

Podcast Transcription

In the Loop - Episode 12

“Believe in Yourself and You Will Be Unstoppable.”

Interview with Lara Gya

Lara: [00:00:00] No one believed I could do it and I was just like you know what, no I can do it. I want to do it and I want to do it for myself. I want to prove to myself that I can get up on stage and that I want to do this. And that I want to be in the best shape of my life because jumping up on stage for me, like even though I did win, it's not about winning. It's about just seeing your body transform.

Kareena: [00:00:21] We reach out to fitness influencer Lara Gya about how she transformed not only her body but her entire life in pursuit of happiness. Tune in to hear her story on this episode of In the Loop.

Kareena: [00:00:42] Hey there Loopers! Welcome To another episode of In the Loop where we chat about the business end of being an influencer. I'm your host Kareena and today we're chatting with the unstoppable force that is Lara Gya. Now you may recognize Lara as a fitness influencer on Instagram but this wonderful woman is more than just a bikini model. Lara has grown a strong and loyal community of followers by sharing her story through her blog: Live to Lift. Having found herself 20 kilos heavier unhappy, and lacking confidence, Lara wanted to change. And so, began her journey to transform her life for the better. Becoming a successful bodybuilding competitor, shedding the extra weight and earning the title of bikini body champion, we learned just how Lara's unwavering belief in herself led to her becoming the person that she is today. Listen in as we learned just how Lara began her fitness journey.

Lara: [00:01:31] So it was all, so I started in fitness when I came back from a full month pretty much backpacking holiday in the States. I was really unhappy with my body. So, all throughout my childhood and everything I was always known as overweight sister, like the girl who needed to lose weight. My diet was not good anyway so I kind of knew it in the back end as well. But I was never happy with my body. And then coming back from a four-month holiday I hit my low. I was seventy-seven kilos and I just knew things needed to change. I wasn't happy, my current boyfriend at the time he was a lot lighter than me and I got teased about that a lot as well. So, it just, it was all the teasing and bullying and everything that kind of got to me in the end. So, then I decided that things needed to change and that I needed to change my lifestyle and I wanted to be happy. That's all I wanted. I wanted to be happy and confident in myself because I was never confident. People always looked at me in high school was like "oh she's confident and stuff." But you know I was never as confident as I am now and I was happy with myself as I am now. So, I decided things needed to change. So, what I did first was I started going to the gym.

Kareena: [00:02:44] How old were you at this point?

Lara: [00:02:45] So I was about 22-23. So yeah, I started going to the gym and then I started eating a bit properly and then it kind of fell back from there because then I didn't really know what to do. And so, I asked my sister what to do. I was like, you know, I really want to lose some weight, I really want to get into shape, what can I do? And she's like, look, I know this guy, he can help you out. He runs a strength and conditioning place just near our house and I was like okay awesome. I'm going to contact him and like see what he thinks. So, then I contacted him and I met with him and then I started training and his gym and he put me in a nutrition program. So, then that's when I started to lose weight. So, it a very slow progress at the start. So, I started to lose like a little bit of weight like each month. And then it got to a point where I saw all these girls and social media and I was like all these fitness girls who compete and stuff. And I was like, you know what, I want to do that. I want to be that girl who gets up on stage and in their bikini, you show off their body and be confident in themselves. So, then I set myself a goal. So then from there, from when I set myself a goal it was all hard work. So, setting myself a goal was probably the best thing I ever did in my life.

Kareena: [00:04:02] Did you write it down?

Lara: [00:04:03] I did write it down cause I am a writer, I have a blog as you know. But yes, I like to write things down. I do have a diary which I don't really use at the moment, I'm more of a blog person. But yes, I did write it down. So that's a really good statement as well to write down goals because you will get there and you have to tell other people about your goals as well.

Kareena: [00:04:21] Makes you socially accountable.

Lara: [00:04:23] 100%. So, I told everyone about this goal. And the only thing was, when I told everyone about this goal I copped so much backlash. It was actually ridiculous. Yeah, I had people say, "you can't do that." Like they didn't believe in me, everything like that. But then that gave me even more fuel to kind of get to stage and losing weight and getting the best shape of my life. So that's what I did. So, I started training hard, started prepping my meals. I changed my whole life all around because before when I was in high school and like first years of uni I would go out a lot, I would party, my diet was horrible. I'd have McDonald's and I'd have KFC, you name it, everything under the sun. It was so bad. It was bad. So, I cut all of that out and I cut my drinking back and I'd still go out and like have a good time with my girlfriends every now and then but it was like more like a monthly thing. And then started prepping my meals, eating right, exercising and then it took about one and a half years to get to the stage and I got there.

Kareena: [00:05:19] Wow. So, we were just saying earlier, that is the stage that people miss. It's not an overnight success by any means. It's not even a short-term thing. You've change your entire life around this to achieve that goal.

Lara: [00:05:30] Yes well initially I had set my goal to jump up on stage six months earlier than when I had actually jumped on stage. So, I planned to compete in February but I ended up competing in about September because I just wasn't ready. I hadn't lost enough weight and 20-25 kilos is a lot of weight to lose. It is a lot of weight especially for a girl whose stature's. Like mine. It's a lot of weight to lose. So, it doesn't happen overnight. It's a big process and it takes a lot of hard work, commitment, early mornings, meal preps. Like everyone thinks it's easy, it's not easy.

Kareena: [00:06:04] Definitely not.

Lara: [00:06:05] It's definitely not easy. So yeah it was a very long process but I got there in the end and I'll never look back.

Kareena: [00:06:12] Tell us about the mindset that you had to have during that period to keep going. Because I think a lot of people tend to lose motivation at certain points.

Lara: [00:06:18] 100%. Like I said before, I think it was just everyone's negative comments that kept me going.

Kareena: [00:06:24] Throughout the whole process?

Lara: [00:06:25] Yeah. Like no one believed I could do it. And I was just like, you know what, no I can do it. I want to do it and I want to do it for myself. I want to prove to myself that I can get up on stage and that I want to do this and that I want to be in the best shape of my life because jumping up on stage for me, even though I did win, it's not about winning. It's about just seeing your body transform. And, even now when I jump up onstage people are like, what do you still compete? I'm like because it's the process. How you can manipulate your body into losing weight and how you can exercise and train yourself so hard that you can get in the best shape of your life. It's just such a rewarding aspect in itself without sounding so cheesy.

Kareena: [00:07:05] No, no, that's right.

Lara: [00:07:07] That's why I love being on stage and love. I just love the whole process. It's just so interesting and it's just so rewarding just to see all your hard work pay off. It's very rewarding.

Kareena: [00:07:17] And that's the thing too, it's not that final moment where you're onstage that you're working towards. It's the work and the journey that you put in at the time that makes it all worthwhile.

Lara: [00:07:26] For instance like when I competed this year, I competed at the IFBB all female classic. And I didn't place in the like opens but I was so happy that day. I was actually like, I was beaming ear-to-ear. And even when I jumped off stage I was just so

happy because I knew that was the best package, best shape I have ever been in in my life and I worked goddamn hard to get up on that stage and to look like that. I was just so proud of myself.

Kareena: [00:07:52] You achieved a lot.

Lara: [00:07:53] Yeah, I achieved a lot. And to bring the best physique each time, it's just really rewarding. And it just keeps me going. Like I'm just so excited to compete again. It's so bad, it's like a drug. I'm like yes, I want to look better, I want to look better.

Kareena: [00:08:06] Do you find yourself competing against other people or competing against your former self?

Lara: [00:08:10] I always compete against my former self. So, my very first competition, I always looked at the other girls. I'd Instagram stalk them and stuff. But as my second, third, fourth, fifth comp came about, I didn't even look at anyone. I was more focused on myself. And I think that's what you need to do if you want to compete. You just stay to not compare yourself to other people and just focus on yourself and focus on being the best person and best package you can bring to the states. That's why I compete and that's why I love to compete pretty much.

Kareena: [00:08:46] Bodybuilding competitions aren't new to the industry; however, they were considered a niche field for many years. The rise of social media has garnered a great deal of awareness around these competitions and become a growing trend amongst fitness enthusiasts that seek to challenge themselves. With new categories continually emerging, it has broadened the appeal of the bodybuilding industry and increased the number of competitions and competitors to the sport. So, what's brought so many to this new era of bodybuilding?

Lara: [00:09:15] So I do comps, and I stand by this, I do competitions for myself. I compete for myself. Like I don't want to compete against other people. Of course, when you go into competitions you're compared against different people. But I always want to bring the best package I can to the stage. I always want to beat my last physique, which I have done and I will do, fingers crossed. But that's what drives me. But a lot of people, especially with comps, they just do it just for the name of it.

Kareena: [00:09:44] Right.

Lara: [00:09:44] You see girls doing comps, like I know so many girls who get up on stage and just do comps once off. And, you know, they change their lifestyle for 20 weeks or like a few months, jump up on stage and then as soon as they jump offstage they go eat burgers, pizza, donuts, you name it. Put all the weight back on and then they're at square one. But people do have that goal to get up on stage and stay in shape and I have met a lot of people like that. But then at the same time there's just a lot of people who just do it because it's a competition and they just want to say, "oh I've

done in bodybuilding competition it's easy." But you know it's, I always say the journey after is what is the hardest.

Kareena: [00:10:25] Tell me more about that then.

Lara: [00:10:25] Yeah so, I've had, so the first competition I came out of I actually put on about 10 kilos after I jumped off stage. So, the first competition I think I weighed in about 56-57 kilos. And then I went back up to about 65-66 kilos because I was just so lost after the competition. Because if you think about it, you're spending months and months on end wanting to get up on stage and looking a particular way and you know wanting to be the best shape possible that you can bring and bring the best package you can. Then as soon as you jump up on stage what am I doing.

Kareena: [00:11:00] Yeah, what's next?

Lara: [00:11:01] And because I was so new to like the competition and just bodybuilding I was just like what's next. I don't know what to do. I feel really lost. And of course, as you jump off stage you're never going to keep that physique weeks on end. You're going to put on weight. That physique up on stage you're only going to have for a few days. You're not going to look like that all year round and you don't want to because there's a lot of health problems and stuff. Girls lose their periods, it's all like a big thing. It's not healthy to look like that. And I think a lot of girls need to understand that and a lot of guys need to know that it's not healthy to look like they do on the stage. Yeah, it's not healthy. And I think that's what played on my mind the first few times. I was like, no, I really want it. I got in the shape and I really want to stay in this shape. So, like coming out of my first competition, I over trained, I over ate, because I was like, I went to the gym. I've developed, I hate saying this, but I developed really bad mentalities. And I even talk about it in my blogs actually. I developed really bad mentalities. I would go out for dinner, I'd have entree, main, dessert, like I couldn't stop because I was so used to eating clean and then all of a sudden, all this food was put in front of me and I was like, oh, I can't stop eating and then like the sugar hits and everything like that.

Kareena: [00:12:17] So your relationship with food changed?

Lara: [00:12:19] My relationship with food changed so much. And it wasn't until I started my next comp prep that it was fixed because I was put on a structured diet because when I was left to myself I just I couldn't do it. It was really bad. Even with training and stuff like I'd to the gym and try and burn all the food off. And I knew it wasn't healthy at all. And I knew in the back of my head and like everyone was telling me, but I guess you just kind of have to figure out for yourself. And I know and I'm pretty sure about 90% of girls go through that because everyone I've spoken to have said that. When I was posting the blogs about how I was going past camp, I got a lot of response from it. A lot of girls were like, thank you so much, I thought I was the only person who did that, but you're actually helping me through. And I would speak to a lot of girls, I've spoken to a lot of girls that send me inboxes and I'd write back and say you know it's normal. You go through that. You have to go through that. And then I always say that you have

to learn that you're going to put on weight too. It's not maintainable or sustainable. So, from then I went into my next competition and I think as you keep on competing, it gets better. 100% it gets better.

Kareena: [00:13:32] It doesn't resurface though, that issue that you had. I mean because it was the problem that you didn't have a comp to then work in afterwards. So, then you created that goal again to work towards. So how did you find that balance in the end?

Lara: [00:13:44] So coming out of the first comp or now?

Kareena: [00:13:47] Even coming out now.

Lara: [00:13:48] I think it took a few comps to kind of be at the stage right now. Like now I have the best flexibility and I love my lifestyle now. I still can go out, go eat pizza and I just enjoy my training everything like that. I've kept within probably 2-3 kilos of my stage weight because I keep on wanting to compete and I've really adopted that lifestyle as well.

Kareena: [00:14:13] OK, so what is it that you learned?

Lara: [00:14:14] From my past?

Kareena: [00:14:14] Yeah.

Lara: [00:14:19] Coming out I just learned that, number one, I needed to put on weight, number two, I needed to find that flexibility. I couldn't just be training all the time, eating really clean and then on weekends go out and eat whatever. Because when I came out of my first comps and stuff I had really bad anxiety. Especially when going out to eat, my girlfriends would ask me during the week, "oh would you come out for dinner?" I'd be like, no I can't. I can only do it on the weekends. I would only do it then. Whereas now I'm like, "hell yeah! Let's go get a zero or something." I have that flexibility in my life now and I have that balance. You have to have that balance and before I didn't have the right mentality at all coming out of my competitions, but now like I'm in a really good positive state. I'm in a really good happy place. I love my training. My weight training I'm doing at F45 as well. Like I love it all. And I just found that I've finally got balance in my life and I'm finally happy with myself as well.

Kareena: [00:15:12] So what do you think is more important in someone starting their fitness journeys. Is it changing their mindset or is it just simply just exercising and eating well.

Lara: [00:15:20] Changing their mindset. If you don't have the right mindset you're not going to get anywhere because you're always going to fall back to square one. I've met so many people who are like I'm gonna go in this like eight-week challenge diet.

Kareena: [00:15:29] Yes, a lot of 8-week challenges, 12-week challenges. It's very troubling.

Lara: [00:15:33] I'm like, "what are you going to do?" And they're like, "I'm starving. I can't wait till I finish I'm going to go to the pizza, I'm going to go out to drink and then I've planned all this stuff." And I'm just like, hang on, are you doing an 8-week challenge or do you actually want to keep the weight off and like you know being in the best shape of your life and keep that going. It's kind of ridiculous in a way. But I guess people do what they want. I'm never going to tell anyone what they can and can't do. But it's about changing habits. I changed all my habits. When I was at work, someone brought it up the other day actually, I used to be known as the top deck girl because I used to work on registers, and I used to have a block of top deck, every time I worked, underneath the registers. Because I used to eat it all the time. It was really bad. But I was known as a top deck girl. And they're like, top deck girl has changed and they brought up the story and I was like yeah that was really bad. But now you wouldn't even see me with a block of top deck. I just changed my whole lifestyle. Like even then, I went out and partied a lot and I drank. And you know I'd eat pizza, I'd eat Maccas, I'll do this, I'll do that. But you wouldn't even see me doing that now.

Kareena: [00:16:37] Do you miss it?

Lara: [00:16:38] No, I don't miss it at all. People are like, do you miss going out eating this and eating that. And I'm like, no, because my goals are bigger than my stomach. I'm in the happiest place I've ever been.

Kareena: [00:16:52] Great.

Lara: [00:16:52] Nothing is going to put me back to that place where I was before.

Kareena: [00:16:58] Having found a love and passion for all things health and fitness. Lara sought to expand her knowledge on these subjects and enrolled herself in a nutrition and dietetics course.

Lara: [00:17:09] The whole competing thing actually drove me to want to study nutrition and dietetics. It's very interesting because before when I was at uni I did biomedicine. So, I completed my undergrad in that and then after that I started competing and I had the year off because I went travelling. And then when I competed I was like, it opened up a new doorway for me and I was like, you know what, I really want to study nutrition and dietetics. So that's what I'm doing at the moment. I'm doing my Masters in both. So, doing Nutrition and Dietetics next year. It's all very, like, everything just fell into place. It was very weird because I had no idea what I wanted to do after I finished my course. I had taken a gap year off and I was like, what do I do. And then as soon as I competed and discovered this whole new world of fitness I was like, this is what I want to do. I want to stay in the industry, I want to help people like me and I find nutrition just so interesting. All the food and carbs and stuff. Everyone gets so confused and I love it all. It's like carbs, proteins, fats. I can look at a plate of food

and tell you how many calories and like what the carbs, fats, I sound like the biggest nerd, oh my goodness. But I can tell you what is on your plate.

Kareena: [00:18:19] That's amazing. I wish I could test that.

Lara: [00:18:22] What do you have here.

Lara: [00:18:24] Whenever I go out for dinner and stuff my friends are like, oh like how many calories is this. What carbs, proteins and stuff and I'd just be like, do you want to know. And they're like yeah and I just tell them. And they'd be like, how do you know this. Once you study it and once you learn it and I do it every day. I meal prep my food every day.

Kareena: [00:18:42] Lara found a way to share all her newfound knowledge and experience with the launch of her blog, Live to Lift. Sharing recipes, funny anecdotes and helpful hints for staying fit and healthy. It had soon become the home of Lara's journey.

Kareena: [00:18:56] You share a lot of nice recipes on your blog.

Lara: [00:18:57] I do. I love to cook. Is that a bad thing?

Kareena: [00:19:02] No, that's great!

Lara: [00:19:02] My mums like, get out of the kitchen, I need it. I'm like, mum I need it. I need to make some food.

Kareena: [00:19:07] Tell me about the blog, when did you start it?

Lara: [00:19:09] Okay so, my best friend Maddie actually pushed me to write a blog. She's like, you've got so many interesting stories. And I was like, you know what, this actually sounds like a really good idea. So, herself and I, we started up like a blog page and then we got a few ideas together and everything and we sat down and just started writing them. And then each week they just came really natural, especially when I was competing because when you compete, I like kind of keep a lot of things inside. But by writing blogs and stuff I just found that I could vent and then I could live and that people could understand my journey and people could follow my journey with me. So, I just kept writing and writing and I got lots of feedback from it. And it just made me want to write even more. So, it was really cool. And then we started to incorporate recipes and just fun things and what supps I use and kind of made it into an even more fun hobby. Every night I'd look forward to it or like once a week every night I'd look forward to writing a blog and be like, what can I write about this week.

Kareena: [00:20:07] Well you do, you share a lot of personal things throughout your blog and throughout your journey. How have people responded to that. You said you had feedback, what was that like?

Lara: [00:20:15] So with all the personal blogs, people have been really nice. I get a lot of messages from people and it actually gives me goose bumps because just people are so nice. And look, you are going to cop some slack along the way but most people want to see you succeed, want to support you. And it's really nice. And it just keeps me doing what I do. It lets me share my story with everyone and I just I love it. Yeah, it's good. It just lets me, like I just be myself and people just say they relate to it and they love following my journey and it's really nice.

Kareena: [00:20:51] It is, it's beautiful. It's a great way for you to connect with people outside of obviously what you're doing on Instagram, which I would love to get into.

Kareena: [00:21:01] Beyond her blog, Lara has also fostered a strong and loyal community on Instagram. We found out just when and why she began sharing her journey on this platform and how it's grown into a business of its own with brand collaborations, ambassadorships and a channel to provide additional products and services to your audience.

Lara: [00:21:20] My Instagram started off just normal when I wasn't competing. But then as I got into competing in fitness and everything like that, I was like, you know, I actually have a lot to share with people. I've got all these cool workout videos, I've got these cool recipes, all these selfies and cool like gym workout clothes. So yeah, I just started sharing it. And then from there it just started to grow. People were more interested and then I got my supplement sponsors, like Bulk Nutrients and a few clothing brands and then it just started grow from there. And then I just post what I do. Like I don't try and do anything else but that. My Instagram is me. If you look at my stories and stuff, it's me and my sister training, or me having fun, it's me dancing like it's just me.

Kareena: [00:21:59] It's just fun.

Lara: [00:21:59] It's just what I do though. Everyone's like, how do you find time to do all of this Instagram stuff. I'm like, it's not about finding time, it's just me. All I have to do is go to the gym and just film me my sister. It's not like I'm like, okay Alex, wait, I just need to set this up and do this and do this and take 10 minutes out of my day. We're just doing it already.

Kareena: [00:22:22] So you're just documenting basically what you're already doing.

Lara: [00:22:26] Exactly, I'm just documenting my life. When I'm in the kitchen I'm like, hey guys, this is what I'm cooking. It's not like I go out of my way and I'm like, oh crap, what are my cooking tonight. It's just what I do. It's just my life.

Kareena: [00:22:34] Well there is a big debate amongst people about whether

you should create content for the platform or as you said document it, which seems a lot more organic and authentic.

Lara: [00:22:43] And I think that's why my Instagram is doing so well at the moment because it's just me. I'm not trying to be anything I'm not. I'm just trying to be me.

Kareena: [00:22:52] And people are connecting with that. Do you have any practical tips and tricks around what you do on Instagram to grow following?

Lara: [00:22:58] Yep. So, I actually talking about this with someone on the weekend cause I'm helping him to grow his Instagram page.

Kareena: [00:23:00] Perfect.

Lara: [00:23:07] So I always say to schedule your posts. So, set aside every Sunday. This is what I do, it sounds a bit cheap.

Kareena: [00:23:12] No, no. I love to hear people's insights and how they manage it.

Lara: [00:23:12] Especially people are time limited. So, I always say, so schedule at your posts. So right in your phone or in your notes, go Sunday to Friday or Sunday to Saturday and put what posts you're going to put where. And then also make sure they don't overlap with each other. I have about four main kind of categories. So, nutrition, exercise, tips or like supplements or my ambassadorship, so whichever. So, I always rotate between those four to keep things interesting for the audience. So yeah cause you don't wanna have workout video, workout video, workout, it's too repetitive. You want to keep your audience interested. Even with stories and stuff make people aware with what you're posting because as you can see on Instagram, when you make a post, sometimes it goes to the bottom. Whereas if people are following your story you make them aware of your posts, they'll go and click on your profile and then you'll get your engagement up and everything like that.

Kareena: [00:24:05] Okay, that's a great tactic.

Lara: [00:24:07] Yeah so, another one I always say is make your Instagram very flowy and very bright. So, before I post I always kind of put some brightness to it and make it all poppy and stuff because you don't want your Instagram to look dull and boring and you know you want to add some brightness and color to it.

Kareena: [00:24:22] So you adjust your photos and videos?

Lara: [00:24:24] Yeah, with brightness and stuff. And then I always say keep things natural. People want to see you.

Kareena: [00:24:29] Yeah, they do.

Lara: [00:24:32] They just want to see you. They don't want to see you trying to be someone you're not. There's no point in trying to prove to the world that you're this person when you're not. I would say to keep it very natural as well.

Kareena: [00:24:43] So other people we've spoken to have often mentioned engaging with their audience is a means of improving their Instagram profile. How much do you engage with your community then?

Lara: [00:24:51] On Instagram I try and engage a lot. A lot of people send me messages and stuff. I always try to get back to them as well. And then people give me like advice and I always try and take that on board and see what they want to hear from me. I always try and take that on board too with workout videos and just little bits and pieces. Like, oh, can you show me what you cook you for dinner or can you explain this, can you explain that. This morning someone asked me or last night someone asked me can you explain your morning ritual. So, this morning I did that. I was like, this is what I do, I have rice cakes and then I have hot water with lemon and apple cider vinegar.

Kareena: [00:25:25] So your community is basically feeding your ideas for content.

Lara: [00:25:27] And they just want to see more of me. I'm like, okay sure. You can see more of me, I don't mind.

Kareena: [00:25:31] That's fantastic. How has the online community supported you and how important has that been in your journey.

Lara: [00:25:41] I have a lot of support from my followers which I love. Especially going into comps and stuff, the amount of messages which I got before my comp, it literally made me cry. People are like, good luck, we followed you're journey. And even when I was having my bad days I'd still post about them. People are like, keep your chin up, do this, do that. And I was like, oh these people are so nice. I have no reason to be sad or like to be in the gutter and be depressed about myself. I'm going to lift myself up. These people are so nice and you know I inspire them and motivate them. I'm gonna be that motivating person that they want. It's really nice.

Kareena: [00:26:22] So you motivate your community and then you mentioned that you also post about sometimes when you're not feeling so great. Do you think it's important to have that balance and show the full picture?

Lara: [00:26:30] I think so. I think you just need to be real. I've always been real. Especially like leading up to my comps and stuff. When I feel down and I can't, because you're obviously carb depleted, like you're struggling. I still work as well and go to uni when my comps are on. It takes a toll on your body. It takes a very big toll mentally as well as physically. And I still post about that, like guys I'm not feeling it today, help me

out. All my followers are like, you know, keep going. It's really nice and it always keeps me motivated. And I get messages from people every day and it just, it brings a smile to my face. I literally every morning wake up with a smile on my face because just people are so nice. It's really nice.

Kareena: [00:27:13] That's beautiful. How have brands come into it? Obviously, you said you have the relationships with the nutrition companies.

Lara: [00:27:19] Yeah so, they approached me after my, I think it was my first or second year competing and I was actually using Bulk Nutrients before my weight loss journey even started. I was using their supplement brand. So, it was actually very fortunate to be signed with them and to be an ambassador for them because it's a supplement company I already believed in. Yes, and they've kind of been with my weight loss, like they've been along with my weight loss journey the whole time. So, it was very fortunate. And then from there, just clothing brands and stuff just approached me. So, I've got one in Bali XO Active as well. So yeah, I go to Bali a lot too.

Kareena: [00:27:52] That's lucky.

Lara: [00:27:52] Yeah, it's all good.

Kareena: [00:27:56] So how is an ambassadorship for our viewers, different to say a brand approaching you just for one off post here and there. What's involved with an ambassadorship?

Lara: [00:28:04] For instance, with Bulk Nutrients, so I do a lot of their events. So, on this Saturday I'm doing their IFBB event because I compete with IFBB so I love doing all those bodybuilding shows of course. So yeah, I work some of their events and then just like different things. Instagram takeovers as well and just promoting their brand and just being a good ambassador. Just kind of promote their business. And I always promote their business as well on my Instagram because it's something that I use and I believe in and it's really easy actually.

Kareena: [00:28:33] Well if you're already using the product, yeah.

Lara: [00:28:34] Whereas a one-off type thing is like, oh can you just wear my clothes and just make a post and then that's all.

Kareena: [00:28:39] Are you seeing Instagram as more of a business avenue now that it's growing?

Lara: [00:28:44] It definitely is. I was having this conversation with someone over the weekend. Especially as my follow are going up, a lot of people have been approaching me and asking me to do posts and stuff and I must say I'm getting very picky because I can't do everything. And I would only do, and I would put my foot down to this, I would only do products and stuff that I believe in. I wouldn't be posting about beef jerky or

something. I wouldn't be like, hey this is beef jerky and I love it. I wouldn't do something like that. I would only do stuff that I believe in and that I actually use and that, you know, that my followers would like to.

Kareena: [00:29:23] These decisions about what to post and what not to post, form the underlying foundation of creating a personal brand. Lara is consciously aware of just how she is representing herself and ensuring that her content aligns with the image that she wants to portray. She is building her personal brand, one post at a time.

Kareena: [00:29:42] Are you conscious that you're creating a brand around yourself?

Lara: [00:29:44] I am. I'm very conscious I'm creating a brand. But at the same time, I kind of want to go down the avenue and explore creating a brand.

Kareena: [00:30:04] What's the main message that you're wanting to get across?

Lara: [00:30:07] Well I've always stood by, and everyone always asks me, if you had to say one thing to someone, what would it be, and I was like the one thing that I always stood by, especially when I was wanting to compete and jumped up on stage for the first time, was believing yourself because you'll be unstoppable. All you have to do is believe in yourself. And that's one thing that I've always believed in. It's just, you know, believe in yourself and you'll get far. But yeah, you just have to trust the process and believe in yourself. Yeah, I was talking to my sister about it last night, actually you bring up all these things.

Kareena: [00:30:37] Yeah, topics of what we're saying.

Lara: [00:30:42] We were talking about and I was saying how I actually might take the year off uni next year. Kind of just have some time to focus on growing my brand. If I put enough time and effort into it, it could be amazing. I really want to start a YouTube. I really want to start doing workout videos. Even like programs, I would love to do that. And even with my nutrition degree, just have packages for people because a lot of people ask me, you know, do you have exercise and meal plan packages, which I do offer at the moment, but I really want to make it something bigger. I would love to put the time of day into it and really, really grow my profile. So, I guess because of what you're trying to achieve, how do you see yourself evolving beyond the packages at the moment. Are you looking to get more online, are you looking to create an actual business or offshoot of this? What is the plan?

Lara: [00:31:31] I have no idea actually, I'm just trying to see where it all takes me. But I would love to be online. I was actually looking at making my blog, so my website, into an online type thing. So, I was definitely looking into that. But I'm just seeing how it goes at the moment. But yeah, like I said, I really want to put the time and energy into it

because I think it could be something big and something really amazing. I have so many things going on at the moment. I've got like my uni degree, I'm working, I'm doing social media at the same time, I'm traveling a lot. But I think once I really focus I think I'll be able to achieve a lot. My dad always told me that actually. He's like, you know what Lara, even when I was studying through high school, he's like, you're the type of girl if you really focus, you can get anything you want. You can see it in your eyes. I was like, okay dad, I will.

Kareena: [00:32:16] Well you believe in yourself.

Lara: [00:32:19] But that was the best advice he ever gave me. And from then I took his advice and look where I am today. Yeah, it's good.

Kareena: [00:32:26] So your values come through a lot.

Lara: [00:32:27] Through my family. Yeah, of course. I'm a very family oriented person and my best friend is my sister.

Kareena: [00:32:34] That's really cute.

Lara: [00:32:37] We train together, we meal prep together. And I think that's why as well my lifestyle so maintainable and enjoyable because I get to share it with someone. I get to share with my best friend. Me and my sister would get up at 6a.m. and go train at F45, come home, meal prep and we even work at Rebel part time together. She works more hours than me but like whatever. Whenever we go in, we'll work and then even at night sometimes we'd go train together and then we'll meal prep dinner together and we'll go have our cheat meals together. It's all really cool when you get to share it with someone too.

Kareena: [00:33:07] It is. How Important has that support been in your journey?

Lara: [00:33:09] My sister was my number one support - especially going into my first and second comps. She was like at my side 24/7. It was amazing especially when you do comps and for the first time and especially coming out of them, you feel really lost. Comp prep takes a lot out of you. Especially because you're losing all this weight and like you're not in the right headspace for a few days and like weeks leading up and even after you feel really lost with wanting to put on weight and wanting to not put on weight. It's all really hard. Comp prep is a very hard journey. For anyone who's done it they'd understand. But yeah, coming out and going into comp, she was my number one supporter. Even leading up to it, she's like, right let's go to gym. Even when I didn't feel motivated, she'd be like, you're lifting that weight, you're doing this, you're doing that.

Kareena: [00:34:00] That's great.

Lara: [00:34:00] She was my number one support and she still is. She's my best friend.

Kareena: [00:34:07] Lara's belief is truly making her unstoppable. And with that drive to achieve, we found out just what Lara has in store for the year ahead.

Lara: [00:34:16] I'm working towards competing next year. So, I really want to compete. So, I want to do that in, I want to do the Arnolds actually. Have you heard the Arnolds?

Kareena: [00:34:22] I have heard of the Arnolds actually.

Lara: [00:34:25] So that's a big show. So that's in March. I really want to do that show. So just staying in shape. I really want to be in the best shape of my life. Number one. Number two I want to focus on myself and do me and do what makes me happy. So, I've still been doing that and I'm happy and I just want to keep on doing that I guess. And I want to compete next year. I want to go do that, and I really want to, like I said before, kind of grow my platform. I really want to offer meal programs and exercise programs and I really want to get YouTube up and running. I really want to be able to travel with my social media. Travelling is something which really means the world to me because I love being everywhere and seeing everything and meeting different people. My sister lives in London, so I really want to go and visit her. I've been meaning to do that for a while. So, I just really want it to take me places I guess.

Kareena: [00:35:12] That's very exciting. It sounds like you've got a big year ahead of you.

Lara: [00:35:15] It does, it does. Am I ready? I think so.

Kareena: [00:35:21] That brings us to the end of our interview Loopers. Thank you so much for joining us. If you liked learning about Lara's journey, you can continue following her via Instagram or even on her blog. We've included all the links in our show descriptions, so be sure to check it out. As you know, we love hearing your feedback, so don't forget to give us a shout out by leaving a review or giving us a rating. And, of course, if you want to keep hearing more of this great content, subscribe to our podcast so you can get updated every time we release a new weekly episode. So, we'll be back again next week with a new episode of In the Loop, where we chat about the business end of being an influencer. Catch you then!