

#151 Building Confidence for Plus Size Kids with Ember & Ace...

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SPEAKERS

Michelle Glogovac, Pam Luk

M Michelle Glogovac 00:01

You're listening to the mind simplified life podcast and this is episode number 151.

M Michelle Glogovac 00:12

Welcome to the my simplified life podcast, a place where you will learn that your past and even your present. Don't define your future. Regardless of what stage of life you're in, I want you to feel inspired and encouraged to pursue your dreams, simplify your life and start taking action today. I'm your host, Michelle Glogovac, and I'm excited to share my stories and life lessons with you will take you on my own journey. This is my simplified life.

M Michelle Glogovac 00:46

Hey, friends, welcome back to another episode. I'm your host, Michelle Glogovac. And today I have a wonderful guest who is not only a friend, but she's also a client. And she is someone I find so inspirational, because, like myself, she decided after having her daughter that she wanted to do something that would change the world for her child, she is doing that. Pam Luk left the comfort of her corporate job in order to launch a business that makes plus size clothing. For Kids. It's called Ember and Ace. Not only is Pam changing the world for children, but she is one of the happiest, most fun loving women I've ever met, we have such a great time chatting. And honestly, when we start talking, we could probably just never stop. And in fact, before we recorded this episode, we had been chatting for over 30 minutes and then said, Oh, we might want to hit record. I love that Pam not only takes her own personal experience, but the experience of her daughter into all that she does with her business and what she's trying to do to change the world for our tiny humans. Because they deserve not only to have clothes, and athletic wear that fit them. But to feel that confidence in everything that they're doing. To not have to think about the clothes that they're wearing, but to focus on what they're doing, how

they're having fun, how they're playing sports and growing into the people that they should be becoming. So I am excited to share Pam's journey with you on how she did all the scary things, how she launched a Kickstarter, and how her fashion line is launching next month. I Pam,

P

Pam Luk 02:42

Hi, Michelle. I'm so excited to get talk to you. It's so much fun, we could probably just chat all day long and not get bored with each other. It seems to very much be the case. Because we've all been we've chatted for 30 minutes so far. And we were just now getting a podcast.

M

Michelle Glogovac 03:04

Yeah, can you take a moment to introduce yourself to everyone, please?

P

Pam Luk 03:07

I'm happy to. My name is Pam Luk. And I am the founder of Ember and Ace. Which is an athletic wear brand exclusively for plus size kids.

M

Michelle Glogovac 03:17

I'd love it. But you weren't always that. No. So let's talk about what you did before and why how you got to finding Ember and Ace now.

P

Pam Luk 03:30

Sure thing. So I've sort of had a varied career, I would say the bulk of my career has been spent as a project manager, I am a certified Project Management Professional, and have done that for a number of years. And I did some coding prior to that. So most of my project management work has been in technology. And how did I end up starting a clothing line? I think it's it's always a varied route. And there's all these things that sort of happen, and you start putting different points together. And I think, you know, I've been plus size fat my whole life, from early puberty years, all the way to being an adult now and and so I would say, you know, one of the first moments in life where I sort of worked on coming to terms being in a better space about my body was when I was pregnant with my daughter, and it sort of was a moment to sort of get my house in order, if you will, about how I felt about my own body and sort of getting more comfortable in it and did a lot of work around. Just feel uncomfortable in this body that I have. And then fast forward to, you know, when my daughter was in late elementary school, and I you know, was in my 40s. And I feel like for a lot of women, there's this moment where you know, you sort of survived those early career years and you've paid off your student and you've survived the diaper years and you're sort of giving a little bit of your brain back and some of your time back and wanting to really look at how am I contributing what kind of contribution by making with the work that I'm doing and wanting to really connect to something that was a little bit more meaningful. And you know, my daughter dances and you know, she's starting those early puberty years and starting to develop a bigger body as well. And there was just this

moment where I'm like, some of the struggles that I had, finding athletic wear that fit, finding leotards, finding soccer clothing, we're starting to see that for her as well. And it's been 30 years since I played in high school. How is this a problem? Still? How is this a problem still. So, you know, this is a problem that I understand this is a problem that I know firsthand, having grown up and wanting to be active and struggling to stay active with the options that were available. And now this is still a problem today. So I said, I understand this problem, I think I can do something about this problem and sort of decided done in there that doesn't matter. A fashion background or a manufacturing background, I will say having a project management background has been hugely helpful. Because I know professionally how to find a problem, take a problem and break it down and find all the steps to take along the way. Because that's really what project management is, you have a problem you have you're trying to solve or you're trying to implement a solution. How do we get there? And that's really the skill set that I had that sort of made it possible, I think, for me to take on something that was so far outside of my, my not only my comfort zone, but My professional background.

M

Michelle Glogovac 06:36

I'm sure there's some connection, just as the the project management portion, you know, comes into play. There's always a connection, I find like people have said to me, how'd you go from selling jet fuel to corporate flight departments to you know, podcasts pitching? Like, well, it's all about sales, you're selling fuel, and you're selling your client. So the I'm sure there's some sort of, you know, connection, just as there is with the project management to how you've designed this clothing line? How have you designed it, what makes it different from you know, what you're getting in like Target? How is it different for for kids,



07:11

I would say first and foremost, it's about proper fit. I think particularly you can, there are some brands that do have sort of plus size sections, and they go up to a certain size, but they don't go beyond that. And they certainly don't do it at all in dance wear. But in fact, you know, some basic T shirts, shorts, joggers, things like that, you can find extended sizes. But as is oftentimes the case, they haven't taken the pattern that they used to develop the clothing, and made any modifications for the bodies have bigger kids for plus sized kids. And those bodies are very different. And so even when I was starting on the pattern making process, just trying to find things, even just shopping for your children, I mean, that's when you start to discover they don't make things that fit these children's bodies. And so you're sort of cobbling together from all these different places, you know, I, one of the recommendations that I make to all parents that have kids that have bigger bodies is you have to shop, every single department, I have shopped the children's department, I've shopped both boys and girls departments, I have shopped the women's department, I've shopped the men's short section, just because you're looking for something that's going to fit these kids bodies. And that has been the biggest effort for me was, I need us to make something that is designed specifically for these kids and bigger bodies. And so it tends to be the case that, particularly in the early stages of puberty, a lot of kids are very tree chunky is the phrase that I use, which is not very, but it's visually, you know, you're not getting that waist hip ratio that tends to develop in later puberty, particularly for girls, right. So I need something that's sort of gonna be big enough to handle kids and bigger bodies. And you know, just mindful of what that's different for them, versus what you find in a traditional sort of kids size where and then a lot of kids don't, they have to wear adult size t

shirts, right, because they've outgrown the kid size t shirts. Those tend to be sloppy looking, because their sleeves are too long, the shirt is too long, right? To get the space that you need to the waist in the chest, you have to go up to such an adult size that they're expecting you to be by five five or more. And these kids are children, and they're less than five feet. So they're swimming in the shirt. That's the only option that exists for them because nobody has made a larger shirt that is proportioned for a kid. But you know, mindful of the fact that they are still growing. So a lot of it was trial and error, trial and error.

M

Michelle Glogovac 09:40

And you find I'm finding this with myself and my kids that all like across the board, clothing sizes, there's no rhyme or reason I've seen the pictures of where you know they take jeans from a various designers. They're all the same size and yet none of them actually match up. You know for kids It's kind of funny that they go, Oh, well, a six year old is a size six. And my kids are very tall. You wouldn't know it from you know me. But they're very tall. And they have these teeny tiny waist. So thank God for extenders because I have to pull them all the way in. But then they end up flooding. Yeah, so their pants don't fit. They, like we leggings for us are Caprice. And then for me, you know, bigger chested. So if I get an extra large, it looks ginormous on me, because now the sleeves are down to my elbows, but it fits across the chest. So I feel like there's no rhyme or reason like nothing fits. Even me, you my kids these days, and you know, you're coming and making something that fits these kids, that it's going to make them feel better and feel good about themselves, you're building confidence in them. Because I know that I would love to wear a shirt that actually fits and I don't swim in, you know, in certain portions and parts like that. So, you know, is that part of what you find as well?

P

Pam Luk 11:01

Absolutely. And I think one of the things you learn is that there is no industry standard for sizing. At least I think sometime in the men's department, you get it a little bit better, because at least they do pants by waist and inseam for men. Yeah, oh, jackets and shirts that have a sleeve length and neck measurement. But there is no industry standard. And so I think what happens is a brand will decide, you know, the within a range, maybe this is a size medium, or this is a size eight, and then they'll make decisions about how they want to grade that out. And there are certain rules about how much you change. But like you said, that can vary very much. brand to brand. And I think particularly for kids, I have always been fascinated by the idea that kid sizing is based on age. Yeah, like, Oh, this is this is the size six years? Or this is the size 18 months and like, they don't understand.

M

Michelle Glogovac 11:56

Yeah, and then you're like, Oh, well, they grew out of it, or Oh, no, no, we just got a big bag of clothes, uniform clothes that were given to us before the school started. And one mom was like, Oh, they're all like size six or something size seven, they're not going to fit us, I went through and we tried on every piece of clothing because there was even size five, that didn't fit like a size five, and it fit like a size seven. So you can't really tell just based on the labels anymore. It's off labels.

P

Pam Luk 12:27

It sort of is. And that's why I think it's, you know, I think women in particular, have struggled a long time. And so it's sort of something that we've I guess I've just decided to accept the betrayal of all the choices. But I do think bodies change a lot. And that's the one thing that everybody has to remember. And then I think we all need to embrace a little bit more. But just think about how different my body is, even if it's generally the same size, I haven't gone too terribly up and down in terms of size, because I you know, divested I'm doing my best to diverse from diet culture. But there's my pre birth, pre giving birth body distribution. And then there's my post giving birth body, sort of where everything sits in, you know, in now, as I'm aging sort of things tend to still be shifting, and so bodies just continue to change. And so it does make it extra, I think challenging. Because something that fit you maybe, even if you technically wear the same size, it doesn't fit the same anymore. So I do think the good old days when you just have all your clothing custom made, must have been nice and slow and expensive. But also nice.

M

Michelle Glogovac 13:35

Now, can you I didn't ask you ahead of time if we could talk about this. So just tell me, you know, yes or no, but what is your daughter, think about and feel about this clothing line that you're coming out with?

P

Pam Luk 13:47

I will say my daughter is 13. And so that means I don't get a lot of direct information of anyone I don't know if anyone else has, you know, if you have kids around this age, you sort of tend to get a lot of grants and noises and one word answers. And so, I mean, I think I think she am an over explainer because I want her to so I do talk a lot about the reasoning behind it. And you know, I think that everyone deserves to have clothing that fits better and that bodies do come in all different sizes. And that's why we're doing this is because for whatever reason, this has not been done before. So I think I think she appreciates it. But I also you know she's 13.

M

Michelle Glogovac 14:36

So was she getting to where the pieces that you have already?

P

Pam Luk 14:40

She is i i started with using her as a fit model because that's one of the hardest things to do is to you know, you have to constantly be trying clothing on and I will say is one of the biggest challenges because the first patterns I made that was over a year ago and kids do this thing where they keep growing You know, things fit a certain way over a year and a half ago. And now I'm like, I think we're still okay. Because I think you've grown another inch and a half. And now you don't I mean, so yeah, yeah, she was one of the first because she's obviously a lot of

the reason why I'm starting this work is you know, we need dancewear. And so the line that I'm doing right now does not include dancing. Every dancer is making a very, you know, we'll make a fast follow, because I'm making custom skirts and leotards at this point. That's exciting. Yeah.

M Michelle Glogovac 15:33

And those leotards are so funny, we did gymnastics for the first time. And so I went on Amazon, I bought a couple. I was like, What the heck are these things? And I'm sure I want you know, I just remember ballet as a young you know, thing with and we wore our, the tights and stuff and but now they're almost like biking, short type leotard things that.

P Pam Luk 15:59

there is a intense variety of it. It also depends on the style of dance that you're doing. And then there's a set for like gymnastics. And there's a set for like, kids that do like acrobatics. And then there's ballet. And then there's the ones that you typically see more in like jazz. And so there's a lot of choices. Sadly, they're all still the same size range, but the styles are varied. You know, sparkles, new sparkles.

M Michelle Glogovac 16:25

Now take us on the journey. So where are you with the business right now? What's coming next? Let's talk about the Kickstarter. Yes, I don't think I've ever had anybody on who's done a Kickstarter. So you're the first.

P Pam Luk 16:38

Excellent. So yeah, we did run a Kickstarter this summer, in an effort to raise funds for our very first production run. Because as in all things manufacturing, the larger of the production, when you're able to do, the better the pricing that you get. But the downside with manufacturing is you have to pay for all that upfront, right, I have to pay for all of the raw materials. So that's fabric and elastic, and zippers and everything you need to produce that garment. And then it's gonna go to the factory and be sewn and cut and sewn. But you have to fund the fabric purchases and the elastic purchases and all of those things up front. And so the larger production when you're able to do, the better your costs will be over the run. So I started a Kickstarter this summer to raise funds to get our first production run. And we were successful, I ran for 30 days. And I raised \$5,000. And

M Michelle Glogovac 17:35

in less than 30 days, less than 30

P Pam Luk 17:37

...days, we did meet our goal, I think it was something like 17 days. But I think it was important for me for a lot of reasons, I think, obviously wanting to have a bigger production run because that lets me produce more pieces, which then I'm able to get and sell and have on more bodies because that's the more feedback you can get from customers around what's working, what's not working. Because I like I said finding examples of this clothing was very difficult. So I would take samples to show the, to the pattern maker I'm like, But this is wrong. And this needs to be bigger. And this needs to be smaller. And the sleeves on this are too long because made for adults, but it's right through the chest. And so there's still a lot of fit that I'm hoping to get a lot more feedback around for folks. So I wanted to have a big production run. But so it's important that Kickstarter, from that perspective, I will also say this is also can be a very sort of lonely journey. You know, I think the pandemic has certainly impacted that. But you know, you're doing all this work, you're working one on one, the pattern maker, they send samples, you try things on, you go back and forth, but you just sort of feel like you're on this journey by yourself a little bit. And so I think the Kickstarter was hugely important just to have others that are excited about what I'm doing be able to share in that journey with me and for me to sort of feel connected and supported by a community of folks that I had worked with or had connections with in some regard. And, and some are folks who just found me thankfully through, you know, amplification that I've gotten through social media from folks like you and from other people. So it was a huge learning process and stressful and ultimately successful and I'm so happy that I did it even though I was nervous about doing it.

M

Michelle Glogovac 19:23

Well, I think it also shows how many people believe in you and what you're doing and that it's necessary. And you know, that truly to me is what the Kickstarter is about. It's this is a group of people who are saying yes, pm you're doing the right thing. And we think so much of the right thing that here's our money, and that's a big deal, you know, to have somebody say, yep, take my money, and, you know, go do your thing with it because I believe that that it's a worthy cause. So congratulations to you because that's a big deal. I haven't asked people for money in the Have people for money on other stuff and PTA stuff, but I haven't said hey, invest in my business.

P

Pam Luk 20:06

It's, it's really hard. It's hard for me, I think. And I think this whole journey through the Kickstarter and through building this business has been just learning to get more comfortable with things like asking for a sale or asking for money and anything. That's why it's, they always say, you know, when you start a business, it really has to be something that you're passionate about. And now I understand it much better. Because I believe so much in what I'm doing. And I believe so much that it's going to help these kids, that it's so much easier for me to make an ask. Right, yeah, because I am fully committed and believe, and I believe this can make a difference. And so it makes it that much easier to be like, Hey, give me a Mac, this campaign, this campaign, and let's make a difference together. And so I think that's part of why they say you know, do something that you're super passionate about, because it you are going to have to do things like ask for money, and ask for support. And, you know, asked, Hey, can you amplify this on your social media platform, because you're, I've reached out to, you know, different, different people on Instagram, people that work in the plus size community and have

been like, Hey, I'm a big fan of yours. Here's what I'm doing. And that for me, like I was terrified the first time I did it. But it's again, I was able to sort of get to that point where I was able to do it, because again, I'm just so passionate about doing this work. And so.

M Michelle Glogovac 21:31

Have you had people reach out to you like other parents who just found you. Random?

P Pam Luk 21:37

I have, I have had a few that have reached out because they just found me. And if because, you know, I commented on somebody's blog post or I commented on somebody else's social media. And I think I'm hoping that we're still going to see some more of that, because I think that's one of the hardest things is to let people know that you exist. And we all know, there's you're just bombarded by like, how do you break through the noise on social media? How do you get people's attention? And, you know, I think that's where just trying to continue to share my story in as many ways and as many places as I can to let people know, and I have had a few folks reach out. Like, oh my gosh, yes. And it's, you know, it's always like, what can you and I need you to do I need to do all these things. Like,

M Michelle Glogovac 22:17

I think he make dresses and then swimwear line. And

P Pam Luk 22:21

already, I've definitely heard for swimwear. And I think the other thing that I don't anticipate venturing into, but I would love to challenge existing manufacturers was around uniforms. For softball teams and basketball teams, and the ones that provide, you know, official school uniforms. Part of it is like, do you offer extended sizes? And if you don't, why not? And if you do, why isn't the school ordering them? So, but that feels like a space that I don't anticipate ever making uniforms. But if they would like to never say never, never say never. But else if they'd like to consult on sizing those pieces again, let me know.

M Michelle Glogovac 22:57

Maybe you can do some samples, and then sell them and make the big bucks that way.

P Pam Luk 23:05

Who knows? Maybe I'll come back next year. And I'm like, so we started making you.

M Michelle Glogovac 23:11

M MICHELLE GLOGOVAC 23:11

I would love that. You're like, here's the new line, here's the new Kickstarter await nakki. Nike just backed us. So

P Pam Luk 23:19

that would be the dream. You never

M Michelle Glogovac 23:21

know. You never know. You know, I love it. And I love that you have mentioned that this, you know, this came about after you became a mom and I because this this is the feeling that I had to have. It was like a wake up call of like, I'm not doing anything that's making a difference in the world in my children's lives to make a better place for them. And that's why I made my switch. This is how you've launched your business. And we're simply moms who are kicking some ass to make the world a better place for our kids. And you know, it has that trickle effect. I absolutely love it. Thanks. And your husband's helping you too. I know, he's supportive, and my husband doing all the photography.

P Pam Luk 24:06

My husband is a full on rock star. Now granted, I got very lucky in that he has a graphic design background, and he's a photographer. So I'm very, very lucky and that support has been key. But even more importantly, he was my first true believer, right? He's the first one that you know, was like, It's okay that you quit your job. And, you know, that's where our benefits come from. But it's okay, that we you know, do all these things because he's been self employed for a number of years. And so, for me to also take that leap, there's some very serious conversations that need to happen. You know, there's usually a lot of times in relationships one partner is sort of holding it down on the stability front, while the other one sort of, you know, is on a self employment journey and it's not always you know, self employment is you know, it's not always a smooth course and so for me to say hey, you know how you're self employed. Well, guess what? Wow. also ready to sort of embark on this and really give this a go? And he's like, Absolutely, let's go. Not for one second. Did he say what about, you know, all these other concerns? And? And he, yeah, he's my biggest fan of my biggest supporter. And all of this is very much possible through that. I mean, he's right now he's making sure that the dogs are behaving.

M Michelle Glogovac 25:27

we're making sure you are all making sure

P Pam Luk 25:28

We're all set up. So I do, I do think that I'm very lucky to have his support. And I think it can, it doesn't have to be a spouse, but for people to have folks in their life that are very supportive. And I, you know, I mean, I think a lot of people will look at what I'm doing and say, Oh, that's

And I, you know, I mean, I think a lot of people will look at what I'm doing and say, Oh, that's crazy. You left a very stable job where you're making a lot of money, and you decided to do it during the pandemic, and you didn't delay, right, you didn't say, Okay, I'm gonna put this on pause until, after things calm down, because it's been two years and things haven't come down. But there's a lot of people that you know, when you share some of this, and they're like, really? Do you think that's a good idea?

M

Michelle Glogovac 26:06

You gave up your insurance benefits during a pandemic?

P

Pam Luk 26:10

Well, I mean, we did switch to cover California, but I mean, that's not as inexpensive as my corporate coverage. No, I mean, I think it's just, you know, you gave up I gave I, I had plans to quit my job, because I'm, I will say, I'm very privileged to be able to do that. But I'm also like, I've saved and saved and saved for years to be able to do this. And I'm also 50. Now I turned 50 in June, and the thought of doing a nine to five and then trying to do this work sort of in that evening, weekend side gig scenario. It worked for a little while, like, obviously, some of the early parts of this were stood up while I was still working full time, but there reached a point where it was time. And I also think you can make some time excuses for your inability to make progress by Well, it's still just a side gig. Right? So I sort of had to go all in on this for myself, in part, but yeah, to we had this had been the plan and the pandemic hit, and I'm like, are we still doing this? Am I still quitting my job? Right? Are we still selling our house? And the answer to both of that was, yes, obviously, it was pushed slightly for you know, we went to lockdown. But um, yeah, to sort of say, you because here's the thing. It's never going to be the perfect time, you cannot wait for the perfect moment. It just doesn't exist. And so, yeah, we held off for a few months, because we were in lockdown. And nobody was going anywhere. But as soon as we sort of found our way in those early summer, fall days of 2020, I'm like, but then we're moving, we're moving forward. Because who knows when the next sort of iteration of this and what it's going to look like? And so I think, you know, just deciding that you were going to press on anyway. So yeah, my husband's been great. And we spend a lot of time together, and it's somehow it works. I don't know, but it's great.

M

Michelle Glogovac 28:08

When can everybody buy online? And where are they going to be able to buy it? Okay.

P

Pam Luk 28:13

So the goal now that fabric has been purchased and has been shipped is that it should arrive in late September. And we're hoping to be well into manufacturing and starting to ship at the end of October of this year. And we are currently available exclusively on our website, which is Ember and Ace.com. So people should start checking in and absolutely come in, subscribe to

the newsletter, because I'll be sharing some behind the scenes things which are super fun if you've ever been curious to see what giant rolls of fabric look like. But to have things available to sell late this fall into early winter. So hopefully in time for the holidays.

M Michelle Glogovac 28:51

Amazing. I'm so proud of you. I'm so proud to get to know you to work with you. To see you on this journey. It's exciting because it's unusual, and you are making a difference. All these kids are going to have something that fits that makes them feel good. And I think anyone can relate to that. So I'm proud of you.

P Pam Luk 29:13

Thank you. I appreciate that. It's nice to hear.

M Michelle Glogovac 29:16

And where can everybody find you also, besides the website, the

P Pam Luk 29:19

best part is to go to the website. But you can also find us on Instagram we are in Bernie's on Instagram, and I have a page on LinkedIn as well for folks that want to on LinkedIn, I share a little bit more about the business side of the journey. So if you're curious about that, but yeah, it's just Instagram in the website at this point, because it's all you need. It's all you need. And we have time we don't have time to talk about social media that whole deal. So

M Michelle Glogovac 29:46

it's all you need. It's all good. Thank you so much Pam for sharing your story and just this whole journey. I'm so excited for you and to see those orders come rolling in shortly and all these kids wearing your clothes.

P Pam Luk 30:00

Thank you. I really appreciate you being on this journey with me and inviting me here today. It's been great.

M Michelle Glogovac 30:06

Thank you. Thanks. Okay, friends, I think we all need a supportive partner like Pam has who said, go ahead and quit your job, no big deal. Because we all know it is a big deal. It's a very big deal to not only leave your job, but to launch something completely brand new, and something

that is not on the market either. So it's not only a new business, but she's launching a new product, something that others haven't created before, which is absolutely incredible. I'm so so proud of Pam and what she's doing. I'm excited to see the growth of Ember and Ace. And to see so many kids wearing her clothing line, this is just going to be something so exciting and so big for her and for all of the children who need this in their lives. Because like I said in the intro, they deserve to be focused on what they're doing their activities, their sports, their dance, their ballet, instead of thinking about how they're closed, just don't feel right as they're trying to do these activities and play team sports or individual sports. Our children deserve this. And it is an issue that needs to be addressed. So I'm grateful that Pam is doing that. Please go support her go follow her. Send her a message of support. I know she'd greatly appreciate it. Until next week, my friends. Have a wonderful week.