

Navigating Women's Health with Rachel Welch

Candace Dellacona: Welcome to the Sandwich Generation Survival Guide. I am your host, Candace Dellacona, and I am really excited to welcome our guest today, Rachel Welch, who is here as a mother, as a daughter, as a woman's health expert. Rachel is known far and wide as a pre and postnatal fitness pioneer, and Rachel is the founder of Revolution Motherhood.

So welcome Rachel.

Rachel Welch: Thank you, Candace. It's really a joy to be here.

Candace Dellacona: I'm so excited to have you and to talk to you about women's health and all of the struggles we have as mothers, as daughters, as members of the sandwich generation. One of our favorite topics here is to talk about self-care, and that's really why you're here.

Rachel Welch: Yeah. I'm excited to talk about self care and to unpack what that term really means. It's thrown around a lot.

Candace Dellacona: It is. And that's a really good place to start.

And maybe you can fill us in on your journey and what led you to find and establish Revolution Motherhood.

Rachel Welch: At its inception revolution, motherhood really was born when I became a mom and it was born to become a body and health education platform for women. When I became a mom, my oldest just turned 14. The black hole of women's health information was much more vacant and vast than it is today. And I would even say even while it's a lot more filled right now, the information isn't necessarily. Better or more easy to understand today. But when I became a mom and discovered firsthand the real failings of the industries I was a part of with regard to women and more specifically than failing women had never even really considered women. And the different bodies we live in and the changes that our bodies transcend year over year and decade over decade, and no conversation, no language, and certainly no roadmap to navigating those many changes so that women could thrive and. I speak of those industries, their fitness, their eastern medicine, their health their, all the movement modalities. There's yoga, Pilates. I was in all of it. And that really fired me up because

because the disregard for the quality of our physical health is actually a disregard for our lives. Your physical health colors, everything about your reality, and in particular, once you become a mom. Those demands are amplified and that amplification is occurring on a compromised physicality. Let alone a compromised hormone and emotional and everything else system. And so I really set out to answer those questions, not just for myself, but for women everywhere, because we deserve to be valued.

Our bodies are valuable. And the assumption that from childbirth onward, even if you don't have a baby, you've crossed the threshold of forties and fifties, that there's an assumption that women's bodies just decline. And that's totally unacceptable.

Candace Dellacona: So first of all, amen to that. And I think you bring up a really important point that here you are, you're immersed in this world of fitness. You have education around the physicality, the body, and really have surrounded yourself probably with the people that should be able to have provided you with

the answers and the data, and you as someone who had the education and the resources to find the additional resources, you couldn't find them.

So it sounds like you just created the resource, and I love what you're saying about we, part of the deficit of that information is a statement on the fact that it wasn't considered. That women's health is dismissed, and so you're bringing it to the forefront to make sure that we're not dismissed.

Rachel Welch: Absolutely. We've never been studied. And as much as that is now coming out in the menopause conversation and the menopause movement, when I started Revolution Motherhood, I would say the movement then was diastasis recti.

These conversations that are so important to be having out loud in the open as women, we process by talking it out. We need to know that we're seen and heard. The research is still not there.

And as much as I give our physicians the benefit of the doubt and credit for working in a very broken system they're working an uphill battle trying to answer questions based on research that hasn't been done and experience they don't have, and frankly, topics that are way outside their scope. And so as women, it's like. As always, we're left to figure it out by ourselves and to self-educate and then self-advocate. And so to have a place like Revolution Motherhood where there's reliable information, it's science backed. I researched women's bodies. I researched the changes. I created a cross training method that actually meets you through each change so that every life change becomes an opportunity for growth. And a deeper connection, I would say, to your humanity and to your essence. You just get better with age. You don't decline with age. And to have an outlook like that and a resource like that is it's a lifeline to a lot of women who have shown up in my office and who I know you interact with all the time, who are just like, they've given up and shuttered themselves out of living in their bodies.

Candace Dellacona: That's a great segue to talk about the importance of self-care and making sure that in the midst of trying to raise good humans and advocate for the older generation in our lives.

That we are not sort of lost in the middle. And that's a big part of the sandwich generation and the moniker and the origination of the moniker, which is feeling squeezed in between.

And I think society dismisses us and we dismiss ourselves because we're so busy looking to other people. So can you talk a little bit about why self care is so important and what that means for our listeners?

Rachel Welch: Yeah. Absolutely self care in my world means having a living relationship with yourself. And that means through your body. It means listening to your emotions. It means, investing time and energy in knowing yourself the same way you invest time and energy in a relationship with your children and with your partner, and with your parents, and with all the people you're taking care of, and you're sandwiched in between. Investing that energy in yourself is what gives you your personal ability to process and align your decisions that you're making in your life for these people in your caretaking efforts, but also for yourself to navigate not just physiological changes, but the changes that come with living decade over decade. And the sooner you establish that habit, and I will say self-care is a habit, not a motivational sort of if you feel like it. Right.

Candace Dellacona: Yeah.

Yeah.

Rachel Welch: because one of the things that really happens for us. In that sandwiched, overtaxed, overwhelmed reality as caretakers of so many others, is you never are gonna feel like it. As soon as you open this can of worms, like you're gonna feel things, you're gonna face things, your thoughts are gonna be like loud, all those things that come up, pressing it down and ignoring it, we all know is not going to work.

Candace Dellacona: It doesn't work. I can attest if anybody needs proof. Yeah, no, I love that. The fact that you're bringing it up and framing it as a routine. And an exercise is so important because self-care doesn't just mean going for a walk. It means prioritizing who you are. And to your point, thinking about the body that you embody as the pathway, I guess to the outside world.

And one of the things that I loved that you brought up in a past conversation that we had is honoring your body at every age. We have listeners who have young children and maybe they're in their thirties, and people who have moved on. I myself am in my fifth decade. What does that mean and why do you think that we as a society don't honor our body at every age?

What is it that prevents us from doing that?

Rachel Welch: I'll share like an in imagine. Okay. You have an experience in your body, whether you're 10, whether you're 20, whether you're 50, whether you're 80, you have something going on in your body that doesn't quite feel right.

Maybe it's pain, maybe it's something going on. We know whether you've experienced it directly or you've just heard it from the women around you. You know that the most likely response you're gonna get if you take this to a healthcare provider is a shrug. Well, I don't know. You're getting older. You had a baby. What do you expect? Your body's just gonna be like this now. We get dismissed. And so starting to bring things up and pay attention to your body as you age is just scary because if you have something wrong with you or you are feeling something going on and there is no path to change it or recover or fix it, I'd rather not know about it too.

Candace Dellacona: Yeah. Yeah.

Rachel Welch: right? It's like, well, we better just get on with it because this is gonna take time and energy I don't have already. So why am I gonna take the time to go see somebody who's gonna tell me that I'm just broken forever?

Candace Dellacona: You're so right. You're so right. There's like almost, it's an easy way out because you look at having to expend more time than you already do not have. But it does go back to devaluing ourselves, right? Because if we had value, then we would say this is necessary time to spend.

I mean, I think what is really important to think about too. And, I try to think about is I'm advocating for my children, for example, or my dad. And one of the ways that I'm a great advocate is because I know them well. And so it sounds to me like you're talking about the same thing for our own bodies.

Like the better you know your body, the better you can articulate and advocate for yourself.

Rachel Welch: absolutely. So flip that what if that I just described and what if you had had a multi-decade relationship with yourself, and that was really the story that I came into motherhood with and having this, all of a sudden life change occur in my body. I had a template against which to test and recover and

experiment on myself and understand, this is working. This isn't working. Take that and apply it to you have a general understanding, a good base knowledge of how your neuromuscular system works, when it feels like you're connected, when it feels like you're not. You have a general understanding of what occurs to your body when you're entering perimenopause and menopause and you're well-educated and versed.

And then you can go to your medical providers and you can one, vet them better. If you can know the questions to ask. You can really choose a better, more skilled provider who's already doing their own research in women's health and ready to meet you there. But you can also have better language that they're going to hear better. And you can, and this is unfortunate, but it's what we all have to do in this day and age is you're gonna maybe have to go through several physicians, right? Test one out and you don't get the answers you want. Go get a second and third opinion. And it's like, Nope, that one wasn't it. Take hormone replacement therapy, take a blown out knee, take a hip replacement, like these are major life moments for women in particular, and having the right medical guide as you go through it. The medical guide is gonna meet you at one level and then having the knowledge that you have about your body and your relationship with yourself is what's gonna take you to a full recovery. And that's true for every single life event, whether it's pregnancy, childbirth, a hurt back a skiing injury, or you're 70 and just trying to maintain really strong muscle and bone mass.

Candace Dellacona: And with that being said, and going to the various care providers and trying out the doctors and figuring out if that is an individual that you can communicate with and that they hear you in a way you need to be heard. Or open to the, data you're essentially giving them by telling them what ails you let's say.

Why do you think the healthcare space is so far behind? Why has the healthcare space not caught up? I shared with you that, it took me over a year to get into a physician that's specialized in perimenopause and menopause, and I'm here in New York City. I have great health insurance, so why is it that the healthcare system hasn't caught up to help us?

Rachel Welch: There are a lot of facets to that answer.

I would say zoom out away from women's health and look at healthcare as a general umbrella. And I think we can all agree it's a crumbling, antiquated, broken system. It has been dismantled like systemically by a lot of different forces, political and nonpolitical, but certainly by financial forces, right? So that, increasingly it's for profit, decreasingly, it's for genuine health.

So that's the condition under which we're dealing with medicine. Then zoom in on women's health. Women's health historically has not been researched, has not been prioritized. Physicians are not routinely trained in it. Same situation as fitness instructors. They're not trained in women's fitness. That's changing a little bit now, there's just no education around it. And so for a physician to be trained in perimenopause, in even in obstetrics and gynecology, like that's a field. But then in women's health related to obstetrics and gynecology, that has to be the physician going out and educating themselves and wanting to learn it. And then take the position of the physician. I work a lot with practitioners, both, from obs, midwives, PTs, like across the whole spectrum. These people are burnt out.

They are doing the very best they can. They're very limited in time. They're also really restrained by scope. They are physically not allowed to go outside their scope, so they're allowed to refer out. But if you ask them a question that is not within their training they're not allowed to answer. And so there's a, an enormous amount of restriction and gagging on the medical providers themselves in a system that's just crushing them,

Candace Dellacona: So. When you think of that though, and so we're on the other side as the novice, right? As the non-medical person. And let's say that we've done a great job at knowing who we are and understanding our body. How do we find the right practitioner? What is your sort of best advice for somebody who really needs to connect with the right care provider? Where do they start?

Rachel Welch: Google is not a bad place. I will tell you, I would go to Google before I went to social media.

Candace Dellacona: Yeah.

Rachel Welch: Social media is just so invasive and divisive. Put that to the side. Go to Google and I would put in the terms that you, for instance, let's take, we'll take perimenopause. Okay. So if I were gonna Google a practitioner and perimenopause, I would put in perimenopause general practitioner, or if I wanted like women's health specialist, something like that I would put a general geographical area around it, so I would put some parameters like that around it. See what comes up. Then generally you do get a list or a link to like Zocdoc or some, list of practitioners where they've been reviewed by patients. And then you've gotta do your research. You've gotta like pull out a few of the physicians. I will tell you this is a place for AI as well. I'll go into Claude and I will plug in some doctor's names. I'll plug into my health insurance and I'll be like, line this up. And Claude's pretty good. They, he they'll help define things for you.

Candace Dellacona: That's a great suggestion actually. Another great example of how AI can help you.

Rachel Welch: It can, yeah. It can cut through the noise a little bit for you. And so that'll then start with like, all right, I've narrowed it down to a handful of physicians. And then, then you can like Google the actual name and just start reading about that person. Read their bio, read the bio they wrote about themselves, and figure out what they're saying about themselves. That's where I would start. And then honestly, I've had a couple physicians where I thought they were, I thought they were gonna be great, and I called the office to try to make an appointment and that experience was so weird and off-putting. I was like, I don't think that's the one actually. And then I would go to somebody else.

Don't be afraid to change doctors. All of this takes time, which is why it becomes it's easy to get self-defeating about it, right? So it does take a little bit of diligence and time. But this is time that's well spent.

Candace Dellacona: It is and making right, and making it a priority. And you just use the word noise, which I think is really illustrative, because as someone who is now in her fifties and searching for the data to help me find my way through, how do we cut through the noise? There's this vast vacancy that we talked about, right?

And there was like the wide open space where, you realize that there was no information. And then I feel like it's two extremes because then there's also so much information and we're being told to take this supplement and don't do hormone replacement therapy, and then this could, don't have soy.

And so how do you cut through the noise with all of the information that's floating out there in the ether?

Rachel Welch: it's really hard and we'll just start there. You have to be really an adult with yourself and discipline the information you're allowing in your brain. And I would say this across all information, not just your health. Know, I would, this is how I relate to it. I choose my sources. I don't allow every source into my brain, but I also choose sources that are science backed or based in research, based in data. For instance, someone just in our community the other day was asking about a perimenopause supplement. And they're just like jumping into the group and they're like, what do I do?

I respond to all those inquiries and I went in and I found an NIH study National Institutes of Health. I found an NIH study and I linked her to that and I said, this is from NIH, it's science backed, it's research backed. They're even at the front, like in the abstract saying women need more study in this area. However, from what we have seen in the data we've collected, here are the results. So it's not telling you a should, it's not advice. It's here is the data. You can weigh it for yourself. And then I said at the bottom of that, here's my opinion, right?

In my experience, supplements should be just that. A supplement to your whole nutrition and active lifestyle, and you have gotta run supplements like this by your doctor because your blood work matters.

So supplements just 'cause they're vitamins doesn't mean they don't have anything in them, or they can't have any negative impact on you. I was like, you need to know if you're deficient in anything or what if this is gonna contradict anything that you're already taking. Like you definitely need to run this stuff by your doctor. So that's a, that's one of the ways we cut through the noise, right? Like she came to a trusted closed community, asked her a question, and the response is, here's science. Definitely run it by your doctor, but also litmus check this with your holistic lifestyle. And the other piece I would say is once you do wanna try something, if you've tested it out, you like think it looks great, you have five friends who've taken it and tried it, try it like, if it seems safe, go for it. And then listen to the results you're having in your body. Don't override it. 'cause as women, we're just trained to doubt ourselves,

Candace Dellacona: That's true. The, the inner voice Is a real thing.

Rachel Welch: It's it just must be me. I'm crazy. It is no, you are not crazy. Your body's talking to you. So maybe it worked for those five other women. Maybe you're having a negative response. Stop. See if the negative response stops, and if it does, that's not the thing for you.

And I would say that from fitness to nutrition, to diets, to supplements to like all of it.

Candace Dellacona: Yeah, and you brought up technology before and your answer went back to technology, right? We have access to a lot of information, which can be, on the one hand, confusing because we have a lot of information coming at us. But on the other hand, you're talking about vetting resources and making sure that you know the website, for example, and the link that you provided was to NIH.

So that is a reputable resource. And then always going back to that physician that you've identified, who you can have that sort of dialogue with, and really knowing the source of your information.

Rachel Welch: Yeah. And I would say, my daughters are 14 and nine, and as they are entering the vast spaces of the internet and all the things we are teaching them very carefully, methodically to be safe, to doubt things, to vet their sources, like to really think before they allow things into their brain. I feel like our generation, we didn't have it. We didn't have smartphones. I was just telling them what microfiche was the other day.

Candace Dellacona: Did they? Did they get it or not really?

Rachel Welch: They thought it was fascinating. And my 9-year-old asked if we could get a microfiche machine.

Candace Dellacona: Actually, you probably could and you could probably get a bargain.

Rachel Welch: Probably gonna, I was like, let's go to the library.

Candace Dellacona: Yeah.

Rachel Welch: It's like we have this really unique experience in our lifetime of pre-technology and using microfiche and doing good research all the way to this really crazy noisy overflowing world of information, getting assaulted all the time by opinion. And for us, we're learning this later in life. It's newer to us than it is to these kids who've never known anything else. And so we've got a learning curve to catch up to.

At the beginning when social media was coming out, like it wasn't that big of a deal. We, I don't, I didn't like, put parameters around it for myself, I was like, oh, I'll go check Facebook. Now I am like, I'm diligent.

I'm diligent about who I follow, what I allow on my feed, and I'm diligent about what I look at and when I look at it.

Candace Dellacona: And so even talking about those parameters and being diligent and finding the right resources. While you were talking, I was thinking those are also examples of self-care.

You're making sure that the information you're allowing to seep into you to help make decisions is good information because you're worth it.

And so putting the value on that and making sure that the data and that the medical people that you choose to be in your orbit are worthy to be in your orbit and making sure that those things are a priority.

I think, one of the things that I love so much about Revolution Motherhood, and if we could talk a little bit about that amazing endeavor that you started.

First of all, I love the title.

Rachel Welch: Thank you.

Candace Dellacona: It's just really indicative of, about what the program is. And so when you found, this wide open space where, this information was really lacking, what was the most important thing for you when you started Revolution Motherhood?

Rachel Welch: I would say it was the desire to help women who had lost all hope that they could really live vital lives. And I can't even describe or count how many women have showed up in my office. And I sit down and I look at them and I ask them how their bodies are and they fall apart. They just sob hysterically, it's like someone's finally asked, and the end of that sobbing is almost always I just, I don't think there's anything that can be done. I'm just in pain all the time. And, over the course of 60 or 90 minutes, we take our time. I listen to them, I listen to their bodies. I watch their bodies move. We find what does turn on and what does work. We chart a course to making the positive changes they didn't think were possible. And it's so much more than just getting strong and doing fitness. Fitness is a word, like self-care, right?

Candace Dellacona: Yeah.

Rachel Welch: so much more than that. It's about intentional living. And for me. This is my personal story, but my body's always been, I've been an athlete my whole life and it's how I've known myself, how I process myself.

And for a woman, for other women who live like that, to have that, that like oasis taken away from them or threatened, it's so much more than, oh, my butt isn't tight anymore. I don't have a six pack anymore. And we're talking about a real loss of self. And so for me that was the real impetus was this isn't just about fitness, this is about teaching you how your body works, so you don't need to fear it anymore.

Candace Dellacona: Yeah.

Rachel Welch: And then from that, discovering the incredible joy that can be found and empowerment truly that can be discovered and accessed in making positive changes in your physical health and getting strong.

Candace Dellacona: Yeah. I love that. The fact that, to your point, whether you're an athlete your whole life or you were someone who was in shape and you were more able bodied maybe than you are at the current time, there's so much identity and self-worth entangled into your physicality, especially in our society.

For you to have created this platform, which is a soft place for people to land and creating a community from that, which is a big part of what Revolution Motherhood is. And I encourage people to check out the website because it really is a place where like-minded people look for vetted information, evidence-based information, and a sense of belonging and not being alone in their struggle.

Rachel Welch: Yeah. Totally. I'll say like I, as a founder, I had an idea, I had a passion flash, I had a vision of what it was gonna be, right? And you never know what it's actually gonna become once it's put out into the organic world. This inner, we call it the inner circle. It blows me away. We've been on it all. We had a summer sweat club, so it was just like one of the groups they could join it if they wanted to, have accountability. And the women that come in there are like, I don't know, like how did you, like someone like posted that they worked out at 5:00 AM and someone else gets in. They're like, all right, tell me how you're getting up at 5:00 AM because I don't think I can do that.

And blah. It's just like this constant community of Yes. Encouragement and hands on each other's back, like it's where we've removed. It's blown me away. It removes competition, it removes the judgment, it removes everything that kind of, we get the social media dusty bus, right? Like pits us against is each other, is like, it is such a safe and loving space where what unites us as women and mothers is what is strongest and loudest. And it is, I've said that actually for a long time is that what unites us as women is so much stronger than any of the distractions that would divide us. And when we come together in that group, we just like, we achieve mountains, right? So I'm, it's just it's been the best and it continues to grow.

It continue, like obviously it's this growing community, but it continues to be this place where women are able to imagine for themselves something that could suddenly become possible that up until that point they had just written off as impossible for themselves. Whether that is getting in the best shape of their lives and getting a six pack for the first time.

Or, running a marathon after you've had four kids because your pelvic floor has been blown out. Or literally just being able, getting out of such chronic pelvic pain that you can go to the playground and have fun with your kids.

Candace Dellacona: That's the thing too, right? It's at every stage, and one of the great sort of guidance that you provide is that your body, you should expect your body to be different every single year, and that is okay and it should happen and that, every stage of life has its thing and that is just part of the aging process.

Rachel Welch: A hundred percent. And I think two things I'd say to that is that one normalizing, just me saying out loud and normalizing a woman's internal experience really helps us off take a breath and relax. oh, okay. I'm not unique or alone or isolated or different or falling apart the way other women aren't.

Your body will change every single year. Our bodies, this is one of the foundational principles of our fitness method is that it just over the course of one month. Your cycle, your abdominal wall, and the muscles that hold your abdominal wall from the front sides and back change shape, they relax, they don't respond as well, and then over the course of your cycle ending, they start to wake back up. So the layers of our tissues and the qualities of our tissues and our mind muscle connection, how our muscles respond or don't when we ask for strength, it changes just over the course of one menstrual cycle and not take that kind of circular experience and apply that over a decade. Apply that over menopause.

Apply that over multiple childbirths and recoveries, and what you're getting is opportunities to continue to know yourself, to activate, to listen to, to find the muscles that have turned off. Not judge yourself about it. 'cause it just is the nature of the beast. Activating them. And once we have a good strong activated muscle group, we can strength train them.

And that's how we stay strong and vital through every life phase. Whether you're going into the changes of menopause and really needing to focus more on some weightlifting and strengthening and maintaining bone density and muscle mass, which is RM revive. Versus postnatal recovery and you gave birth five days ago and you're like, I just would like to be able to sit down without pain, we got you through all of it. And that's really where, it's that change that like we can just count on the body going through this cycle where I started to research well, what gets our tissues vital and that's fascial hydration. If I'm gonna get into some science, like we use this big soft foam ruler and we really tend to hydration and muscle tissue movement, meaning muscles have full range of motion.

They're not stuck like this. Take that to your pelvic floor, your back, or anywhere else in your body, right? We get full functional ranges of motion, then we activate, then we strength train and integrate, and then we cross train you.

Candace Dellacona: Right.

Rachel Welch: And that is the magic sauce that just travels with you over a lifetime, that you're not just prenatal and then now you're postpartum.

So you have to learn something all brand new. And now you're perimenopausal. You're just gotta learn something all brand new and go lift some weights, right.

Candace Dellacona: And also, to your point is it's a journey and it's a journey that we are all, we are all worthy of going on and putting the time in. And so when you think of being in the sandwich generation and stuck in between and we've said this before that you are so much better.

A better parent, a better daughter, a better sister, a better advocate. When you yourself have put the time in to know yourself and finding people like you, Rachel, who have done such a great job at creating a community and a place for resources that have been vetted. I think it's so important that our listeners think

about community and find the community that helps them in the way that you're trying to, do that for us with Revolution Motherhood. 'Cause it really is a revolution. We're demanding time and attention and medical expertise and we're, we should demand it for ourselves and we should demand it from the rest of the world.

Rachel Welch: Yeah, it's a brand new narrative. And that narrative is being challenged constantly by the internal scripts, right? And so to have a community around you that, we've all done this for women, you get with your girlfriends and you're like, F me, I think I'm just drowning. I can't do this anymore. And your girls are like, no, you got this. You're gonna go get a massage, go like, you know,

Candace Dellacona: Or take a nap, whatever

works.

Rachel Welch: What is the self-care moment that is needed right now? You're worth it. And to have those like mirrors of support just pouring back on you all the time and to know you're safe, to be vulnerable there and to reveal that truth because that truth is ubiquitous. We are all experiencing it.

I, I teach group experiences all the time. And I'll walk into a group cold. They don't know each other. They don't know me. And the second I open space for women to start to talk about themselves, it's immediate. It's just wait. You go through that? I go through that too.

Wait, you did that too. I did that too. It's just oh my God, what a relief. I'm not alone.

Candace Dellacona: I love that.

And that is really, the purpose of this podcast is to really highlight for others the universality of this experience and sharing with each other the resources that help get us through so that maybe the people that follow behind us have a little bit of an easier path than we did, and really putting good into the world, which is exactly what you have done with Revolution Motherhood, and it was really a pleasure to have you, Rachel,

Rachel Welch: Thank you.

Candace Dellacona: I encourage our listeners to check it out and thank you for all that you have done to try to bring the narrative to the forefront and make sure that we are valued.

Rachel Welch: Oh God, it's my privilege truly, besides having my daughters, it's my privilege. And thank you for creating and generating this platform because this is how, it's by sharing our stories and sharing these resources that we imagine. And are allowed to imagine a different reality and a different narrative. So the more we fill the space with good noise and good information, the better.

So thank much.

Candace Dellacona: Cheers to that. Yes. Thanks again.