

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! 🚀



Health, Happiness & Beyond: 10 Experts' Best Game-Changers

Carmen Hecox: Hello everyone, and welcome to our very special 100th episode of Create the Best Me. Today, we're celebrating by looking back at some of our most powerful and insightful episodes. We have an amazing lineup of highlights from inspiring conversations that truly resonate with our incredible community. And to be really honest with you, choosing which episode to showcase wasn't easy because to be honest with you, I think every one of my 48 guests had inspiring messages. So, before we begin, I want to say thank you to all my guests who helped get us this far. We wouldn't have made it without each and every one of you. And thank you for watching or listening to the show every week.

Broadway, Big Screens, and Books: Heather Hach's Tale

Carmen Hecox: Today, we'll start out with ["Broadway, Big Screens And Books: Heather Hach Tale,"](#) featured Tony-nominated writer, Heather Hach, famed for "Legally Blonde the Musical," "Freaky Friday," and "What to Expect When You're Expecting." In this conversation, Heather explored why creating multifaceted female protagonists is more crucial than ever and how she channels the real-life complexities of being a woman into her story.

Both "Legally Blonde, the Musical" and "Freaky Friday" feature strong, multifaceted female characters. How has your experience writing these women influenced the protagonist in your novel?

Heather Hach: I'm just interested in women's stories. And I'm really interested in kind of commenting on what we're going through right now, it's really complicated

to be a woman. I think that's why Barbie resonated on a lot of different levels. But one of the reasons it resonated so incredibly with everybody, or most people is because it really gave voice to how complicated it is to be a woman in this world today.

And there's a lot of contradictory information about what we're valued for and what people want out of us. And always kind of walking that tightrope of satisfying everybody. I mean, I think that just always trying to take care of everybody and always trying to make everybody comfortable is such a female, perspective.

And I'm really interested in women's stories that are empowering and maybe in a more unconventional route. Like Elle Woods on paper would not be seen as the most traditional feminist heroine, someone following her ex-boyfriend to college. That's not the best choice, but her mistake ended up leading her to where she needed to go and to find her own strength.

So, I'm also for looking at the bestness that it is to be a woman, and Kat is not a linear character. She is a mess. She had a troubled past. She definitely battles with mental illness, and she's struggling. Um, but I have great sympathy for her, and I really wanted to give, a humanity to a messy complicated character.

And I'm interested in exploring what it means to be a woman today.

Carmen Hecox: Heather's perspective reminds us that we don't need to present women as flawless heroes. In fact, it's the so-called messiness that resonates with many of us. Here's what stood out:

Embracing Imperfection: Heather talked about Elle Woods and how following her ex-boyfriend to law school might not have been the best plan, yet it led her to find her own strength and purpose. This demonstrates that poor decisions or unexpected detours can lead to personal growth.

Commentary on Modern Womanhood: From Legally Blonde to the complexities of Heather's first novel, "The Trouble With Drowning," Kat, a character who's battling mental health challenges. Heather is interested in highlighting the contradictions and pressures women face today, like always being expected to keep everyone else comfortable.

Catalysts for real conversation: Heather's work invites us to reconsider how we judge women based on outward choices. Sometimes, the "wrong move" can trigger life-changing self-discoveries.

If you feel like your life isn't perfectly linear, Heather's message is a powerful reminder that there's strength and wisdom in chaos.

From Darkness to Empowerment: Kathy Wisniewski's Journey

Carmen Hecox: In "[From Darkness to Empowerment, Overcoming Abuse,](#)" Kathy Wisniewski bravely shares her journey of surviving multiple abusive relationships. She opens up about the realization that she was the common denominator in these patterns and how facing that truth propelled her toward real change.

Kathy Wisniewski: I'm no different than anyone else out there that's experienced any kind of abuse. That, I'm not special. And I think that, a lot of times the piece that maybe we miss is just like the piece of advice that my mentor gave me. Like, you're the common denominator. If you've had more than one abusive relationship, figure out why. And don't be offended by that question, but just do the inner work to figure out what is it about me that may be causing me to walk into these situations to not be able to see the signs or that kind of thing. And go within and control the controllables. You can't control everything obviously, but there are some things that you can control. And there is, hope and there are people and places that can encourage you.

And yeah, I think that, if I did it with someone who I was deeply, deeply in love with, I think you can do it too.

Carmen Hecox: Kathy's experience highlights a critical aspect of healing and the willingness to look inward. Here's some key reflections from Kathy's message.

Self-reflection is a non-negotiable: When Kathy realized she had to figure out why she gravitated toward these abusive relationships, it shifted her perspective. This isn't about blaming herself; it's about reclaiming her power by understanding her triggers and patterns.

Controlling the "Controllables": She talked about focusing on what you can change - your mindset, your boundaries, and your self-worth. Trying to control or "fix" an abusive partner is not only ineffective, it's emotionally draining.

Seek resources and community: Kathy reminds us that hope does exist, even when it's difficult to see it during this challenging time, whether it's therapy, a mentor, or a supportive friendship group. Kathy reminds us that no one should walk this path alone. There is hope and help out there if we're brave enough to seek it.

If you or someone you know is facing a similar situation, Kathy's story can be a beacon showing that true empowerment often starts with looking within.

Unmasking Success: Cortney McDermott's Authentic Journey

Carmen Hecox: Our third highlight is ["Unmasking Success: Cortney McDermott's Authentic Journey,"](#) who uncovered the power of reconnecting with our bodies to heal emotional strain. Cortney shared practice like Qoya, "shaking," demonstrates how physical movement can release tension stored in our muscles and our organs.

Cortney McDermott: As women, especially when we're running all these things and we're and we're mothering we can get very detached from our physicality. Our, the awareness of our physiology, the awareness of our needs, the intelligence that lives in this very complex organism that we call a body.

And so, one of the very first things that I actually stumbled across was a practice called Qoya. And when I did it that it was in particular one practice It was called shaking. And the woman Rochelle, who was the founder of this when she was teaching it she was suggesting that we shake one hand.

And whoever's listening you might want to do it just you know you shake one hand vigorously for the time that it takes for me to tell the story and you'll see what I'm talking about. And so, she suggested we shake this hand, and we keep the other one stagnant. And while she told us this story of a gazelle being chased through the wetlands by a tiger, but the gazelle gets away. However, the gazelle does not go to therapy for the next 10 years about this time that a tiger chased her through the wetlands. What the gazelle does is she shakes, through every part of her body,

releasing the tension, releasing the fear, and she goes back to being a gazelle. When I heard that story, and when I started to shake through my body, at that time I actually couldn't shake certain parts of my body.

I couldn't shake my legs very quickly; it was like they were, there was a lot of stuck energy in there. I couldn't shake through I just didn't have that freedom of a physicality. And after I started doing this for a while, I started to notice that things were shifting. Now then of course after that I started to study the science behind it not through that tradition but, through scientific journals and things. And understanding what was happening that these neuropeptides are actually stuck in the different organs of my body. You know again lots of times we think something is up here, it's in our mind when in reality, it's stuck stagnant energy in our bodies.

And I think that was one of the huge keys for me. In fact, I know that was one of the huge keys for me to releasing a lot of the tension that I had been holding. Another huge key for me was relaxing. And that's really hard to do when you're wound up because we don't even know we're so wound up. you know,

Carmen Hecox: Cortney's story uncovers the importance of mind-body connection. Here's what we can take away.

The Body Remembers: Cortney references the science behind "stuck" neuropeptides in different organs highlights that past stress can literally be trapped in our tissue.

Movement as Medicine: The simple act of shaking, like the gazelle that outruns a predator, helps discharge trauma. This might feel silly at first, but it can be transformative.

Relaxation is a Learned Skill: Especially for busy women balancing many roles. Recognize how wound up we are is the first step. From there, consistent practice like gentle movement, deep breathing, or mindful stretching can lower our stress baseline.

If you've been feeling stuck or restless, incorporating short bursts of freeing physical movement could be the relief you didn't know you needed. If you enjoyed Cortney's explanation of Qoya, I'd recommend you read her book, "Give Yourself Permission."

Menopause and How It Affects Your Skin:

Dr. Mary Alice Mina

Carmen Hecox: In "[Menopause and How It Affects Your Skin](#)," Dermatologist and Dermatologic Surgeon Dr. Mary Alice Mina delved into the hormonal upheaval of menopause and how it manifests in our skin - from dryness to increased sensitivity. She emphasized diet, stress management, and reframing aging as a larger journey.

I've also heard that stress and lifestyle factors can have a significant impact on your skin.

Mary Alice Mina: Absolutely. So yeah, if you can just eliminate all the stress, you'll have amazing skin. It's that simple. I'm just kidding. But yes, stress and lifestyle for sure. I haven't actually read the book or watch the Netflix show about the Blue Zones, but I think that sort of shows that longevity, a lot of things affect longevity more than just going to the gym or working out. Well, it's sort of like a culmination of all of these things. Having a purpose in life, managing your stress. All of those things impact aging. And if you are not taking care of your body, you're not eating well; you're eating processed foods. That's another thing I didn't mention, but actually eating processed foods, refined sugars, they actually bind to your collagen and make your collagen more brittle, friable. And so, again, trying to eat whole foods, fruits and vegetables. I like sweets, so I can't say I can't eliminate sweets, but having them in moderation can really be impactful.

And yes, stress: when we're stressed out, our cortisol levels go up. We have inflammation, which that raises inflammation in our bodies. And when our bodies are inflamed and cortisol levels are high, it's hard for us to fight infections. And it's hard for our body is in this fight or flight state. And so it's not a good place to be in, perpetually for years and years, right?

It's something just for emergencies. And then, learning how to manage that stress, manage your mind. That's something that I've really kind of diving deep into now in my forties. It so much is mindset and mental. And I'm not saying these changes that we're seeing are all in your head, they're not. But how you reframe it. How you

look at aging, all of that is going to change how you feel about yourself in your life. So that's super critical. Absolutely

Carmen Hecox: Dr. Mina's advice goes well beyond skin care products:

Hormone and Cortisol: Menopause triggers shifts in estrogen and other hormones, and while chronic stress can spike cortisol levels and foster inflammation, both accelerate changes in our skin texture and resilience.

The Role Of Nutrition: Refined sugars can weaken collagen, making our skin more prone to sagging and wrinkling. Meanwhile, whole foods, fruits, and vegetables help maintain healthier complexion from the inside out.

Mindset Really Matters: Dr. Mina champions reframing how we see aging and less about "losing our youth" it's more about embracing wisdom and self-care practices that keeps our entire body, including our skin at its best.

It's a holistic reminder that beauty is deeply intertwined with our overall health, stress levels, and emotional well-being.

Overcome Anxiety with Proven Strategies: Susie Maldonado

Carmen Hecox: ["Overcome Anxiety With Proven Strategies,"](#) brought us the inspiring health and fitness coach, Susie Maldonado, who focuses on tangible strategies to conquer anxiety. She discussed everything from daily self-care routines and hydration to the concept that pain and peace can coexist. Let's listen to Susie's message.

Susie Maldonado: Like, rewind your day. Typically, whenever I have minimal sleep, I am more prone to have a negative mindset. And so, there's key functions: are you hydrating well?

Because a lot of times if we have headaches, we're not hydrating well, it causes all these ripple effects. If you're not getting out in nature. If you're not playing, if

you're not sleeping well. Typically a lot of it can be stemmed back towards how are you taking care of yourself? How are you filling your cup?

Are you surrounding yourself with the right people? Are you doing the things that make you your best? But really after losing my mom, life was really hard. I was able to learn that both pain and peace can co-exist. I was able to learn that resiliency is my value for life. I was able to reflect on so many things. And overcoming adversity, but this time it was different. This time, it was a matter of stepping up, stepping in, and stepping over into the next chapter.

Carmen Hecox: For our listeners who are women in midlife, looking to adopt a positive outlook. What are the best practices that you recommend starting with?

Susie Maldonado: This one's tough for midlife women. The words I'm going to say may sound easy, but they're not. You have to understand that hard choices make an easy life, and easy choices make a hard life. I would say monitor the language that you speak to yourself. So, if you are a midlife mom say you have kids, you don't have kids, no matter what is happening, you are you.

So that's the seven inches between your two ears. The dialogue that happens, it is reflective through body language, through whatever it is. So, I would just say, grace, have compassion for yourself. Talk to yourself the way that you would talk to your best friend. Don't say you have to be kind because those words are rooted in our identity. In our self-confidence and our self-worth. Our self-worth really is the best way to put it, it's like the foundation of a house. Your self-worth has nothing to do with what you do. It's, it's how you see yourself day in and day out. Is the foundation of your house? Is it solid? Is it sturdy? Is it shaky? Is it cracked?

Because from there, the house that you build on the foundation is your self-confidence.

Carmen Hecox: Susie's wisdom is grounded in simplicity and compassion.

Back To Basics: She reminds us how crucial sleep, hydration, and a supportive environment are in shaping our mindset. If we neglect these basics, anxiety flares up more easily.

Self-talk Shapes Reality: According to Susie, the words we choose for ourselves matters immensely. Even subtle changes, like choosing a kinder inner voice, builds resilience and self-worth.

Hard Choices, Easy Life: Susie mentions that enduring short-term discomfort, setting boundaries, saying no, or making healthy choices can yield a much more peaceful long-term outcome.

Her message is that overcoming anxiety often starts with small, daily commitments to self-care and mindset shifts.

Stop Living on Autopilot: Shannon Talbot's Challenge

Carmen Hecox: In "[Stop Living On Autopilot](#)," performance coach, keynote speaker, and author Shannon Talbot pushes us to confront whether we're merely existing or living. She recommends writing your own obituary to see if our current path aligns with what we want our life to be.

Shannon Talbot: So, I have an exercise in the book that I like to go to. It's very morbid, and people are like, really Shannon, really? If you were to write your obituary, it sounds horrible, I know, I'm sorry, but if you were to write your obituary right now, what would it say?

And are you okay with that? And I think a lot of times we play it safe, right? Or we just, we're just trying to get through the everyday. We're trying to survive. And at certain times in our lives, that is totally okay, right? There's certain periods of our lives we're going to go through where it's really rough, and we just have to get through the day.

But there are other times in our lives where we know we're holding ourselves back, where we know we could be destined for bigger and better, and we're just scared. And then to that, I would ask, then are you going to be okay with not pursuing it? We sometimes think it means this chasing our dreams means going from A to Z and it doesn't. It just means taking one step in that direction and then another step

and to keep going until you get there. But if you can break it down into smaller steps, it actually won't seem that risky at the end of the day.

Carmen Hecox: Shannon's approach might feel a bit morbid, but it's also incredibly motivating, and here's why:

Facing Mortality Sparks Action: Thinking about the end of our life can be a wake-up call for seizing the present. It forces us to ask, am I okay with where I'm headed?

Taking Baby Steps To Big Dreams: She emphasizes that achieving your goal doesn't require a massive leap from A to Z. It's about breaking them down into smaller, more digested steps, each one building momentum.

Give Yourself Permission To Shift Gears: Sometimes, we coast along, especially after overcoming a tough season. Shannon challenges us not to stay in survival mode longer than necessary. It's okay to aim higher once you have the bandwidth.

If you've been living on autopilot, consider what you truly want your legacy to be and start making small moves to align with it. Shannon's book, "Breaking Free," is a great guide to help you move to the next level without feeling burned out or overwhelmed.

Transform Your Brain Health: Dr. Anna Marie Frank's Holistic Tips

Carmen Hecox: ["Transform Your Brain Health Holistic Tips,"](#) featured Dr. Anna Marie Frank, who passionately spoke about reframing negative thoughts patterns and releasing the holds that others' opinions have on our well-being. Her holistic take on mental health integrates both mind and physical care.

Anna Marie Frank: Well, first, pay attention to your narrative as it is right now. And if it is constantly looking for what's wrong in the world, that is already going to fog your memory and fog your thinking. Because you are living in a stressful state. This was a huge lesson in my essentially reprogramming of my brain. I had to learn to let go of so many things. I had to learn to realize that what other people think about me, what other people say about me has nothing to do with me and everything to do with what they've been through. Because at the end of the day,

nobody can change your character. Your character will always shine through. So, if you're a person that has integrity that does what they say they're going to do, this is a great way of being. And so really pay attention to what you're allowing to hit you inside and make you feel disrupted.

Carmen Hecox: Anna Marie's message underscores that our mental landscape directly impacts our physical state.

Negative Narratives versus Foggy Thinking: chronic negativity keeps our brains in stress mode, which can actually impair our focus and memory. Recognizing the thought loops that drag us down is the first step.

Unapologetic Integrity: She reminds us that no one else's words can change our character. If we act with integrity, our true selves will shine through regardless of external criticism.

Personal Accountability: Letting go of what others think doesn't mean ignoring constructive feedback - it means not allowing harmful opinions to define your self-worth.

Anna Marie's framework teaches us that emotional clarity and self-respect are the cornerstones of a healthy mind

Become Your Own Personal Stylist: Alison Bruhn's Advice

Carmen Hecox: in "[Become Your Own Personal Stylist,](#)" we are joined by style and image consultant Alison Bruhn, who explores how style and confidence intersect. She encourages women to remember they're amazing each day and to invest time and care into their appearance, not for vanity, but for self-empowerment.

For the lady who is listening or watching right now, what is one key advice that you would like her to hold close to her heart and remember it? Every day.

Alison Bruhn: Well, one thing is you're amazing. That's really the truth. And you need to say that to yourself in the mirror every morning. Hello friend, you're

amazing, something like that. Because you just are. And life is so short. So, tell yourself you're amazing, and then maybe spend a little more time on yourself than you have been in the past.

In a nice way, in a way that shows you that you're still important. And other people notice it, too. I remember one man said, you have to help my wife she looks like she has the flu. And then he said, she's always in her workout clothes, but I don't even think she works out. And I was kind of like, look, you try living the life she's lived with four kids, and putting you through med school or whatever it is.

Alison Bruhn: But, you know, it is true that women are judged by their appearance, and we don't want to get obsessive about that for sure. But like you said, when you look good, you feel good.

Carmen Hecox: Allison highlights the often-overlooked emotional impact of personal style.

Practicing Morning Affirmations: By starting your day with a simple "you're amazing", you challenge negative narratives before they gain momentum.

Appearance as Self-Care: We're judged by our appearance, like it or not - but more importantly, how we see ourselves can affect confidence in every area of our life.

Functionality Meets Style: It's not about forsaking comfort; it's about finding a balance that honors your needs and aspiration. If wearing a flattering outfit lifts up your mood, that's a form of self-nurturing.

Embracing your unique style can be a tangible way to reinforce your positive self-image.

Reclaim Your Energy and Confidence: Courtney Townley's Insights

Carmen Hecox: Next, in ["Reclaim Your Energy And Confidence Starting Today,"](#) brought us self-leadership coach and host of Grace and Grit podcast, Courtney Townley. Courtney's profound insights on boundaries, why they might feel

uncomfortable, but are absolutely essential for authentic relationships and personal freedom. Let's listen to Courtney now.

Courtney Townley: Two primary reasons that we struggle to set boundaries. The first is we have to lean into discomfort. We have to open ourselves to the judgment of other people. We have to open ourselves up to the possibility of making other people uncomfortable. Cause people benefit from you not having boundaries.

So that may be having a conversation with myself or with my husband about how we talk to each other when we're upset with each other. I love you, and if you talk to me in a disrespectful way, I'm going to leave the room, and I will not engage, re-engage with the conversation until you can talk to me, like, I'm the woman that you fell in love with so many years ago. That's a boundary, it's just saying, hey, I love you, but right now, this is what I need from you in order to continue this in a healthy way.

The second reason I think we struggle to set boundaries is because we have a lot of thoughts about boundaries. Like you said, it means I'm not going to be fun. It means no one's going to want to hang out with me. It means people are going to think I'm a jerk.

Boundaries might mean, I've had a lot of clients say boundaries to them mean lack of freedom. I should be able to do whatever I want, whenever I want. Well, you can, but is that truly how you define freedom? Because I would argue that when you set healthy boundaries out of respect for yourself and your other relationships, you get to experience more freedom than you know what to do with because life gets so good and you are so fully expressed, and you feel amazing.

To me, that's freedom. Doing what I want all the time in the moment is not freedom. It's temporary freedom, which comes with massive consequences.

So again, leaning into discomfort, the willingness to lean into discomfort, and also the willingness and the practice of changing the way that we think about boundaries can really help us to set them and help us to follow through with them.

And when we do it, the reward is more self-respect, more confidence, more energy. Life just, again, it gets better.

Carmen Hecox: Courtney reframes boundaries in a powerful way:

Discomfort Leads to Growth: Setting boundaries can make us worry about being judged or hurting others' feelings, yet genuine closeness and respect often arises when we're clear about our limits.

Who Benefits From No Boundaries: Courtney highlights that people sometimes enjoy the perks of you not setting boundaries. Recognizing this is a wake-up call.

Redefining Freedom: Instead of seeing boundaries as restrictive, view them as a path to greater emotional freedom. When you respect your own time and energy, you feel lighter, not heavier.

Her approach challenges us to get comfortable with being uncomfortable because on the other side is a life where we can thrive.

Improve Your Health and Live a Longer Life: Dr. John Lewis

Carmen Hecox: And finally, ["Improve Your Health And Live a Longer Life,"](#) features Dr. John Lewis, who shares practical steps to kickstart a healthier lifestyle. From taking baseline health data to seeking coaching or therapy. He emphasizes personal responsibility as the cornerstone of true wellness.

But I would say for people thinking about New Year's resolutions and starting off 2025 in a direction of trying to get healthier, we'll take some data. Like go to your primary care physician or whoever your preferred healthcare provider is and say hey, I want some blood work. I want some anthropomorphic data tested. I want to have a baseline so that I know that when I start making changes, I can say, okay, we're doing this right now in January; we're making all these assessments. So, February, March, April, I can come back in April or May or so after I've given my body 90, 100, 120 days. And then I can collect the same data again and reevaluate. Tip number two would maybe be to reach out to somebody who, either through a family member, one of your close friends, somebody in your circle who can help you with coaching.

Dr. John Lewis: So, a lot of people really need that type of coaching or therapeutic support from you know, somebody, a social worker, a psychologist or whatever.

Again, if you can afford to do that, if you have it within your means, if you have it through your insurance, man, get yourself some psychological support to help you work through these changes in the way you look at food, the way you look at activity, the way you look at putting health as a very key component to your life. Because again, I would argue without good health, you really don't have a lot.

And then number three, take personal responsibility. I mean, to me, just like we have too many Americans looking for the quick fix, looking for, oh, well, just give me a drug. I don't care how I got here in the first place but just give me that drug. Take personal responsibility for yourself.

Carmen Hecox: Dr. Lewis' guidance simplifies the process of improving health by:

Gathering Data First: Get your blood work and a full checkup by establishing a baseline. By tracking changes over 90 to 120 days shows you what's working and where you might need to adjust.

Leveraging Coaching or Therapy: Whether it's a dietician, a psychologist, or a personal trainer, professional support can offer accountability and a structured approach to change.

Begin by Owning Your Choices: Rather than seeking a quick fix or a magic pill, adopt healthier habits and growth mindset leads to longer-lasting results and a better quality of life.

Remember, even small incremental changes can add to big improvements over time.

Final Thoughts and Thank You!

Carmen Hecox: And there you have it, our special 100th episode highlighting some of the most inspiring insights! Each one of these conversations holds powerful lessons on personal growth, health, confidence, and resilience.

If you enjoyed today's recap, please share it, like it, subscribe - it truly helps our community grow. For more details on everything we've covered here, head on over

to createthebestme.com/ep100. And if you'd like to watch or listen to any of these full episodes, the show notes have direct links to each one of them.

And don't forget to come back next week as our guest will be Alicia Jones, a health and fitness expert specializing in helping women over 50 lose weight, live their healthiest, best life. Trust me, you don't want to miss this episode.

Thank you so much for celebrating this milestone with me. Until next time, keep thriving, keep learning, and keep creating the best version of yourself. Bye for now.