

-- [00:00:27] Speaker A: Hi, everyone. Welcome to Dr. MC's self care Cabaret podcast. I'm Teresa Molito Connors, a doctoral level educational administrator and mental health practitioner focused on helping you, our world's helpers. Over the summer, I had the pleasure of conducting a series of Instagram live conversations with various experts, and the conversations were too good not to share with my podcast listeners. Before we dive in, I want to chat about the importance of listening to your body.

Those subtle sensations and cues that your body is giving you. We tend to ignore them. And I just want to remind you that if you listen to your body when it whispers, you won't have to hear it scream. So I ask you, what have you been neglecting? What has been going on that maybe you've been ignoring, haven't gotten around to making the doctor's appointment, et cetera. I know it can be a nuisance. Speaking of the doctor, when was the last time you went? Maybe to your primary care specialist or another specialist you work with? The eye doctor, the dentist, etc. You really don't want to neglect that physical medical domain of self care. So let this be a reminder and a sign for you to make those appointments. So anyway, today I am sharing my conversation with rockstar Becky Manley, founder of Meta, which is the multi service eating disorder association. We discussed so many important topics such as weight, stigma in children, tips for parents and teachers, for body acceptance, body image in the Barbie movie, and more. Please enjoy our conversation.

[00:02:18] Speaker B: Hi, friends. Happy Tuesday. Happy August. Rabbit, rabbit. Here we are, August 1. Anyway, we are going live with Becky Manley, who will be jumping on in just a minute to join us and chat with us. And I'm so excited to chat with Becky. Oh, I can see she's even on already, so she'll be requesting to join in just a second. I'm thrilled to talk with her. Another Massachusetts girl, which is pretty exciting. And yeah, so let's get this going here.

Always takes a second, but she should be popping up. Hi, Becky.

[00:02:54] Speaker C: Hi. How are you?

[00:02:56] Speaker B: Good. Thanks for joining me.

[00:02:58] Speaker C: Oh, my gosh. Thanks for asking me to join.

[00:03:01] Speaker B: This is very exciting. I feel like we've been trying to connect more on Instagram. We've been Instagram friends for a while.

[00:03:08] Speaker C: We have.

[00:03:09] Speaker B: So thank you. And thank you for all the cool work that you do, which we're going to talk a little bit about this morning.

[00:03:14] Speaker C: Can't wait.

[00:03:15] Speaker B: Yeah.

[00:03:15] Speaker C: And.

[00:03:15] Speaker D: Happy August.

[00:03:16] Speaker B: I can't believe it's August.

[00:03:17] Speaker C: I can't believe it, either. Unbelievable.

[00:03:20] Speaker B: My goodness.

[00:03:21] Speaker C: Crazy summer, too. I know.

-- 0 year anniversary next year.

I know. I can't believe it. And then the other thing is we provide a lot of clinical services. We take almost every insurance.

We provide support groups, individual counseling and coaching. And it's a great organization with great clinicians. For information or questions, you can always shoot an email to our info box, which is info@metainc.org. And the other hat that I wear is I also have a coaching practice where I work with teens and tweens ages eleven to 21. And I focus a lot on anxiety and body image and friendships and social media and work with parents as well. So that's a little bit about me.

[00:06:10] Speaker B: That's just so amazing. So I work, in addition to being Dr. MC of Dr. MC Self Care Cabaret, where I help helping professionals really learn the true meaning of self care. And I do work with trauma recovery and growth mindset and all that good stuff. I'm also a special education administrator in a public school I do in the greater Boston area. So we're both in similar areas. I do hope at some point to be able to shift to do solely my Dr. MC work because I feel like I can have a much larger impact. But I also do love working in public education and in education in general.

[00:06:47] Speaker C: I started off as a teacher.

[00:06:49] Speaker B: Oh, really?

[00:06:50] Speaker C: And then I went back to school and got my Master's in Family studies and counseling, became a certified coach, founded the organization. So a lot of the work that I do actually I meld my education practice with my counseling.

[00:07:03] Speaker B: Yeah, that's awesome. And it definitely helps me in doing my other work, having that experience, being an administrator, I was a school counselor before that. I've never actually been a classroom teacher, but I've been working in education for a long time in different capacities, so that's awesome. We have a lot of shared ground.

[00:07:19] Speaker C: We do.

[00:07:20] Speaker B: That's cool. So I wonder what was a little bit about the journey to founding the Multi Service Eating Disorders Association almost 30 years ago.

[00:07:30] Speaker C: So the journey began through my own recovery from an eating disorder. I struggled with an eating disorder through much of my childhood and into my early twenty s.

I lost your audio.

[00:07:49] Speaker B: Can you hear me? I can now. You cut out for a second.

[00:07:52] Speaker C: Okay. Sorry about that. That's okay. So through my own journey, I knew that once I was on the other side, I wanted to do something to promote recovery.

When I was struggling, I was told that this was something I was going to have to live with my entire life. And as you can imagine, that is devastating to someone who is really in a low point and feeling like I'm never going to get over this. So I knew I wanted to do something to promote full recovery.

When I was getting my master's degree, my master's thesis, we had to create a hypothetical nonprofit. And my nonprofit that I created was Meta. And a number of professionals at the university called me in and they said, we think you should do this. And so my husband at the time said, hey, you know what? Why don't you try it for a few months, start this and see if anything happens. And so that's kind of how it all began. We started in a basement office at

-- are struggling with eating disorders or disordered eating has really skyrocketed.

[00:10:36] Speaker B: Yeah. In my lived experience being in recovery for multiple eating disorders, I didn't really recognize because my body was always a little bit larger and curvier. And I always looked, I guess, healthy that even though I was very sick and suffering a lot, I actually didn't get help until I was in my late 20s, early 30s, actually. Early 30s, where I was blessed enough and privileged enough to be like, okay, this isn't working. Something's wrong here. After continued attempt and continued attempt and whatnot and various levels of success, whatever that means.

And I ended up working with Anna Sweeney in the greater Boston area also, who I know a lot mean. She changed and arguably saved my life when I started working with her. That's where I learned about intuitive eating. That's where I really started to understand all the behaviors and the generational trauma that went along with kind of my experience.

But I think back to being a young girl and wanting to be a prima ballerina. And we know that the ballet world certainly still is not a very inclusive, accepting space, unfortunately. And I began to notice probably around 1415 years old that my body's not built the same. I am a little curvier. I'm not that waiflike, stereotypical ideal of a ballet body. So I'm wondering, in your experience in working with kids and adults, and whatnot kind of what advice or what kind of thoughts or observations have you made about folks? Kind of who, as a kid, realized or started to feel that their body.

[00:12:21] Speaker C: Was the you know, that's probably something that I talk about the most and why parents call me. Because all of a sudden, they were weighed at the pediatrician's office or they were weighed at school. Or somebody else said something about their body, and all of a sudden they came to the realization, I think there's something wrong with me. I think there's something wrong with my body. And so a lot of the work that I do is talking to kids and parents about diet culture and social media and the fact that we are all supposed to look different. We are not all supposed to look the same. And even you and I, we could eat the exact same every day and move our bodies the same every day, and we're going to look different.

That genetics plays a huge role in what we look like. And so for kids to have that education, that understanding, and to have someone who listens to them compassionately about what their struggle is, I do a lot of education with primary care doctors and with pediatricians, around weight shaming and weight stigma, it's a huge problem.

And so helping kids to advocate for themselves to do family education around body diversity, sometimes parents think that just because they have one child that looks a certain way, the other child might not look that way. Sure.

And talking to them about pushing to restrict is just as harmful as kind of pushing to eat.

I recently worked with a family that had two children and they came back from the pediatricians and one was in the Nintieth percentile and the other one was in the five percentile, and one was given a prescription of high protein shakes and increased calorie intake. And the other one, as you can imagine, was given quite the opposite, increased pushing for activity and lowered fat intake. And as you can imagine, what was the message that these two kids got right?

[00:15:04] Speaker B: One's good and one's bad. I mean, at the most basic level?

[00:15:08] Speaker C: Exactly. Yeah, exactly.

[00:15:10] Speaker B: Oh, goodness. And then being siblings too, that's going to be tough, right? Do you see that a lot? That it's like generational, too? Like mom and daughter or even dad and daughter or maybe son? I mean, I don't think it necessarily.

[00:15:24] Speaker C: Discriminates, but it doesn't I see a lot of intergenerational and I see a lot

-- iving education and helping parents to kind of become more in tune to their bodies and more in tune to their own body image dissatisfaction.

And just because a parent is struggling with their body image, that doesn't necessarily mean that their kid is going to struggle too. The first step is awareness, is becoming aware and not saying things in front of your child, young child, two, three, about their bodies that are negative or could be misconstrued as harmful. Yeah.

[00:16:49] Speaker B: It's so hard though. And I know I think back both my parents struggle with their weight, my dad to really extreme degrees and whatnot I think at one point he was around 700 pounds, and I watched him always struggle and do all these crazy restrictive diet things. And then my mom's also struggled as well. And for me, I remember and by today's standards, this is probably late, but I was around 17 when I went on my first diet. I had put on a little bit of weight, like the summer going into senior year. My pants didn't quite fit when school started and I was bummed out. And of course it was like I can actually remember more. My dad actually kind of teaching me how to diet and restricting. And I remember telling him I was hungry and him being like, you'll get over it. That'll subside making me eat these weird little crackers, and I didn't want that.

And my earliest memory of really internalizing it and starting that diet behavior and then that was just a cycle that would continue for many years until it really spiraled out of control to the point where it was pretty bad.

[00:18:05] Speaker C: I'm so glad that you were able to connect with Anna and that your recovery journey, it's still I feel like.

[00:18:13] Speaker B: Some days are even still better than others. I mean, it's been about eight years or so and even every now and again you get those little thoughts or something. Or something doesn't quite fit. Or maybe your body just feels I remember Anna telling me your body weight can fluctuate like seven pounds from day to so maybe some days you just feel a little heavier. It doesn't mean it. That was actually me last week. I remember thinking, oh gosh, have I gained weight? What's going on? I'm like, no, you're actually moving. No, stop it. But you kind of get that in your head.

[00:18:43] Speaker C: And now this week.

[00:18:56] Speaker A: Hey friends. We've got some exciting news for our podcast listeners. Are you ready to take self care and body positivity to a whole new level? We're thrilled to announce the grand opening of the Self Care Cabaret Shop. And here's what sets us apart. We are proudly size inclusive and there are no additional fees for extended sizes because every body is beautiful. We've got a fantastic range of self care and body love merchandise just waiting for you. From cozy sweatshirts and stylish tees to empowering accessories perfect for showing off your confidence and self love. So head on over to Drmcselfcare.com Shop and grab your favorite items. Today it's time to celebrate you. Cheers.

Did you hear the news about our exciting new offering from the Selfcare Cabaret? We're calling it talkback. If you're familiar with theater space, you may have participated in a talkback before. After a performance, the cast and crew will come back on stage to chat with the audience and answer questions. Think of it as a casual guided discussion. Inspired by this and by popular interest, we've come up with a talkback for the Self Care Cabaret podcast. Groups will listen to a podcast episode or two of their choosing. Then I'll come and lead your discussion either in person or virtually of those episodes, expanding on the big ideas. It's a great option for groups looking for short impactful professional development or smaller teams looking to get an introduction to self care and well being. We have done a few of these so far and let me say they have been so much fun. So if you're interested in bringing a talk back to your group or organization, email podcast@drmcselfcare.com. And now on with the show.

[00:21:00] Speaker B: Yeah. Which brings me to my next kind of question about Barbie. And I

-- about wondering, you know, is there a teachable moment here? How do we maybe start these conversations with kids? Because I'm going to be going back to school in a couple of weeks, and I'm sure all my Barbie and I actually admittedly haven't seen the movie.

[00:21:44] Speaker C: Yet, but I haven't seen it either. I haven't seen it either.

So, first of all, marketing, marketing, marketing. I mean, they started marketing this movie.

[00:21:55] Speaker B: A couple of years ago.

[00:21:57] Speaker C: So the hype, they've built it up, right? And so there's so much hype, so much marketing.

So that's kind of the first thing I just want to say, the power of dollars and dye industry is what, a \$72 billion a year industry again? Power of money. Power of marketing. I haven't seen the movie. However, I get concerned about a couple of things.

Body diversity in the movie, just the image of Barbie. And when I first started Meta in 1994, I was doing a lot of work in the schools, and I would use Barbie all the time in my presentations about this is the ideal that a lot of young girls are striving to look like. And so, that being said, that is the message that I get worried about. Again, I think there's a lot of positive messages from what I've read and what I've heard about from the movie as far as empowering her to use her voice to break away from the patriarchy. So I think there's some teachable moments in there.

Again, I don't think I can speak to it enough just because I haven't seen it, but I think Barbie in itself is a teachable moment. Ken is a teachable moment because the reality is this is not what humans look like.

[00:23:29] Speaker B: And.

[00:23:33] Speaker C: This ideal image is something that we need to continue to break out of and break away from. Until we have body diversity, until we can eradicate weight stigma, we are going to have a really challenging time eradicating eating disorders. Yeah.

[00:23:54] Speaker B: And I want to go back to something you said earlier. We're not all meant to look the same. Imagine if we did. I think that would be so boring.

[00:24:02] Speaker C: It would be so boring.

When you were talking about your recovery, it's really hard to recover in a disordered world.

[00:24:12] Speaker B: Sure.

[00:24:13] Speaker C: And even on social media, we're on social media right now. Social media has a lot of great things, but social media also has a lot of negative things.

[00:24:23] Speaker B: A lot of negative things.

[00:24:24] Speaker C: So I have worked with so many kids who once they took a social media break, how much better they felt. I have a couple of kids who just got back from camp, and they were away at camp for four to six weeks, and they came back and they were like, oh, my gosh, I feel so much better. I didn't have my phone.

[00:24:46] Speaker B: It's brutal. I can't imagine. I mean, I work in school, so I see this, and I've had kids with the bullying things on social media and texting and all of that, and I'm just like, I'm so glad I missed that. Right?

I didn't have a cell phone until I was 18 and even that's probably arguably too young but

-- And report. Someone just said reporting. Reporting. Report it.

[00:26:44] Speaker B: It's brutal.

[00:26:44] Speaker D: It's brutal.

[00:26:45] Speaker B: I mean, it's such a cool tool.

[00:26:48] Speaker C: It is.

[00:26:48] Speaker B: It bringing people together from all over the world that we never get to connect with and see and learn. But that dark side, man, right?

[00:26:59] Speaker C: I went on TikTok this winter, and I posed as a 14 year old, and I couldn't believe the stuff that I was allowed to see and the input of things that I was seeing, and it's out there, and parents and caretakers need to be just really vigilant about what your kids are ingesting.

[00:27:25] Speaker B: Oh, gosh, and you've done a lot of work with schools and stuff. I think, what was it back in 2001, you created a screening tool and some sort of curriculum that went along with kind of body? Yeah, that's amazing. Thank you for that. I was actually horrified earlier this school year. All of a sudden, I see a bunch of kids standing outside the nurse's office, and I said to the secretary, I go, what's going on? She goes, oh, they're doing their weigh ins. I was like, what?

[00:27:54] Speaker C: We do that here?

[00:27:55] Speaker B: Why?

I kind of, like, panicked, and I wasn't in a position even though I am an administrator, I'm like, oh, this is bigger than me. We're at this moment, I can't do anything about this, and I watched it happen, and I'm just like, oh, no. I even asked my mom. I'm like, I don't remember that happening to me in elementary school. I asked my mom. She's like, yeah, they used to do that. I'm glad it never like, I must have blocked it out or whatever. It didn't seem to bother me. But, I mean, in Massachusetts, in public schools, we're weighing kids.

[00:28:24] Speaker C: Oh, I can vividly remember mine. I can vividly remember mine. I was in the school gym in Simsbury, Connecticut. Mr. Greco was my gym teacher, and he lined us all up, and not only did he weigh us in front of everyone, he yelled the weight to the school nurse, who.

[00:28:43] Speaker B: Oh, my gosh.

[00:28:44] Speaker C: Sitting there. And I remember all the boys snickering behind me, and it was like a humiliating point in my life. Horrible. So I'm a huge advocate for schools, sending emails, putting it in newsletters that parents are allowed to opt out of way. And the state of Massachusetts, it's mandated 1st, 4th, 7th, 9th, and 11th graders be weighed unless parental permission is given not to.

I don't understand what that has to do with a child's learning, but that's a whole nother conversation.

[00:29:30] Speaker B: I was horrified. And like I said, growing up, when I was like that age, elementary school, my weight might have been fine. I don't really remember. I was definitely just, like, a tougher kid. I never was like a little scrawny little thing. I'm all Italian. Like, I had meat on my bones. I like pasta as a little kid. So it was just my body is not anything. Nothing wrong with it. But I didn't know that until much later, but whatever. Yeah, no, I was kind of horrified. So I'm wondering, with that in mind and your curriculum that you wrote, what's something that a teacher could do maybe in the classroom to kind of help with body acceptance and just helping to kind of

-- teeth, that's something they can fix in 10 seconds. But talking to them about their body shape or size, not okay.

Literature talking, having books in the classroom that promote body diversity and talk about body acceptance, I think that's really important.

Encouraging kids to talk about their feelings, to have a place where they can have every kid should have a self soothing box in the classroom that can help them manage figuring out how to manage their emotions. Because what we know about eating disorders is it's so much about not being able to manage your feelings. And so if we can start really young with kids, giving them the tools to be able to manage those feelings, that would be incredible.

And then parent education, the rules that you set in the classroom, make sure that parents at home know the same rules, right? And why that you have these rules. Sometimes parents just don't know.

I don't mean to talk about dads specifically, but it usually seems to be dads that are doing the teasing at home with kids just to try to break the ice or be funny and hey, short stack, having these types of funny jokes. But I think educating parents about why that's not funny, I think that could also go just a long way as well.

I could go on and on making sure that kids have enough time to eat.

Oh, not being food police, not telling kids that they, oh, wow, you brought a brownie. Wow, that's something that's a bad food. Or, oh, you didn't eat your sandwich. Can you have three more bites? Pushing these kids to eat, I think is really discouraging them from the mind body connection that's so important.

[00:33:51] Speaker B: Look at the research on intuitive eating, right? Doesn't it tell us the kids actually know how to eat intuitive?

[00:33:56] Speaker C: They do.

[00:33:56] Speaker B: The adults that kind of put the nonsense and the diet rules around them. So if you just kind of let if you watch a little kid eat my friend's two year old was around by the pool one day recently, and she kind of bopped around in the pool. She's swimming, she's having a grand old time. Then she'd get out, go over, eat like one. She took a mozzarella stick, which was awesome, like mob like half of it, popped it back down, back in the pool a couple of minutes later. Now she wants two goldfish. Love it, back in the pool, having just a grand. Then the cookies came out. She had some little bit, and she didn't just sit down and her mother didn't say a word. And I actually at one point commented, and I go, she's eating intuitively. Like, she's fine.

[00:34:36] Speaker C: That's.

[00:34:37] Speaker D: It.

[00:34:37] Speaker B: That's right, because it's kind of wild and so many things. Like, think back last year. I had a little second grader, and one day he was having a tough day, and we were outside in the playground, and I was trying to get him down. He climbed way up on a structure. I need to get him down. I ain't climbing up on that structure. Body size out outside of it. I'm just not. And I'm trying to get him down, and he looks down. I go, I'm not climbing up there after you. You got to come down here. And he looks down at me, and he goes, Are you fat? And for a second, I almost was like, Would you say but I was like, Wait a minute. And I looked him, and I go, yeah, I am. I go, and is that really a nice thing to say, though, about somebody's body? I don't talk about your body. And he just kind of looked at me. I could tell, like, the wheels are turning. And then I said to him, I go look around. I go, look at me. And whoever else was around. I go, look at all the bodies around you. We're not all the same. And he was like and he didn't say anything bad, right?

-- eventually, he's going to need to process all of that and figure it out. But he's fine. He's asking for food. You can see that it calms him down. Don't put rules and do not start putting all those seeds in his head about food rules and what's good and what's bad, and that food's bad, and it gets messy.

[00:36:48] Speaker C: It does.

And you never know what kind of food insecurity that child might have at home right, as well. So I think people just it's a very complicated issue, and I think that the more that we can just be compassionate listeners for our kids and non judgmental around their food and their bodies, that's kind of the starting point, and one of the best things that we can do for our kids.

[00:37:23] Speaker B: Yeah, for sure. And there's a lot of work to be done here. So thank you so much for your time this morning and for all.

[00:37:28] Speaker C: Loved it. Thank you so much.

[00:37:30] Speaker B: Yeah, thank you. Real quick, last one more question. What's your favorite summer meal here? We're in August.

What's your favorite?

[00:37:38] Speaker C: With butter or mayo and fries? Right there. Absolutely.

[00:37:41] Speaker B: With mayo or butter.

[00:37:42] Speaker D: Mayo.

[00:37:48] Speaker A: Thanks so much for listening to this special podcast episode from our summer Instagram Live series. I hope you're feeling more energized and empowered. We regularly go live on Instagram to chat with other experts and amplify voices, so be sure to follow along at DRMC. Selfcare. That's Dr. MC selfcare. Also, in case you missed it, we've been hosting virtual pop up 30 minutes dance parties called Dance Break with Dr. MC Joyful Movement for All Bodies. A participant described these classes as the best kept secret in fitness. So what are you waiting for? They happen at 04:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time. All low impact movement, but high in fun. All bodies and abilities are welcome. There is a warm up and a cooldown. Modifications are provided and it is free to join. Donations are accepted, so head on over to my Instagram bio to register or check out the link in the episode notes. Thanks again. Stay well and do good.

[00:39:14] Speaker D: Nine Battle.

Down by blast.

Nine Bath. Down by blast.

Nine bath. --