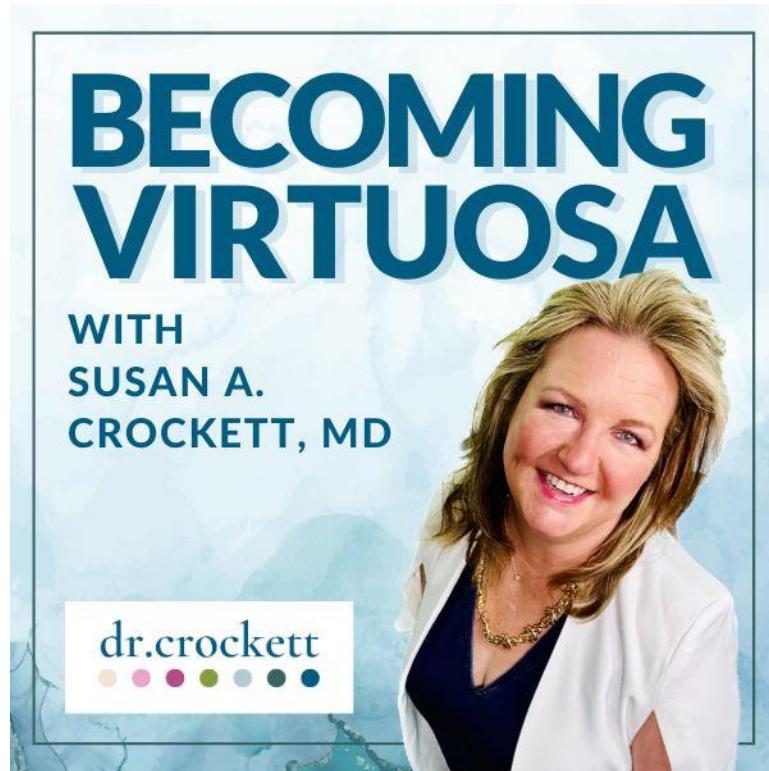


Ep #53: Female Fitness Through All Ages and Stages with Michelle Cook



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Susan A. Crockett, MD

Dr. Crockett presents Becoming Virtuosa

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Dr. Crockett: Right.

Michelle: The filters. So we automatically think like cardio, cardio, cardio because the more we sweat, the more we're just going to shed weight. But you're right. As we age, weight training becomes more important. It's like yes and.

Welcome to *Becoming Virtuosa*, the podcast. I'm your host, Dr. Susan Crockett. You are listening to episode number 53, Female Fitness Through All Ages and Stages, an interview with fellow female fitness expert and co-owner of LivingStone Athletics, Michelle Cook.

Welcome to *Becoming Virtuosa*, the podcast that encourages you to become your best virtuosa self. Each week Dr. Susan Crockett goes where the scalpel can't reach, exploring conversations about how to be, heal, love, give, grow, pray, and attune. For the first time ever, she's bringing the personal one on one teaching that she shares with individual patients to you on this broader platform. A weekly source of inspiration and encouragement designed to empower you.

By evolving ourselves as individuals. We influence and transform the world around us. Please help me welcome board certified OB-GYN specializing in minimally invasive GYN surgery, internationally in the top 1% of all GYN robotic surgeons, a certified life coach, and US News top doctor, your host Susan A. Crockett, MD.

Dr. Crockett: I've been waiting a long time to do this series of interviews with the Cooks. We've been working backstage on the show for about two and a half years, and there are a couple of reasons why this is special. One

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is we have some personal relationship. The other is I've been wanting to do a fitness interview. We haven't done that yet. It's a big part of health and wellness and becoming the best version of yourself, which is your virtuoso self, which is what we're all about. So I want to reintroduce and welcome back Michelle Cook.

Michelle: Thank you.

Dr. Crockett: She and her husband, Malcolm, are the owners of Livingston Athletics. I almost messed it up. Okay, LivingStone Athletics in San Antonio, Texas. For y'all that don't know, I was messing it up like all morning long downstairs. LivingStone Athletics in San Antonio, Texas.

Today, she and I are going to talk about some specifics about fitness that are specific to women. Of course, because I'm a gynecologist. We're both going through midlife transitions. I know she doesn't look it. She looks like she's 30, but that's because she works out all the time. So yeah. So welcome, Michelle. Thanks for coming.

Michelle: Thank you. Well, thank you, Dr. Crockett. I do have a question because I'm just so detail oriented.

Dr. Crockett: Yeah.

Michelle: Can you tell me more about the colors of your logo? Do they mean something?

Dr. Crockett: I'm so glad you asked. They actually do. So the seven colors are the seven seeds of the soul. It is my curriculum. So each color stands for a different part of how we teach ourselves and each other to become better versions of ourselves. So you ready? They go like this. Be, heal, love, give, grow, pray, and attune to the world around you.

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Michelle: Oh, I love that.

Dr. Crockett: Thank you.

Michelle: Thank you for sharing. Yeah.

Dr. Crockett: So the be one is all about how to be. Just self-care, how to be aware, how to be in the world, how do you want to take care of yourself, which is a huge part of what we're talking about today with you.

Michelle: It's such a hard thing to do to just be and not do.

Dr. Crockett: Right? You know, we were talking about that be still thing downstairs. Like, we live in a world where it's so hard just to turn off the phones.

Michelle: It truly is.

Dr. Crockett: And just be.

Michelle: I think like as women in the household, we take on more of a mental load than we should. Living in that mindset of like I can do it better, or like I'll do it my way and nobody else can do it that way. But then like after so many years, you're just like just take it. I don't even care anymore. I'm so tired. But it truly is really hard to be. Really hard to be still and just be.

Dr. Crockett: It is. So we we've talked on the show and other prior episodes about how to eat, how to take care of ourselves to sleep. I've talked a little bit about I have kind of a personal goal to live to be a healthy 120 years old. So I'm a huge nerd fan of Peter Attia and Andrew Huberman. So I

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listen to those guys, and I've tried incorporating all kinds of things into my world.

But I also have some female podcasters that are in the wellness bracket, and specifically around our age. So that would be like JJ Virgin. I've listened to a good bit of her stuff. She's a nutritionist. MC Haber. She's an OBGYN menopause specialist in Galveston. Her Galveston diet is pretty cool.

I thought when I was planning this series for our listeners, our viewers, that how cool would it be to have somebody who's a female in the fitness industry. I just want to pick your brain. I want to talk with you about what you see, specifically your female clients which are my female patients, going through as they're transitioning from being 20 year old bodies to 40 and 50 year old bodies to 70 year old bodies. So yeah, what do you see from your perspective?

Michelle: What I do see a lot in the female space is a lot of guilt and shame of like I hear it a lot. It was something new that I never thought about, but it's almost like them coming for that one hour to a gym space is taking from spending that time with their kids because they've been at work all day. Or they just, like it's just going to put them back behind what they have to, dinner's gonna run later.

So it's almost like a conversation that I encourage them to have with their partner, their spouse, of like how can we make this work where you also need your space of movement and I do because then we're just not good for one another.

Dr. Crockett: Right. I'm sorry to interrupt, but you're touching on a really important point. This is why be is the first dot. Because until we learn how to be and take care of ourselves then we don't have the energy to do all the

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rest of this. All the rest of this is the family and the relationships and all of that. I think it's really hard for couples to have that conversation and to give each other that physical space as a priority. You're right. I see it with my patients. We put it way down on the totem pole. Yeah.

Michelle: When it comes to that, it's also really important for us to have a space where say the couple's not coming together. But we both want to be welcoming enough to where if the other spouse, like they know they're going to be in a safe space. It's like an extension of part of their life. They don't have to worry about it, because the toxic scene can be super, I mean, the gym scene can be super toxic.

So I think a lot of people, I don't even know if this is a term, but I say it all the time. They come with gym trauma or just past experiences. So if we can be welcoming with their families too. Like, we've seen a lot of growth in that, and people are bringing their kids just to watch, which is so important, I think. Yeah. So that's just a different culture that we are seeing now.

I think it has to do with not treating it just like a gym space, but being very relational with our people. Me with women because, again, I go back to that mental load. It is real. It's that guilt that we carry. But then at the end of the day, like if we're not mentally well, we're just not good to do anything or for anyone for that matter.

Dr. Crockett: Well, I've been impressed as I've gotten into this middle stage of life. I was pretty lucky as a young person. I had pretty good fitness level. I had a fairly thin body. I had good nutrition growing up. I had outlets for exercise, and I didn't have to think about it very much. I didn't have to do very much.

Then I had babies and then I gained the weight and then had life and crazy hours and busy and all of that. So now I'm hitting midlife. I'm mid-50s just

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transitioning into menopause. I've taken care of menopausal patients for a long time, but I haven't actually gone through the transition.

So I talk a lot with my patients about how you remember when we were younger, we could just go run five miles and drop five pounds. Like the aerobic exercise really did it pretty easily for a lot of us. But now we kind of have to switch that.

So I usually, I'm telling them they need to do to third strength training, one third aerobic, or not even that much because you get a lot of aerobic through strength training. But then the muscle maintenance becomes so much more important for women as we get into the 40s and 50s. Can you talk a little bit about that? Am I telling them the right thing?

Michelle: No, absolutely. Yeah, I think we automatically think that we're gonna get bulky, and we're gonna look like guys if we start lifting. I know this mentality of it just being a male space. But I don't know all the science behind the whole lifting, but I know that a lot of us women are comparing ourselves, especially on social media, with like we forget about the filters.

Dr. Crockett: Right.

Michelle: The filters. So we automatically think like cardio, cardio, cardio because the more we sweat, the more we're just going to shed weight. But you're right. As we age, weight training becomes more important. It's like yes and.

I also wanted to talk about the word consistency because I talk about consistency a lot, and consistency isn't every day. Your movement can also be just going out to walk with your kids or just go on a walk. I think that when we talk about, like for us, if we're talking about it in the CrossFit

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space, people automatically think we want you in our gym community. We want you in doing CrossFit.

It's kinda like whatever that movement is for you, just do it consistently. That has helped me. I don't know. I guess you would be able to point me more into that direction, but would you say I was pre-menopausal right now in my age?

Dr. Crockett: Well, let's just talk about that for a minute.

Michelle: Okay.

Dr. Crockett: So when we talk about menopausal transition, a lot of times in our 40s before our cycle is shut off, our hormones start decreasing. So a lot of patients that will come in starting in their 40s to have hot flashes, especially right before their cycle starts. Or they skip one or two, and then they'll have a cycle, and it'll go for a while and be kind of irregular, sometimes heavier. That is the peri-menopausal transition.

So technically, the definition historically for menopause has been no period for 13 months. So a month past a year. In this day and age, that's shifting a little bit because we have such good laboratory value measurement. So technically, that's kind of like when we're doing pregnancies, we used to not be able to see a baby until it was further along. But now we have ultrasound detection at the earliest stage so we can date better.

We're kind of doing that with how we define the stages of menopause. So not everybody at your age is at your stage. There are women that I see in my office who are already menopausal at your stage. Their FSH level has gone through the roof. Their estrogen levels, testosterone levels, and progesterone levels are super low. Then there are other people who really haven't started that peri-menopausal transition at your age and stage.

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So when we talk about women transitioning through this though, some of the things are consistent in the 40s and 50s age group no matter where they are in that transition. Some of those things I've seen are propensity towards more belly fat, even my really fit patients. Sometimes needing bioidentical hormone support.

Not everybody needs to be on hormones, but women need to have, us having these conversations about how menopause means starting to change our metabolism, which means we lose our muscles and how important our muscles are for maintaining our metabolism level, our body fat, especially our visceral body fat, and also our bone strength.

Michelle: Yeah.

Dr. Crockett: Because when we pull on our bones with our muscle attachments as part of what helps us be strong.

Michelle: Isn't it like one of the reasons why people die when they're older is because of a fall?

Dr. Crockett: Yeah. From a hip fracture.

Michelle: From a hip fracture. Yeah.

Dr. Crockett: From osteoporosis.

Michelle: Right.

Dr. Crockett: So I want to get back to what you were saying about consistency. I love how you and Malcolm talked in the interview about, maybe it was at lunch, about how consistency doesn't mean you have to do HIIT workouts every single day.

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Because that's the other thing I've noticed is that recovery is a lot more difficult for me. I just have more inflammation. I think that's very common in this age and stage also. But I like what you're saying about consistency is whatever your movement definition is on a regular basis. It might be once a week until you get the hang of it.

Michelle: Yes. Yes. Instead of going full on and being like yeah, sign me up. I'm gonna be every day and then like going back to longevity. It's not even something that you can sustain.

Dr. Crockett: Right.

Michelle: So yes, consistency matters, but I think that consistency looks different for everyone.

Dr. Crockett: I love that you're giving the grace for that. Talk to me about what you think about doing the, what do they call it, like phase two or cardiac level two training versus HIIT training.

Michelle: Oh I can't even speak into that. Probably Malcolm.

Dr. Crockett: We'll do that with Malcolm. We'll have Malcolm have that interview. Okay.

Michelle: He's a fitness guru.

Dr. Crockett: He's a fitness guru.

Michelle: I'm more like the mental kind of like psychological safety kind of stuff for women. Yeah.

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Dr. Crockett: Oh that's cool. Well, talk about that. Tell me what you mean about that.

Michelle: When it comes to that I feel that women, most importantly women, need a safe space to come and just workout.

Dr. Crockett: Oh my gosh. You're so right.

Michelle: I think that they've had experiences where the gym is not that.

Dr. Crockett: Where they're getting hit on exactly, or it's a fashion show competition or other women looking at yes judgment zone and all that.

Michelle: All of that. All of that.

Dr. Crockett: How do you create a safe space where that doesn't exist?

Michelle: I wish I could say I have the template for that, but I don't. I think it's just us just truly being real with our people, which is really seeking them out, relationships first, loving first. We spoke about that. Really being intentional. Like, if I haven't seen you at the gym, I'm gonna text you. I'm gonna call you. I'm gonna check in on you.

Dr. Crockett: Wow.

Michelle: So, I think just the small things go a long way. We just tend to compare ourselves all the time, especially yeah. We're so hard on ourselves. We're parents. I have a 22 year old, and I still deal with the guilt of like the what ifs. It's awful.

But when it comes to our mental health, I think that movement is so important. And I think it's been my experience, so I think it's a little easier

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for me to be intentional about wanting to provide that space for other women.

Yeah, and the rest just really happens naturally. We don't have this as the way to do it. I think you need to just see people, validate them, and really be available. That's what I love that I can be in this space full time now and just be available. I'm available to people.

Dr. Crockett: This is really your ministry.

Michelle: It truly is.

Dr. Crockett: It's just that service to taking care of people.

Michelle: It truly is. It is church to me. Like it just really is our ministry.

Dr. Crockett: I love that.

Michelle: Yeah.

Dr. Crockett: So I think that that creating that safe space kind of goes back to what you're talking about in couples where having discussions about people as couples going to the gym. I think as well as the woman feeling like there's a space for her to be and to be able to move and take care of her mental health from a fitness perspective.

I think it also says a lot that you've created a space where husband's not afraid that she's going to be cheating on him or getting hit on or any of that and vice versa. I think that's a very thoughtful, intentional thing that you guys have done. I'm so impressed with that.

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I didn't even realize, I'm not married right now, but I didn't even realize how much that might weigh on people. I don't even have that excuse for not going to the gym, but I imagine a lot of people do.

Michelle: Yeah, they do. They do. It's just the stories that they shared. I mean, yeah.

Dr. Crockett: How old are your oldest female gym members? What's their age range that you do?

Michelle: We have mainly 30s I would say. 30s, 20s, 30s. I think Malcolm and I are probably the, yeah, we are the oldest ones there. So definitely, we're gym parents is what they call us.

Dr. Crockett: Oh, that's so cute.

Michelle: Yeah.

Dr. Crockett: Mom and dad gym parents. That's really cool. So a lot of times in my older patients, I can see this. My older patients tend towards more yoga and that flexibility strike training kind of thing. Less of the gym. But I'm gonna do a shout out for you guys because as I've started listening to more of these doctors who are learning about longevity, and specifically when I listen to female physiologists talking about aging female athletes. I think the strength training really is not emphasized enough.

The yoga is amazing for lots of different reasons. You do have definitely strength training in there because you're moving your own body. But I think we should encourage more people are aged and older to hit your gym.

Michelle: Absolutely. Malcolm has personal training clients that are older. I think he can speak more into that. But he's seen a lot of a lot of that. Like

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movement, how they come in not knowing how to move well. That's the thing is like I think people just don't know how to move well. Everything we do at the gym as far as our workouts, it all transfers into real life.

Dr. Crockett: Right. Because as we age, one of the biggest indicators of us having failing health is like our hand grip strength, which I didn't even ever think about that being a marker. That's a really big marker for declining function. So I think as I get older, I want to have more conversations along the lines of how do we help our fellow women be strong? How do we shift the mindset from being fit, firm, and sexy in the 30s and 40s into being strong, healthy individuals that are able to recover and have that continuity that we're talking about going into their geriatric years?

Michelle: How do we educate the males to also come around and champion us in that space?

Dr. Crockett: Right?

Michelle: So yes.

Dr. Crockett: Hello. Well, you have a champion. You have a male champion. We're gonna talk with him in just a little bit. We're gonna do his interview. Maybe he can talk about how do we encourage his counterparts to.

Michelle: Yeah, definitely.

Dr. Crockett: Well, I want to thank you so much for this conversation today. It was really enlightening. I hope you guys enjoyed it as much as I did. If you did, please like, share, and subscribe. Share it with your friends. That's how we grow the channel and grow this community that we're growing. I'm gonna give Michelle one last chance to give a shout out to how you can

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find her on social media, or if you live in the San Antonio area how you can find them at their gym.

Michelle: Yeah, so we, LivingStone Athletics. We do have a community wide workout every first Saturday of the month, but you're more than welcome to come in. Try us out. Come check us out for a little bit and see if this is a community you want to invest your time in. But you can find us on Facebook and Instagram under LivingStone Athletics.

Dr. Crockett: Fabulous.

Michelle: Yes.

Dr. Crockett: Thank you guys.

Michelle: Thank you.

Dr. Crockett: See you in the next episode. Take care.

Thanks for listening to this episode of *Becoming Virtuosa*. To learn more, come visit us at DrCrockett.com, or find us on YouTube for the Dr. Crockett Show. If you found this episode helpful or think it might help someone else, please like, subscribe, and share. This is how we grow together. Thanks, and I'll see you next week. Love always, Sue.