

Narrator 00:00

From Curtco Media.

Jill de Jong 00:08

Life Done Better podcast. This podcast is produced for all the unicorns who strive to create a life on their own terms, don't take life too seriously and are on the mission to make a positive impact in this world. In this show, we're getting real about daily struggles and obstacles and how best to navigate through difficult times and challenges in life so you can make better decisions for yourself and feel healthy, confident, and aligned, Feel less alone and more connected. We're in this together, from my heart to yours.

Jill de Jong 00:52

Welcome to Life Done Better. I'm your host, Jill de Jong, and today I'm talking to Sarah Anne Stewart. Sarah was thrown into the world of wellness as a teenager when her father was diagnosed with terminal cancer. Her family made a choice to fight back with alternative medicine. Seven months later, her father was declared cancer free, and a spark was lit in Sarah that propelled her to dedicate her life to spreading the healings her family had discovered. Today as an integrative nutrition health coach Sarah runs a leading private coaching practice with a focus on breaking free of diet culture through mindfulness. Sarah is the founder of the awesome Inside Out movement, an advisor to international wellness brands, and soon to be a Hay House author. Sarah, thank you so much for taking the time to chat with me today.

Sarah Anne Stewart 01:41

Thank you so much for having me, it's an honor to be here. And I just so appreciate you and the work that you do and all the light that you bring to the world. So thank you so much. I'm excited for this conversation.

Jill de Jong 01:52

Me too, because I really admire the honesty and like the vulnerable content that you share with your followers. I think everyone can benefit spending time with you and listening to some of your insights.

Sarah Anne Stewart 02:03

Thank you so much. It hasn't always been that way. I, for many years was very terrified to share about my personal life and my eating disorders and breast implant illness and some different things that were showing up specifically for me around my wounding and my trauma. But in the last couple years, I've just been much more open to sharing because I feel like it's a disservice if we if we aren't sharing our truth once we're through it. And it's been beautiful to witness just the response.

Jill de Jong 02:30

We don't want to necessarily hear what to do. But we do want to get inspired and choose to do and, and really get inspired to take action ourselves because as soon as we hear do this, do that. We're like, ooh, no. It's kind of the rebel in us, right?

Sarah Anne Stewart 02:45

Yes.

Jill de Jong 02:45

And then we're like, wow, she did that. I want to do that. And now it's a decision from within. So what opened the door for you to share? And what was that moment where you're like, you know what, I really think that this is something that I shouldn't keep to myself. What was like the first thing, do you remember that?

Sarah Anne Stewart 03:00

I was raised by parents who are very holistic. I grew up in a world where we were learning about meditation as children, we were doing yoga in our basement. When my father was diagnosed with terminal cancer, he decided to use alternative medicine and he went on this complete spiritual journey where within seven months, his cancer was completely cured. And for me, this sparked a light inside of me that said, like, I want to spread this message. And so for me, it was really about spreading, spreading my father's message for a very long time. And upon being scouted to become a model and going into the modeling world, I developed a series of eating disorders for 10 years, to the point where I was told if you don't make a change, you're going to absolutely lose your life to this eating disorder. I had so much shame and guilt because on one hand, I knew the power of food, I watched it cure my father's cancer. And then the other hand, I was using food as a way of control and it was it was taking my life. And I remember thinking like I can't call home, I can't call my parents. I don't know what to do. I don't have the support system around me to cure this eating disorder. The interesting thing was, which I learned was that it didn't matter how far I ran, it didn't matter how many people I cut out of my life, it didn't matter that I quit the modeling industry. My mind went with me everywhere I went and so that anxiety that stress, the the perfectionism, the looking in the mirror. This was very true to my life. And it didn't matter how much nutrition information I studied, it didn't matter how many experts I look to. It wasn't until I was willing and able to witness the truth within me that needed to be healed that I finally started to recognize and truly accept that this was a deeper journey. It was a spiritual journey. It was a journey of going within and really healing the parts of myself that needed this validation for so many years in the modeling industry, which was really about my relationship with my mom. So So while I was going through this process, I started coaching other women about my father's journey and I was teaching them how to drink green juice and eat more salads and I was wanting to educate women about prevention. But the the interesting part was women didn't really want that. They wanted to be met in their pain, they want it to be met in their struggles and their frustrations. And it wasn't until I met my husband, he really just, every single day encouraged me and said, you have this profound story to tell, you have been through this, you've healed yourself. And now women are going through your programs. And they're not just learning food, they're learning, the emotional component, they're learning to take responsibility for their health, they're learning to dive within. And you're doing nothing other than giving them guidance through meditation and mindfulness, and offering them the tools so that they can heal themselves from within. And this isn't trauma work, it's mindfulness work. And that's really what I'm a stand for now is just helping women love themselves as they are, so that they can become their healthiest. There wasn't a specific moment. But there was definitely this accumulation of moments with my husband, where he was like, It's time, it's time.

Jill de Jong 05:57

Yeah, and too feeble, that he loved you so much that he wanted you to go out because he could have been a different type of husband, he could have said, I don't want you to be talking about that. Because that's your past and your perfect now like the way you are, you know, he could have like made you feel that it wasn't okay to for you, for you to share. It's a beautiful way to open up other people's experiences and for them to dive in deep themselves. So I think that's your superpower, now. The sharing through storytelling. So I really admire you for that. And I think it's it's, it's really special that you healed your father, helped heal him. How is he today?

Sarah Anne Stewart 06:34

He's good. He actually lives with us. He's been living with us the last couple of years. He's great. I mean, he's been cured for 20 plus years, and still very much committed to his diet and eating as healthy as he can. And it's been just a really beautiful experience to see the cancer not come back. So for him to stay cancer free for this long is really such a beautiful thing to witness. And he actually shared his story and our mutual friend Liana Werner-Gray's *Cancer Free with Food* book. So it was really great to see him get that platform to share. It's been really just just so profound to have other people kind of take these steps and follow in his footsteps in terms of healing.

Jill de Jong 07:15

I'm sure he's an inspiration to many others. I'm sure he's telling his story, right. Like, even if it's, you know, talking to the neighbors, you know, someone that he runs into the supermarket that we all know, someone that has been, has been or is dealing with the battle of cancer.

Sarah Anne Stewart 07:29

Yeah. So it's been really great to see him go out and speak about this. And it's I think it's important for us all to once we've moved through the part of ourselves, the trauma, the pain, the frustration, I think on the other side of that, as we heal, it's just really important that we continue to have conversations because there's just so much power in coming back to connection and one on one. And really sharing from, from our truth to the people around us. And certainly important that we continue to do that.

Jill de Jong 07:56

Absolutely. And that's why I also created this podcast. So we feel less alone and more together in our journey, because we all go through a lot in our lives.

Sarah Anne Stewart 08:06

Exactly.

Jill de Jong 08:07

And so when you were talking about close to like losing your life, and it was pretty much a near death experience, like what happened for you to end up in the ER, and for them to say, if you don't change now, you are not going to live.

Sarah Anne Stewart 08:22

Yeah, so I want to preface this with, you know, this can be a little triggering to hear. Over 10 years of modeling, I was never the size that I was that they intended or wanted me to be. And so when I started modeling, I was playing sports. And so they told me to quit sports. And they told me you know, to stop eating, and you're 15 going through puberty and you're signing a contract, and they're telling you, you're going to be the star and that's what they're sharing with you if you sign the contract and do the things that they want you to do you quickly go down this rabbit hole of well, since I'm not enough now, I'm never going to be enough. And that's kind of the story that I carried. And what's interesting is that once I dove deeper into the experience around why I wanted to be a model I actually recognize that had a lot of to do with my relationship with my mother and not ever feeling good enough. Not ever feeling like I could live out her dream. She was a beautiful mother. She did a lot for us, but she wanted to live her life through us like she wanted us to have the best life and because of that I put so much pressure on myself. And so I chose a career where I wanted to continue to seek that hit of validation or that seek that hit of approval based on my external, based on how I physically looked. I began to identify myself with my size, my weight. And so it was a series of transferring the trauma or transferring the wounding from one thing to the next because I wasn't willing to look inside myself and say, oh my gosh, like I specifically really need to heal the part of myself that is seeking this feeling on the other side of the casting and the other side of the agent on the other side of getting this job. And when I reverse engineered it, where I went back to why I wanted to create impact and do what I wanted to do in my life, I was sitting on the bed just thinking, wow, like, I can't believe that I would allow this girl who connects deeply with her truth to how did she get to this place so many years later, and that's my biggest mission now is really encouraging women to really think about what drives your behavior, because if you have a bigger, why a bigger impact, a bigger reason to be alive, you'll want to take care of your body, and you'll want so badly to stay alive, right, you'll want to honor and appreciate the vessel that were given. And that was part of that process of just recognizing, sitting there and recognizing I'm not honoring the very gift that I've been given, which is my body, I'm not using my life for purpose and impact. I'm not serving in any way other than to fuel my own ego. And it was a hard thing to finally confront. And it is my hope that most women can see that their truest selves lives inside of themselves first.

Jill de Jong 11:25

It's a journey. And also these type of realizations, that you connected back to the relationship with your mom, are really powerful. And did you feel like you had to talk to your mom about these things, too? Did you share that with her? Or did you feel like you could resolve that from within.

Sarah Anne Stewart 11:39

So the first part was, I had to really heal it for myself, I had to go within and what was interesting is I met a meditation teacher, he's a sun lineage guru, his name [inaudible]. And he said, you have to unlearn the way that you were taught to suffer. And so there's three parts of the brain. It's like the identity, which you're identifying yourself as the physical, and then the memory, which is your childhood and your past, and everything that you've experienced up into this point, and everything you've experienced in the modeling world. And then, and then there's the intellect. And so through his process, he really helped me start to see that, see what's beyond the mind. See that there's an awareness of solitude, a grace, a silence an ease that exists in between thought. It was only when I started to deeply dive in to the inner workings of myself that I was able to, to disconnect from those thoughts that were running my life and begin to heal. And then, years later, my mom and I have had many conversations,

and we've done a lot of healing around this. And I think that it was because I was finally ready to stand in my truth, regardless of what her truth was. It was like, This is my truth. And I've healed and I forgiven you. And I would love for you to just hear what has shown up and how this has impacted my life. And she has been very open to that and open to the healing.

Jill de Jong 13:03

It's a beautiful thing, you know that you share that with your mom, I'm so glad she was able to receive that.

Sarah Anne Stewart 13:08

Yeah.

Jill de Jong 13:09

And you're going to be a Hay House author soon, congratulations, can you share a few things that could help start the journey to that subconscious mind.

Sarah Anne Stewart 13:19

The book is really about breaking down our mindset shifts, breaking down our belief systems. And as I've shared a few things, but it's really about taking a look at okay, well why are we putting our trust in our experts over our body? And how do we get back into the body? And how do we tap the intuitive part of ourselves and just like a simple thing to think about is so many people go from diet to diet thinking, Okay, well, that diet is going to be my answer. And then when they come to me, I say, okay, just close your eyes. And I'm going to go through a list of foods with you. And you're going to tell me if those foods make you feel good. And if you don't know yet, it's okay. But then we go through them and the amount of information that they already know is so profound, because they've already been experimenting with food. It's just the willingness to trust and so we'll do that with movement. We'll do that with lifestyle choices. And then we'll co-create this beautiful experience where they get to choose what works for them and what doesn't. And the problem is, is we just can't copy and paste a protocol or a program and think it's gonna work across the board for everyone. We're over complicating our health so much. When over and over and over again, the research shows sleep movement, leafy greens, organic.

Jill de Jong 14:34

It's quite simple like yeah, drink plenty of water.

Sarah Anne Stewart 14:37

Yeah, and we're, we're over complicating it because of these belief systems that have been projected upon us and the belief system that I'm not worthy unless I look a certain way I can't feel good unless I eat a certain way. I can't be healthy unless I have X amount of money and the book is really just calling out all those beliefs and saying, it's time to radically take responsibility for our health and our well-being, while creating change globally, of course, but really standing in our own power and saying, it's time that we all have access to those belief systems that potentially are holding us back.

Jill de Jong 15:14

Yeah. So again, instead of looking at a general, like the general information, really see what works for you what feels best, what makes you feel empowered, what makes you smile, and finding a newfound appreciation for the little things in life. That can be so empowering.

Sarah Anne Stewart 15:32

Yes, yeah.

Sarah Anne Stewart, let's take a quick break. And we'll be right back.

[Ad Break] 15:37

Jill de Jong 16:47

We're back! We're here with Sarah Anne Stewart, what would you say to the women listening now that have you know, some insecurities around the summertime and not having the exact figure that they want? Not, you know, like having the body that they wanted this summer? What would you recommend them to do, or think, or practice to actually really enjoy the summer without caring about it too much?

Sarah Anne Stewart 17:12

Yeah so, it's really interesting, because so many, so many times, we think that we can just poof, like, say something positive, and all of a sudden, that feeling is going to go away, like I'm going to empower myself in this morning to love my body. But again, it comes back to the deeper work. And I know that that's really challenging to hear sometimes. But it really comes back to recognizing and witnessing what part of myself feels insecure? And why? What is the story? Where did it come from? What belief system? Did it show up in originally that, again, has been projected upon me. And then getting really clear about what you want to feel like I think is the other really important piece is like how do you want to feel in your body? Not what do you want your body to look like? But what do you want to actually feel in your body, you want to feel joy, happiness, love, self-confidence, self-worth, and focusing on those emotions first. Because often we think that on the other side of having that six pack is going to be that experience of self-confidence. But as someone who has felt the same lack of self-worth at size zero, or size 12, it didn't matter until I worked on my mindset. And so there are some really like simple ways to start to rethink this. But you can do a forgiveness letter to yourself and your body, you can really start to again, quiet your mind and tap into your heart and recognize the gift of your body and what it's doing and how it's showing up for you. And so often I'll have people take off their vision board what they want to look like, and I'll have them change it to how they want to feel. And even that just one simple exercise changes things completely. Because it takes away the I want to look like her. And when I look like her, I'll feel a certain way. And really separating yourself from your body, to wanting to be like someone else to then appreciating your unique body for what it is. But then accepting and surrendering to the fact that you can't change your DNA to a certain extent like this is your body. And we might as well feel the gratitude and the love and the compassion and the understanding for it. And again, it just takes some deep work. And that might be working with a therapist, that might be working with a life coach, that might be doing, you know, exercises every morning for several months until you can feel that way. It might not happen this summer. But if you work on it over the next year, next summer, you could be like I'm ready for the beach and so excited to be there. And this summer, you could, you might, you know, just doing a few of these short exercises, really be able to feel and dissolve the

anxiousness and the insecurity and be able to show up and say, yeah, I don't love everything yet, but I'm working on it and I'm choosing to show up and step in to this self love that I know is deeply there even though it might not be here yet,

Jill de Jong 20:00

it is so much extreme empowerment. And like you said, a radical like shift in mindset is needed for that. There's one thing that I found really compelling and that you shared a story about your breast implant illness. It's something that more and more women share. A lot of women have breast implants these days, a lot of my friends have breast implants. And you found out that after so many years of having them, they were making you sick. And I don't hear that that often. And now it keeps showing up, I see a lot more women are sharing about their journey, and getting ill after having their breast implants for so many years. And, and there's a lot of underlying things that you may not directly link to it at first. Can you share about that?

Sarah Anne Stewart 20:48

Yeah, I would love to share about this. And this is another example of why being vulnerable is so important. Because I was a self love coach for many years before I recognized that I had breast implant illness. And all of a sudden in Tuolumne, I started getting heart palpitations. Over the next year and a half, I developed a series of very bizarre, strange symptoms, everything from rashes, to tingling in my finger to joint pain to pain under my armpits, migraines, I couldn't get out of bed, I was extremely fatigued and tired. Memory loss. And so, and my sickness kept getting worse and worse and worse. And I started hearing about women with breast implant illness, maybe six months, seven months after I started getting the symptoms, and my ego was like, can't be my implants, can't be my implants. And I wasn't willing to hear it right away. And so it took me multiple months later to continue to do the research and to hear these other women's stories. And thank God, these other women were sharing their story because it really, really helped me in. And I don't know, if I would have found the answer if it wasn't for them. You know, later on, I was like, okay, I've heard this enough, this has come into my orbit enough, I see that the universe is signaling to me to get my implants out, I met a doctor who also verified, she's like, we've done everything else. And if you want to continue to avoid what's really causing the problem, you're dealing with the symptoms, and you're not dealing with the root cause. And I think this is really important. From a holistic side of things, we always have to deal with the root cause. And I know this from studying holistic health, but yet, again, my ego was getting in the way. And so finally, I just said, okay, I'm sick enough to the point where I am absolutely ready to get these out. And I will be willing and able to confront my own body judgment, my own pain, my own forgiveness process in terms of getting these in my body, from a place of them making me sick, I had to go through the morning of getting them out, I had to sit in front of the mirror, as I do every day and just tell myself, I love my body, I'm going to love my body, with or without these implants. It's not going to change who I am inside. And this was a, this was one of those moments where I literally had to take everything in my toolbox and use it for myself. Life is going to happen challenges are going to happen. We're, we're humans and our bodies are going to change. But when you have the tools and the resources to navigate the mind. So whatever is happening in your external environment or with your body, you can manage the peace within, that's when you really get to wake up and say, wow, I have actually shifted my consciousness and my awareness and my ability to manage what is showing up for me. And that was what was so beautiful about it was I just brought in all these different practices, whether it was

writing forgiveness letters, or writing my self-forgiveness letters, it didn't matter what tool I was using, I just recognize it as part of the process to healing and healing my internal experience. And therefore, my body actually healed very quickly. Because I did the inner work multiple weeks before and after.

Jill de Jong 23:59

Thanks for sharing. It's incredibly brave to share that. So, how many years did you have the implants for?

Sarah Anne Stewart 24:05

I had them for nine and I got them out two years ago. So exactly two years ago, and I've been pretty much like 95% symptom free I would say since then. Like this last year, I'm really, really on the up. Again, this is like one of those stories where I had so much shame that I'm this holistic health practitioner that's getting sick and can't get out of bed. Like it was a very bizarre process for me to just witness myself in the shame and the guilt. And when I thought about it, I was like, I can't not share this. Like this is why I do what I do. Because if I don't share that I'm struggling with the shame and the guilt around my body and struggling with the fact that I can't figure this out. It's not giving other coaches and experts the space to also share where maybe they're struggling and maybe they feel like a fraud like I felt such like a fraud for part of that time. Because I was just like, man, I've studied holistic health for 12 years now, how is this possible that I can't figure out my own body? I never tell people what to do with their body. I never say don't get plastic surgery. But I will recommend saying do some inner work first and recognize where the desire for it comes from. And I've had so many women take that advice, and then they come back, and they're like, oh, wow, I've done the inner work for six months, and I don't want to get plastic surgery anymore.

Jill de Jong 25:27

It's really helpful to guide women that think about that this decision to truly ask themselves good questions. Why do we need this right now? And why is it important? And how do you think it's going to make things different? Everyone can make their own decisions, but I think there would definitely be a lot less breast implants around the world if we truly look inside and understand that what we have is really not all that bad. And it does not always need to be improved.

Sarah Anne Stewart 25:58

So when I first started sharing about breast implant illness, there wasn't as many people sharing and so my post kind of went crazy viral and hundreds of women reaching out, which was so interesting to me that so often when I asked them, well, what is the reason for the implant, it really had nothing to do with them, which was so heartbreaking for me to hear. So it was about their partner wanting their implants, or they think that they'll eventually find their partner if they get them or because it will boost their career in some way or because yeah, it didn't matter what it was, it was usually not about something inherent within them. And I was just very much in shock of how many women were so, so scared for the impact of what it would do to their relationships, which was so heartbreaking to me, and also opened my eyes to how much work we need to do as a culture to really empower women to think that and to believe deeply, that they can love their bodies exactly as they are. And if their health is compromised, that they can get their implants out without the consequence of losing their partner or losing their career or losing different aspects of, you know, there are financial resources and so forth. And so...

Jill de Jong 27:09
Absolutely.

Sarah Anne Stewart 27:10

It comes back to us, it comes back to doing the inner work, it comes back to the mindfulness piece and the meditation and, and also healing trauma. I think that that's a huge piece is healing the trauma that we've had growing up and so that we don't continue to live and operate from that place of pain.

Jill de Jong 27:25

It's amazing what you've gone through and continue to go through because not too long ago, you had a rollerblading accident and had multiple fractures in both arms and a serious concussion. Then I spoke to your assistant and she said, because I was asking, how is she doing? Like, oh, she's just great. You know, she has such a great attitude. And like her spirit is so lifted and seeing how this could maybe benefit in some way. I thought it was just a remarkable how she shared how you felt that your attitude about the accident. It's now how many weeks later after the accident?

Sarah Anne Stewart 28:01

It's been about four weeks since the accident. What's really interesting is going to the ER during COVID I had one of those moments where I was alone. And my husband couldn't come in the hospital. And I didn't know really how bad it was at that time. I had a lovely couple drive me, even with COVID masks on and again, it just taught me about how when we actually can confront the mind and the stories that are showing up. I originally went into the victim mode. As I was sitting there like why me, why this time, why during COVID, I have so much in my business, I have to get my book done, immediately in the victim energy. I just thought what if this is the greatest blessing that has happened during 2020? Like what if this is the greatest awakening, the greatest healing for my consciousness, my awareness of what I need right now? And how do I change my perspective in this moment? And so since that time, I wasn't searching for this is the worst case I actually was searching for how can this be the best case scenario at this time in my life. And what's been beautiful is I've been working with, you know, different healers and body workers and energy workers and chiropractors and people who I would never have been able to work with and they're discovering and sharing with me things that are beyond the accident, things that I needed clearing around things that I needed to really get out of my awareness and my consciousness in the sense of like, creating room for a deeper level of awareness and consciousness but getting out of my mindset beliefs on like, limiting thoughts and, and specifically around pregnancy because my husband and I have been trying for for quite some time and I had so much anger and resent around my pregnancy that there was things I needed to heal in order for this child to want to come in that I wasn't willing to look at until this accident happened. And that's me sharing from a very vulnerable place, of course, but I think so often, you know, we think it's so easy to just stay in the right mindset and be like, you know, my child's gonna come, but there gets to be a point where you do develop that, like anger that that frustration, and I needed to clear that in order to yeah, to move into pregnancy. And I see that very clear now. And I just I am just in full trust that this is what what was meant to happen, there was no preventing the accident, it was literally me rollerblading. And then like, the next minute I am faced planted on the ground, and there was just like, there was no time in history where I could have like, you know, changed the outcome.

Jill de Jong 30:42

And again, it's really brave that you share it, and I hope everyone that's listening is going to go like, okay, if Sarah can go through this with this positive attitude, in you know, whatever you're going through in your life, right now, you can do this too. You can say, when you're experiencing something really awful, something that you didn't plan, something that you know, is not fun, or, you know, you think that you need it in a moment. But what if you do need it in the moment? What if this could be a lesson? What if this could be a huge gift, like Sarah is just sharing with all of us, I think it's the most wonderful thing you can do for yourself.

Sarah Anne Stewart 31:21

And that doesn't mean that you don't feel that physical pain or the emotional pain, it doesn't mean that you're not going to experience the heartache of a certain experience showing up. I think it's just a reminder that you can be meditating and you can be spiritual, and you can be in alignment and really trying to ground yourself every day. And that doesn't mean necessarily that challenging things or hard, things aren't going to show up. Often the universe gives us the signs and wakes us up to say, okay, well, are you listening? Are you willing to hear what I have to say right now? Are you willing to open your mind and your heart and your consciousness to a deeper level of being to serve? I'm trying to get your attention.

Jill de Jong 32:04

This is how.

Sarah Anne Stewart 32:06

Yeah, and so it's just like, are we willing to listen? And then are we willing to confront and do the work on ourselves?

Jill de Jong 32:14

I do think that you know, someone like you really, really deserves a lot to come back to you because you give so much light, you give so much great insights, you share and show up so beautifully. I really admire you and I thank you so much for being the guest today on Life Done Better. We're going to share all your social media handles in the show notes. And please follow Sarah Anne Stewart. Follow her, like or comment and get inspired,

Sarah Anne Stewart 32:42

Thank you so much for having me.

Jill de Jong 32:44

Thank you.

Jill de Jong 32:48

Hey, it's Jill. The one thing we cannot buy more of is time. Time is precious. And I am so grateful that you chose to spend time listening to my podcast. There's a lot more I'd like to share with you. So don't forget to subscribe to Life Done Better on your favorite podcast app and stay in touch. If you have a question or a topic you want to hear discuss on the show, shoot me a message on Twitter

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Narrator 33:37

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