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In times of stress or anxiety, most people believe that a yoga routine is what they need. However, the process of beginning something new, creating a new habit, or even knowing how to start do prevents us from ever diving in. Sound familiar?

We become overwhelmed, not knowing which class to take, which yoga poses to try or believing that we're far too inflexible to try yoga and we'll get started after we stretch a bit.

Today, we're delving into all of those mindsets and more. We're going to chat about making yoga a routine, making it practical for busy moms and how to thrive while we get started.

And I've got the perfect person to guide us. So, let's dive in.

Welcome to the Fit as a Mama Bear Podcast. I'm Shelby, a certified strength coach, nutrition coach, mama to two, and all-around health nut. This show is about a little bit of everything healthy, fit and natural related.

So if you're striving to smash goals, eat better, feel better and enjoy the occasional mom rant, this is the place for you.

Hello everyone. So thanks so much for letting me jump into your ear today. The days are long and warm here. I always feel like August comes and the days feel so numbered because the reality and real life sets in and all that fun, which makes today's episode even more important. So first off, thank you everyone for listening and hitting that subscribe button to let me jump into your day and provide you with some stories and my 2 cents as a solo business owner operator. I can't tell you how much I appreciate it. If you're new here, welcome. I hope you take a little bit of knowledge and a whole lot of inspiration from today's episode, and don't forget to hit that subscribe button. So you never miss another episode.

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So today we are chatting about working a yoga routine into a busy lifestyle. Sometimes I feel like yoga is a two sided coin. I know how amazing it can be, but I struggled to find a place for it in my day, sound familiar? Today I want to break that mindset. I want to smash through the overwhelming sensation of getting started. Here with me to do that is the Italia. Italia is a classical musician and bodybuilder turned to international yoga teacher who has dedicated herself to mind and body wellness while maintaining a digital nomad style. inquisitive by nature and obsessed with learning, she holds two undergraduate degrees and a master's degree in music. In 2007 launched the Nathaliafit.com, a wellness lifestyle blog that provides a voice to millennial women on topics relating to wellness, fitness, clean beauty, fashion, and travel.

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I can't deny that I'm super excited to pick her brain. Welcome to the show in Italia. Thanks for dropping in.

Thank you so much for having me. I'm so excited to talk to you about yoga today.

I know it's going be great. So why don't you go ahead and tell us a little bit more about yourself and how you made the swap from bodybuilder to yoga teacher, because that there has to be a story there.

Yeah, so that's actually a really rare thing. I find that fitness is very polarized. So either you're very much in the mindset of being an athlete and you are training and conditioning for performance or aesthetics, or you're on the other side. You're on the wellness side of things where you're just focusing on how you feel and kind of longevity and long-term health. So I have always been very active

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and one of my earliest memories is seeing my mom who was a single mom in her bedroom with these 10-pound dumbbells doing single arm dumbbell curls. That was always very normal in my household. She would get up so early in the morning before taking me to the before school program and she would go to the gym at like four or five in the morning. So I was always very active growing up because I saw that and that was just normal. In college I started hearing about bikini competitions and I was the type of girl that was a cardio bunny. Let's be honest. I would go to the gym and I would get on the bike, which I love.

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I would go for miles and miles and miles. I think I could go for like 60 miles. I was in that gym for like two or three hours. It was very conditioned, my cardio was on point, but I wasn't getting those results I wanted, that firm tight look and I thought, Oh my gosh, I can do a bikini competition. So I competed for several years. When you're in that culture, you're very much in that grind, got to get it done no matter what. While that worked for a while, I did not realize that I was neglecting the health of my joints, my connective tissues. Those things that people really don't talk about when they talk about training. So I remember very specifically in 2015 I was in the gym and I was doing some cable exercises and I heard a pop and a tear and I had the worst pain I've ever had in my life.

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It was so bad in my back by my shoulder blade and between my spine that I couldn't even breathe. I was in grad school at the time. Being young I thought it'll be fine in a few days and I didn't get it checked out until around 2017. It turns out I had torn my rhomboid and it healed, but it healed in a not really great way where now the muscle fibers are kind of laying over each other in a net. Now, whenever I move my shoulder blade in a certain way, it crunches, which isn't great. So once that happened, I went back into yoga as a way to find relief from the stress and as a way to rehab my left shoulder blade.

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I was not thrilled about doing yoga. I wanted to build muscle and that was my mindset. I went because I knew it was good for me and I needed to move my body and I couldn't do it any other way. I couldn't lift weights because I was injured. So, I started a regular practice with YouTube videos at home and my low-quality foamy yoga mat. Finally went to a few classes and really liked doing a yoga class, it was very different from doing yoga at home. Most people start in the studio and then do yoga at home, but I started at home and then went into the studio to take some classes. That's when I got really interested and started learning more and more about yoga. I found out it's not just the physical practice of yoga, there so much more to yoga than just the Asana, the poses. I happened to be in the right time in the right place and felt really ready to get certified. So I reached out to my studio and I negotiated a deal in order for me to be able to do the yoga teacher training. So I hold a 200 hour yoga teacher certification in Vinyasa Yoga, which is just your typical flowy poses sort of class that you see in a lot of studios.

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Congratulations. I'm laughing a little from a kindred spirit perspective because I actually used to coach figure competitors for about five years. That was my jam. I know what you mean about that mindset. It

is go hard or go home, get up, get it done, period. There is no in between. Getting out of that mindset is a very challenging thing. I was that person too, I was always into strength training, but I neglected mobility training for a very long time and it catches up with you, I partially detached my hamstring. So I can appreciate where you're coming from. It's funny that you end up having to have such a journey to get there. You can't just take someone's word for it.

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Yeah. I think that's true of any physical activity, whether it's strength, conditioning or yoga, you have to come to it yourself.

Let's jump right into it today. So why don't you tell us some of the benefits you've seen with your students and your own personal experience of a dedicated yoga routine?

There are so many benefits because yoga is an all encompassing practice. Personally, I've experienced less pain. Many people use yoga for lowering blood pressure, issues sleeping, increase flexibility and mobility. Yoga can be really challenging and you can also build strength that you wouldn't otherwise build with traditional resistance training. I had a private yoga session, the way she made me contract and hold isometrically, I was shaking it was so hard.

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You just don't expect it. I think a lot of people have that idea that yoga is a nice, easy stretch and it's kind of flowy and fun, but it's a challenge.

Yeah, absolutely. You can improve breathing because breathing is a huge part of your yoga practice. It can be a really great way to start any sort of physical practice. Some people experience weight reduction or better metabolism. If you're a conditioned athlete, you're probably not going to notice weight reduction or anything like that but overall athletic performance improves, because it hits all of the parts that you need in order to be a really great athlete, flexibility, mobility and strength. The mental benefits are also numerous.

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The main thing I've noticed is that if I can maintain it every day, and that's the challenge that we'll talk about in a little bit, but if I can maintain it, I experience reduced stress, clarity, better focus and attention and overall sense of calmness. Um, and for me coming into yoga with that injury, I already had a lot of awareness of that part of my body that I didn't have before. Practicing yoga as a full body practice and not just focusing on the injured area, I was able to really connect with my body in a way that I hadn't before. I created this intense mind body connection where I started getting control over muscles. I honestly didn't even know that I could control,

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Which is really cool.

Yeah. That's awesome. Now, would you say that yoga is the thing you go to when you are stressed, because everyone has that thing right. Where you need to kind of sort out your mind and figure your stuff out. Is that yoga for you now? Or do you still lift?

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I do still lift, when I'm on the road a lot, I use resistance bands and things that are easy to pack. When I'm at home, I go to the gym and I love my weights and my cables and all of that.

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So, you have a nice balance then?

Yes. Yoga is

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Movement and meditation. Whether you're lifting weights or you're doing yoga, you're focusing on counting or reps or you're focusing on your breathing. I think that doing any sort of movement like that is great for stress relief. Yoga in particular really puts emphasis on focusing on your body and breath connection. So, it's another level of a moving meditation.

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That makes sense. I struggle with that a lot. I'm not going to lie. It is one of those things that I wish I was better at. I worked really hard in the postpartum phase to get that connection back. It's something that I just let slide and you do have to continuously practice it. Now, what is your personal yoga practice look like? How often do you practice?

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As a yoga teacher, I aim for every day. I think the really good balance is three to five times a week. For me, while my aim is seven days a week for an hour or more, I don't always hit that. So I set my goal or my baseline at three to five sessions a week for 20 to 30 minutes minimum. I feel good about that if I can do more, that's amazing.

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Okay. That's a nice mindset.

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I think three to five times a week for 20 to 30 minutes, if you're strength training is a really good schedule, because then you can stagger it and do an every other day schedule and it doesn't require too much planning or thinking. It's easy to alternate between yoga days and strength training days. So you're getting it all in.

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What about the practice itself? I know there's a lot of different styles of yoga. Which one do you gravitate towards?

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I like the freedom of Vinyasa yoga and that's what I am certified in. Vinyasa has a kind of flow to the practice. It's what you're going to see at, at most studios. Many offer a Vinyasa class or a few Vinyasa classes. I like teaching it because it gives the yoga teacher the chance to be creative. So, you might go to a class with many different poses and every class is different. It gives the students a chance to

chime in and say, well, I want to work on this today, and then the yoga teacher can incorporate requests into the class for the day.

What about the poses? Are there certain poses that you do every day or frequently or that you always have in there?

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Yes. I do shoulder stretches obviously because of my left injury. I also like to keep my hips very mobile because when I did a bikini-competitions, I lost a lot of mobility in that area and along with hamstring flexibility. You may hear a lot of teachers say that, whatever yoga pose you don't like doing, that's probably the pose you need to do. It's so true, even for yoga teachers. We have to remind ourselves about that because it's so easy to just go back into your routine and do what you like or what's easier or what feels good and you neglect those poses that are harder for you. Those are the ones that you really need to work on.

That's like any training though, if you think of Bulgarian split squats, no one wants to do those, but they're really beneficial.

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There are so many poses to help with hip mobility. I love pigeon pose or king pigeon pose. I used to struggle with pigeon pose. I couldn't get anywhere close to what the pose is supposed to look like and my yoga instructor encouraged me, reminding me that this is important, that I needed to work on it. I spent a solid year working hip mobility and it took six months of that year for me to not want to vomit in pigeon pose. Now I do it multiple times a week, 92 second holds because it is so beneficial for me, but it was one of the ones that took me forever to not hate. Everyone has those poses, some don't like standing splits for whatever reason.

Yeah. I, through a phase when I started

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yoga where I only wanted to do fun yoga, like. I had a really good instructor who was very honest in the fact that that was not why I needed to be coming to yoga.

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That's really common for people who come from a background of strength and resistance training as you want to get a similar benefits. So, you're doing all of these very challenging strength-based poses and what you need to be doing are those more restorative poses that get into those connective tissues.

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That couldn't be more true. So if we're thinking of busy moms here, ideally three days a week would probably be a good place for people to start.

Right. Well,

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You know, the thing about yoga is that there are many aspects to yoga, the poses are just one aspect. So I think releasing the expectation that you even have to do those poses is the first step in incorporating yoga into your routine.

So yoga,

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That's a big. My mind just blew up.

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It was a mind block for me too. It's not the poses? The thing is yoga could be just you, getting on your mat for the only five minutes that you might have in a day and meditating. If that's where you need to start, that's ok. Learning about yoga or incorporating it with your schedule, whatever it may be, then start there. Maybe that turns into 12 minutes and then you're doing a down dog, a pigeon, and a few warriors, and then you can build up from there. It doesn't have to be that one hour practice that you do at the studio

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I like it. Just dropping the expectations and the big commitments, a little bit more getting on your mat. Do you think everyone should start by more learning to meditate and kind of finding their breathing a bit more?

I think that's a good place to start.

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A lot of people do start in Asana and it can be a little overwhelming when the teacher's telling you to breathe a certain way. Your breath and your body might not be in sync. For me, it was a very difficult thing to understand when to breathe in and, when to breathe out whilst doing a pose. So, I think starting with breathing is a really friendly way to get into yoga. Once you have that foundation adding in the poses and syncing it with your breath can be a lot easier. Yoga, I believe, is all about just starting where you are with what you have.

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It can be anything, just start the habit and then you can build from there. It doesn't have to be three times a week or one hour, just choose a number of minutes that you're going to dedicate to getting on that mat for however many days a week, you think is doable for your schedule and just start there. Release all of your other expectations and what you hope it will be or what you think it's going to be and just be still and be with yourself and see where it goes.

I like it. From a busy mom perspective, I am not going to go to a one-hour yoga class. It just getting out of my house is tough!

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So, how do moms start at home? I think I know myself personally, I get really overwhelmed by yoga, it's not my specialty at all. I have six poses that I know and I get on my mat and I do my six-pose flow. Then I'm done, task accomplished. So, where do we start? Do we just find random things on YouTube? Do we get a book?

You start by releasing expectation. If you can't leave your house or if you don't like the studio, do a YouTube video, I love YouTube videos, even as a yoga teacher. Find something that is at your level, if you're a beginner, find something that's short and very simple. If you're more advanced and you want that challenge, find something that's a power yoga. That's going to get you sweating or strength based.

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You can do yoga with very little equipment; you don't even need a yoga mat. I often use a blanket.

Exactly! You don't need all of this expensive equipment. You don't need blocks, or straps, or a yoga mat. You just need you! You don't even need clothes! You certainly don't need those fancy, head to toe, all decked out in spandex outfits to do yoga. Don't let anything prevent you from doing yoga.

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I love it. You don't need a whole lot of stuff to get started. Now, what should we look for in a YouTube channel that we're following? This is a really big pet peeve of mine, so I might be projecting here to be perfectly honest, but just because someone looks fit does not mean that they are qualified to give you a workout. I imagine the same is true with yoga. So what should we look at? I know the 200 hour training is important. Is there anything else that we could look for?

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Generally, teachers will teach one or a couple of styles of yoga. If there's a teacher that teaches a wide range of yoga, there's nothing wrong with that but, you might not get the technical instruction that comes with really having an in-depth knowledge of a specific style. Someone who has some experience teaching in person is very valuable. Working with people in person teaches you as a teacher, it allows you to understand different walks of life. As a teacher you often have an entire classroom full of students who are all at different levels and different backgrounds. When you're on YouTube, your audience is the whole world, so someone who's taught in a studio is able to understand that they are teaching millions or billions of people right now, not just one person. Having that mindset for a teacher is really important.

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I love that. know when I filmed my videos, most of my clients were not pregnant, but I always give modifications for pregnancy just because I know I have a lot of pregnant moms who follow me online. So you're right. That makes a big difference. I've been teaching for way too long now, but all of that does kind of come into play as you try to give modifications or progressions for multiple levels versus just the one you kind of think of when you're teaching.

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Yeah. So having a teacher, that's going to have that mindset is important for queuing all the different levels of people watching. If you're a beginner looking for a yoga class on YouTube, finding a teacher, that's going to cue a tree pose by saying "do this in your tree pose" or "If you're just starting out with us, the next step up from this is adding this modification."

You talked about Vinyasa yoga and a couple of other different styles of yoga, can you give us a better understanding of what we might enjoy or want to start with?

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Yes. If you are pregnant, prenatal, yoga, all the way. There are very specific contra indications for pregnancy. Especially if you're a beginner and you're pregnant. I can't recommend going to a standard yoga class because, you're very stretchy and parts of you've body that have never been stretched stretching before are stretching. So, you need a teacher that is knowledgeable on that type of queing and those classes. One of my biggest pet peeves is marketing to pregnant women when you start teaching. Any type of activity can be dangerous, even any yoga, if you're pregnant. You need knowledge on how women are supposed to lay on the floor, there's a certain direction that you're not supposed to lay in because it can cause harm to the baby. So, you know, those things are really important. There is Ashtanga is a very regimented yoga class, that's predictable.

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I believe there are three levels of Ashtanga that teachers can get certified in. When you go to an Ashtanga class, it's going to be the same poses every single time. It's challenging and it moves quickly. The idea is because you're doing the same poses, you're able to fall into that state of meditation a little easier, due to autopilot. Once you get used to the poses and you can improve because your practising them over and over again. There is hot yoga, which is really any style of yoga that's in a heated room. I personally don't love super hot, super humid rooms, like the ones where they're pumping in humidity and it's like a hundred and four degrees. That's really intense for me even, I prefer rooms that are between 80 and 95. I get freaked out by it. Everyone's dripping sweat.

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Hot yoga is so popular. Often times I find the room cramped in, if there's room

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in the space, then it doesn't bother me as much. I've definitely been in classes where there's 25 or so people in in the room and that's all I can think about. That type of environment is not effective for me.

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There is Hatha yoga, which is in the West. In the United States, yoga tends to be marketed as beginner, yoga or easy intro to yoga sort of classes. So, if you're a beginner, look for a beginner intro classes, Iyengar yoga is wonderful for people who have physical limitations or injuries or any sort of special physical considerations because Iyengar uses a lot of props; blankets, bolsters, and foam blocks. The idea is to meet the student where they are, instead of trying to force the body to do certain poses. Restorative yoga can be so yummy for athletes and people who are always doing resistance training or a lot of cardio.

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The restorative yoga kills me cause they make you hold the poses for so long.

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Yeah. Well, you know, and that is really important for, for people who do weightlifting. It's not what we want to do, but it's so important.

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I've noticed the biggest bang, the biggest difference from starting restorative yoga then from just going through all my tree poses.

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Yeah. So restorative yoga is so great. A step up and intensity from restorative yoga is yin yoga and yoga, classes are usually an hour long and you're probably only going to go through maybe five to 10 poses and you're going to hold those poses for a long time. Maybe 10 minutes per pose. Can you imagine doing a pigeon for 10 minutes?

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Oh, the first time I held frog pose for two minutes, I wondered if stopwatch was still going? I have to have a stopwatch, I'm a trainer Yogi, otherwise I'll cheat.

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Yoga is so great for getting in those connective tissues. The more you sit in those stretchy poses, the deeper you're going to be able to get into those connective tissues. If you're tight, that's really key to being able to be more flexible in the joints or more mobile in the joints and more flexible in the muscles. There is also Kundalini yoga, which is very interesting. It's a mixture of spiritualism and yoga. The idea is that you're building heat in the body. So if it focuses a lot on breathing techniques, very fast breathing techniques, coupled with very short and fast repetitive movements. If you could imagine doing a squat and kind pulsing at the top of that squat for a hundred reps while also breathing in and out really fast, that is like something that you might see in a Kundalini yoga class that would take a lot of coordination.

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That's just a short list skimming the very top of different styles of yoga. There are so many other styles of yoga. So, it's all about finding what it is that you like and just trying the different styles. If you don't know a lot about them.

Now I know everyone is thinking, so I'm just going to ask it. What about if we're not flexible because I think that's everyone's fear, that they're going to go to yoga and they can't even touch their toes and it's just a waste of time and they don't start.

Yeah. I get this question so much and my answer is, well, it's a journey. You don't go into a yoga class being the queen Supreme yoga goddess, and being able to do all of the very stretchy poses and all of the strengths poses. Everyone is going to go into a yoga class and they're going to have their strengths and weaknesses.

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You might not be able to touch your toes and maybe you won't ever be able to touch your toes and that's fine, but you're probably going to be really good at something else. That person that you're looking at next to you, who's super bendy might not ever have your strong capabilities and vice versa. And then you'll realize, okay, it's okay to be different. No one's judging me here. Maybe you will get better at those poses if you stick with them. Or maybe you won't, maybe that's it's not for you, but there are some benefits that you can gain from maintaining that practice. It is all about consistency.

Yeah. To be honest consistency and getting started are the two hardest things you'll meet in any training program. So tell us where we can find you. Do you have a YouTube channel in addition to the blog?

Yeah. I am on Instagram, where I am most active and I love connecting with my community on there. So go ahead and give me a follow it's at Nathalia_fit

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, the same thing on Twitter, and on Facebook I'm Nathalia Fit. Okay. Let her be.

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My website is Natalia fit.com.

Perfect. So, everyone head on over to her Instagram and check her out and remember that when it comes to beginning in any kind of routine, be kind to yourself, there's no one solution or perfect system. My goal for you this week is to just start, don't overthink it or plan out the perfect system. Just start with one day, one session, one moment, and then head on over to my Instagram channel and let me know how it went. I love hearing about when our tips are put in the action. Remember if you're in need of fitness tips, workouts, and amazingly healthy recipes, check out my website at fitasamamabear.com as well as my YouTube channel for work out videos and tips. Check back soon to catch the next episode of the Fit as a Mama Bear podcast. If you took one lesson from today's episode, I hope it's that anyone can begin a yoga routine and a new routine can fit into any kind of lifestyle. You've just got to get started.