocolate cake. And sometimes, you know, going along with something that you don't agree with is just what we have to do to manage sometimes.

Candice Schutter: Mm-Hmm.

Susan McCulley: And, so yeah, it is always fascinating when I'm saying, you are too dogmatic about your whatever, when.

Candice Schutter: Totally. I'm so guilty of this.

Susan McCulley: I got my, got my own dogma. I got my damn dogma. Yeah.

Candice Schutter: So much.

Susan McCulley: And that's [01:03:00] why we deconstruct it, and that's why we talk about these things. And um, and why it's so helpful to be willing to put the flashlight not just on the things that we're proud of and the things that, that we're growing into, but also the things where we regress and the things that we wish we'd done differently and,

Candice Schutter: Mm-Hmm.

Susan McCulley: um, the things that we're messing up all the time. And that's just part of the messy process of learning.

Candice Schutter: And the human condition.

Like who, who decided that it wasn't supposed to be that way? You know, isn't that funny? Like we have this sort of implication sometimes of we're gonna figure it out. We're gonna crack this whole being human thing, and we're gonna nail it. And it's like, who decided that that was even something we could do?

Susan McCulley: Or would be advisable.

Candice Schutter: Or even, yeah, exactly. Cause it seems like as soon as we start to do that, that's when we make the biggest messes.

Susan McCulley: Yeah. Right.

Candice Schutter: So it's like, or [01:04:00] I'll speak for myself. It's when I make the biggest messes. And the messes I've been involved in have been when I've been like dogmatically sure that we're cleaning shit up.

Susan McCulley: Absolutely. Absolutely.

Candice Schutter: Oh yeah.

Susan McCulley: You referenced this podcast that I sent you. The Burnt Toast Podcast is done by Virginia Sole-Smith, who is also a fantastic journalist who does a wonderful combination, I think, of well researched articles and pieces about what's actually happening for fat bodies in, especially in our country. And she mixes with that, her own experiences, um, a lot of practical information.

So for example, when I teach my classes, I like to have chairs available anybody for whatever reason. I have some participants who spend much of the class in a [01:05:00] chair. I have people who occasionally visit the chair, you know.

And one of the things I learned on, I think it was on Virginia's podcast, was have chairs without arms.

Candice Schutter: Mm-Hmm.

Susan McCulley: Have chairs that have the capacity for a body that doesn't fit in this amount of space, right? Like this.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Susan McCulley: And I would never have thought of that. Because of my privilege and because I had never bumped up against that.

So that's the kind of thing that I'm saying, is that by really listening to these, these educators and these journalists is a way of understanding what's at stake for people who are living in more marginalized bodies than, than mine. And can help me stand up and speak up for things.

So that when I go to the doctor, when I go to the doctor, when they ask me to weigh myself, I say no. Because

Candice Schutter: Hmm.

Susan McCulley: Unless it's like... I ask them, is there some reason? [01:06:00] I'm, I'm here for a sore piriformis muscle. I don't see how my weight has any impact on that.

Is there some reason? No. There's no reason. Okay.

Or, if they say it's so we can get your BMI.

Candice Schutter: Right.

Susan McCulley: Okay, I have a podcast for you.

Candice Schutter: Right.

Susan McCulley: And no and no.

So, but, but what I'm saying is that if people with thin privilege start saying no to being weighed.

Candice Schutter: That's true. That's true. I see what you're saying. Yeah.

Susan McCulley: If, if people with thin privilege are speaking up about the furniture in the waiting room.

Candice Schutter: Mm-Hmm.

Susan McCulley: There is only furniture for people of a certain kind of body.

It's important for us to see these things. And I've been so grateful for all of these resources. And, um, and I really invite, if people are interested in unpacking this stuff, these are all great places to go.

Candice Schutter: Yeah, we're gonna link to all of those. That's great. Thank you. I'm looking for as many resources as possible. I appreciate that.

I love that. [01:07:00] It's sort of practical ideas of how to use privilege to sort of shift the culture. I love that so much. Yeah.

And the BMI thing, you know, it actually circles me back to your essay and this interaction you had in high school? Was it in high school when you were being, you went in for medical advice and he said something about, the doctor said something about you should, oh no, it wasn't in high school. You were a grown woman. See.

Susan McCulley: I was grown ass woman.

Candice Schutter: This points to the real fucked-up-ness of this.

You were a grown ass woman and you went to the doctor and your doctor told you that people should weigh what they weighed in high school.

Susan McCulley: Yes.

Candice Schutter: Uh.

Susan McCulley: That, I call that one, that snapshot The Shittiest Doctor Boston.

Candice Schutter: Yeah, that's right.

Susan McCulley: He's the shittiest doctor in Boston.

I have the shittiest doctor in Boston. A man with no kindness or warmth. I'm afraid to go to someone else, though, because of what he would think. Oddly, I [01:08:00] don't want to hurt his feelings. I decide it doesn't matter that he's shitty. Two years married and not the least bit interested in having children, I tentatively, hesitantly ask him if there's anything I should know if I decided I wanted to get pregnant.

Why am I asking if I have no interest in having a baby? Excellent question. It's like eating lunch because it's noon. It seems like what I'm supposed to be asking my doctor at this point in my life. People, says the world's shittiest doctor, have been getting pregnant forever. There's nothing you need to know.

A year later, deep in the throes of disordered eating and exercising, I tell him that I'm concerned that I weigh too much. He asks what I weighed my senior year of high school. Everybody, he says, should weigh what they weighed in high school. I have no idea what I weighed then, but I tell him [01:09:00] 130, knowing full well that was what I weighed in eighth grade.

You should lose ten pounds then, says my shitty, shitty doctor. Do you exercise? I tell him my regimen of two workouts plus a walk every day. He looks at me over his shitty half moon glasses and sighs. I guess there's not much more you can do then.

And it was at a time where I was, I absolutely was deferring to his authority. Not one cell in my body was gonna question what he had to say or even leave his practice.

That's the other thing that sort of is gobsmacking to me, that I was like, oh, I don't want him to think that I don't like him by pulling out of his practice.

Candice Schutter: Oh God. How relatable is that? People pleasers.

Susan McCulley: Oh my gosh. So, right.

So, so, yeah. That was, his assertion was that it, you should, everyone [01:10:00] weigh whatever they weighed in high school. And that, you know, such a, a small example of how

people in the healthcare industry have so much authority for many of us, that it's hard for us to buck against it.

And so when these things are being thrown around, which when we scratch the surface, they're like, based on nothing.

Whether it's the BMI or like this kind of random I mean, it's so absurd.

Candice Schutter: Or toxic masculinity's visual preference.

Susan McCulley: Right on. Right on, right on, right on.

Candice Schutter: Which actually, side note, isn't even true. Because there's all kinds of research showing that actually people are attracted to larger bodies, but they hide it. So I just wanna throw that in there 'cause even fucking true.

Susan McCulley: That isn't even true. That's, that is right. That is right.

And, you know, fascinating, right?

But, I think that part of what we [01:11:00] have seen in the education of our healthcare professionals is that they are given very, very biased information, very sort of black and white information. And you know, they're also influenced by companies like Novo Nordisk and these big diet companies who go in with just gobs of money and their own kind of influence that.

Candice Schutter: And their own self-funded research that they're just pumping into these doctors. Like, look at what the research says, which is totally biased research.

Susan McCulley: Yep. That's right.

So I think that part of what I feel good about is that over the decades, my willingness to say, hold on a second.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Susan McCulley: In a doctor's office has changed a lot. And I appreciate the opportunity to use my privilege to do that.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Susan McCulley: In a way that I am far less vulnerable[01:12:00] a lot of people.

Candice Schutter: That's right. Which leads perfectly into another moment I highlighted in your essay, where you're talking about your experience in your brown belt.

Like the way that these wounds cut, like how much more deeply they cut some folks more than others.

Susan McCulley: Oh Yeah.

Later in brown belt, grappling with my own demons, a beautiful, round, brown woman who I've been admiring all week is crying about her body. This brings me a fresh round of tears, to think that she was stuck in this too. Not her, too.

Yeah. I remember that so well. That, that feeling of, I think like literally being on the floor, feeling like I was wrestling with my demons. And having spent a good part of a week watching this woman move, watching her presence and just admiring her so much in every way. [01:13:00]

And saying, not her, too.

Not her, too.

Candice Schutter: Mm-Hmm.

Susan McCulley: So, um, yeah, is important to look at our own positions and also to, yeah, just show just a lot of, of grace and compassion for all of us, wherever, wherever we are.

Candice Schutter: That's right.

Susan McCulley: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

You'll find a link to Susan's original blog post in the show notes that accompany today's episode. Or, if you love the sound of her voice as much as I do, if you head over to Patreon, I've included a link of her reading it in its entirety.

And don't forget, there's more to this conversation. If you'd like to listen in on the final 45 minutes or so of our chat, I'll be dropping it as a bonus over on Patreon later this week.

Susan, and I discuss all sorts of things, including [01:14:00] orthorexic food monitoring, the pluses and minuses of mirrors, waking up to anti-fat bias, and what it might *actually* look like to shift fitness spaces away from diet culture norms.

If you're not yet a patron of the pod, you can gain access through a seven day free trial. And you'll discover an existing library of 50 plus bonus episodes and a brand new unscripted solo series with yours truly, that I'm calling *Subject To Change*.

Head over to patreon.com/thedeeperpulse if you want to learn more.

A huge wholehearted thank you to Susan for bringing so much humility, candor, and depth to this dialogue.

And I'll be back next week with a very timely conversation. Did you know that January is Spiritual Abuse Awareness Month? There's a lot to unpack there. And my next guest specializes in exactly that. I can't wait for you to meet her.

Thanks for tuning in and if you [01:15:00] haven't yet taken a moment to rate and review the pod on your favorite streaming app, I would so appreciate if you would.

I'll see you next week.

Bye for now.