

## **Elizabeth Cronise McLaughlin**

**Susan:** Alright. Welcome, everybody! I'm super-jacked up today because we have my friend Elizabeth Cronise McLaughlin here! (Claps) And she is such a star, and she is such a powerhouse. And Elizabeth, I can't thank you enough for coming on here to talk about some BAREness.

**Elizabeth:** I am so excited to be here. It's a thrill (laughs).

**Susan:** So, you're somebody – you are a powerful woman in the public eye, and a lot of the BARE process is about, for women, being comfortable being seen and making a scene.

**Elizabeth:** Mm hm!

**Susan:** And that's something you do on a daily basis.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah. (Laughs)

**Susan:** Right? Because your Resistance Live, I mean how many followers and viewers do you have now?

**Elizabeth:** Well, so all put together across all platforms, we're at like about 200, 250, 250,000, somewhere in that neck of the woods. There are days where we get, like, 100,000 people watching the broadcast within 24 hours. It's pretty nuts. Live is usually around, you know, a few thousand, but yeah, it's pretty crazy.

**Susan:** It's amazing! And so, I have watched from the beginning, obviously, this platform grow and am thrilled about it, but what I'm not so thrilled about is observing some of the stuff that you have to put up with –

**Elizabeth:** Yes.

**Susan:** – being a woman in the public eye, not to mention – I mean, put all of the issues and your belief systems aside, just the fact that you are a woman on camera, your beauty, your body –

**Elizabeth:** Mm hm.

**Susan:** – is commented on, on a regular basis.

**Elizabeth:** Every day. Every day. Yeah. And it's noticeable because it comes from one of two angles, you know? There's the very supportive side of it, which is usually from, you know, my really powerhouse women followers who will say everything from "Your hair looks awesome

today” or fabulous make-up to “You look really tired. You should go take a nap.” And all of that comes from a very good place –

**Susan:** Right.

**Elizabeth:** – but the flipside of it is that we – you know, we often have a few folks on the other side of the political spectrum – let’s put it that way – who pop in now and again – a few trolls, sometimes even a few of those “famous Russian bots” – and what’s interesting is that the way that they usually come for me is with critiques of my appearance, so –

**Susan:** Exactly.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah. And it’s – you know, at the beginning, it was a little bit rough because it can feel very personal until you realize that it’s being designed to hurt, like that’s kind of the point, and so it’s not actually about your appearance or who you are or your own body or how you feel. It’s just designed to hit and make a mark basically.

**Susan:** Mm hm.

**Elizabeth:** And I have a lot of good people behind me now on my team who take care of those folks very fast (laughs).

**Susan:** Right. Right. Well, isn’t it interesting – and this is – from the time of being a small girl recognizing that, you know, if they can’t come for your intellect – which they can’t – and they can’t come for your credentials or your training – because they can’t –

**Elizabeth:** Right.

**Susan:** – they’re gonna go for a woman’s appearance.

**Elizabeth:** Yep.

**Susan:** Every time! Every time.

**Elizabeth:** Every time. Yeah. And you know, it’s – I find it to be really insidious because it is – it reinforces all the notions that we were raised with in this culture, right? That, like, if you don’t look a certain way or you don’t fit into a certain box or you’re not exactly specific within a certain type of mold that you’re not good enough no matter what else goes with it, right?

**Susan:** Yes.

**Elizabeth:** And I even think about it in the context of my daughter.

**Susan:** Mm hm.

**Elizabeth:** You know, people so harmlessly say to her, “Oh, you’re so pretty” or “You’re getting more beautiful every day,” and I always find myself having to say, “And smart!” Right? (Laughs)

**Susan:** Right!

**Elizabeth:** And, like, amazing and strong and bold and brave and all that other sort of good stuff. But you know, it’s a way of kind of getting under our skin because the messaging that we’ve had in this culture since we were really little girls is that that’s the thing that we’re judged on first and always and often.

**Susan:** Mm hm. Yeah. I mean, I was trying to explain to my husband actually, because he’s sort of like *Why are women* – you know, a lot of guys are like, *Why are women like this to one another?* and I was like, *No-no-no-no-no*. It is the system and the structure that we’re raised in that we are competition for one another *and* that our commodity is how we appear –

**Elizabeth:** Yeah.

**Susan:** – and so that like, you know, our power is in manipulation and how we look and not in – of course, you and I –

**Elizabeth:** Yeah.

**Susan:** – and many others of us are out to change that, but that –

**Elizabeth:** Yeah.

**Susan:** – that’s what we’re trading on.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah.

**Susan:** And so, it’s interesting when I watch you on Facebook Live, you know, breaking down every day what’s happening in American politics so brilliantly and people want to talk about your hair or –

**Elizabeth:** Right. Or my boobs. That’s the other thing that comes with it (laughs).

**Susan:** Oh, your boobs. Right. Your boobs. (Laughs)

**Elizabeth:** Yeah, I’m wearing a high-collared sweater today, but – you are looking so beautiful today, my dear, by the way, I just want to say.

**Susan:** Thanks.

**Elizabeth:** It's like I always have to comment – you know, here's the thing. I feel like there's a way in which we do need to lift each other up around this stuff – right? – you know, like I don't mind the compliments being paid to me. What I mind is the stuff that is, you know, just so aggressive, right? And you know, in the context of saying, like, "You are smart and beautiful," you know, like you are capable and beautiful – and everyone is, by the way, I really believe that. What I'm reminded of in the nature of this conversation is that there's a balance to be struck there in the way that we as women deal with each other. Like, I have a very good friend who said to me at one point, "My mother never told me I was beautiful while I was growing up. She always told me I was smart. She always told me I was capable. But she never told me I was beautiful, and to me, that made me feel like I was flawed" –

**Susan:** Mm hm.

**Elizabeth:** – right? So, there has to be a balance in these things, right? I feel like we ought to be able to support and lift one another up in, like, the beautiful bodies that we all live in, and at the same time, we also need to be really mindful of not replicating what patriarchy has taught us about all of that, right? So –

**Susan:** Right.

**Elizabeth:** – the good news is that the only people who tend to comment on my boobs are the kind of Russian trolls and bots and we get them very fast that way (laughs).

**Susan:** Well, now I'm going to have to make a point, Elizabeth, to go on a Facebook Live and comment (laughs) about your boobs –

**Elizabeth:** (Laughs)

**Susan:** – in an authentic and admirable way. *Heyyy! Hey, girl.* (Laughs) So, we were talking before I started and hit record about what it has been like for you – you know, one of the things I talk with people about is like, you know, what kind of messaging do you remember, whether it was through family of origin –

**Elizabeth:** Yeah.

**Susan:** – or culture or peer group. And you were saying, "You know? I really didn't have any – I was pretty blessed with not having any body issues *until...*"

**Elizabeth:** Until I got pregnant (laughs).

**Susan:** (Laughs)

**Elizabeth:** Yeah, and I – you know, it’s funny because I waited to get pregnant ‘til late in life. I had my daughter at 40 and my son at 42. I was – I got pregnant with my son when my daughter was 6 months old, so this was all very close together. And you know, those of you out there who are listening who have had kids later in life know that being pregnant over 40 – I am told anyway – is very different from being pregnant in your 20s and your 30s, let alone doing two back-to-back, let alone two back-to-back C-sections, which is what I did. And it’s funny how, you know, having been fortunate enough to be raised in a family where, you know, body issues were not part of our dynamic, right?

**Susan:** Mm hm.

**Elizabeth:** And I don’t know how I got so lucky, right? I was like a classically trained ballet dancer for 16 years, and I was like the only girl in my class that didn’t have an eating disorder. Somehow the messaging came through in ways that were healthy and I was really – I feel so fortunate about that, that like I don’t have issues with food, I – you know, there’s just never been any of that in my dynamic. *But* I will tell you that, you know, going from being somebody who naturally has always been pretty fit – you know, I had a seven-day-a-week yoga practice before I got pregnant – to putting on like, you know, probably like an extra two-thirds of my normal body weight (laughs) in both pregnancies, and then, like, ending up having a very hard time kind of getting back to where I wanted to be and getting stabilized and all the stress and pressure of not sleeping and food not being consistent and that sort of stuff, it was a whole new world for me. And it – you know, it required me to really sort of re-evaluate how much pressure have I put myself under since then, right? Like, I may not have had to worry about it, luckily enough, from the standpoint of feeling judged or judging myself until that point, but since then has been a whole other ball of wax. And you add to that kind of aging and, you know, it kind of – it puts things in a new dynamic. What I will say about it is that – you know, I feel – it’s made me much more conscious of the fact that when we feel good in our bodies we present differently in the world, that – you know, that thing that I always talk about in the women’s leadership work I do is about how when we change the inside we change the outside, and that may not necessarily mean, like, your physical exterior, but it may mean the way that you show up –

**Susan:** Right.

**Elizabeth:** – as a leader, the way that you present energetically. If you’re feeling good in your own skin – and I know I’m preaching to the choir here with you, Susan – but you know, the way you feel in your own skin changes everything, right? And so, the lessons for me around that were about, like, am I good enough – quote, unquote – am I good enough if, like, the extra 20 pounds of baby weight isn’t going anywhere for five years?

**Susan:** Mm hm.

**Elizabeth:** Like, am I good enough now that I’m like having to deal with the after-effects of two C-sections in two years, right? Like, all of that – and it’s been an interesting debate internally. I

will say that it made me rethink quite a bit, you know, the way in which I wanted to talk about this sort of stuff, right? And it also kind of – in many ways, of course, motherhood changes everything, right? It also made me really mindful of my self-talk through that, you know, with – in front of my daughter and my son, right? You know, because I’ve never been one of those people who will verbally – you know, I’ve never called myself fat. I’ve never done any of that sort of stuff articulated, but I’ve also made a point, for instance, with my daughter, even on days where I wasn’t feeling particularly good in my own skin, of doing this thing that we have done, like, after bath time since she was a very little girl, which is to look in the mirror and say, like, Who are we? We’re two smart, pretty ladies; two strong, pretty ladies; two brave, pretty ladies, you know. And even if there was a moment there where I wasn’t feeling that, I was going to as sure as hell show up in a way that led my daughter to know that no matter what might be going on there, I was gonna show her that it was okay to be me in this body and still feel strong and beautiful and brave and all that other sort of good stuff.

**Susan:** That’s really beautiful. I love that. And you know, I agree with you, no matter what size a woman is –

**Elizabeth:** Yeah.

**Susan:** – feeling amazing about it, you present in such a different way than if you’re having this inner dialog about it. And I don’t think that there’s a woman alive who hasn’t had inner dialog where she didn’t talk about herself in a loving –

**Elizabeth:** Right.

**Susan:** – appreciative way, and it is interesting, like, listening to you talk about having pregnancies back-to-back later in life, and what came to my mind was all the pressure we see in magazines and online about getting your “pre-baby body” back.

**Elizabeth:** Right.

**Susan:** And like, why is that even a thing?

**Elizabeth:** Right. Right.

**Susan:** Right? Like, we’re mothers now.

**Elizabeth:** Right.

**Susan:** And that doesn’t mean that we can’t – like, I’m a runner, I go to the gym. It doesn’t mean that we can’t love and appreciate our bodies and also be working towards, you know, being stronger.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah.

**Susan:** But it's just interesting where we get these ideas that we have to bounce right back.

**Elizabeth:** Right. Right.

**Susan:** And the aging thing, you know, that we're also taught that the aging face and the aging body is not beautiful.

**Elizabeth:** Yep.

**Susan:** And I'm really out to disrupt that because, you know, I'm certainly not old – I'm turning 45 – but I am aging just like everybody else, and it's interesting to observe where previously when my mind would go to stuff about body, and I've cleaned that stuff up, how it has pivoted towards aging –

**Elizabeth:** Mm hm.

**Susan:** – and how interesting it is to watch my mind – to watch me question my own mind about, like, *Oh, well, you didn't have those crow's feet before or Your neck didn't do that before or, you know, Oh!*

**Elizabeth:** Yeah!

**Susan:** *But this bathing suit looks different this year –*

**Elizabeth:** Right.

**Susan:** – and how interesting it is that we get the idea that we should be young, we should bounce back to this pre-pregnancy body –

**Elizabeth:** Right.

**Susan:** – that we should appear in a certain way.

**Elizabeth:** Right. Well, and you know, it's all about the commodification of our bodies in a lot of ways, right, because –

**Susan:** Mm hm, mm hm.

**Elizabeth:** – younger women of certain body types, of certain ethnicities, of certain kind of like, you know, whatever, all the things that are put on us are more highly valued than others, right? And all of that is arbitrary. That's the other thing that's so crazy to me about it, is it's like there are other cultures where – you know, other than American culture and Western cultures, where, you know, being beautiful and round and big is a sign of, you know, wonderful things,

right? Height of attraction and, you know, the lens through which we view these things, it's so internalized. That's the thing that kills me about it, is that, like, we don't even need people to say that to us – the kind of negative stuff to us sometimes. We repeat it in our heads so often. And I agree with you. Like, disrupting this is absolutely necessary, because the other thing about it is just why isn't getting older beautiful, right? Why isn't greater wisdom and all the signs of the things that have made us laugh and cry and, you know, have impacted us being worn on our faces, why isn't that a sign of something wonderful, you know?

**Susan:** Right.

**Elizabeth:** So, I think we have to do the work inside ourselves on all of that and also we have to model it to others, and to me, leading by example on that is really important. And I also want to say that it feels really important to me – I don't know if you followed the whole debate that Gloria Steinem was involved in about a year and a half ago, two years ago, where somebody had called her out as having – you know, had some plastic surgery or done Botox or something like this and –

**Susan:** Mm hm.

**Elizabeth:** – she made a point of saying, “No, I actually haven't done that, *but* it's my body,” right?

**Susan:** Right!

**Elizabeth:** Like, I have dominion over it. Like, if I had chosen to do that, still my body! Right?

**Susan:** Right!

**Elizabeth:** Like, I have dominion over those kind of choices, too, and – and that's interesting to me because I do feel like even in the realm of wanting to critique this idea that we all have to be young and skinny and white and, you know, all the other things to be valuable in this culture that, you know, are constantly reiterated through toxic racist patriarchy, we also have to be mindful that, you know, our dominion over our own bodies is constantly under threat in this country.

**Susan:** Mm hm.

**Elizabeth:** And so, we need to remind ourselves, I think, that we still get to make our own choices, right? And I think there's two things have to be in balance and in harmony – and the easiest way in my mind, by the way, to attack all of this stuff is to stop critiquing other women on their appearance.

**Susan:** Thank you! Absolutely, amen! You know, like, with me, I have this private community – it's called BARE Daily – and that is a judgment-free zone. And so, if you are in there and you want to talk about that you just got Botox or you are saying you want to lose weight –

**Elizabeth:** Yeah.

**Susan:** – there is no judgment in my world around that because it's your body and you get to make those decisions.

**Elizabeth:** Right!

**Susan:** And it's interesting how, even within the body positivity movement, because I certainly have been subjected to it –

**Elizabeth:** Yeah.

**Susan:** – just like with feminists – right? – like, you're too feminist for some, not feminist enough for others. Within body positivity, I'm right in the middle where I think you can love and appreciate your body and also want to change it, just like we can love and appreciate our country –

**Elizabeth:** Yep.

**Susan:** – and also want to change it.

**Elizabeth:** Yep! (Laughs)

**Susan:** And boy, like the daggers come out with any –

**Elizabeth:** Yeah.

**Susan:** – conversation around weight loss, and I believe that there is a place for weight loss if it's coming from a place of, you know – there's a woman I love who was going through a terrible marriage and had lost her job and she was sitting in this red comfy chair in her house every day watching soap operas and eating Little Debbie cakes.

**Elizabeth:** Mm hm.

**Susan:** And when she came out of that fog and got a job that she loved and left her husband that she didn't love –

**Elizabeth:** Yeah.

**Susan:** – and stopped eating Little Debbie cakes, she was like, *Wow! I've lost like 20 pounds,* and I'm like, *Eureka!*

**Elizabeth:** (Laughs)

**Susan:** But like, if somebody like that recognizes that eating Little Debbie cakes all day every day is not good for them and they have a goal of losing weight, like, there's no problem for that –

**Elizabeth:** Right.

**Susan:** – in my world.

**Elizabeth:** Right. Right. And you know, I'll just add, as well, that I think some of it – you know, that one of the things we have to be really careful of in the kind of way that we talk about one another's bodies as women is also this thing of competition really being part of a reinforcing mechanism that keeps women down –

**Susan:** Mm hm.

**Elizabeth:** – because when we're competing with one another and we're critiquing one another and we're attacking one another, we're not working together to lift one another up, and that in and of itself just maintains the status quo. So, to me – I got asked this really curious question at an event at the Eleanor Roosevelt Center at Val-Kill, of all places, when I was speaking there a couple of years ago –

**Susan:** Mm hm.

**Elizabeth:** – where someone – a wonderful older lady in the room raised her hand and she said, "I just don't understand why these teenage girls like Kim Kardashian running around in her kind of like tight little dresses and her see-through sort of stuff," and like blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And I looked at that woman and I said, "You know? Kim Kardashian also runs a multiple hundred million dollar business every year, and maybe one of the things that we should be thinking about rather than critiquing how she looks or how she dresses or wondering why teenage girls are looking up to her because it's that, is whether or not it might actually have something to do with the fact that she's built an enormous public profile and a thriving business that obviously captures a lot of attention, and that might be something interesting to look at," right?

**Susan:** Yes!

**Elizabeth:** So, that in and of itself, it's like if what you're focused on is what this woman is wearing or, you know, and what she looks like or her body or her – you know, whatever, you're not actually talking about the substance of the human being, right? And for women in

particular, when we're trying to lift each other up and we're trying to change society and culture and, you know, we're feminists and we're working together across intersectional lines, it's just so important that we're looking at who the person is and not their exterior, because that in and of itself just reinforces all the messages that we're being given about us having to be at each other's heads, right?

**Susan:** Right! Amen.

**Elizabeth:** And if we're tearing one another down, we're not lifting one another up.

**Susan:** So good!

**Elizabeth:** (Laughs)

**Susan:** So, with that, Elizabeth, I want – where's your favorite place for people to connect with you?

**Elizabeth:** Oh! So, the daily Resistance Live broadcast is on my public page on Facebook, which is [facebook.com/ElizabethCroniseMcLaughlin](https://facebook.com/ElizabethCroniseMcLaughlin), just all one word.

**Susan:** Mm hm.

**Elizabeth:** And you can also find out everything there is to know about me at our website, which is [gaialeadershipproject.com](https://gaialeadershipproject.com), and that goes through all of our corporate women's leadership work and all of our virtual women's leadership work and all of our broadcasting and everything else, and there's lots more there about me and my entire team.

**Susan:** So amazing! We will put all those links below, and I know you're super-busy, so thank you for dropping by –

**Elizabeth:** Yes!

**Susan:** – for some BARE goodness.

**Elizabeth:** Thank you so much for having me.

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