

## Love What You Love Podcast

### Episode 43: Power Lifting with Sarah Robinson

#### July 13, 2021

Welcome to *Love What You Love*; I'm Julie Rose. I'm insatiably curious about people and the world around us, and absolutely in love with passion and unselfconscious enthusiasm. Every other week I geek out with someone about the thing that they love, and then I share it with you.

Welcome back! Or, Welcome! A couple of quick *Love What You Love* alumni news bites before we jump into this week's show. First of all, Episode 5 guest AJ Odasso, the poet and professor who chatted with me about fandom and fanfiction, is debuting their first novel! Published by DartFrog Books, *The Pursued and the Pursuing* is a queer reimaging of *The Great Gatsby*. The novel is available for pre-order now and will launch on September 28th, 2021.

Also, Aaron Reynolds, the reigning king of swearing, just won the 2020 Webby Award for Social Humor for *Effin' Birds*! You can hear all about the *Effin' Birds* origin story, and so much more, in Episode 26.

Okay, let's meet this week's guest! Sarah Robinson, who also goes by Shay, isn't what you'd call a lifelong fitness nut. In fact, quite the opposite. But a random and auspicious post on Tumblr completely changed how they think about fitness and strength. In this chat, we talk about being okay with being a beginner, MacGyvering your own gym, setting your own goals, perfectionists in recovery, changing how you see your body, and so much more. So find out why Sarah loves powerlifting, and why you might learn to love it, too.

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**Julie:** Hello, Sarah! Thank you so much for joining me today!

**Sarah:** Thanks for having me.

**Julie:** I'm stoked because you are super into powerlifting and I don't know a *damn* thing about it. [laughs] So, I'm really excited to learn more about it. Maybe just to start, can you, kind of, define what powerlifting is?

**Sarah:** I guess I should start by saying that I'm also relatively new to it. I've only been doing it for about a couple years, so there's still a lot I'm learning about it. But basically, there are three main lifts. There's the squat, there's a bench press, and there's a deadlift. And generally, in a powerlifting meet, you will have three opportunities to do each of those lifts and you'll get your scores based on that.

I haven't actually done a meet before, but I know that's basically the way it goes. But yes, it's the three main lifts: squat, bench press, and deadlift. And that's been my, I guess, exercise of choice over the past couple of years.

**Julie:** What is it about powerlifting versus, like, doing CrossFit? What are the differences and why do you prefer powerlifting?

**Sarah:** Well, I actually started out with CrossFit in 2019 because I had been looking for a new kind of workout. I was really tired of just going to the gym by myself. I liked the idea of having a plan. So, I saw CrossFit, and I said, "Okay, it seems really high energy, something I could do." And then, basically, what we did in the CrossFit gym I went to was the group classes. The first half would be working on some kind of lift; squat, bench, deadlift. It might also be one of the Olympic lifts, which is a different category

of lifting that I haven't really gotten into yet. And then the other half would be some, like, high-cardio interval training.

But that was where I had my first experience with a barbell, lifting weights, anything like that. And I really, really enjoyed it. So, once the pandemic hit I wasn't able to lift for a while because I wasn't going to the gym. But this past, I think, last September, I was finally able to get back into it. I got my hands on a barbell and slowly built up a really small home gym that I've been working on... Basically, working out there three to four times a week since then. It's been a lot of fun.

**Julie:** What was it about... Like, you were at CrossFit, you're like, "Ooh, this lifting stuff is really awesome."? Do you have a history of being athletic as a kid, or...? What was it?

**Sarah:** Yeah, it's really funny because I was not athletic at all growing up. I hated going outside. I hated exercise. Like, I remember my parents took me to do, like, tennis, softball, soccer. I just remember standing there and just being so sweaty and miserable. [laughs] I hated it. But I don't know what it is about lifting. It might be because... The way you can measure your progress, I think that's really what's gotten me into it.

Basically, with different programs, at least the program I'm doing now, it has you doing one of the different lifts every day. So, one day you might be doing a squat, then on top of the squat you might also be doing, like, other accessory exercises like lunges, or... I'm trying to think of something else and it's not coming to mind. Like curls, that type of thing. So, there are a lot of exercises you're doing to also support the muscle that you're building, and it's really cool to see, from week to week, how the weight you're lifting or squatting is going up.

Like when I first started, it was like... I remember I was doing deadlifts and I was really afraid of lifting wrong and hurting my back because, you know, you're kind of bent over and the whole point of a deadlift is to stand up straight so you're holding the barbell in both hands. You can drop it and let it go, and it'll just crash to the ground and make a lot of noise. But the whole point of deadlifts is, you know, stand up straight, good form, keep your back flat, don't round out, don't hurt your spine or anything.

And I remember I had a coach who was really encouraging me to... He was like, "I think you can lift a little more. You can lift a little more." And I remember I was deadlifting like 175lbs. It wasn't that heavy in the grand scheme of things. A lot of people can deadlift way more than me. But he kept encouraging me to try more. And I remember the day I first deadlifted 220lbs. And for me, that was huge because it was more than I weighed. I thought, like, "Wow. I didn't think I could ever lift anything like this." And then I started thinking, like, "Okay, if I could do this, could I just keep going up?"

It was really cool to see, like, week after week, as I was consistently lifting, and training, and getting stronger, how I could look at the numbers and say, "Okay, these numbers are slowly but surely still increasing." They might plateau every now and then, or I might have to go back down if I feel like I'm getting a little shaky or not as steady as I should be. But overall, it's really cool to see, like, "I can see my progress. I know that I'm getting better." And it's a really easy way for me to see what I'm doing, basically.

Because when it came to sports like softball or soccer, I guess I didn't really know how to get better and I wasn't really interested in it. I wasn't a fan of cardio and getting

super sweaty. I liked the idea of, basically, just getting stronger. That was a real big appeal for me with lifting. I love the idea of building muscle and getting stronger.

**Julie:** What is it about feeling stronger that appeals to you?

**Sarah:** I guess it's, kind of, for aesthetic reasons. I just like the idea of being muscular, looking strong. And it's also helped me with self-image and weight issues because I've noticed... Like with fitness, I've noticed that when my focus is on weight loss, I'm generally pretty miserable. That's just how it's worked out for me. It's never really worked for me that I can just be like, "Okay, I'm going to lose weight! Yeah!" But if I say, "Okay, I'm going to build muscle and work on improving my lifts in general," then it's something that I really look forward to and I really enjoy my workout sessions every day.

**Julie:** How long are your workout sessions?

**Sarah:** It can depend. When it's a lower-body day, it can be like an hour or so. Upper-body days are usually quicker. I've noticed... This is my first time really focusing on my upper body strength, so I think I'm getting some of what people call 'newbie gains'. So, I'm able to... I feel like I'm progressing a lot faster in upper body than lower body because my legs are a lot stronger than my arms, so... [laughs] As far as legs are concerned, they're already, I guess, where they're going to be for a while. But upper body, those workouts go by a lot quicker.

**Julie:** So you mentioned that you follow a plan. Where did you get that plan and how does that work?

**Sarah:** Yeah, I follow a program called Stronger by the Day. It's by a powerlifter I discovered on YouTube. Her name was @MegSquats. Basically, she and her team put out programming every Sunday. It's basically, like, four days of programming plus an optional fifth day. And what I do is I say, "Okay, there's four days of programming. I'm going to try and work out maybe, you know, Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday," or whatever four days in the week I can find. And it's a mixture of the main lift and other exercises to support the lift.

For instance, if I'm doing a bench press, that's like upper body, so there will also be lift-type things like an overhead press where you're pushing a dumbbell overhead or pulling down from a resistance band; those types of movements just to support the main lift and build the muscles in other ways too.

**Julie:** Can you describe a little bit more what the three main lifts are and what muscles they're working?

**Sarah:** So, for the squat, that's basically a lower body movement. I should add a caveat here that I'm still learning what each thing does. But for the squat, it's basically your lower body, so your legs, hamstrings, glutes, quads. It also involves a lot of flexibility in your ankles and hips, which is something I've been really trying to work on lately, trying to get a deeper squat.

Bench press, upper body, chest, arms, triceps. For deadlifts, that's more legs, back... I think some of your arms are involved... Yeah, your arms are involved because your arms are holding it! So yeah, those are the three big things. And then, I did mention there are four days of working out. The fourth day we do a lot of... That's like an overhead press day. That's more just exclusively arms.

**Julie:** Maybe this is a sensitive question, but what are you currently lifting, and are you happy with that, and what are your goals in terms of total weight?

**Sarah:** Currently, with deadlifts, I had to drop a lot because I took a break because of coronavirus and everything. But right now I'm deadlifting right around 200 because those are all the weights I have. I basically got to the end and I was like, "Welp, I'm here. I can deadlift all of this." So it's like 200lbs. Squat, I'm around 153lbs. Bench press, that's like 110 or so. And then overhead press, it might be around 83lbs, but that one is my lightest lift. Basically, anything to do with arms or just arms and chest is going to be my lowest lift. I know that's the case with a lot of people because it's more isolated and you can't really use your whole body to support yourself for that the way you can, like, with a deadlift or a squat.

**Julie:** You know, I'm really excited when I can lift both of my 5lb weights over my head, so... [laughs] I'm super impressed right now. That's impressive!

So, you've got 200lbs worth of weights. Is buying extra weights expensive? And setting up a home gym, is that kind of a piecemeal process because it costs a lot?

**Sarah:** Yeah, it's one of those things where I really wish I'd gotten to this before the pandemic because the price of barbells, weight plates, home gym equipment has gone up so much over the past year. And a lot of things have been out of stock everywhere. Like, I was finally able to grab a barbell from a company called Rogue Fitness. They make a lot of quality barbells. And what I had to do was... I was on my computer in the morning, I just kept refreshing their page to see when it would be in stock. And the first couple of times I did that, it was out of stock in the time it took me to put it in my cart and go to checkout. [laughs] So, it took me a while to get my hands on a barbell.

But once I got that, then I was like, "Okay, now I'm going to need a mat. I'm going to need a rack to put the barbell on. I'm going to have to find weights." So, I was able to find a rack thanks to Amazon. The mat, I actually got a horse stall mat from a tractor supply store because they're cheaper than getting an actual gym mat, and they're just as durable. And then the weights themselves... Actually, my girlfriend was the one who found those for me because I'd been complaining that I couldn't find them in stock anywhere.

So she went on Craigslist and she found a guy who was actually making his own. So he made them, they're like cement... He covered them with truck bed liner or something. And they're really rough. I can't really drop them the way I could with weight plates that are made of rubber since they're made of cement. But they get the job done. I'm still able to lift. I still feel a good workout. So they've been really useful.

**Julie:** Providing that you can acquire more weights, what kind of goals do you have?

**Sarah:** When I was doing CrossFit, I wasn't really going about it the most healthy way because my mindset was really tied up in the numbers. Like my deadlift, when I was doing CrossFit, was around 260 or so, and I was like, "I gotta get to 300!! I have to be able to deadlift 300lbs like all the big guys out there!" [laughs] I remember being kind of disappointed with myself when I hit a wall around 260. I was like, "Aw man, I'm not increasing."

And of course, the pandemic hit and I had to drop down. I had to drop way down when I started over again. But right now, I'm really trying not to tie myself to any specific numbers. My overall focus is just, like, "Okay, I want to be able to do these moves well,

with good form so I don't pull a muscle in my back or anything like that." I just want to focus on getting stronger, doing things with good form, and hopefully doing these types of exercises will help me out as years go by and as my body gets older I'm able to stay more mobile. That's what my angle is, basically, at this point.

**Julie:** Kind of overall health, and strength, and looking good in a tank top?

**Sarah:** Yes, that's my goal. [laughs]

**Julie:** [laughs] When you had to stop because of the pandemic, was it really like starting from zero when you started up again?

**Sarah:** Oh yeah. I remember I got the barbell... I have what they call the "women's" barbell, which is like 15kg. The barbell itself isn't super heavy, but I remember I picked it up and thought, "Oh my god, how am I supposed to lift this and then put weights on it?" I didn't really notice too many changes in my body when I stopped. I just remember, like, feeling really sad that I couldn't lift. [laughs] Just being disappointed. Because, you know, the gyms were closed, and then once the gyms opened again I thought, "I *could* go back, but then I don't really know how comfortable I'd be trying to work out wearing a face mask," which I could've done it, but I guess I just didn't really want to go through the trouble. So I just said, "You know, I'll just stay home."

But yeah, when I first started again, everything felt very heavy; I felt very discouraged. But it was just one of those things where I had to tell myself, "Okay, this is going to be an incremental progression just like before, we're just starting maybe a little bit behind where you were before. But that's okay. We'll get back up there eventually." It's like the name of the program I'm using, Stronger by the Day. Every day you get a little bit stronger. It might not always be a linear progression, but overall, you'll get there.

**Julie:** Yeah. So, do you give yourself pep talks? Because that's impressive that you have this mindset. What happens when you wobble and you're like, "Augh! This isn't working how I want it to work!"? How do you get out of that and back into your mindset?

**Sarah:** Some days I'm just kind of miserable about it. Especially when it comes to doing squats. That's currently my lift that I feel the weakest about. I think it's just a matter of me working on stability and, you know, keeping my whole foot on the floor, keep my back up, not leaning over, try not to tilt or fall over when I'm squatting. But some of it is just telling myself, "At least we came and we did it. We did the lift. It wasn't perfect, but we tried it." Other days are just like, "You know what? I don't even want to think about this. All right, we're done. Moving on to the next thing."

**Julie:** [laughs] Don't dwell, don't dwell.

**Sarah:** Yeah, and sometimes I do. I try not to. I try to just think of it like, "Okay..." Because I'm trying to keep working out as something that I do because I enjoy it. I don't want to get to a point where I feel like I *have* to do it. I want it to stay something that I do because I really enjoy it, or out of habit even; that's fine. And it's cool because this is, like, the first time in my life that I've felt this way about anything that's, like, exercise-related, so I really want to hold onto this. I don't want to lose this. [laughs]

**Julie:** Now, have you felt that mindset bleed over into other parts of your life? Like, has it influenced the way that you think about other things you do?

**Sarah:** You know what? That's a good question. I'm not sure. I'm trying to think... Yeah, I guess a little bit, because... Okay, a couple of months ago I started roller skating.

**Julie:** [laughs] That's so cool!

**Sarah:** It's been, I guess, the one cardio activity I've enjoyed. And I have found myself... Like on days when I'm really discouraged, like, "Oh, I fell," or, "I couldn't do the thing I wanted to do, couldn't do that turn," I tell myself, "Okay, you couldn't do that, but you were also able to stand up a lot longer than you were last time," you know? "You didn't fall immediately after standing up. That's an improvement."

So, I've noticed that when it comes to... I'm learning that it's good to, not ignore the negatives, but don't discount the positives, I guess, when it comes to noticing the progress that you're making in different areas. It might not be as much progress as you want to make, but it's still something and it's still better than nothing. So, yeah.

**Julie:** Now that we're starting to open back up, do you think you'll go back to a gym, or do you just prefer working out at home?

**Sarah:** It's really funny because I've been thinking about that and I'm not sure. On one hand, I did kind of miss going to the CrossFit gym, and lifting, and having people around to, you know, check your form and be like, "Okay, make sure you keep your whole foot on the ground. Make sure your back's straight and your bar is going in a straight line."

But also, I feel like... It's more of a self-conscious thing. I feel like sometimes, when I go to the gym, that people are watching me, or I'm being judged, or "Oh, she's not lifting as heavy as I can lift," or "Her form isn't great. I should probably talk to her about it." So, I do really like lifting at home.

I could see myself going back occasionally to maybe lift with a class or with a friend if I were able to meet other people who were also into lifting. But overall, I really enjoy just lifting at home. I can play my music, I can record my lifts without having to worry about anyone walking around in front of me, and I can have the dogs there, so...

**Julie:** [laughs] Do they help you?

**Sarah:** They usually just sleep and observe. [laughs]

**Julie:** So, no help at all. [laughs] Got it. Now, is there, like, an online community?

**Sarah:** Well, with the program I'm in right now, they have a Facebook group and it's been helpful because a lot of people will post their lifts and say, "Can you check my form? Am I doing this right?" Or you know, ask for encouragement, or just say, like, "I'm really feeling discouraged about this. Is this normal?" And of course, a lot of people will be like, "Yes, that's totally normal! We all go through that." And it's nice.

I don't really participate too much. I have posted some of my lifts and asked for feedback, and the feedback's always been very helpful. Everyone is very positive and any criticism they give is, like, really helpful. So, I'm part of one Facebook group for that. I haven't met anyone in person yet to lift with, but I feel like that would probably be a really good next step for, like, getting motivation and encouragement if I was able to find someone else to lift weights with.

**Julie:** Would your ten-year-old self who was forced to go into soccer believe what you're doing now?

**Sarah:** No, it's... Yeah. I remember... I didn't even like going outside to play with my siblings' friends or anything like that. They would be outside playing with their friends and I'd be like, "I just want to sit inside at a computer and write fanfiction." [laughs]

**Julie:** [laughs] Nothing wrong with that!

**Sarah:** It's just... I was always very much a... I'm still pretty introverted, but even more so... I was a lot shyer, I would say. I didn't want to go out, I didn't want to talk to people. Yeah. I think... This is kind of a tangent, but just something I thought of. I was thinking, like... One thing that's really helped me really embrace powerlifting has been changing my mindset on how I see my body, I would say.

I know when I was younger, as far as body image goes, I always assumed skinnier is better. The skinnier you are, the more "healthy" you are, that type of thing. And it was one of those things that was, unfortunately, reinforced by family and, of course, a lot of people... Even a lot of fitness-related people will assume that, because you're a woman you don't want to get too muscular. "No, you don't want to get too big! Women don't want that. If you're a woman, you want to be skinny. You want to be toned."

And I remember, one of the first times I realized that that was ridiculous, I was on Tumblr, actually, and there was this one person who posted a picture of herself flexing. And I saw that picture and I was like, "What?! You don't have to be a man to be muscular?? WHAT? You don't have to be, like, super all up on testosterone or anything? You can just be a woman and still have muscles too??" So, I think that was the turning point for me.

Of course, this didn't happen until I was an adult. It would've been nice if it had happened earlier, but when I saw that I was like, "Okay, I don't have to be as skinny as possible? This is interesting. This is a whole new area of fitness that I'd never considered before!" It was cool.

**Julie:** So, you film your lifting, and that's so you can look back at it and say, "Okay, my form wasn't great there," or, "That was perfect"?

**Sarah:** Yeah, it's basically just to check myself since I'm doing this myself. And even with that, I haven't... I don't do that all the time because there was a period of time at the beginning of this year, a few months back, where I was recording every single lift. I would do a lift, I would immediately go and check it and be like, "Mm, okay. Your hips were too high. Your arms weren't straight. Your back wasn't flat. You've got to do this again." So then my next set I'd be like, "Do it again" and I'd check again.

And I noticed it was really making me kind of miserable about my lifts. I said, "Okay, I basically know some of the basics of what I'm supposed to be doing, so as long as I'm not doing anything super wild like trying to squat with one foot or something..." as long as I'm taking it slow, taking deep breaths, keeping your head up, chest up... As long as I'm aware of what my body's doing and I take a video maybe here or there just to spot check, I feel like I should be okay.

And I know that's one of those things that might not work for everybody. I know there are some lifters who will film all of their lifts because, I guess, they get a better sense of what they're doing. But I've noticed for me, if I do that, I start to get really down on myself and critical because I'll compare myself to everybody else I've seen on Instagram who can deadlift 400lbs.

**Julie:** Yeah, like a perfectionism thing.

**Sarah:** Yes! Exactly. It's been one of those things, again, I've had to learn as I've gotten older. Growing up, I was homeschooled, pretty independent because I was the oldest of four kids, so a lot of stuff I did was basically on my own. And I noticed sometimes that I

could get very wrapped up in, I guess, thinking about something and not doing it. Like when it came to writing, sometimes I'd be like, "Oh, I have all these ideas!" But when it's time to sit down and write, it's like, "Oh, I can't do it! It's not going to be perfect! I can't! No! I'm going to mess it up!"

And it's the same thing with lifting. I noticed if I were to record or focus too much on one thing, I would get too wrapped up in my head. I'd be like, "You know what? I can't do this." But instead, I'm like, "No, no. We can back off. We can lift a little bit lighter if we need to. We can cut things short, maybe switch to a different exercise if you need to. But we can do this."

So yeah, it's been a learning process on not being a perfectionist, understanding that, like, some days your body's not going to be able to do everything. There's been days where I've been super cramped and been like, "Okay, this isn't working. I'm going to have to cut this short." So yeah...

**Julie:** Yeah, listening to your body. Overriding your mind who, you know... If you were to just listen to your mind, your mind would be like, "No, keep going! Keep going! You can do it! Just get over it!"

**Sarah:** Yeah, and I've learned that if I try to do things like that, that's how I burn out. There have been times when I've tried to "get in shape" before, and it was very much an all-or-nothing type of thing. It was like, "Okay, we have to eat only these foods. No snacks. No candy. Nothing sweet." And that doesn't work because eventually you're like, "I can't do this anymore. I need some candy! I need a snack!" [laughs]

For me, it's been much more beneficial to be like, "Okay, within reason, this is what we want to do, but we can still have the foods we like and just try to also balance it out with healthy foods," that type of thing. And I've noticed that's helped a lot more than... Letting go of the all-or-nothing mindset, or trying to. It's not completely let go. I haven't gotten rid of it completely, but trying not to be as all-or-nothing in my thinking has helped so much in general with so many areas of my life, not just lifting.

**Julie:** You mentioned that you follow a program. Are there other powerlifters that you really admire, that you follow their content too?

**Sarah:** Yes. The first one, she was actually the one who inspired me when I found her on Tumblr, @KorraFitness. She is super cool. She does a lot of powerlifting. I think she made her own home gym as well. But she's able to lift super heavy. She has, like... She's super strong. I'm just... She's like my big inspiration.

**Julie:** Are there misconceptions about powerlifting that you hate?

**Sarah:** There are some stereotypes about lifters, which, one of them at least I conform to. There are stereotypes about, like, "Oh, if you're a powerlifter you probably don't like cardio. You don't like running or biking." Which is true. I don't like running. I don't like being super sweaty. So, at least for me, that one is true.

There are probably other misconceptions. I know people have misconceptions about women lifting weights. Like in my family, for instance, when I mentioned that I started powerlifting, I had a family member tell me, like, "You don't want to get too muscular. You don't want to bulk up that much." But the thing is, it's a lot harder to gain muscle, I'm learning, than it would be for someone who, you know, has a higher level of

testosterone or something like that. For me, it's taken several months for me to even start noticing, "Yes, my biceps are slightly visible."

So, I think the main misconception I've seen is people assuming that if you're a woman who's going to lift weights, you're automatically going to balloon up to... you're immediately going to be like a bodybuilder; you're going to be huge. And it's like, no. Actually, for bodybuilders, it's very difficult to even get to that level. It's not going to happen immediately.

**Julie:** Yeah, that makes me wonder... Do you know how long KorraFitness has been lifting? How long has it taken her to get to the point where you were so impressed by her?

**Sarah:** I think it's been several years. I don't know the exact time, but I've been following her for at least a few years. I know she's been doing it for longer than that. For a lot of fitness people, a lot of people who go into powerlifting, it can take years for you to get to a point where you're like, "Yes, I like how I look." Or for other people it might be shorter. But I know, at least for me, it's taken a while. Also because it's not just about lifting. It's also about diet and I'm still learning about that type of thing, like protein, macros... That's all stuff I'm still very much a beginner at.

Yeah, it's very much an ongoing thing. I don't know if... I might get to a point where I'm like, "You know what? I'm tired of lifting. Let's go do something else." And I guess as long as I'm not doing it because I'm, I guess, miserable, that would be fine. Like, "Okay, this sport has served its purpose for me. I'm going to go on and try something new."

But the way I look at it now is, I'm trying to just make this a really long-term thing. I like working out four days a week. I like the lifts I'm doing and the other exercises like the accessory work that I do, and I just want to keep doing it until, I guess, maybe another type of sport catches my interest or until I realize, "I think maybe my body might be done with this."

**Julie:** What kind of music do you listen to when you're lifting?

**Sarah:** Actually... [laughs] I don't really listen to too much music. I listen more to D&D podcasts. Yeah, I basically just listen to podcasts and listen to the story. It helps make the time go by so I'm not like, "Oh god. This set is taking forever." I'm just like, "Hm..." listening to the story.

**Julie:** And that also helps keep your brain occupied so it doesn't keep squirreling off to other places. [laughs]

**Sarah:** Yeah, that helps. I know with music, like every time the song will change, I'll be like, "This is a different song" and I'll just think about the song. But if I have a podcast going, it's like one continuous thing that just goes for, like, an hour or so. It helps me stay focused.

**Julie:** If someone who listened to our conversation wanted to get started with powerlifting, how would you recommend they get started?

**Sarah:** Well, I've got to say, you don't really need weights to get started. You could start with just practicing squats, pushups... If you have, like, 5lb dumbbells... I have a pair of 8lb ones that I use for some other exercises. You could use those for different exercises. On YouTube, if you search, like, 'powerlifting basics' or 'powerlifting form', there are a lot of videos that helped me out when I was really starting to try to get my form correct.

And as I mentioned before, MegSquats on YouTube, she was a really huge help because she had a lot of really good pointers on form and a lot of tips for beginners regarding lifting, diet, exercise frequency. All that kind of stuff. It's been really helpful.

**Julie:** And do you have any tips that you've learned in the course of doing lifting that you're like, "Don't do what I did," or, "Definitely do this. It really helped me."?

**Sarah:** Yeah, I think the biggest thing is just, like, don't try to do too much too fast. You might see other people lifting super heavy; you might want to also do that. But you have to learn to know when your body is approaching its limit. You don't want to try to do a really heavy squat and then you're having trouble standing up. You might pull a muscle or something.

So, even if that means staying super light for a while and only doing light weights, only doing small moves, that's fine because you can eventually build up to something heavier. So, basically, just don't try to do too much too fast. Take your time. Watch videos. Work on form. That's what's helped me a lot.

**Julie:** What would you say is absolutely the best thing about powerlifting for you?

**Sarah:** It's just a great stress reliever. I really like how I feel when I'm done. I'm like, "Yes! I feel strong! I did a lot of work with resistance bands and I also did a bench press today." It makes me feel weirdly accomplished, even though all I did was just move heavy things for an hour. [laughs] I just feel... It just makes me feel happy. I feel content, like, "Yes, we have lifted heavy things and now we can go on with our day."

**Julie:** [laughs] Oh my goodness. Well Sarah, thank you so much for taking so much time to talk with me about this. I've learned a ton and I'm super inspired now.

**Sarah:** No problem. Thank you for speaking to me. I'm glad we had a chance to talk.

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You can find Sarah on Instagram @ [ShayWise](#). I'll put a link to their Instagram in the show notes along with links to [@KorraFitness](#) and [Stronger by the Day](#). Plus, I'll include a list of Sarah's favorite nonprofits and a list of mine, too. Huge thanks to Sarah for sharing her passion with us.

Just a reminder that you can find this podcast on Instagram [@LoveWhatYouLovePod](#), on Twitter, [@WhatYouLovePod](#), and the website is [LoveWhatYouLovePod.com](#).

All of the transcripts for *Love What You Love* are available for everyone on the website. Thanks to Emily White, transcription magician and proprietress of The Wordary. If you need transcripts, reach out to her at [Emily@TheWordary.com](mailto:Emily@TheWordary.com). The music for *Love What You Love* is called "Inspiring Hope" by Pink-Sounds. A link to that artist is included in the show notes.

As always, thank you so, so much for listening. Let's hang out again soon.

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