

## Episode 10: Starting a career in Health and Wellness and International Women's Day with Lecturer Macy Kalb

Eliza Barsanti: Welcome to the department of Health and Exercise Studies' Talk 8 at State Podcast with your host, Eliza Barsanti!

EB: While Macy Kalb is relatively new to the Health and Exercise Studies Department at NC State, she's clearly already made a tremendous impact on students in her short time here. Today, we're sitting down with Macy to talk about her unique journey into the world of health and exercise studies, and some of her best health and wellness tips. Also, in honor of International Women's day, we'll be talking about how the experiences of women in the fitness field have changed and are still changing over time.

Eliza Barsanti: Okay, so today we are sitting down with Macy Kalb, who is a lecturer here at NC State in the HES Department. Macy, would you like to introduce yourself?

Macy Kalb: Sure, hi, I'm Macy. I'm excited that we are doing this. I'm so excited to share a little bit about our department and about my experience with the department and what we can offer students, most importantly.

EB: Amazing. Well, thank you for being here! So let's start with a little bit about you, how did you become interested in health and wellness and what did your journey to teaching these subjects to college students look like?

MK: Well, it started actually really early. I started gymnastics- I think I was around eight years old and just really became interested in how the human body moves. You know how, as I got into high school, you know what was really happening physics-wise for me to be able to fling myself in the air and flip around and land. And you know how does all of that work biomechanically, not that I had the term biomechanics yet. But really started to think about that because, probably around high school age I also started dancing in high school. So I was a little late bloomer with dance but they put in dance classes at the gym I was doing gymnastics and I thought "Well you know that would actually probably help me really further my performance skills and fine tune things." So I went ahead and got into some dance classes: jazz, ballet, all of that, tap, and really kind of fell in love with that as well.

MK: In college, I really thought about going for exercise science as an undergrad and I was intimidated actually, this is kind of funny, I was intimidated by the anatomy course and decided instead that I wanted to go communications. So with communications, I started taking a lot of the dance classes just for credit and just for fun, got on the dance team as well, decided I wanted to declare a dance minor, and ended up having to take anatomy for the dance minor! But at that point, I was so close to graduating and I got through anatomy just fine. There was nothing to be scared of. I got through anatomy and, my goodness, I think that was my senior year, so I mean I had to go ahead and graduate really with this with a communications major. And I did really work in communications, I worked actually in radio advertising sales for 12

years. I was teaching fitness and on the side yeah so you know I did use the communications degree, and I think I still use it, because a lot of what we do honestly really is communications, as far as being in front of the students talking to the students and helping the students so it's come in handy. But I worked in radio advertising and several different radio markets for a while and was always teaching fitness on the side at a YMCA or at a private gym or what have you. And there came a point where there was the opportunity to go back to school and I did it as a non-traditional student, I was in my 30s when I went back. And I went back and got the masters in exercise science, took a lot of anatomy then, and still survived, thankfully, but so yeah don't let one class intimidate you from a major if you're listening to this because it really will be fine, you might have to study but it'll be fine. But you know, I went back, really fell in love with the anatomy, the biomechanics, and how the body moves again, really just solidifying what I kind of knew when I was younger, but I just had to take my own little path to get there. And then I still worked in consumer fitness a lot. I've been a personal trainer for years, had a personal training goodness, my personal training license- I don't even know how many years I've heard that. Several. Anyway so, I have been a personal trainer for years, also have an indoor cycling spin certification and yoga, pilates, and then some other things like TRX, things like that, on the side. But really got into that and started doing that full time really pretty much full time while I was still in school and then continued with the gym I was working at an hours after I got my degree we did consumer fitness personal training, one on one, small group, group classes, and we also did corporate wellness. So we would actually go into different businesses and whether or not the person had repetitive tasks, maybe they were working in a factory or something like that and we needed to kind of rebalance their body that way, or could have been a person who was sitting in a desk a lot, because we know that that's not healthy so really working into how can we help them benefit, and you know we use exercise to make their day to day life functionally more healthy. And that brought me here and that's what I was doing when I moved to Raleigh. I was doing just personal fitness and really, when I was in grad school, when I was in a master's program that's kind of when I started thinking toward teaching college level so that was kind of full circle there.

EB: That's so cool. What a unique journey, and also it's so cool to think about how many people you've impacted along the way. Like now you're teaching students who are in college, but also you know, in the corporate setting and that one on one training- you've impacted so many people's lives. It's so crazy to think about.

MK: I hope so.

EB: Yeah, definitely, wow. What a great answer. Moving on from learning about just the details of your journey, yesterday was International Women's Day. Woohoo!

MK: Right yes.

EB: Yes, so, in general, with all of these experiences in the fitness and wellness field, what has your experience been like as a woman in this field?

MK: Oh, goodness, you know, I think it's really changed over the years. My gosh, when I started being interested in fitness it was really like Denise Austin, still Jane fonda was around, they were wearing the leotards with tights and you know, everybody was this cookie cutter body image that we know doesn't fit everybody, and I think everybody really was trying to just fit, from what I remember of the 80s and I was I wasn't super young (I wish) but I was still fairly young in the 80s and you know I had those videos, I had like buns of steel, abs of steel, Denise Austin, And then, it was still for women, I feel, more so about weight. You know, "How much do you weigh?" And that was like that indicator on the scale. We weren't really trying to build muscle, we weren't really trying to be athletic necessarily, but we wanted to look good in those little leotards. So, thank goodness that era, it has passed, I must say. Now, I feel like the biggest shift that I've seen is the body awareness and the acceptance of different body types and that's women and men probably too. But the acceptance of different body types in fitness and wellness, and the idea that really any body type can be healthy. So yes, there are things that you need to do, you want to stay active so that your body's in balance, you want to eat so that your body gets the nourishment it needs, same as putting gas in your car, you know you want to.

Just pay attention to those types of things and really take care of yourself but you don't have to fit into this cookie cutter mold anymore and we as instructors don't have to fit into this cookie cutter mold anymore, which is really great. And that probably really did impact women more than men. It was kind of when I started going into fitness, it was more you know the women are the ones teaching the aerobics classes and the women are the ones teaching yoga classes and the women are the ones teaching just the lightweights not the heavyweights you know, women didn't touch the heavy weights and now that has all thank goodness changed. You know you really see women instructing all sorts of different activities now and it doesn't seem like the gender roles are quite as defined which is really, really nice because I know women who are great at weightlifting and great at soccer and great at all these other sports that aren't, I guess, if you can make air quotes on a podcast, were "women's sports" before, so I've really seen the gender lines starting to blur which is wonderful and wonderful I think for students wanting to get into a certain activity too. They don't have that. Hopefully, they don't feel like that's holding them back, they can get into what activity they want to do and get it that way, because it's all about having fun with what you're doing to stay active.

EB: Absolutely, that's awesome. I'm glad that the industry has definitely gone through that change because it's something that I've benefited from and I know that lots of other people have so that's awesome.

MK: And you know it can go the other way, too which is really cool. I see a lot of men become really great aerobics, yoga instructors, so I think the lines are blurring both ways which is wonderful.

EB: Yeah, so important, so kind of going along with that I know there's a high ratio of women to men in the health department at NC State specifically. Around 48.5% women or something like that which is awesome, and I'm wondering what that experience has been like for you, having a lot of other women supporting you.

MK: Oh wonderful and I think it kind of goes back to what we just talked about you know, there are women, teaching a diverse amount of the classes. And you know everything from racquet sports to yoga and dancing and you know their women teach a lot of the different classes here, and I think that's really nice to see, we have a diverse faculty as it is, and you know, the fact that it is really, almost 50/50 shows. I think that and having been through the hiring process recently myself. I know that they really take a lot of time to find somebody who they think is going to be a good fit for first of all responses that are being taught and secondly for the department as a whole. And I think our department reflects that because it is very diverse, and it is kind of a 50/50 split, so you can tell that you know, in the hiring process, they have picked out the person, emphasis on the word person, didn't have to be a man or a woman, that doesn't seem to matter when they hire, but they pick the best person for the job. And I think that's how we ended up with the split. They're very careful about hiring and we just get the best person, no matter what it is that has to be taught what position that person has been hired for, I feel like. They're not seeking a man or they're not seeking a woman, they are seeking a faculty member.

EB: That's awesome. I mean and also again so important today. So, like you just mentioned, you recently went through the hiring process you're relatively new in the department so what surprised you, and what have you enjoyed the most so far?

MK: No definitely the students and I think that that's probably the answer to both. Our students are wonderful. They are fun to work with, absolutely the most enjoyable part of my job is getting to interact with students and I'm so happy that we are back in the hybrid format, at least this semester, and get to see each other in person. So hopefully things keep going great that way. But what really I think surprised me is the seriousness of the students for even these types of classes. And you know I'll even look out as I'm teaching a class and say you know, maybe we're in yoga class or dance class, I'll say "You know what it's okay to smile," this can be a fun class because they're very, very serious, they want to get a good grade they want to do well. They want to learn the skill that they signed up to learn and sometimes I have to remind them that we're also here to have fun. And we want the department to be fun, we want our classes to be something that the students really look forward to going to. Of course they're going to be doing work to get the grades in class, but that work really should make them feel good. But yeah.

EB: Definitely that's awesome. I mean I loved my HES classes, I know and yeah it was something that you had to put the work in but it's just like any other class, you know it should be like a positive gratifying experience. That's awesome.

MK: That's what we try for, yeah.

EB: Do you have a favorite class to teach? I don't know if you're allowed to say that. Do you have like a favorite subject?

MK: Oh, I see well, I guess the most background I have, the subject that I'm the most trained in is yoga and what I love about that one is, it would really be hard to pick a favorite, but I like yoga

because it's a very diverse practice. You can do the movement part, the actual yoga poses, which is what we really think about when we think of yoga, we think about being on the mat doing the poses. But we also teach students different yoga theories that may help them shape the way that they think about the world, that they think about their interaction with the world and with other people. We teach meditation and relaxation techniques and who in college does not need to learn how to relax right? That one is that was probably the most inclusive in that if you don't really fall in love with the movement aspect of it, there are so many other aspects of it that students can take, hopefully, away from their college experience into whatever they do next, and still use as a benefit to you know just help them navigate life. Because, it can help. Any of those techniques.

EB: That's awesome, yeah, there's something in it for everyone, we love that! I took yoga my sophomore year with coach Renee Harrington and it was one of my favorite classes so

MK: Yeah she's great.

EB: Yeah! So I guess we're gonna close out with kind of a fun question. What is your biggest health and exercise tip right now? You know it could be anything- could be related to health and exercise, or we can add wellness in there, do you have any big big tips?

MK: Well, if you stick with health and exercise, which I can do, especially now that the weather is getting really nice. I find that, and this was going really back to my personal training days, I find that if you find an activity that you love that you look forward to doing that you like, that you're more inclined to go do it when you have free time. So I always tell people who are like "Well you know I want to get into exercising but I don't know what I want to do with it"- Well, find something that you enjoy. And then you'll look forward to doing it, then you will do it. I mean I hate to run on the treadmill. Personally, I do not like running on a treadmill. I'll run outside, it's it's fine. I hate treadmills. So if I have on my calendar schedule that I'm going to run on a treadmill I will find- I'll clean the house, I will do laundry, I will do anything except for run on the treadmill. But, if I have on my agenda I'm going to go mountain biking which is one of my favorite things to do, my house might be a complete disaster but I'm going mountain biking. So you know find something that you like to do, schedule it and that's that's healthy for your body it's also healthy for your mind.

EB: Definitely yeah if you were mentioning earlier like taking time to relax as a college student. I think exercise can be one of the most relaxing and mind clearing experiences. Well that's awesome, yeah. Thank you so much for sitting down with us today Macy, this has been amazing.

MK: Thank you.