

Hey there, beautiful! 🌸 Before you dive in, a quick heads-up: this transcript is a super close-to-verbatim buddy from our podcast, but it's got its quirks! We didn't call the grammar cops on it, so you might bump into a typo or two. But hey, that just adds character, right? 😊 Embrace the wild side of language and enjoy the read! Happy exploring! 🚀



Fit, Active and Ageless for Life Now!

Carmen Hecox: Well, hello there and welcome to Create The Best Me, a haven for women in midlife seeking to reinvent themselves and embrace their dreams. I am your host, Carmen Hecox, and today I'm thrilled to have a remarkable guest, Kelly Howard. Kelly is a beacon of inspiration, a fitness consistency expert with a splash of adventure. Author of [“Fit: Active and Ageless for Life,”](#) Kelly has devoted over 25 years to helping women prioritize their fitness, ensuring they feel fantastic and can fully enjoy this exhilarating phase of life. Her Fit is Freedom Podcast. Coaching, retreats, and online courses have transformed the lives of countless women.

Kelly's Story: From Fitness Expert to Midlife Empowerment Guru

Carmen Hecox: Join us as we discuss this empowering world of staying fit in midlife Kelly Howard, welcome to Create the Best Me. I am a big fan, and I can't believe you're on the show.

Kelly Howard: Oh, Carmen thank you so much. I'm super excited to be here.

Carmen Hecox: Great. Can you tell the audience who you are and a little bit about your business?

Kelly Howard: Sure Kelly Howard, and I am known as the fitness consistency expert with a touch of adventure. And what my business is I help women learn how to become consistent with their fitness and then keep it for a lifetime. And we do that through some coaching course retreats and just learning how to play and have a lot of fun.

Carmen Hecox: Yes. And you know, when I think about your brand, Fit is Freedom, there's so much truth to that phrase.

Kelly Howard: Yeah. It's it. It's just the thing, because in our lives, we play so many roles, but the truth is that if we don't feel good, then we're not free to do anything well with all those roles. It just doesn't work.

Survival, Strength, and the Power of Fitness

Carmen Hecox: And I'll give you a little backstory because just your title resonates with my backstory. So last year my husband and I and my daughter always go to Hawaii. It's our favorite place to be. And so, we were in Maui during the time of the fires. And my husband and I did our best to not show how panicked we were, because we could see the fires. From where we were at from our hotel. And we had no power, no cell phones. We were trapped. And we have a 10-year-old, she's 11 now, but she was 10 at the time. And all I kept thinking is if something happens, I'm going to get my daughter, get my husband and we're going to go into the ocean. And we were staying in a big hotel. So, there's like several thousands of people staying here. And I just kept thinking anything happens, we'll just go to the ocean. I can swim. And I didn't tell my husband this because I didn't want him to know that I was scared for my life and, scared for us. Because we could see the red flames. And fortunately, the fire stopped about a mile before it reached our hotel.

Kelly Howard: Oh gosh.

Carmen Hecox: And when we got to the airport, my husband told me, he says, I was thinking that night, I thought about going and getting some life preservers. Cause there's thousands of people here and everyone probably thought the same thing.

Carmen Hecox: If the fire reaches our area, we need to get to the ocean. And my husband said, I know that I'm a good swimmer, but honestly, with that many people, I don't honestly think that I could stay in the water that long with my daughter and you. And so that's why your title, your brand resonates so much with me because fit is freedom.

Carmen Hecox: I think if we were both fit, we wouldn't fear that if we were put into a situation that meant life or death, could we survive?

Kelly Howard: That's powerful. And yeah, oh, my goodness. What a situation.

Carmen Hecox: Yeah. And fortunately, we made it out and stuff, but it's just, you never know where life's going to take you.

Redefining Fitness: It's More Than Just Looks

Carmen Hecox: And I think that being fit, in my opinion, especially after reading your book, is, it's not about having that rock hard body that we see, we all see those beach body commercials and other people that are just, they look amazing.

Carmen Hecox: And sometimes. Some of us may dream, oh, I'd love to look that way, but is that really fit? I think that you have changed the meaning of what it means to be fit. It doesn't mean that you have to look that way.

Kelly Howard: Oh, thank you. Isn't that so true, too? Of course, everybody wants to have, and I think probably I can say this with, totalitarian. All of us want to have that appearance but in the very, very bottom line, it's what we can do. It's what we can do with the bodies that we have.

Kelly Howard: It's how we take care of them so that we can enjoy our lives. We can live our lives. We can tread water when we need to tread water.

Discovering Passion for Fitness and Adventure in Midlife

Carmen Hecox: Could you share How you discovered your passion for fitness and adventure and what motivated you to focus specifically in helping women in midlife?

Kelly Howard: Absolutely. So much. We teach what we need to learn, right? I'm in my early sixties now. So, prior to that, go back to just about 50. I had purchased

a company a couple of years before, and it was an outdoor activity company. So, it was like hiking and biking and all these outdoor things.

Kelly Howard: And it was stuff that I hadn't really done before. I had always been very active, but I'd never done these particular things. So, I am growing this company. I'm doing all the work. We happened to buy a new house that was an old house. So, knowing that the best thing you can do is be your own contractor or have a contractor, I decided to set up work in the middle of that vacant house and just tell everybody what to do.

Kelly Howard: So now I'm working on two by four, running this company, starting it. My mother has a heart attack. She has a stroke and falls, ends up in a wheelchair. So now I'm taking care of my mom too. And it's no different, the story is no different than any of us, right? Like we all have all these things that are going on in life.

Kelly Howard: I was getting by on a body that I'd always taken care of, but I was also, what, late forties, early fifties now. So, you can't just get away with being a weekend warrior and expect your body to hold on. So, one day in the middle of all this, I wake up and I realized that I am in too much pain to walk to the bathroom.

Kelly Howard: Like I literally crawl to the bathroom, and I crawl back to bed. And of course, the first thing I do is, what I call hypochondriacs.com I'm on there looking to see What's wrong with me? I'm probably dying from something. And the whole time in the back of my head, I'm hearing, yeah, Kel, what you're dying from is the fact that there's nothing wrong with you except that you're not taking care of your body. You're trying to get by in a 50-year-old body, treating it like it's 20 years old. And there's nothing wrong with a 50-year-old body, except that we have to be a little bit kinder, and we have to be a little bit smarter.

Kelly Howard: So, fast forward a week or so, I'm back to doing all the things, but I'm a little bit wiser than I was a week before. And I go back to what I had done before, which was, back to lifting weights, back to doing, all the mobility, back to my basics, my routine. But while I'm doing all this, I'm also thinking about the fact that all these women I know, all these women I work with, we're all doing the same thing, right?

Kelly Howard: We're all doing all the things and expecting our bodies just to suck it up and do this stuff. And it's not real. Like it is realistic that we can do all the

things. But only if we support ourselves in the process. So, in that moment, this company was born. Now I still had, call it 10 years to grow the old company, get it to a point where it was sellable, sell it. But even during that period of time, I was still working with, I was really working with my women, like helping them get solid on whatever it was like their outdoor activities they wanted to do, or their fitness really get solid with it. And so, once I sold that company, I just decided this is what I do.

Kelly Howard: I love it, right? I really love it because no matter where you're at, in life, we can get stronger, fitter, have more fun, have more freedom, but we do have to be a little strategic about It.

Carmen Hecox: Yeah, like picking up weights or let's say you wanted to build a shed in your backyard. When you were in your twenties or thirties, maybe you could lift a lot of lumber and haul it to where you needed to haul it, or you could just nonchalant, just bend over and pick it up. The wise thing to do is lift with your knees, not bend over because we're not going to recover as quickly as we did in our twenties and thirties.

Kelly Howard: It's so hard to remember. I've got this dog that ended up living with me, two of them, and she's probably about 78 pounds, and twice, two times, I've just she doesn't like to get in the car, so I've just reached down, picked the dog up, threw her in the car, and all of a sudden I'm like, oh my gosh, what did you just do, Kelly?

Kelly Howard: And then, of course, it takes me a little while to learn, do the same thing again. And we also have to be a little smarter, I guess.

Carmen Hecox: But I think that we need to become acquainted with our new bodies. They're not really new, but they're new to us because they react differently than they did before.

Kelly Howard: They do. And maybe we get away with stuff when we're a little bit younger that we can't get away with so easily now. But maybe we're also smarter now. Obviously not since I keep picking up the darn dog, but one day I'm going to be smart enough not to do that. But we do, we get a little bit smarter.

Kelly Howard: And when we do, we learn how to work with our bodies the way they are so that we can do even more. It's just a matter of care.

Carmen Hecox: So, tell me, when you purchased this company, this outdoor activity company, and you suddenly discovered that you needed to change your life. Did owning this company; did it make it easier for you to connect with your tribe?

Kelly Howard: Oh gosh, yes. Oh yes. Because I have been very fortunate my whole life. I've always been active, and I've always been strong. And I don't know why, but I started going to the gym, lifting weights when I was about 19 - 20. I was like the only woman in there in the free weight section. And so, I've always been strong.

Kelly Howard: And what I realized was that a lot of us didn't have that lucky background that I had. So, what would happen is that women would be excited about doing something and then they'd try it, and they'd realize that they weren't that good at it. And so, they want to stop. And instead, I'd be like, no, it's not the fact that you're not that good at it. It's just that you're not practiced at it. That's all it is. We can do almost anything if we train for it. And the women that I worked with, we proved that time and time again.

Building Your Tribe: The Role of Community in Fitness Success

Kelly Howard: And this is a story I'd love to tell it. It fits, it doesn't, but it's a worthwhile story.

Kelly Howard: So I was, at the time I'd been leading hikes in Houston for a number of years. And Houston's a relatively flat city. Okay, it's flat as a board. But there's this one section in Houston that we have some hills. Houston Hills is what we call them. They're not that big, 20, 30 feet tall, not much, but it's something that requires a little bit of effort.

Kelly Howard: So, I had this hike, I was getting ready to lead and we're getting ready to head out and this woman shows up and she stops, she gets out of her car and she doesn't have hiking poles, she has a cane. I'm taken aback. I don't even know what to say exactly, actually. But I do know what I'm going to say because I'm like, oh, hi, great. Join us, right? Like I'm not going to say don't come. And she's no, no, no, no. I just wanted to prove to myself that I would come here. I'm not going to go with you guys. And I was like, wait, you don't know me. So, you're

here, you're going. And we convinced her to go. And it really became a deal where it takes a village.

Kelly Howard: Like we were helping her up. We were helping her down. Everybody was in on this. I don't know how many people I had out there. I had a crowd out there. But it became a thing, and we finished this hike, and she finished it with us. And when she got back to the parking lot, she was just like, oh my gosh, I never thought I could do that. I was hoping that in a year I might be able to go like a mile with you somewhere, but not that hike. It was three miles. It was solid. So, great story, right? But it doesn't end there. Call it four to five years later, I get an email from her, and she stayed in touch with me. She'd been traveling and stuff like that. So, I get this email and she has it's her 65th birthday. She's at the trailhead for Yosemite Falls. Yosemite Falls is a solid hike. I've done it and I was like, that was fun. So, she's at the trailhead she's just finished the hike. She'd taken a couple of friends. It was her birthday, and she did the hike. And she had taken off and she was going to go hike all the national parks around the country. That's amazing to me. That right there I could have just stopped. I, as far as I was concerned, I had just accomplished my life's mission.

Kelly Howard: But then, you go on and it keeps happening and that's freedom, right?

Carmen Hecox: It is.

Kelly Howard: Yeah.

Carmen Hecox: I love that story. I remember when I got to that section in your book where you wrote about that story. I asked my husband, how rigorous is, Yosemite Falls? Cause we've been to Yosemite. And he goes, you've never been to Yosemite Falls. He says, that's a hike. He that's not for everybody. He says, you could not do that. And you have to be in really good shape to do that. And I said, because I read about that. And it warmed my heart to read that story because I loved the community that you built. Because I think if it would have been a different community, you would have had some people say, oh my God,

Kelly Howard: Right.

Carmen Hecox: This is going to take forever. I can't believe Kelly invited her to come. Now we're going to have to chug her along. We're responsible for this

person who's out of shape. But they welcomed her. They embraced her. They motivated her.

Kelly Howard: It's so cool. Isn't it? It's a changer. It's a changer in our life. And when you have a good community, oh my goodness, like life changes.

Carmen Hecox: And the benefit that she received is that it motivated her to keep going. That she had an entire village that believed in her. You believed in her. And then the village believed in her that they helped her achieve this thing that she thought was going to happen in a year or two.

Kelly Howard: Yeah, I love that story. It's like one of those, I'll never forget that one.

Carmen Hecox: Yeah, I loved it because like I said, it just showed, the support system of, women connecting with women.

Kelly Howard: It's a big piece. It's a huge piece. I don't think we really realized for the longest what a difference a community makes. We know we need friends. And we especially know we would need friends after the pandemic. We experienced what life was like without connection. But then when you really get connected even just like briefly, right? It's when you have those connections, we need that. So fun.

Mind Over Matter: Cultivating a Fitness Mindset

Carmen Hecox: Exactly. From your extensive experience, what is the most common obstacles that women encounter and how do you help them overcome that obstacle?

Kelly Howard: There's a couple. First one starts in our head, right? I believe that fitness starts in our brain, not our feet. And a lot of times it can be one of several things. One of them is that feeling that you know what maybe it's time to just give up. Whatever it is, right? Whatever holds us back. Maybe it's just time to throw in the towel. That's one of them. The other one is, I'll start next week. And either one of those, they're two sides of the same coin, right? And so, what it's about is the

fact that a lot of times we think that we'll start next week because next week we'll have our act together. Next week we'll be perfect at this, right? We'll nail it.

Kelly Howard: Perfection is baloney. Perfection when it comes to, especially when it comes to your fitness, isn't real. If you're hitting every one of your fitness goals every day, click, you're probably not trying hard enough, quite frankly.

Kelly Howard: So, knowing that your mind's has to be your first obstacle. One way to jump around that is to give yourself a very simple little schedule of the things that it's a mix. Okay, it's a mix of some mobility. Because we need that mobility and mobility is nothing more than warming up our joints.

Kelly Howard: Think about mobility that way. It's not about stretching. It's not about having to do an hour of yoga. It's just warming up our joints. We need that. I'm going to give you an aside. This is not a squirrel moment, but I'll just give you an aside.

Kelly Howard: I've done a test, and this test is on my body. So, it's a test of one, same hike done numerous times. I'll get out of the car, and I'll go out cold. I'll come back and I'll test How do I feel? How fast did I go? All this, I'll test all the things. Then, same hike another day I get out of the car. I do my mobility workout.

Kelly Howard: After those five minutes, I go out and do it. I'm faster. I feel better. Things hurt less. So, if I can say anything, do a little bit of mobility. Then you need to have a little bit of cardio, whatever a little bit is for you, and then some resistance. And there's lots of resistance out there. But take those things and then just simply ask yourself, if I was to do a couple of these each a week, how could I put them into a schedule that fits into my time? Even if it's only 10, 15 minutes a day and start there.

Kelly Howard: Start so small that you're pretty sure what you're doing is not worthwhile. When you start that small, and you just do it for a month, right? You just give yourself a month. After a month, you start adjusting, you start getting a habit.

Kelly Howard: You maybe don't have a full habit yet, but you start getting a habit. That's what gets us moving. Just like giving ourselves a little bit of grace, giving ourselves a little bit of space.

Carmen Hecox: And I think not comparing yourself. Let's say you have a girlfriend that her body is exactly like yours. You're around the same age. And let's say she says, oh, I walk a mile in, eight minutes. And you walk a mile, and it took you 15 minutes. Maybe saying, I should just give up because it takes me 15 minutes, she could have done two miles in the time that I did one mile.

Kelly Howard: Yeah, that's such a good point. And not worrying if you're slow. That's something I see a lot. And it's always my women, it's never my guys. It's always my women. And they'll be like, I don't want to hold people back. I'm like, you know what? So what? Don't worry about it. And know that you're not that far behind. Even if it's a minute difference in a mile, it's just not that big a deal. And you're exactly right. There'll be that day when that person who was doing their 10-minute mile or whatever it was, is wondering what the heck got into you? And they're trying to keep up. So, we can't compare ourselves to other people and it's the same thing with appearance, right?

Kelly Howard: It's just hard. Like when you see the people we were talking about earlier, when you see those people who look freaking amazing, at least in photos. It's like I always say, I want to look like I do on Zoom with my filter. I do. At least in photos. And we just can't compare it.

Nutrition's Role: Fueling Your Fitness Journey

Carmen Hecox: And that takes me to page 59 where you said, we live in a society that loves instant solutions. Quick fixes might seem attractive, but seldom last. And I think this is really important, especially right now, because you find that a lot of people may be watching more TV and they see Oprah or Kelly Clarkson, who we've all known them to be bigger people and now they're smaller people.

Carmen Hecox: And we say, I'm going to go see my doctor and I'm going to ask for that diabetic medication because I deserve to look small too. But that doesn't mean you're fit. You're still not going to be able to have the endurance to do the things you really want to do.

Kelly Howard: We are very much a visual quick fix, lose 30 pounds in 30 days society. And it's hard, okay it's hard to look away. I understand that. And then if you can, and you can just run your own race is what I've always telling my women, just run your own race.

Kelly Howard: Don't worry about it. I have a client who one day she was like, oh my gosh, I'm finally running my own race. I said, and so what's happened? And she's I'm so happy. I'm so happy. She was trying to keep up with some of the other people in the group and she was trying to do other things that just didn't work for her body. And now she's just rocking it in her own space.

Carmen Hecox: And another thing when reading your book that really was an eye opener to me was my husband and I walk three and a half miles every day. And he's taller than me. Got longer legs than me. And I am like almost jogging to keep up with him. And I cannot hold a conversation with him while we're walking. Thank goodness we listen to books. I was thinking, cause we used to walk my daughter to school and that was less walking than the walking we do now. And I started losing weight when we were walking her to school. And now I'm trying to keep up with him. And it's just by the time we get home, I'm like sweating and everything cause I'm post-menopausal. And so, I'm sweating. And he's like, why are you all sweaty? And I said, I got a hot flash in the middle of all of our walking that's why I'm all sweaty. But in reading your book, you talked about raising your heart level, bringing your heart level down and stuff.

The Science Behind Fitness and Effective Weight Management

Carmen Hecox: And I thought, oh my goodness. The reason why I lost weight when we walked my daughter to school is because we had stoplights, and we would stop. So, it gave my heart enough time to drop and then spike back up. As opposed to now I'm spiked up at all time and so what do I have? Cortisol.

Kelly Howard: Yeah, that's such a great awareness, right? Cause when you were doing the walking to school, it's almost like you're doing high intensity training. Up, down, up, down, up, down. But basically, what happens is that we can get away with probably an hour of cardio, right? Hard cardio. But after that we're burning muscle.

Kelly Howard: And it's not really doing us that great. Which is a bummer. Like I love cardio. I'm a bit of an addict. But at the same time, I've also learned that maybe once a week, go hard and long. And then the rest of the time, give yourself that up and down. And high intensity training will help remove the weight versus just driving up the cortisol that doing nothing, but hard cardio does.

Carmen Hecox: The other thing that I loved is that you talked about the blend. For example, you have Isabella. She was heading for a heart attack. And so, her doctor told her to do something. And so, she walked, and she was walking, she was moving but when she saw you, you made a different suggestion. You said we need to change things up a bit. And I liked that because you talked about not just the cardio, but she also needed to do the resistance training and balance. And I thought, oh my goodness, I'm like Isabella. I'm not doing the resistance. I'm not lifting weights. I'm not doing anything about balance. About making sure that I still have balance. Cause we're not as agile as we used to be.

Kelly Howard: And it's true right but two things I can say. One of them is, when you do resistance, your balance comes back. And when you do balance work, your balance gets better every time. And it's fast, right? Like we do what I call experiments in my group. Cause I don't like challenges.

Evolving Your Fitness Routine: Balancing Strength, Flexibility, and Endurance

Kelly Howard: Challenges sound, I don't know, boring, but experiments are like, try this for three weeks or a month or whatever. And right now, we're doing a balance experiment. Start out like knowing where your balance is, what can you do? Can you stand on one foot with your eyes shut? If so, how long? Or whatever, wherever your starting point is.

Kelly Howard: At the end of three weeks, everybody's just blown away by the fact that their body and their brain have reintegrated with these balance work exercises and they're, solid. And then, the flip side of that is that the resistance does add to your balance every time. It really does. And we need it.

Mastering Muscle Maintenance: Tips for Midlife and Beyond

Kelly Howard: I mean, muscle starts going away. It's a bummer.

Carmen Hecox: Oh, I know I look at myself and oh goodness. Where I used to have muscle, I have fat. And it seems now that I'm older it seems like harder to build muscle.

Kelly Howard: It is you have to become can I use the word trickier? You have to be a little bit more cognizant.

Embracing Protein and Supplements for Muscle Growth

Kelly Howard: I'm more protein centric. And I am someone who has been a vegetarian since I was about 20. So, I didn't eat protein for 40 years. I ate pasta. It's my favorite food, right? I love pasta.

Kelly Howard: I can't do it anymore. Like I can eat a little bit of pasta once a week, but I can't get away with it. So, protein centric, more supplements that are leaning more like, and okay guys, I'm not a doctor. I'm not a nurse. I have no letters behind my name, but I will say sitting on my desk right now is a bottle of creatine.

Kelly Howard: Because I need to order some more. Because I see for myself, when I lift and then take creatine and aminos, which are basically the building blocks of protein, my muscles come on quicker. And I use more protein powders. We just have to be a little bit smarter.

The Power of Mind-Muscle Connection

Kelly Howard: And I lift differently than I used to. I used to go to the gym, and I'd use the free weights and the machines. And that was great. And now I work out at home. And so, I'm very super aware. And I'm sure you know this, but if you need a reminder to anybody listening, when you're doing your, weights, or your

resistance, or your body, or body weight, or whatever it is, you're thinking about those muscles. Because when you're thinking about those muscles, you're actually making a connection.

Kelly Howard: And they have shown again and again that you will actually increase your muscles by thinking about your muscles. And it sounds crazy, if you haven't heard this before, read it. Olympic athletes do this night and day now. I have friends who are gold medal winners, and this is how they train.

Carmen Hecox: Yeah, and my husband, he lifts weights all time. And I walked into his office, cause that's what he does during his lunch break. And I saw him lifting and it almost seemed like he was just like lifting. Not exactly like that. He was more concentrated, but I asked him, I said, hey, are you thinking about that muscle you're using? And he's what do you know? You never lift. And I said, no, but when was in my thirties I used to go to the racket club, and I lifted. I had a gentleman come up and he told me, he says, you need to focus on the muscle that you're working and breathe. And I said, and he taught me how to breathe.

Carmen Hecox: And he taught me to focus on that particular muscle that I'm working out. And I thought he was crazy, but I thought, hey, yeah, I'll try it. And I started gaining muscle definition. And I said, so you really need to focus on the muscle that you're working out and breathe. I said, I can't remember if it's in or out, with the flexion or whatever. And I said, you'll be surprised. You will gain muscle as opposed to if you're just lifting nothing is to happen. It takes a lot of mind.

Kelly Howard: Yeah, isn't It? It's so interesting to me. And I love, I love that I think something that's happening right now is that there's so much science, right? I read a lot. And so, I'm always reading the science to this stuff, because somebody's going to say to me, I had a client say it a couple of days ago.

Kelly Howard: She says, Kelly, I'm doing what you said. But I've never done any of this before in my life and I'm 67. Am I really going to see a change? So poor thing. She's probably still trying to dig herself up out from underneath all the reports I sent her showing. Yes. Yes. We can make these changes and especially if we do exactly what you just said, throw everything at it. Do all of

Carmen Hecox: I thought the guy was crazy when he told me that, but then, within a couple of weeks or so, I can't remember exactly, I was getting out of the shower and I was drying myself off and I looked at my leg and I'm like, oh my

goodness. Cause I used to run cross country when I was younger in high school, and I never had muscle definition in my legs.

Carmen Hecox: And I looked down, I'm oh my gosh, I have muscle definition. And its funny cause I never noticed it. It wasn't until I was drying off and I thought that guy's not crazy. I did what he told me to do, and I have muscle definition. So that's why when I walked into my husband's office, I said, do you do that? And he says, that's crazy and I said OKAY I said that's what I thought, and I said, but it works.

Kelly Howard: It does actually, if he likes to lift somewhere out there, and I don't know exactly where you'd find it, but there's a quote or a small snippet from Arnold Schwarzenegger, who was like, the bodybuilder King. And he was talking exactly about that.

Kelly Howard: I've ran across it just recently. I was like, oh, that's interesting. Cause that's a long time ago too.

Carmen Hecox: And don't make Mr. Olympia, without having valid information to support It.

Kelly Howard: Exactly.

Stepping Out of Comfort Zones: Stories of Transformation

Carmen Hecox: How do you think stepping out of one's comfort zone and trying new activities can benefit women especially in midlife?

Kelly Howard: Whoop, I think in lots of ways. But probably, the biggest way is that when you do something that you didn't think you could do, or something that is uncomfortable, whatever it is. Like somebody I work with, she's wants to get on a standup paddleboard.

Kelly Howard: And I was like, get on the standup paddleboard. She's like, well, I, you know. I was like, just get on the standup paddleboard. What's going to happen? You're going to fall off. Thing is that when we do something that we haven't done

before, or we didn't think we could do, or it's a little bit of a push. We never come back to the person we were before. It's like a rubber band. You stretch a rubber band and you let it go. It's never going to come back perfectly small. You were always stretching ourselves outside. And the more we do that, I think, I believe the more we're willing to experience life. The more we're willing to live a freedom life. The more we're willing to just live, like flourish, be vibrant.

Kelly Howard: Those things really matter. Like having that, I'm not going to use the word outlook, energy, like having that energy changes stuff. It just makes stuff better. I'll just put it that way.

Carmen Hecox: You stop living on the sidelines start living on the field.

Kelly Howard: Nice, nice I like that. I like that a lot. That's so true too....

Carmen Hecox: For many years I would sit there and say, geez, I wish I could be like so and so because they look so happy doing whatever it was that they were doing that I wanted to do. And I would ask myself, why aren't you doing that? Why are you wishing you could be like so and so? What makes you different than so and so that appears to be happy?

Kelly Howard: Yeah, and it's so true. I know, and this goes back a long time ago, a long time ago. I'm going to say it was probably 25 years ago. I was reading this magazine article, and it was talking about a river in Texas. And this guy had run it and it's a whitewater river in Texas.

Empowering Adventures and Overcoming Limits

Kelly Howard: And I said to my partner, I went, oh my gosh if we were younger, I would love to try that. And those were my exact words. I couldn't even believe, now I can't even believe I said it at the time. If we were younger, we should have tried that. About five years later, one of my members in my club said, hey, can we try whitewater kayaking?

Kelly Howard: And I'm like, sure. Like how bad could it be? So, I get there it was awful. Oh, it was awful. I thought I was going to drown. I couldn't swim, all the things like I was the worst paddler in the world. But it caught my attention because

it stretched me so far that I was like, wow, I've never run into something that I just simply cannot do because it mentally debilitates me.

Kelly Howard: And I just kept coming back. And this poor instructor, you would just see it on his face. He's oh my gosh, she's back again. Like she's the worst person who's ever come here. And what happened though was that now 20 years later, it's my passion. It's so much fun to me. Like I couldn't imagine not doing it. But it's because I kept getting pushed past my comfort zone and it was a tough thing for me to do. But in doing that, I found something that I would have never done before.

Kelly Howard: And I have friends that I would have never met before. And it's just one of those things. Like you don't have to do something that you're thinking you're going to die at. But you do need to do things that you're like, whoa, huh look at me do that thing. It's a big piece. huge.

The Ripple Effect of Pushing Boundaries

Carmen Hecox: And my husband and I were watching this Netflix movie. It's Diane Nyan. And I just told my you know what, regardless to whatever they don't want to say that she really, swam from Cuba to Florida. The Florida Keys, even though she did, because there's all these rules that say she didn't do.

Carmen Hecox: I said, but the bottom line is she did. And she was 64 when she did it. And that to me is so empowering because it just showed that she became stronger and stronger with every single fail. And she'd been trying this since, 30 years prior, when she was younger and stronger and resilient, and she failed. But it took her five times, and she finally did it. And so, don't underestimate what you can do if you really want to do it.

Kelly Howard: Yeah, so true and yeah that was a very powerful movie. And a very powerful, not just movie, but story. A very powerful woman.

Carmen Hecox: Just, I was just taken back. I told my husband, I, remember every fail. I remember seeing it on TV and I said, and now seeing it from a different lens I'm older now, it's empowering.

Kelly Howard: It's super empowering.

Carmen Hecox: With that said, have you ever had a woman that said, I absolutely would love to do this, but I can't do it. And now she's a leader. This thing that she said she could not do she's a powerhouse she's rocking it. Other than yourself, cause you already gave that story.

Kelly Howard: Aw, yeah, I know. I, yes and this a story that I probably shouldn't tell but I'm going to. So, I have a client who, when she first came to me. To all you listeners, I apologize my dog is chewing on a bone and I'm trying just quiet her down, and it's impossible.

Kelly Howard: So, I have a client who comes to me and when she did, she said that her goal was to be able to walk down the stairs one foot after another, solid, have balance, without hanging onto the handrail. So, this is her goal a year and a half ago. And so about eh three months ago, she's with me in Costa Rica. We have a bit of a; we have a bit of a moment. We're in a raft and the raft, so everybody listening, this has never happened before. It will never happen again, but it was funny now. So, the raft gets stuck against a rock. We can't get it off. It's there. So, I've got all these people in my raft. It's myself and a guide. So, we get them off the raft onto a big rock in the middle of the river. And she's one of those people. So, she climbs onto that rock. She then stands on that rock in the middle of that river and then moves down to the other raft. It was an in the middle of the river rescue. And we were talking afterwards and she's oh my gosh, that was intense, but I think I have a new goal. And that goal is to be able to do that anytime I need to. And I said to her, I went, do you remember what your original goal was with me? She's like no, I said, your original goal was to be able to walk down a set of stairs one foot after another without grasping onto a handrail. And here you are, you're in the middle of a class four river, you get out of a raft, you balance on a rock, and you get down on the other side. I'm like, you are a rock star, literally and figuratively. So, to me that was an extreme situation, but wow, she could have frozen. There were other people in that raft that froze. Believe me, they just froze, and we just had to deal with it. She did it. That's huge. That's super huge. And one other, because not everybody can relate to being on a raft in the middle of a river and she couldn't either, quite frankly.

Kelly Howard: But there's another one where one of the ladies who came with me in the book, I talk about the view from the top of the mountain. She came with me on the first retreat and when she got to that retreat, she didn't know any of us. She'd never met us before. She'd met us on zoom, but she'd never met us in person.

Kelly Howard: And she told me, she said, my kids are really uncomfortable that I'm here. They told me that I shouldn't go. And they're like, where are you going? And what are you doing? And she said, I need to be very careful. And I may not be able to do all these things. So, I'm like, okay, no problem. Let's just do what you do.

Kelly Howard: Are you kidding me? She was leading the pack. She was at the top of the mountain. She's like cheering everybody on. That's it. Like life gets so big when you get to play like that.

Carmen Hecox: That's amazing. and I think. that these women, what happened is, in this situation, they removed themselves from who they thought they were and become who they really are.

Carmen Hecox: Yeah, that's a really good way of putting it. Cause it's true. Because we do tend to play safe a lot of times. And when we push back a little bit, doesn't have to be big, right? Like you don't have to be trying to drown yourself in the middle of the river. You just push back a little bit and you just stretch so much you become super women. I think all of my clients are superwomen, It's just so amazing.

The Transformative Power of Self-Care and Movement

Carmen Hecox: And most of your clients are women over the age of 50 am I correct?

Kelly Howard: Yes, so I think my youngest person is 49. My probably my oldest client is about 75. She came with me on, we went to the Smoky Mountains last year. She did every single one of those hikes. She rocked it? like nobody's business.

Carmen Hecox: That's empowering.

Kelly Howard: There you go.

Carmen Hecox: It is. It's so empowering because you find that sometimes women, once we get in the menopause years, we start to say, oh, I can't do this because I could have osteoporosis. I got to take care of my bones. But here are women that are saying, you know what? I'm going to prevent that because I'm going to be fit and I'm not going to limit my freedom because this could happen.

Kelly Howard: Yeah, you know, things happen. Things happen in life and a lot of times they happen when we're really not having much fun.

Carmen Hecox: Could get up the couch, trip on the dog, break your hip.

Kelly Howard: All right. Exactly I know somebody who just grabbed her suitcase off a rack and ripped her shoulder. I'm like, well, hopefully you were somewhere fun doing that. Yeah.

Carmen Hecox: I absolutely love your book. As I mentioned to you before our recording, I love your book. It was very well written, very inspirational. And what I loved about it was that you didn't have these rock hard, you did have some women that were fit. And just wanted to move to the next level.

Carmen Hecox: Maybe do something a little bit more adventurous, more rewarding per se in a community. But then you also have these women that were couch potatoes per se, or not really couch potatoes, but they were powerhouses. They were rocking it in the business world and spent too much time in their chair that unfortunately they were out of shape. And working with you allowed them the opportunity to turn into somebody different.

Carmen Hecox: I love it. And the other thing that I thought was interesting and I can't remember the actual lady that you wrote about in the book. But you talked about this woman who owned her own business. She was involved in; I believe her church. And she was your go to person because she got everything done.

Carmen Hecox: And if you added something to her layer of to do list, she got that done too. But she wasn't taking care of herself. And working with you, you allowed her to prioritize self-care then everything else.

Kelly Howard: Yeah, self-care is, it's funny. We've been, it's like self-care is fluffy. self-care is not fluffy. Self-care is doing the things that we know we need to do to be able to do the things that we want to do forever. That's self-care.

Carmen Hecox: Fit, fit, is freedom, is self-care. It's basically what it is. It's putting yourself first so that you can do all the other things.

Kelly Howard: It's true and if anybody's listening, thinking, oh, but isn't that selfish to put yourself first? The truth is that if we don't, those people that we love, that we're caring for are going to be having to take care of us. So yeah, but if we put ourselves first, then they're going to be able to play with us for a very long time.

Carmen Hecox: Kelly, what advice would you give that listener right now who's listening or watching right now and says, I'd love to do that, but. What would you tell her? What would be the first thing that she should do right now to eliminate the but and move forward?

Starting Small: The Path to Fitness Freedom

Kelly Howard: Hum yeah so there's lots of buts. There's usually no time. I don't know what to do. I've got too many injuries. I have to throw in the towel, that kind of stuff. So, the first thing I would say is create what I love to call an MDM, which is a minimum daily movement. And that minimum daily movement is going to be so small that you are sure that it is useless.

Kelly Howard: Okay. Because when you can do something like, let's say it's just like five minutes of mobility and five minutes of walking, like that's pretty small. We can all do it. You cannot tell me that you don't have time for that one. But if you do it, and you do it consistently five days a week and you do it for a month.

Kelly Howard: What's going to happen is that even though you're sure like, I guess I'm going to add a second piece to this in just a second, but let's just say you do it for a month. What's going to happen is at the end of that month, you're going to be a little bored with that. And instead of giving up, like so many of us have done on so many different diets and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

Kelly Howard: We've got a fire, right? We have a little bit of a habit started there. So, then we step it up, maybe we step it up to 20 minutes. Maybe you step it up to 30 minutes. But what you're going to find is if you're willing to give yourself that gift of movement for a month, then the bug is going to bite and you're going to keep moving. And you're going to start finding new ways of dealing with this.

Kelly Howard: And you have to, and I don't like the word have to, but you're going to have to add a little fun into this because if it's boring, if it's not fun, it is not sustainable. So, you have to find a few things that you enjoy doing. And if you are somebody like some of my people who tell me, there's really nothing I like to do that involves exercise.

Kelly Howard: Then you need to think outside the box. And just start like being aware. One of my clients lives in Hawaii and she said to me the other day, we were on a call and she's oh my gosh, all of a sudden, I realized that she can't stand up paddle board anymore because she can't carry her paddle board down to the water.

Kelly Howard: She had some problems. She went oh, I could just go rent one of those paddle boards that's already down there. Thinking outside of the box. You're going to have to start thinking outside a little bit and having some fun. And then add to that when you're ready. Add to that a little bit of nutrition because food matters.

Kelly Howard: Add to that a community because community matters. Add to that some accountability if you need it. But start somewhere where you know you're willing to do it. And you have to have a reason. It's that North Star. You have to have a reason. The reason could be as small as I don't want to fade away, which is really big actually, it sounds small, but it's huge. Or it can be as big as I want to do something stinking amazing that I've never done before. And I've got to start somewhere.

Carmen Hecox: Kelly, how can people learn more about you and maybe even begin to work with you?

Kelly Howard: So, my website's always the easiest place, which is just fitisfreedom.com. And from there you can find all the socials and all the stuff. And also, in your show notes, we will have a free copy of my book. It's going to be an electronic copy, but anyone that's listening can download this and get started.

Kelly Howard: I am adamant about helping women do anything they need to do to get moving. So, you can get the book for free. Follow it, even though it's free, there's value there. And you're going to be able to walk away with not just inspiration, which I think is nice, but you walk away with a plan too. Which is probably, you know the gold.

Carmen Hecox: For anyone who is thinking about downloading it, you need to download it. This is an amazing book, a beautiful book. Well written. It was as if though you were sitting up there talking to me the whole time. It was very quick, easy, very concise. I loved it. Love the book. And I recommend any woman, every woman or man, read the book. It's great stories and awesome resource. Kelly, thank you so much for coming on the show. I look forward to reading another book if there's one in the works.

Exploring Future Projects and Simplifying Life

Kelly Howard: Oh, there's two in the works. What am I thinking I finished that book, and I went, well, I don't have to do that again. And the next day I woke up and I went, oh, I have a couple ideas.

Carmen Hecox: Any future projects you're working on other than books?

Kelly Howard: Other than books probably the project for this year, is to really like, within my group program, we have the Fit is Freedom course. And we're redoing the course. So that's a big piece. And then really the rest of this year, my big project is to simplify my life. So that I have more and more time to play, and people would be like really Kelly how can you have more time to play? Because it's just it matters. So those are the big projects.

Carmen Hecox: Perfect. Thank you so much for coming on. I will include all your information in the show notes and the downloadable link for people to get a free copy of your book that everyone needs to own.

Kelly Howard: Well, thank you Carmen and Thank you. to everybody listening. I truly appreciate it.

Wrapping Up: The Impact of Fitness and Adventure

Carmen Hecox: That wraps another invigorating episode of Create the Best Me. A huge thank you to Kelly Howard for joining us and sharing such invaluable insights and stories. Her passion for fitness and adventure is truly contagious. You can find all of Kelly's contact information on Links and downloadable copy of today's transcript at createthebestme.com/ep059.

And also, don't forget to grab your free copy of her transformative book, [“Fit Active and Ageless for Life.”](#) And if you found today's episode inspiring, please subscribe to our show and share with your friends. Your support means the world to me.

Join me next week as we explore effective communications and relationship buildings in midlife. A crucial topic for personal growth and strengthening our connections.

Remember, midlife is not a phase. It's an opportunity to become the person you've always envisioned.

Until then, keep dreaming big, take care of yourself, and remember, you are beautiful, strong, and capable of creating the best version of yourself. Thank you for watching. Catch you next week. Bye for now.