

# Done with Dieting Podcast #43: Unlearning Patriarchal Programming with Dr. Amanda Ryan-Fear



Full Episode Transcript

With your Host  
Elizabeth Sherman

[Done with Dieting Podcast with Elizabeth Sherman](#)

# Done with Dieting Podcast #43: Unlearning Patriarchal Programming with Dr. Amanda Ryan-Fear

You are listening to the Done with Dieting Podcast Episode number 43.

Hi, I'm Elizabeth Sherman, former corporate high tech executive turned life and weight loss coach. But it wasn't that long ago that I was searching for that perfect diet, the one that would finally be the golden ticket to lose the weight that I so desired.

Fast forward past tons of failed diet attempts, exercise fads and painful lessons learned, and although I still have not reached the state of Nirvana, body love, my relationship with food exercise in my body is infinitely better than it was not only when I started this journey, but even as recently as three years ago.

The journey that has allowed me to ditch my scale, stop logging my food and exercise, eat food that I didn't prepare and easily maintain my weight - something that I never thought was possible for me.

I created the Done with Dieting podcast to give you simple, easy to do and sustainable strategies to help you do the same without all of the drama that I went through.

If you're a woman who's looking to create a better relationship with food and her body, get off the diet roller coaster and free up a bunch of headspace spent on calories, how you should look what you should eat and beating yourself up for not doing what you think you should be doing. You are in the right place.

Let's get started.

**Elizabeth:** Hey everyone, welcome to today's episode. I'm so glad that you are here. I cannot wait to introduce you to today's guests.

# Done with Dieting Podcast #43: Unlearning Patriarchal Programming with Dr. Amanda Ryan-Fear

Amanda Ryan Fear is a leadership coach for women, and I really wanted to have her on the podcast today because she works a lot with her clients on female empowerment, and the environment that we've been raised in, and how that influences our ability to take care of ourselves. How it influences our ability to stand up for ourselves and to stand out in a crowd. Right?

To be a feminist is great, it's an amazing thing that we want equality for women. However, as you'll see in this episode, feminism and equality runs so much deeper than that. And until we can really understand how patriarchal structures influence, how we see ourselves, how we treat our body, and how we assert ourselves. We'll keep repeating the same behaviors not really understanding, how we can change?

Tune in to my interview with Amanda right now, to get a little bit clearer on how we've been conditioned to believe as girls and then as young women that we're not enough and how our appearance plays into that.

All right, let's get on with it. Welcome Amanda to the show.

All right everyone, welcome Amanda Ryan Fear to the done with dieting podcast. Thank you for being here, Amanda.

**Amanda:** Yeah, thanks so much for having me, Elizabeth. I've been so excited to have this conversation with you.

**Elizabeth:** I am super thrilled to have you on the show because this is something that is in my heart. It's been in my heart for centuries. And centuries, I'm not that old. I heard Paul.

**Amanda:** Yeah. Generational there's something there.

## Done with Dieting Podcast #43: Unlearning Patriarchal Programming with Dr. Amanda Ryan-Fear

**Elizabeth:** Yeah. And so, first of all, let's start off with introducing yourself. Who are you? What do you do and who do you help?

**Amanda:** Yeah, it's so interesting. I have a client who I've been coaching on introductions lately because she has all the negative self-talk, whenever she introduces herself because her brain is like, "you're an imposter, this isn't really your job; this isn't really what you do."

So, I always think of her before I introduce myself now and just send a little love and compassion. Okay, my name is Amanda Ryan Fear and I coach high achieving women who are tired of feeling unfulfilled, overwhelmed, anxious. They've checked all the boxes in their lives. And they're just tired of feeling crummy because they feel like, "you know, I've climbed the ladder, I have the job, I have the family, I've reached all the goals. Why am I not happy?"

So, I help them unpack the subconscious thoughts and beliefs that we have. There really are that inner critic among other things so that they can be more fully who they are and love who they are without trying to be somebody else.

And then, I help them live out their biggest dreams because once we stop putting on that armor every day is really when we have more energy, more time, or passion. And more often than not, my clients are like, "why am I doing this thing that I've been doing for so long?" Like, "this is not what I want to do."

So, one of my clients called me a dream doula once and I thought that was just the nicest thing ever. I was like, "yes, I want to midwife your dreams, I want to help you birth your dreams." So, that's who I am, that's what I do.

**Elizabeth:** That's amazing! And so, how did you get to this point? You know, and I don't actually know anything about your background, so how did you get here?

# Done with Dieting Podcast #43: Unlearning Patriarchal Programming with Dr. Amanda Ryan-Fear

**Amanda:** Yeah, that's a good question. So, I am my first and best client, right? So, I also checked all the boxes. So, I went to an Ivy league college, moved from Portland, where I grew up in where I live now to New York city. And was in school and pushed really-really hard until I became clinically depressed and couldn't get out of bed.

Came home, revised my life, and made some choices that were actually better for being rather than what I thought everybody else wanted from me. Graduated from college, took a job in corporate America. I was a business process, re-engineering consultant, and again, totally burned myself out. It was the symptoms were anxiety this time.

And so, stepped back, asked myself, what is it that I really love to do? And I became a high school teacher, taught high school art and leadership for 10 years. And that I thought that voice in my mind was like, "well, you can't be a high school teacher for the rest of your life. What are you going to do?"

So, I became an administrator, and I did that for five years. Totally burned myself out.

This time, Elizabeth, instead of getting depressed or anxious, I broke my leg. And so, with this that was what I heard my first coach, because suddenly I had time in bed to recuperate and I really took stock of my life. And I was like, "you know, sensing a pattern here is that whenever I make decisions based on, what I think I should do, and what everybody else wants me to do, or decisions based on achievements, like in and of themselves." That's when I crash and burn and I get sick, I hurt myself all of the things.

So, I hired my first coach and she helped me shift my perspective about what I wanted to do. But there was something missing with that. And I didn't know what it was, I couldn't put my finger on it then. And so, live my life. And then, I found to Carlo and Pyle who runs the "can I swear since it's the name of her podcast?" I found the "Unfuck Your Brain" podcast.

## Done with Dieting Podcast #43: Unlearning Patriarchal Programming with Dr. Amanda Ryan-Fear

And I was like, "oh my gosh, this woman is inside my head!" And so, I hired her as a coach, I did her program. And then, what made the difference was that in her marketing, she talks about being a feminist. And no other life coaches at the time talked about being a feminist. And I thought, "this is what I'm missing," because the coach that I've worked with before she was great, but it really was missing this like, "here's why you're feeling this way."

And here are the beliefs that got you to where you are and here's what's holding you back. And so, with Kara, I learned a lot more about how our beliefs that are completely subconscious most of the time really can I use it? I used the phrase back then and a lot of my clients use the phrase get in our own way, but it's really not us getting in our own way. It's these years and centuries even of conditioning of what women can and can't do in the world. And what's socially acceptable for women to do.

And so, she really helped me to see that and that was what really pivoted my life. So, I did the coaching with her, I was still working as a high school administrator and then my mom passed away. And that was what really shift me to the core where I was like, "oh my gosh, life is really flipping short." And so, I quit my job and got certified by the life coach school, and started coaching, and the rest is history.

**Elizabeth:** Wow! So, actually there are a lot of parallels I think to our stories because my mom's passing was also pivotal in where I am today. And actually, one of the key moments resonating with what you were just saying about the expectations that other people put on us. One of the labels that I wore as a young woman was that I had to be the good girl. Right? And what it means to be the good girl, who is not disappointing people and doing what's expected of you.

And when my mom passed away, I actually moved from Chicago to Austin, Texas. Like, I moved just days before she passed away and had to go back. And my sisters were very

## Done with Dieting Podcast #43: Unlearning Patriarchal Programming with Dr. Amanda Ryan-Fear

upset with me even though my brother was like in another country, and they didn't want to disturb his vacation when my mom was on her death bed. I'm like, "wait a minute!" Like, no double standards that even we women have for ourselves. Right?

**Amanda:** Yeah, absolutely. Something you just said really resonated with me too about the good girl conditioning. Because I have this image of a hot air balloon kind of holding me up. And when my dad passed away, it was like one of the sandbags was cut. And then, when my mom passed away, the other sandbag was cut and suddenly like I was free and it's really this beautiful thing. Like, I miss my parents terribly and I'm going to get emotional but it's also so flipping liberating, right? Like, I didn't have to live up to anybody else's expectations, but my own. Which is a whole other story. Right?

But I didn't have to be the girl who applied to and went to the Ivy league college. I didn't have to be the girl who worked for the consulting firm and did all these fancy things. Like, I could just do what I wanted to.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah. Well, and it's kind of like Dorothy in the Ruby flippers, like you always had that power all along, but I didn't know it.

**Amanda:** Right.

**Elizabeth:** Oh, that's so beautiful, I love that. Yeah, okay. So, first of all, I love Kara, I love her teachings, I think she's absolutely brilliant. And I am actually signed up for her advanced certification in feminist coaching for this upcoming year. So, I'm really super excited to learn everything that you've experienced with it and then see how some of that information can apply to the listeners, and our body image, and what we think of ourselves, and all of that great stuff.

# Done with Dieting Podcast #43: Unlearning Patriarchal Programming with Dr. Amanda Ryan-Fear

Let's start with defining what is feminism?

**Amanda:** Okay, Elizabeth, I have to tell you when you said earlier. First, we should define patriarchy, I just got on Google, perfectionist brain here. Okay, I would say my definition of feminism is just the belief that women should have as much power as men, right? And feminism gets such a bad rap. And I'm not even going to go into that cause it's not worth our energy and our time.

Really, like just the stuff that happens to us day in and day out simply because we're female, feminism is the belief that that shouldn't happen. Right?

I'm a small anecdote I'm currently serving on the board of a small nonprofit here in the Portland area. And it's come to pass that one of the board members is very old school, male white. Yeah, and he is really triggered by women who pushed back on his ideas. And so, he and I have been having some lovely email exchanges back and forth. And my favorite one was, I said something about how he needs to stop gaslighting other women's experiences. And he said, any accusation of gaslighting on my behalf is simply a paranoid fantasy. And I wrote back that sentence is gas. So, anyway, so feminism is the belief that I shouldn't have to put up with that shit. Right?

Like, okay so I digress. But I would say, yeah, feminism is just the idea that women should be paid equally to men. We should be able to show up in spaces as men do. We shouldn't have to do all of this kind of compartmentalizing and shrinking of ourselves that we do just to fit in. Really all of these, like I was alluding to before about all of these rules that we have in our culture that are mostly unspoken, right? About what women can and can't do and how we can, and can't be, and I think this is where our bodies come into play. Right? Because our bodies traditionally never belonged to us. Right?

## Done with Dieting Podcast #43: Unlearning Patriarchal Programming with Dr. Amanda Ryan-Fear

So, women legally belong to their father until they got married and then they belonged to their husband. And it was something like until the 1970s, even that a woman could hold her own bank account without having a male co-signer. So, I think about our generation of women, I mean, I was alive in the seventies and my mom growing up not being able to have her own bank account really until most she was onto her second husband by then.

But it just like, when I think of women's rights, I tend to go back in time, like 200 years ago. Really, when women had zero rights. But it was in our lifetime where women still didn't have rights. And technically, legally, we have equal rights, but women are still paid pennies on the dollar for every man and women of color especially make a lot less than your average white man.

**Elizabeth:** But the Equal Rights Amendment has never been ratified. Like, I remember as a child going to era rallies with my mom and the equal rights rally, or the equal rights amendment has not been ratified in all 50 states.

**Amanda:** Yeah. That's crazy.

**Elizabeth:** It is. So, what I think about is we think about feminism as being ball busting, bra burning, feminist Nazi women. And what I think gets lost in that whole conversation is actually the freedom that men get from feminism as well, which is the idea that you can cry and that doesn't make you weak. Like, you can be whoever you want to as a man and we are just allowing everyone to be who they are. Like, there aren't these traditional sex roles of what it means to be a man, what it means to be a woman. And I think that that gets lost in the conversation as well.

**Amanda:** Yeah, you're totally right. And so, I went to two different women's colleges and just the backlash about identifying as a feminist because the feeling was especially

# Done with Dieting Podcast #43: Unlearning Patriarchal Programming with Dr. Amanda Ryan-Fear

amongst my male peers was well then, you must hate men. Like, you go to a women's college, you identify as a feminist, you must hate men.

And so, patriarchy is bad for everybody. Just like you were saying, men growing up with patriarchal conditioning belief, they can't show their emotions. They'd have to suck it up. They have to provide for their families. And I've seen this drama play out so much with my friends and their husbands and in my own relationship where I would be so happy to be the breadwinner in my family. Like, I can't wait right? Until I can retire my husband.

And then, that makes me think about growing up with the idea of like; you should always have your own bank account, you can't depend on a man, always have a career. Like, that was my conditioning and then that messed me up in my own in its own way. Right? Like, it's just these rigid rules for how you should be in shouldn't be, aren't good for anybody.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah. Yeah. And so, I don't want to say gender roles get more fluid. But yeah, it's feminism actually encompasses a lot more than just women's rights because it's really kind of just making everyone equitable and accepting what characteristics and traits are that person brings to the table. Right?

**Amanda:** Yeah. Absolutely. And I think where we have to be careful with feminism too, is feminism at least in America traditionally it's been a white woman's thing, right? Black women, women of color have been left out of the equation. And so, now there's more of a movement to really, I wouldn't even say include black women in the conversation because that's still seems off. Right?

But to understand intersectionality and the fact that as a white woman, I have a very different experience than a black woman or a Latin X woman. And just being able to weave that into the conversation and understand that because talking about body image,

# Done with Dieting Podcast #43: Unlearning Patriarchal Programming with Dr. Amanda Ryan-Fear

black women's bodies have been policed literally and figuratively from day one, and that still is happening. And so, for white women, it feels like a very different conversation. It's still a very important conversation, but just something that should be noted.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah. So, let's get into that. But before we do, let's start talking a little bit about patriarchal standards and how it influenced our perceptions on our bodies up until today? So, can you give us some examples of, I know that there are people out here right now who are listening, who are like, "oh, you're just blaming on the patriarchy." What does that even mean? Right?

**Amanda:** Okay. So, I just ordered myself a mug that says I've got 99 problems, but a white heteronormative patriarchy is all of them.

Yeah. So, let's unpack that a little bit because I think when we start using words like patriarchy and feminism, a lot of people get their hackles up and they're like, that doesn't include me. I would say, we don't grow up in a vacuum. Right? And so, we have the messages that we receive from our family of origin. And then, we also have the messages that we receive from our culture. So, television media, et cetera, et cetera, but also conversations with other humans.

And through all of those, we start to build these beliefs about; what a woman is, what a woman does? And those beliefs get lodged in our brains. I mean, you know this. And so, our subconscious has this whole schema of, what a woman should do, what a woman should look like? And that doesn't come from nowhere. Right?

That comes really from thinking about media, especially if we look at who holds the power in media, it's usually white Christian males. Right? And so, then they're controlling what we see. I'm trying not to sound like a conspiracy there. They have a certain lens. And so, it usually has been white Christian males who've set the standard for how everybody should behave. And so, how that shows up for us is like my client who has

# Done with Dieting Podcast #43: Unlearning Patriarchal Programming with Dr. Amanda Ryan-Fear

anxiety about speaking up in meetings. Because traditionally it's been dangerous for women to speak up, right? Like, we're taught to not rock the boat, we're taught to make everybody else happy.

You'd mentioned the good girl conditioning, which a lot of my clients identify with. And so, the idea of speaking up in a meeting, not always speaking up, but contradicting a man like that can feel really dangerous. And instead of recognizing that, "oh, it's because I have this condition beliefs about the fact that I should be quiet, and demure, and all the things we blame ourselves. And we're like, "what's wrong with me? Why can't I speak up in this meeting?" And then, we think it's us.

But like Karez says, she says the call's coming from inside the house. Like the horror movies where the phone rings, the babysitter picks it up, and it's the killer. And you find out the call is coming from inside the house. Well, it's not, it's our own brains. Right? Because we have ingested these beliefs and we just think that that's what we believe. So, I don't know if that answered your question.

**Elizabeth:** No, absolutely. And where my brain was going, as you were talking was, I remember as a young girl, like maybe freshman year in high school or something, reading 17 magazine. And for all practical purposes, I am a white Christian straight woman who has a generally lean body, but I haven't always been like this.

And even then, when I would look through the magazines, I didn't look like the models, and that's me. I can't even imagine women who are Latina, or African-American, or any other race, or who are shorter, or just naturally heavier. Like, they don't see any representation and there's actual proof to show that, well, first of all, most women are happiest with their face.

The reason that we're most happy with our face is because we see it the most. And so, the more we are exposed to other shapes and bodies, the more we see them as normal

# Done with Dieting Podcast #43: Unlearning Patriarchal Programming with Dr. Amanda Ryan-Fear

and the more that we accept our own bodies. And so, it's the same thing that we don't see what we are in media. And so, therefore, we automatically assume that we, our body is wrong, or broken, or whatever we interpret it to be.

**Amanda:** Yeah, absolutely.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah. Okay, so we've learned all of this programming of how we're supposed to be. And these are very subtle signals that we pick up on as children. Right? Of what it means to be a woman, what it means to be a man, what it means to be attractive? Right?

**Amanda:** Yeah. Yeah, and I think about it like, nobody ever sits you down and is like, "okay, here's what you need to look like, here's how you need to speak." But then, I also was thinking, so I have a Facebook group of some fabulous women and I posted the question to them. I said, I'm going to be on a friend's podcast. We're going to be talking to you about body image.

When I say the word body image, what comes to mind for you? And they were so amazingly honest and open. And one of them said, "you know, I've always been really critical of my arm." Like, "I've always thought I should have a thin arms." She's had two kids and she actually remembers hearing that message from her mom who heard it from her mom of this is how she digested it. And I apologize, I'm not doing what she wrote credit, but what I took home from it was that this is generational. And so, I am sure my grandmother had that conversation with my mother of, here's what you need to look like to attract a man, right?

Being concerned for my mother's welfare. Right? Because even in the forties, and fifties, and sixties, when my mother was coming of age, women had to have a man to be able to have certain rights and be secure. And so, this message really resonated with me, like generationally. We have to have thin arms. And then, her mom is also in my group too

# Done with Dieting Podcast #43: Unlearning Patriarchal Programming with Dr. Amanda Ryan-Fear

and her mom chimed in and she's like, "yes, I remember my mother telling me, here's how I had to look to attract a man."

And so, I think for our generation, maybe it's not as explicit, but it's still out there in the pipeline. Like, it's still out there in the ether. And thinking about media, so I've been rewatching friends with my husband and her daughter, and I absolutely had our friends and I remember watching it in college. And just now looking back because it was 30 years ago, 25 years ago. It sounds crazy 20 years ago, I can't remember.

But just some of the things that they say, and I think, "oh, yeah." Like, my brain hadn't been fully developed when I was ingesting these messages about what women should do. And it's so sexist, it's so sexist.

**Elizabeth:** Is it, really?

**Amanda:** My daughter, she's 10 and she's watching these things and I feel like I have to unpack that for her. Like, this is not okay to behave like this, but in the nineties it was. And I don't feel like the nineties were that long ago.

**Elizabeth:** Right.

**Amanda:** So, yeah, it's both explicit and implicit. Like, it's very targeted messaging, but also that kind of subliminal messaging too.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah. Well, it's so interesting about body image. Like, I don't know that I remember, well, the messages I got about my body from my mom were very, "I want to say asexual." So, like along the same lines of; you need to be pretty, but you don't need to attract so much attention. And so, that's another thing that women really have to walk that tight rope of being you need to look like you put attention on your appearance, but not so much that your vein.

# Done with Dieting Podcast #43: Unlearning Patriarchal Programming with Dr. Amanda Ryan-Fear

**Amanda:** Yeah. It's like impossible. Right. Be pretty, but not too pretty.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah. Yeah. And I remember my mom, you know, one of the things that I think really was difficult with like, the 1970s and the 1980s with the birth of feminism is that we have this double standard for women, that women had to go out and work. But then, they also had to continue with a lot of the expectations that we had for women at the same time. And it was a really confusing time.

**Amanda:** Yeah. Okay, this is my big soap box. So, yeah, we were raised with the myth of having it all. Where our mothers, at least my mother was raised to get married. She wasn't raised to have a career. My grandmother actually told me she was like, "I never wanted to get married or have kids, I wanted to be a journalist." And I was like, "well, I'm glad you did have kids because otherwise I wouldn't be here."

But anyway, so all of this baggage about; have a career, have your own bank account, never depend on a man. Okay, awesome. So, I'll focus on my career but then you have to have kids too, right? Like, you want to have kids. And so, yeah, this is where most of my clients are. So, my clients average age is 45 to 55. And I think there's something that happens in that age range, where like, I was saying before, "where we've done all the things, we've checked all the boxes," and we're like, "where's the happiness you promised me?"

Like, where's the fulfillment that I was supposed to have once I had the babies and the promotion and my clients are just tired, right? Like, they're overwhelmed, they're unfulfilled. And again, they blame it on themselves because they're like, "well, I was taught that I could do this, and I can't." And it's this crushing weight. And especially for women who are around our age, who have kids, but they also have elderly parents that they're taken care of, and they have the career. And they're just looking around like, "when does this stop? Like, when do I get to rest?"

# Done with Dieting Podcast #43: Unlearning Patriarchal Programming with Dr. Amanda Ryan-Fear

**Elizabeth:** Yeah. Yeah. And what I see happening with a lot of my clients is that they're going through a huge transitional time, where they're trying to figure out, where do I fit in? My quote-unquote looks are fading. I'm moving into this other stage of my life. What role does my appearance have? Do I just chuck it and say "F" it? Or do I really try to invest time and energy in that? Or what is the next phase of my life? And what does life look like as I progress through this? There's no rule book for it.

**Amanda:** Yeah. I love that you say that, and that really resonates with me because that's the same with my clients and for them, they come to me to decide, what their next career phase is because they're like 10 to 15 years out from retirement. So, they want to keep doing something, but they don't really want to keep doing what they're doing.

And so, the metaphor I use with them, which I absolutely love is I call it my lobsters. And so, a lobster will grow, and grow, and grow until it's shell doesn't fit it anymore. And then, it has to shed its shell. And then, it has to find a rock to hide under because suddenly it's this tender juicy tree without its shell. And all the predators are like lobster dinner. And so, it's this like really tender being that has to go hide under a rock until it creates its new, bigger, and better shell. And so, I tell my clients that nothing has gone wrong because our brains always want to go to that place first.

Something's wrong, I'm not happy. Something's wrong, I feel discomfort. Something's wrong, my body's changing. And so, I tell them, nothing's gone wrong and you just have shed your first lobster shell and you're creating your second lobster shell. And all you need to do right now is acknowledge that and take care of yourself, your little tender self, and go hide under a rock and work on creating the next shell.

**Elizabeth:** Go hide under a rock for a year.

**Amanda:** And that's when we do our coaching work together. They're creating that next shell. So, yeah, I just loved that metaphor because I think there is something that

## Done with Dieting Podcast #43: Unlearning Patriarchal Programming with Dr. Amanda Ryan-Fear

happens for women between the ages of like 45 and 55, where we reached that point where we're not really taking any shit anymore. Right? But we know there can be something better, we just don't know how to create it yet.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah. That's so interesting and brilliant. So, let's shift gears a little bit and talk more about our body image and what are the some of the body image tells that would indicate to someone that they've bought into this programming that we were talking about?

**Amanda:** That's a really good question. I think our culture of cultural obsession with thinness is a big part of that. Because historically, 200, 300, 500 years ago, being a larger was envied because that meant you had resources for food, right? And so then, with the industrial revolution and as we became more technology oriented, we didn't have to labor 12 hours a day for food.

And at some point, that shifted where the female body ideal was not large, and curvaceous, and Romanesque, it was fin. And you started seeing the corsets of the 12 inch waist so a man could put his hands around the woman's waist, and all of this is controlling women's bodies, right? Because historically, if women didn't even own their own bodies, they were subject to being appealing to men. And so, it was men who were setting the standard for what was beautiful at the time, right?

Because if there are a hundred women competing for male attention and men are looking for women who are beautiful, but also can produce children and all of the things. How their body appears is going to be really important to that? And then, at some point it shifted, where instead of having like the Romanesque childbearing body, it was having the tiny, tiny body. And it almost became a moral virtue to be able to control your body and to be able to control what you ate.

## Done with Dieting Podcast #43: Unlearning Patriarchal Programming with Dr. Amanda Ryan-Fear

And this is for white women that I'm speaking of historically, to have this small, thin body, because it showed that you were morally superior to larger women because you could control it. And I think that's where we're still stuck, where we still have this cultural obsession with thinness. And women spend so much time, money, and energy trying to control their bodies and beat their bodies into submission almost.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah.

**Amanda:** We can be doing so many other things with that time, money, and energy.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah, one of my favorite phrases is, "Mother Teresa didn't have time to sit around thinking about the size of her thighs, she had shit to do."

**Amanda:** Yeah, right. Okay, so you would ask me what the tells are and I went through history. So, I think that tells are, our desire to lose weight, not because we want to. And I don't want to fall into a trap here because fitness also doesn't equal health. But where are we going to lose weight to be appealing to other people and even appealing to ourselves? Because we think, if we look at our body and we see the small thighs with no cellulite, then we finally can feel good about ourselves. And I think that's the trap.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah, that's actually pretty spot on and beautiful. And I love that because I've talked about my mom a little bit on this episode already. And growing up, my mom looked at her body in a very utilitarian type of way. Her body to her was, "I don't want to say for birthing babies," but she did not exercise, she was interested in feeding the family. We had six kids, so there were eight mouths, and she was all about economically feeding all of those mouths and making sure that we were good nutritionally.

And so, there wasn't necessarily a lot of vegetables, there was a ton of starch in our diets. The point being that exercise and sport and those types of things, we're really shunned to the more cerebral type of Scholastic things in my family. And she died of breast

## Done with Dieting Podcast #43: Unlearning Patriarchal Programming with Dr. Amanda Ryan-Fear

cancer, which my journey started when I started researching, how do I not get breast cancer? And finding out that being overweight was a huge risk factor for breast cancer.

And the reason I'm bringing this up is because if we pay a little bit attention to our lifestyle, then we can be healthy, and there really is. There's not a direct correlation between health and body size. There's a little bit, but not 100%. The haze movement, which I love, talks about how you can't look at someone and based on their size know if they're healthy or not healthy, 100% true.

However, I do have a lot of clients who come to me wanting to lose weight, not because of appearance, although that some people, but rather because they want to feel better. Which is such a different experience when we're looking at weight loss, when we're looking at body image, when we think about how we're feeling, and it was really interesting.

So, I had Sarah de Andrea on the podcast like 10 episodes ago. And we were talking about body image with her. And one thing that she said, which was just so beautiful, cause she's a pleasure coach. And she was like, when we talk about body image, we're talking about the visual. And when we're talking about pleasure, we're talking about feeling.

And so, yeah, just to come back full circle with what you were saying, which is that when we're thinking about body image, am I doing it for the appearance of what you see in the mirror, or how I appear to other people, or is it some other reason?

**Amanda:** Yeah, absolutely. And I think a couple of things. So, to circle it back to the idea of patriarchal conditioning, the whole definition of patriarchy is that women are less than men. So, men hold all the power and women don't. And that's a very simplified version, but the premise is that women are less than. And so, we internalize that to me

## Done with Dieting Podcast #43: Unlearning Patriarchal Programming with Dr. Amanda Ryan-Fear

that I'm not good enough, I'm not smart enough, everything I do is wrong. And then, that's kind of the voice in our heads, this running commentary that happens all the time.

And so, yeah, when you were saying that that made me think of being critical of our bodies because our bodies aren't good enough and it could be based on what they look like, but it also could be, "can my body do what I want it to do?" And that's been a lot of my own body image dramas. I used to be a runner, but then after multiple knee and leg injuries, that just doesn't happen anymore.

And so, I look at a good friend of mine who's an ultra-runner and she is fit people, we go hiking together and people stop her and they're like, "you must be an athlete, what do you do?" And I'm like, "I want that, I want people to stop me and ask what kind of athlete, I'm an athlete too." But just really this whole idea of my body is wrong, which opens up to so many other things because body image relates to sexuality and pleasure. And also, how we show up in the world, our confidence really everything, our perception of ourselves.

And so, it's really important to be able to unpack. Well, if I don't have a good body image and I want to change my body, what are the reasons for that? Like, why am I so critical of my body? And you and I had spoken before about us, a way women bond right now is we all get on the train of being critical of our bodies. And to be the one who doesn't jump on that train, feels awkward. And so, how do we stop that narrative? How do we stop that conversation of, "you don't have to be beating up on our bodies all the time. It's okay to have an imperfect body.

**Elizabeth:** Well, and you said something that actually, I want to go back to and touch on, which is your friend, who's the ultra-marathoner. People come up to her and comment on her body. And how often do we do that? Like, when women greet each

# Done with Dieting Podcast #43: Unlearning Patriarchal Programming with Dr. Amanda Ryan-Fear

other, we talk about our appearance, right? Like, "oh, you look amazing, you look like you lost weight." And why is that okay? We don't have to do that to men.

**Amanda:** Yeah. It drives me crazy when somebody says, have you lost weight? I don't know.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah. Well, and it's meant to be a compliment.

**Amanda:** Yeah. But it feels so personal.

**Elizabeth:** It does. Because you don't know the reason if someone did lose weight, was there a medical reason, or did they lose it unhelpfully, or what? It's so interesting. I had a client in a group training when I was a personal trainer, I used to have a class and one of the women did weight loss surgery. So, it was just a class of two, the other woman in the class when she had the weight loss surgery was really encouraging her and like, "oh, you're doing great, you're losing so much weight, you're losing so much weight." And she got down to, "I don't know," she lost maybe a hundred pounds.

And then, the narrative changed, and it was like, "oh, you're going to stop losing weight now, aren't you?" You haven't lost enough weight. And it's like, "why is that anyone's business?"

**Amanda:** Yeah, right. Because apparently there's this socially acceptable window of how much weight she can lose. And people started having some thoughts and feelings if she was losing too much weight.

**Elizabeth:** Exactly. Yeah, and it goes back to the narrative that we were talking before of, "well, you want to be sexy, but not too sexy; you want to lose weight, but not too much."

# Done with Dieting Podcast #43: Unlearning Patriarchal Programming with Dr. Amanda Ryan-Fear

**Amanda:** Right. And then, wherever we are on the spectrum, we're telling ourselves we aren't good enough because we haven't met that artificial ideal of what we're supposed to look like.

**Elizabeth:** Yes.

**Amanda:** It's so interesting. So, I'm tall, you don't know that because we haven't ever been in the same room together, but I'm 5'11. My daughter's supposed to be 6 feet or 6'1. And so, people are always commenting on how tall she is. And I remember when I was a kid, people were always commenting on how tall I am. When I was in college in New York city, I was walking around a flea market and there was this man who was following me saying, "you're so tall, do you play basketball?"

And it was really creepy. I was like, "cool, wait." But I want to say to people like, "yes, she's tall but that's not her identity." Right? If people make it your identity, right? You're the tall girl, you're the skinny girl, you're the whatever else fill in the blank girl. And then, that becomes our identity.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah. I am also tall, and I remember, I used to have poor posture because I was always trying to shrink myself and make myself fit-in in grade school. Yeah.

**Amanda:** Yeah, absolutely. We were just talking about that last night. I met with a group of women and a couple of us are on the taller side and we were talking about the tall girl crouch in pictures. And I feel like in college, all my friends were like 5'5 and I was the one who couldn't share clothes with them. And well, mainly couldn't share clothes with them but then in all the pictures there, they're all kind of ducks in a row and I'm like, bending over awkwardly.

**Elizabeth:** You're like, I have some Capri pants, you'll want them for full size pants.

## Done with Dieting Podcast #43: Unlearning Patriarchal Programming with Dr. Amanda Ryan-Fear

**Amanda:** Totally, see how you can't win, you're too tall, you're too short. If you're average height and you can say you could put any variable in there, right? If you're average then, "oh, well, I'm so average," like, I wish I was tall or whatever.

**Elizabeth:** Well, and yeah, that is a narrative that all of us have going on in our heads when I'm not smart enough, or I'm not doing a good enough job, or whatever. And you can ask the question, okay so, at what point will you be validated that you are enough, that you are thin enough, or that you are smart enough, or that you are doing a good enough job? And we can come up with some arbitrary metric, but then once we get there and we think it's when I get to my goal weight.

**Amanda:** Yes.

**Elizabeth:** But once I get to my goal weight, then I'll be happy. But what happens then is we get to that goal weight, so let's say, "I don't know," 135 pounds, what happens at 136? Are we not allowed to be happy?

**Amanda:** Right. I can't be happy yet.

**Elizabeth:** Right. I need to lose one more pound.

**Amanda:** Yeah, that's so true. And I think that's true really for any accomplishment. Like, once I finally get that advanced degree, then I'll feel good about myself, I'll feel smart. Once I finally get that promotion, I'll feel like I'm competent at work. Once I buy that house, I'll be happy. But we all know from personal experience that's not true, we just changed the bar.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah. Well, or we don't hear it. So, like, if my father compliments me, then I will have arrived. Or if my mother praises me or whatever, and your parents could be

# Done with Dieting Podcast #43: Unlearning Patriarchal Programming with Dr. Amanda Ryan-Fear

praising you, but your inability to receive that praise or that compliment is shirking it off and being like, "yeah, but they didn't mean it."

**Amanda:** Yeah, right. And if you're resting so much on their compliment, then you also arresting as much on their criticism. And so, it's an equal way, right?

**Elizabeth:** Yeah.

**Amanda:** Yeah. The conversation I'm always having with my clients are that your value is not a dependent variable. Like, you get to have value no matter what. No matter what your body looks like, no matter what you've achieved, no matter what you say in the meeting, you still have value. And that's been something that's been hard for me in my own journey to embrace. And when I say that to my clients, their heads explode like, "but no, my value is when other people tell me I'm good enough." Or when other people tell me I'm pretty. Or when men look at me in a certain way or when I get a compliment from my boss, it's all external.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah. And so, being able to validate ourselves, then allows us to stop seeking that external validation and therefore maybe have a little bit more happiness.

**Amanda:** At least more energy. I mean, caring what everybody else thinks is exhausting.

**Elizabeth:** Yes, absolutely true. Absolutely true. Okay, so I want to get back to something that you said earlier in the interview, which was when we were talking about black women's bodies. And how that is intertwined in our body image and culture and all of that. Because I understand it, but not enough to be able to explain it.

**Amanda:** Yeah. And I am a white woman and have only recently been more, "I don't even know how to say this," but exposed to the experiences of black women in their bodies. So, white women, since the industrial revolution, we have been taught that we

# Done with Dieting Podcast #43: Unlearning Patriarchal Programming with Dr. Amanda Ryan-Fear

need to be skinny and that it's a moral Christian virtue to control your body and control all of the things.

And that also, there's a racist element to that too, because it's in contrast to black women's bodies. Where black women and black people in general had been characterized as being savages, right? Because throughout our history of slavery, you can't look at another human, and still enslave them, and be okay with that.

So, in order for white people to make their peace with slavery, black people had to be the other, and they had to be savages, and they had to be less than. And so, in contrast to black women's bodies, white women had to be very different. And so, that's why I said from day one, black women's bodies have been policed because they literally have been placed and they figure deeply have been pleased.

And so, I was listening to this podcast last night, called code switch. And had an essayist who works for the Atlantic on, and she'd written an essay about black women and body image. And it started off talking about Lizzo and Cardi B and their recent song, I think it's called "Rumors", not hip enough to really have that at my fingertips.

But and so they both address all the rumors about them, specifically about their bodies. So, Lizzo is a very large voluptuous woman, she embraces that, and she's been a role model for a lot of women. But of course, she has been criticized up and down for that too. And Cardi B has more of an hourglass figure to the point where I don't know if she's had plastic surgery.

I can't remember the narrative of this, but she's been accused of having plastic surgery. I don't know the circumstances, but the point was that here they have two very different bodies and they're both criticized up and down for embracing their bodies for how they are. And talking about, "well, what is the ideal body for black woman and who decides that?"

## Done with Dieting Podcast #43: Unlearning Patriarchal Programming with Dr. Amanda Ryan-Fear

And same thing for white women, right? Like, who decides that? And the fact that these two women are very open and vocal about their bodies and their body image journey's makes them fall even more under a fire because I think we're all women, we're all supposed to be critical of our bodies. That's what makes other people feel safe. Like, I was talking about, how we bond as women by criticizing our bodies? It feels unsafe if someone's like, "I love my body," right? That just feels weird.

So, yeah, I can't speak well enough to the experience of black women in their bodies and how their bodies have been criticized. And the narrative about their bodies, but it's really interesting in how black women and white women have been played against each other and continue to be played against each other through body image, amongst a variety of other things.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah. Well, and it's my understanding that when we're talking about slavery and we're talking about black women's bodies versus white women's bodies that we had to also not just put a moral standing on it. But when you think about being overweight, all of the judgments that we have on that person. That person is lazy, they're stupid, they're all these things that aren't true.

But usually that's only when it comes to women. When you think of a large man, he might be a businessman, he might be smart. But when you think of a large woman, she can't be, right?

**Amanda:** Yeah. You're totally right. And she's criticized so much more. And when you were just talking of made me think of, I talk about white women not owning their bodies. Black women really didn't know their bodies.

**Elizabeth:** Like, literally, did not own their bodies.

# Done with Dieting Podcast #43: Unlearning Patriarchal Programming with Dr. Amanda Ryan-Fear

**Amanda:** Literally, were not their own. And that's a whole different experience, and history, and trauma to live through generationally.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah. Yeah. Oh, so how do we get out of this? Of course, I'm going to ask that question.

**Amanda:** No, I love that question because that gives us our power back. Right?

**Elizabeth:** Right.

**Amanda:** And that's a hundred percent why I do the work that I do because I want women to feel their full power so that they can go out and do whatever it is they want in the world. Because that's how we're going to change the world. Right? The more women who feel comfortable in their own skin and feel a sense of agency over their lives and their bodies, the more power we'll have as women figuratively and literally to go out and change the world.

And so, when we play small, when we buy into that narrative, that we're not good enough, we're not as good as, that just saps our energy. And time and to a certain extent energy or finite resources. And so, how do we want to spend our time and energy? Do we want to spend it being critical and being at the mercy of everybody else's opinions? Or do we want to really step into our power and our amazing newness and go out and lead these bad-ass lives that are going to change the world?

And when I say change the world, I don't mean like, yeah, you could go into politics, and you could literally change laws. But I also think that there's something so empowering about a woman saying here's what I want to do with my life and then going and doing it rather than being victim to all of really the inputs of what she should do. And so, having a dream and then living it out, like that's amazing, and that's so powerful.

# Done with Dieting Podcast #43: Unlearning Patriarchal Programming with Dr. Amanda Ryan-Fear

And I think the more women that we have doing that and making choices based on really what lights them up and what excites them, that's how we'll change all of this.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah. And going back to what you said earlier about the call coming from inside the house, really understanding why we're making the decisions that we're making? Why are we deciding to do X over Y, and do we really like our reasons? One of the things that you also talked about was, doing things because they are expected of us.

And so, really trying to get clear on; am I doing this losing weights, not pursuing a job? Whatever it is, am I doing this because of what other people expect of me? And if other people didn't have that expectation, what would I do then? Because we can deal with other people's expectations. Right?

**Amanda:** Yeah. It's like, I was talking about when my parents died, that untethered feeling, which was terrifying but also, I don't have to live up to anybody else's expectations. Like, it was their expectations that I was trying to live up to. And once that was gone, it was like, I could be a whole different person.

And so, how do we create more of that without people having to go through a traumatic loss? Like, how do you step into that version of yourself that you really want to be? And I really believe that women, we all know what it is that we want from life. We tell ourselves we don't because we're afraid we can't have it or we tell ourselves we can't have it.

And so, I asked my clients when they're making a decision. Is this decision based out of love or out of fear? Because we're so conditioned to feel fear just as humans, that becomes our default. Like, "yeah, I'm comfortable feeling fear because that's what I feel 95% of the day," especially my clients who identify with having anxiety. It's like, that's just the norm.

# Done with Dieting Podcast #43: Unlearning Patriarchal Programming with Dr. Amanda Ryan-Fear

And so, am I making this decision based on fear of what other people will say or what other people will think? Or am I based on fear of failure, which is a whole. Other topic for us to talk about for hours? Or am I making this decision based on like, "this lights me up, this excites me." This is the most loving decision for myself.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah. When I started this process, if you had asked me if fear was one of my underlying like, default feelings, I would have said no. But it's amazing once I got in touch with that fear and really started to get into my body when I was making decisions like, "oh, what's this coming up?" And really understanding that, "yeah, fear was driving 95% of my decisions at the time." It's crazy.

**Amanda:** Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. When I first started this work, I didn't even know what anxiety was. I knew I'd been diagnosed with it; I knew I was on medication for it. But if you'd asked me to define anxiety, I would have been like, "I don't even know."

And then, I remember telling my therapist, I'm like, "I just feel like I'm going to jump out of my skin at all times." So, it's this constant underlying fear and I think a lot of it comes from that feeling of not being good enough and we're going to be found out. And that was a circled back to my client who struggled with introductions.

We unpacked it and what we discovered was that she's afraid if she says something wrong and I'm using air quotes. If she says something wrong during an introduction, everyone's going to know she doesn't know what she's doing. Like, everyone's going to find out that I'm the imposter.

And so, then we just live in fear, and we start to put this armor on to protect ourselves and then we don't actually experience life because we're just reacting to fear all the time.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah. The more that we can like really to get in touch with our emotions and what we're thinking it all just comes together, doesn't it?

# Done with Dieting Podcast #43: Unlearning Patriarchal Programming with Dr. Amanda Ryan-Fear

**Amanda:** Yeah, it does. It's awesome to get to do this work that we do.

**Elizabeth:** That is true. Yeah, so like right now in my group coaching program, we are spending the entire month working on our feelings and everything that we've been talking about right now today has just tied into everything that we're doing there and it's going to be so great for those women to hear this.

So, Amanda, thank you so much for being on the show. This has been so amazing. Now, if people want to find you, how can they do that? And do you have anything going on over the next few months?

**Amanda:** Yeah, well, first of all, thank you so much for having me, Elizabeth. This has been so fun, and I could talk about women's thoughts and experiences and beliefs all day long. So, this has been super fun.

And so, you can find me on my website, it's [amandaryanfear.com](http://amandaryanfear.com). So, just like it sounds every time I say my last name is Fear, especially because I have a doctoral degree. So, I'm Dr. Fear and assistant principal, that was rad. But so, it's [amandaryanfear.com](http://amandaryanfear.com).

You also can find me online on Facebook, it's Amanda Ryan Fear, D.Ed. I also have a group of private group called, "The BadAssery," where we talk about all things living out your best lives and being a bad ass. And yes, I will have my group coaching program, it's called "Reset" because it's all about resetting your brain and starting to think new thoughts so that you can live a life on purpose rather than by default.

And it is a 12 week program, and it is all about retraining your brain so that you work with your brain to get the results you want rather than work your brain working against you, which more often happens more often than not. We talk about all sorts of fun things like imposter syndrome, and building confidence, and perfectionist brains, and

# Done with Dieting Podcast #43: Unlearning Patriarchal Programming with Dr. Amanda Ryan-Fear

figuring out what you actually want from life based on what you think everybody else thinks that you should want.

So, we do a lot of super fun stuff, and you can find out more information about that on my website, [amandaryanfear.com](http://amandaryanfear.com).

**Elizabeth:** Awesome. Well, thank you for coming.

**Amanda:** Yeah. Thanks so much for having me. This is super fun.

**Elizabeth:** Wow! That was such an amazing experience, such great takeaways from that episode. I hope you enjoyed the interview and are interested in diving deeper into feminism and how we've been conditioned to believe generationally that we're somehow flawed.

But it doesn't have to continue. We have the power to stop the cycle through understanding what beliefs we have about ourselves that are learned and which beliefs are true. I expect that we'll be talking a lot more about this in future episodes.

But that's all I have for you today, thank you so much for hanging out with us today. Have an amazing week everyone, and I'll see you next time. Bye-bye.

Hey, thanks for listening!

If the show resonates with you and you have a friend, mother, sister, or anyone else who you think would benefit, I'd love for you to share the podcast with them. You can leave me a rating and review in Apple podcasts which helps me create an amazing experience

# Done with Dieting Podcast #43: Unlearning Patriarchal Programming with Dr. Amanda Ryan-Fear

for you. And it helps other women who are done with dieting and want to get off the diet roller coaster to find it as well.

See you next week.