

Podcast Transcription

In the Loop - Episode 15

“Is it Propelling You Forward or Holding You Back?” | Interview with Justine Switalla

Justine: [00:00:00] I think once my programs stopped selling at the rate that they were, I was like "What can I do now that's going to work? Because there's too much competition and I don't have a team behind me." You know there's some massive names out there that have teams of people that do everything for them and they just have to show up and be the face and their programs and apps and everything sell. I was doing everything myself while looking after my baby on my own.

Kareena: [00:00:25] Tune in to find out how health and fitness influencer Justine Switalla overcame these challenges and became one of Australia's leading online coaches.

Kareena: [00:00:43] Hey there Loopers! And 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 health and fitness influencer Justine Switalla. As one of Australia's leading online coaches, Justine shares how she went from starting as a dental nurse, to donning the cover of Oxygen Magazine and then launching two incredibly successful online businesses. Now you may have heard of them before. One, is the awe inspiring "Fit Healthy Mums" that provides women with support for pre and post-natal workouts and the second being her all-inclusive program; "Mind Body Overhaul". So, tune in to hear Justine's story and learn how she's working to empower women all over the world.

Justine: [00:01:27] Hi! How are you going?

Kareena: [00:01:28] Good thank you. Thank you for joining us.

Justine: [00:01:31] Thanks for having me.

Kareena: [00:01:33] No problem! I'm very excited to interview you.

Justine: [00:01:34] Aw that's so sweet

Kareena: [00:01:35] Well to kick us off, why don't you share with us how you got started in the fitness industry?

Justine: [00:01:38] Sure! Well I used to be a dental nurse for many years and I didn't Podcast Episode 15: In the Loop
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like it. I was the nine to five slave to the world of working through the week, partying on the weekends drinking up a storm and you know I really wasn't feeling fulfilled. I grew up playing a lot of sport, I used to be a dancer, so fitness was always in the backburn of my mind and something that I sort of wanted to do. No one knows at high school what they want to do when they grow up. (laughs).

Kareena: [00:02:07] No (laughs).

Justine: [00:02:07] I didn't really know, so I worked to earn money to travel and went overseas and did my O.E. when I was so young, and if my son left at twenty I would have a heart attack! (laughs).

Kareena: [00:02:15] (Laughs).

Justine: [00:02:18] At twenty I still can't believe it. But anyways I had fun and just lived week to week, travelled and partied and did all that and then got back to the Gold Coast to settle. I'm actually from New Zealand originally, but decided to live on the Gold Coast and got a job in a dental surgery and eventually I was like, "I can't do this anymore". I just felt really tired of it, so I went to the Australian Institute of Fitness and started to do my Cert three and Cert four in fitness while I was working so I did that part time. I then decided that I didn't like the Gold Coast because at the time it was a little bit too commercial for me. After London I felt like it was too small.

Kareena: [00:02:51] Okay.

Justine: [00:02:51] And I always loved Melbourne so then I decided to move down to Melbourne and my promise to myself was as soon as I get to Melbourne I'm not getting a job at a dental surgery. So, I got down there and I literally had this CV with no experience of anything just my Certificates really.

Kareena: [00:03:05] Yeah.

Justine: [00:03:05] So I was going around to all the gym's in Melbourne looking for work and Fitness First in St Kilda offered me a job doing sales. So, I said yes! Yep sign me up. I've never sold anything in my life (laughs). But I can sell gym memberships surely. And you know it wasn't for me, I'm not a pushy person. You know if someone doesn't want to join a gym that's their choice and I would never be like, "Sign here...". you know?

Kareena: [00:03:26] Yeah.

Justine: [00:03:26] So I did that for about three months then moved to reception and then I started doing my group fitness stuff with the Les Mills. So, I did Body Attack, RPM and then moved into personal training so I stepped away from the sales and personal training and group fitness. This was for many years I think I was at that gym for eight years in total so...

Kareena: [00:03:48] Wow.

Justine: [00:03:48] And that was that was sort of the stepping stone in that direction.

Kareena: [00:03:52] While the early stages of Justine's journey sounded fun, it definitely wasn't without its headaches.

Justine: [00:03:59] I guess I went through a bit of a tough time as my boyfriend at the time decided to move back to New Zealand. He was like "I want to move back to New Zealand" and I was like, "Well I want to stay and chase my dreams" and It was the hardest decision I've ever made but obviously the right one for me and I chose to stay in Melbourne. I then sort of had this point to prove to myself that I would achieve amazing things, not to prove a point but more so because I'd sacrificed something that was pretty special to me to stay here. And that was the beginning.

Kareena: [00:04:26] Justine soon found herself competing in sports model competitions, which opened up a world of opportunities. But her journey to that first stage had her realize some hard truths about the state of her health.

Justine: [00:04:37] So I just started doing fitness comps, sports model comps. It was 2007 my first comp.

Kareena: [00:04:41] Oh so not that long ago.

Justine: [00:04:56] Yeah and, sort of what actually happened was I went to Thailand and did a detox and I was a fitness professional, but I wasn't actually that healthy. I was still partying a lot, I was young only like twenty-six or whatever and going through that transition. So, I went to Thailand and did this detox and I realized how unhealthy my insides were because I just felt like rubbish the whole time, I was literally going through a detox cleanse. My skin broke out in this rash and I couldn't sleep and it was just like, I mean it was horrendous and I was like holy moly I'm unhealthy. So, when I got back to Melbourne a personal trainer at one of the gyms said to me "Jus you're looking fantastic!" Cause I had lost a bit of weight and I was brown from being in Thailand.

Kareena: [00:05:35] Yeah.

Justine: [00:05:35] And he was like "Why did you jump up on stage and do a comp?" And I just went "Ok!" So that was another turning point for me because as soon as I had that goal I just stayed eating healthy clean food and training more weight training which I wasn't really doing. I was doing a lot of cardio and a lot of classes.

Kareena: [00:05:50] Yep.

Justine: [00:05:51] I was burning the candle at both ends as you do when you're a

young sort of, you know young fitness professional with the world at their feet. But yeah, I did my first show and loved it and was able to sort of maintain that sort of physique and I competed for about three or four years, but it was nothing like it is now. There was no social media. I mean, there was but there wasn't, so I felt like there was nothing to compare yourself to. No one was doing it for, I don't want to say the wrong reasons but we were literally doing it for fun.

Kareena: [00:06:21] Yes, yep.

Justine: [00:06:22] Whereas these days it's very competitive. Everyone thinks that they want to be at Instagram fitness model famous person and it's just changed everything. So, I'm so grateful I did it when I did it. I kind of got in and out and had a ball doing it and it really set up another layer of my career and got me in with Oxygen Magazine on the cover and then writing articles. That was the snowball effect from there.

Kareena: [00:06:49] With a laser focus and goal oriented personality, Justine found herself setting and achieving new goals in the realm of fitness.

Justine: [00:06:56] Yeah and like I say, I guess once I set a goal I love to achieve it. So, with the Les Mills stuff I became a trainer presenter for Les Mills Asia Pacific and got to travel around Australia teaching instructors.

Kareena: [00:07:09] Aw wow.

Justine: [00:07:09] That was really cool and yeah, I think whatever I set out to do I would always not strive to be the best but just be the best I can be and I guess I was naturally gifted with the group exercise because my dancing background, and I love connecting with people, so I was a great connector and inspiring people to work out is like amazing. So, I did that for about ten years and only sort of gave it up two years ago and that was really, really hard.

Kareena: [00:07:35] That would have been a bit of a transition then.

Justine: [00:07:36] Yeah. I mean I've had so many transitions and at the time it's gut wrenching because you're like "How can I give this up?" You know I love it so much.

Kareena: [00:07:43] Yes especially when you love it.

Justine: [00:07:44] Yeah and the music, the people. You don't do it for money you don't do it for anything else other than the passion. So, there's been many of those decisions sort of throughout my career where you've got to take that step and go, well what's the bigger picture and is this serving me right now? Is this propelling my career forward or is it holding me back? And sometimes the things that we love the most can hold us back even though we don't want them to.

Kareena: [00:08:08] Justine's life was quickly about to change again as she

transitioned into motherhood, with the birth of her son Leo.

Justine: [00:08:16] Yeah so that's it, in a nutshell and I suppose it wasn't until I had Leo when I got pregnant that I decided to take my business online. So before that I was a personal trainer and teaching classes, doing all the modelling and magazine stuff. As soon as I got pregnant it was almost like a blessing (laughs) because I was like "Oh thank god I can rest".

Kareena: [00:08:37] (Laughs) You have an excuse now.

Justine: [00:08:37] Yeah and I'll eat a blueberry muffin, I'll have chocolate in the afternoon if I want it (laughs). Because the first twelve weeks I was so sick. I couldn't even get off the couch and it was really hard, I couldn't even eat a piece of chicken if you put it in front of me.

Kareena: [00:08:53] Aw you poor thing.

Justine: [00:08:54] It was just "Give me carbs, give me bread and pasta and chips". So, I put most of my weight on in the first trimester and then after the sickness went away at about 14 weeks, I felt amazing and it was a great realization to me of, I guess the impact everything that I was doing on my body had. Because after I had Leo everything changed. My body changed but also my time, my energy, my focus and what was more important to me obviously my focus was Leo. So, then I was like "Well I want to stay home and work with him. I don't want to get up at 5:00am in the morning to go and train clients." So, I had to start my online business then.

Kareena: [00:09:34] The reason for taking her business online was to gain back some time and flexibility so she could be Mum and continue helping clients on their fitness journeys. Justine shares with us just how she married the two to create "Fit Healthy Mums".

Justine: [00:09:50] It's evolved a lot. I'll start with "Fit Healthy Mums" because that was my first sort of web site and online business. So, when I was pregnant, I realized there wasn't a lot of information out there for pregnant and postnatal women.

Kareena: [00:10:00] Yes.

Justine: [00:10:01] And there was but it wasn't accurate. So, I decided to team up with a nutritionist and a physio and create some programs that were safe and effective, that weren't extreme, and really nurtured the pregnancy body as well as the post-natal body. So that took me six months to put together. It took a lot of work and cost a lot of money. Back then there weren't a lot of online programs on the market so that was 2014 I launched that just after Leo was born.

Justine: [00:10:31] And yeah, I'll be honest it probably cost me 30 grand to set up because I did it properly like all the filming and the videos. You know having the experts

come in and help me it was real. I invested my savings into it because I saw that this was a niche that needed help. So, I launched that, and it was a huge success. In the first sort of six months like you know women were loving it and I felt like I had a really good community and tribe going on. Then everyone else started doing online programs and it sort of started to slow down a bit. So, I've never really been a sales person as such. I guess you learn as you go when you're an entrepreneur and you work for yourself and when you work online. But yeah, I've spent thousands of dollars on coaches and people to help guide me through because I didn't really know what I was doing.

Kareena: [00:11:22] For the business side of things?

Justine: [00:11:23] Yeah, yeah, yeah. It isn't just "buy my program", you've got to do this and you've got to get them in here, you've got to build a funnel. I'm like what? What's a funnel? (laughs) You know I had no idea so it was such a steep learning curve and I think once my program stopped selling at the rate that they were, I was like "What can I do now that's going to work because there's too much competition and I don't have a team behind me." You know there's some massive names out there that have teams of people that do everything for them and they just have to show up and be the face. Their programs and apps and everything sell and I was doing everything myself while looking after my baby on my own. My husband at the time, (we're not together now) but he wasn't around really much he was working a lot. You know he was doing his thing and I was at home with Leo doing my thing so yeah you know it was it was challenging to say the least.

Kareena: [00:12:18] How did you balance it?

Justine: [00:12:18] Well I don't think I did and I think for about six months I was in a bit of a brain fog and not coping very well with everything. You know, I'm very honest with my followers and people who follow me online that I think it wasn't postnatal depression but I think it was what they call the adjustment disorder. So, I was struggling being a new Mum, being a businesswoman and working online. Everything was all new, and I had no control over a lot of it. So, I felt really isolated and alone and unsupported and there was a lot of pressure on me. So, I didn't really cope that well. When I look back, because I can see where I'm at now and in four years how far I've come as a person, as an individual on every level not just physically but emotionally, mentally and spiritually because I've done so much work on myself. But, you know that's what people don't see and they don't see that rock bottom. So, from there I sort of had to create a different program and I actually felt like I didn't like just selling programs and giving ladies programs and then going "See you later, you know have fun with it". Because I was like well how do I know that they're gonna be okay and supported and educated?

Kareena: [00:13:29] Yes.

Justine: [00:13:29] So I created "Mind Body Overhaul" which is my coaching program now that's been running for three years and that's where I worked with an exclusive

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group of women every eight (well I'm changing it next year to twelve weeks but it has been eight weeks) and they come in and I customize everything for them. I put them in a supportive forum, I do weekly coaching calls and some of them have the VIP option where I actually have one on one face to face time with them each week as well. And it's so much more rewarding, it's so good because I'm able to impact them with my knowledge and power and support and keep them accountable.

Kareena: [00:14:09] With a wealth of information available when it comes to fitness health and wellness practices, it's often hard to understand what's right for any one individual. Justine witnessed women becoming increasingly confused by all the messages and sought to provide a simple solution to have women feeling empowered once again.

Justine: [00:14:26] You know women are just so confused and so lost and they feel alone. I feel like I've been through so many transitions that most women have probably been through or Mums especially and I've come out the other end. But some women aren't strong enough to come out the other end you know. And they stay in that slump and that's when they get down on themselves and stressed out and over eat, and they just don't have any control or power of themselves or their lives and they don't put themselves first. It's something in today's world you know, there's a lot of pressure on women whether it comes from ourselves or from social media or from everyone else to be perfect and have our shit together all the time.

Kareena: [00:15:04] Absolutely.

Justine: [00:15:04] You know I'm here to say that that's just not that's not life, like we have to deal with shit otherwise we can't grow, or we can't evolve. But you need the tools to implement to be able to move through those times and have the support and structures in place. So, I try and take the focus off the weight loss, and more on the mindset.

Kareena: [00:15:22] Yes.

Justine: [00:15:22] So everything I do is more on how you feel about yourself. Self-love, self-care, and education around nutrition. So, telling them why they're eating that, how much to eat, when to eat it because otherwise they're just confused you know?

Kareena: [00:15:35] Yeah there's a lot of messages out there and a lot of them conflicting.

Justine: [00:15:37] Its worrying about if I don't eat carbs at this time, or that time and I shouldn't eat this, and I had a cheat meal etc. I'm like It's not a cheat meal it's just a meal. Why are you labeling something as bad and have that guilt?

Kareena: [00:15:48] Yeah.

Justine: [00:15:48] Yeah. Then they don't eat for half a day because they feel guilty then their starving and they binge. Since starting this program I've really been made aware of how many women are not in a good state when it comes to their relationship with themselves and the relationship that they have with food. Food is the absolute enemy or the devil you know to most women. They don't see it as fuel that they need for their workouts, that they need to eat to actually lose body fat that they need to eat more. My clients eat more and lose weight and they have these realizations two weeks in they're like "I'm doing less, I'm eating more and I'm losing weight" you know?

Kareena: [00:16:26] It's a great place to be.

Justine: [00:16:28] Yeah, I'm like I'm so glad you trusted me on this. Because when they come to me, they're tired, they're worn out, they're under eating, stressed, can't sleep. They're relationships are suffering you know they resent their kids, or they resent themselves and it's so rampant in today's world. Every single woman that I'd speak with it's the same story with a lot of them so it's really, really sad. But also, you know I'm so grateful that I've got a platform to offer them that will transform their mindset, transform their body and in turn transform their life to make them feel confident about themselves and happier and really start to feel at peace with themselves.

Kareena: [00:17:05] One of Justine's top priorities was to build an inclusive community that women could come and feel supported. Justin soon came to find that it wasn't her efforts alone that were creating this environment, but that the community members themselves were taking the initiative to support each other.

Justine: [00:17:20] That's what I love the most I think. I've got it to the stage now where sometimes someone will ask a question and by the time I get to it there's all this beautiful advice that I just have this proud mum moment. I'm like, "Yeah look at my girls and women empowering women."

Justine: [00:17:34] It's a very beautiful thing and doesn't happen enough that when I've created a safe space where women feel comfortable enough to share their highs their lows, it sorts of lets those gods down and they're able to do that. And that's something that I'm very proud of. So, you know, there's no more than 30 women at one time that I'm working with so it's not an influx of thousands of people. I want to keep it exclusive and intimate because that's what sort of different to it from the rest.

Kareena: [00:17:59] Yes.

Justine: [00:17:59] And they get that direct time with me. I do livestream and do the webinar, so each webinar is a different topic. You know the first one is nutrition and the second one is emotional eating. I've got a gut health protocol that all of my clients go on because I could go on about gut health as well, its paramount when it comes to weight loss. So, I try and focus on the interior with this program like the gut health what the heart, the mind and the rest take care of itself. But I feel like society is pushing us

towards only focusing on the exterior and that's where women get lost and do extreme things to lose weight. So hopefully it can get to that stage where women can really start to know that this is the best place to start working on you.

Kareena: [00:18:40] Yes, absolutely.

Justine: [00:18:40] I'm not trying to focus on the other stuff because no matter what, even if you do get that bikini body and you'll still dislike yourself when you look in the mirror, if you've got your internal demons.

Kareena: [00:18:53] Justine had not only managed to build a successful community on her own channels, but also built a considerable following on social media. Having found early success on Facebook, Justine has stayed on top of current trends and launched her brand across Instagram.

Justine: [00:19:08] Yeah, I think Facebook exploded for me a bit. I was one of the first fitness models to have a page and it used to be called Justine Switalla sports model (laughs). I had to drop that off the end, I was like that's not who I am anymore. But yeah it just exploded, and I was good friends and still am with Emily Skye and back then we were sharing each other's pages. No one had online businesses, so it wasn't competitive, and we would share each other's stuff and content. Whereas now I guess it's a business and I don't expect anyone to do that now but back then that's sort of what we did. We sort of just shared pages and I ran Facebook ads just to gain more followers. But I haven't done it for a long time and to be honest it has sort of stagnated in the last year or two but I'm not going to push Facebook as much now because Instagram is where it's at. Also, a lot of my followers on my main page are probably 40 percent women 60 percent men, whereas on Instagram it's 70 percent women.

Kareena: [00:20:08] Okay.

Justine: [00:20:08] So women is who I'm trying to target, but I do have another Facebook page with the Fit Healthy Mums and it's twenty thousand and that's mostly women. So, it just gets a little bit exhausting at times because I'm like two pages, Facebook group Facebook group, Instagram, sometimes Snapchat Instagram Stories etc.

Kareena: [00:20:26] So many social platforms (laughs).

Justine: [00:20:26] I know (laugh) and my friends get annoyed because I'm always on my phone and I'm like "Guys seriously sometimes it's my job" and it's hard to switch off. It's something I'm always trying to work hard on to be able to switch off. But when you've got people coming at you from all directions and you've only got a certain window to reply to messages for the algorithms, that's my that's my bread and butter. So, when I post something I've got to be on, ready to reply to comments. I don't want to just sort of leave it and put it down because you've got to strive for that on time and keep people interested in what you're doing and connect because that's what social

media is great for. It's the connection side of things and if people say, "You look great" say "Thanks" you know don't say nothing. For me it's a great way to be able to connect with people and engage with people. So, I still post a lot on Facebook obviously because I do have such a big following on there, but the algorithms have changed and I'm trialing a few different things on there at the moment with different stuff that I can do on Facebook. I've got someone else working for me now so it's like trial and error with everything and seeing how things go. But I think most of my business comes from Instagram also because of Instagram Stories.

Kareena: [00:21:37] OK.

Justine: [00:21:38] So they see me talking, they see me engaging with Leo all the time and I really can connect with them on that level. And when I'm just posting stuff people don't know where it's coming from but when they can hear it and see it and they feel it more that's where most of my business comes from. I just prefer Instagram it feels cleaner and fresher, now that I can direct people through my Instagram Stories to go and check out my post to swipe up to check out links and things and connect with them that way. It's getting in front of them and it's what I want them to see is that side of things. But you also don't know what's going to happen next. So, at the moment Instagram is good so I'm rolling with that.

Kareena: [00:22:12] Do you have a strategy around Instagram?

Justine: [00:22:14] Yeah, I do now. So, at the start of this year I am I employed someone to help me with my marketing. I used to do it all myself and it's really hard because you know, I thought I was posting good content which I was, but it was also the imagery that goes with it you've got to create great images. So, people come to your page and they're like "Wow this leads to some amazing photos" and they like your page and will follow you. So, in the last sort of six months I feel like I've really gained good momentum because I show her everything and she proofreads everything. And you know and she's like "No not that one or yes that one" and then she's also sending through ideas and it's really helped me get to where it is now. I think I sort of try and mix it up, so I'll always give them something cutesy and mumsy to relate to. I'll give them workouts like yesterday I posted a workout of me and Leo and he was just cracking me up the whole time. Just giving them something to show that playful Mum's side. Sometimes it could just be something funny about a Mum, some motivational stuff around body image, transformation stories from other women. So, I'll decide to have a different focus. I might keep it serious, fun, or between so I'm not just throwing a lot of heavy stuff at people, but keeping it engaging and relatable. And that's something that I guess having Dani on board has really helped me with, to have good content but content that's not just focused on one thing. Yes, I'm an online coach and fitness and health influence but I'm also just an everyday mom you know?

Kareena: [00:23:50] Yeah.

Justine: [00:23:50] You know you've got to keep it relatable and then when you do

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post something powerful it has even more of an impact. But with Instagram I get followers and I lose followers so yeah, I feel like it hasn't really grown quickly because people drop off or things change. It's just up and down and you get the spammy accounts that drop off as well.

Kareena: [00:24:11] Of course, always.

Justine: [00:24:12] So sometimes you're like "Yeah I'm above forty-five thousand", and then you go "Forty-four point nine, What? (laughs) what did I say?". You've kinda just gotta go "Oh whatever" but it's about engagement and my engagements good and viewing your stories and stuff like that. So that's what's more important. But yeah, it's another beast altogether.

Kareena: [00:24:33] It is absolutely.

Kareena: [00:24:34] Having another set of eyes look over captions and creative, or even to help brainstorm new ideas is always a huge benefit. We found out just how this collaborative approach helped Justine take her Instagram to the next level.

Justine: [00:24:47] Oh this is huge actually because it comes down to my self-confidence and what I was willing to post. So, she was always like you need to show off more. You need to show your body more and I was always under the impression that I should show less to not intimidate. But that comes from an insecurity of mine growing up trying to suppress who I was so that women liked me rather than making them feel threatened. So, this is something that I spoke about actually just on one of my IGTV's that I did about I guess where I've come from in regard to having to overcome the "She's too pretty" or "You can't be too pretty or perfect or have a nice body and be a nice person". So, for me I was like "Well I want to suppress that, I don't want to be nice and I don't want to have a great body and I don't want these women to feel bad about themselves." So, I kind of hid away a lot, whereas she's empowered me. She's like "No, post that show that. If I looked like you I'd walk around the house naked", and I'm like "Okay" (laughs). It's funny because she's forty-five as well and she's a Mum and I'm like "Wow so Mums want to see this." And you know when I do post a sexy pic or something I'm closing my eyes and doing it. But the women love it, I get more comments from women than I do from men and it's kind of like wow, okay this is good. It's just sort of that snowball effect from there and it's not less is more. I'm not posting photos in my lingerie like its usually just bikini shots or whatever, whatever but still stepping into that space and owning that power and being proud of it. I do work hard in the gym and I look after myself and that's inspiring for women but it's also the message that I put behind it because I'm not in their faces showing off my body to get in front of them. It's more so the message behind it and them knowing I guess where I've come from. You know last year my marriage broke down and I'm a single Mum, so the transformation in the last 18 months that my online people have witnessed their probably like "What getting this girl do next" You know? Because I've just gone again it's another transition in my life and I had to sort of make the most of opportunities and surround myself with

people that really supported me.

Kareena: [00:26:56] Surrounding yourself with the right people is important, especially when you throw in fun facts like you are the average of the five people that you hang out most with. Yep, think about it. Justine has worked hard to build a team of people around her that have the right skills and the right personality for the job.

Justine: [00:27:14] So Dani's one of those, she's the girl who it's me and I've got another girl who works for me Mel and she does all my tech stuff. So, she came in in January and started doing all the making my e-books pretty and so I really was able to step in to more of a business woman space and not in the trenches like trying to do everything tearing my hair and I couldn't think of stuff to say because I wasn't inspired.

Kareena: [00:27:35] Yes.

Justine: [00:27:35] Whereas now I've got women behind me that are like do that do that. And doing the stuff behind the scenes, emailing people doing the tech stuff you know. But like I say that's taken me four years to get to that point where I wasn't doing everything myself. And that's why I think I'm at the stage where I'm at now where I still feel like the best is yet to come because I'm not exhausted, I love what I do. And.

Kareena: [00:27:58] You're still evolving.

Justine: [00:27:58] It's still evolving. And that's the thing it's exciting because I'm like my life is exciting because opportunities come to me, but they don't just come because I'm lucky. You know people are noticing the hard work that I'm doing and are attracted to what I'm doing and want and want me to be a part of whatever it is that they're doing. I'm all about collaborations and I love meeting people and being in front of people. Seminars and retreats and expos and all that sort of stuff. When someone says, "Can you come" I'm like "Yes!" because I'm stuck behind a computer or my phone a lot. I really want to meet people and connect with people in a way, because I feel like words and eye contact is much more powerful than words on sort of social media.

Kareena: [00:28:38] Absolutely.

Kareena: [00:28:39] We asked Justine for the advice she has to other women that are looking to start their own business in the fitness space.

Justine: [00:28:46] Yeah, it's hard, I think I know how hard it is now. I think I got in just at the right time to be able to build something before it got really competitive. Building a platform online is really hard. Also, you've got to have I guess, financial backing to be able to invest into whatever business that it is that you want to do. So you got to spend money and make money and it's annoying that you have to do that but sometimes you've got to take a risk and if the money is there or you can borrow it and you've got a vision and you've got a passion then you've got to go for it. And you know in saying

that is just to map everything out. What's the goal or what do you want to achieve? How many people do you need around you to do X Y Z? I've got a good web designer who's worked for me since I started and she's continuously working with me as well because you can't do everything yourself.

Kareena: [00:29:36] Yeah.

Justine: [00:29:39] And probably these days you can if you really want to cut costs. There are a lot of overseas companies now that do things for you on the cheap. Personally, I like speaking to a human and I like really having a relationship with someone that's going to stay with me long term. Even though it might cost me more money in the long run I feel like it will save me. If you want to go all the way you've got to be able to spend that time and money and invest in that. So, start with that, have your vision, sort of work backwards from there rather than yeah.

Justine: [00:30:06] Like you've got to look at the big picture, how far you want to go and that can be quite overwhelming and quite scary. If you really look big and go "Well how far can I take this?" And then peeling it back and working back and then figuring out you know, your expenses and who you need around you and in support of that to be able to achieve what you want.

Kareena: [00:30:24] Allocating your time I imagine is one of the most difficult things.

Justine: [00:30:27] Yeah, I mean I would hate to think in those first six months how the amount of content I had to pump out and while breastfeeding Leo I would be on my laptop. It was just like full on. But I don't know if you've got an inner drive and passion for something and a vision you've just got to go for it.

Kareena: [00:30:44] As we heard there's a lot of time, money and sacrifices that need to be made in order to build a successful business. Justine's journey wasn't all smooth sailing. There were a lot of lessons that she learned throughout the process and she shares just how she overcame all these setbacks.

Justine: [00:31:00] I failed in certain areas of business or I've done things wrong or I've stuffed up, but that's how you learn. So, you can't expect to go into a business, I think they say it takes five years to actually get it to a place where it's profitable. So, you can't think it's gonna be an overnight thing, that I'm going to be an overnight millionaire and a lot of people do and then they give up and then they get disheartened. Working for yourself especially online is very expensive, so people do it because they want to earn more money doing less, which you can earn a lot of money. Making money isn't the issue it's the expenditure, so you know that sometimes I get really excited when I say my income and then I'm like "What? Look at my expenses for the month". So, it can be peaks and troughs and you've just got to expect that and be ready for it. And I think you know, keep evolving. So, you know once you've started keep evolving with the times otherwise you will get left behind.

Kareena: [00:31:55] How have you dealt with those challenges previously where you have potentially failed in certain areas? How do you overcome that and go I'm going to keep going with this?

Justine: [00:32:03] You know what I think because I've had mentors, it's really, really helped me. So that's something I would suggest if you've got the time or I should say the money not the time but to invest in someone to help you to coach you because you can't do it all by yourself and you need someone to push you and to guide you as well. And so, I had my first business coach I think just after I launched "Fit Healthy Mums" and she was the one that sort of got me into the idea of creating the VIP program. And I've sort of just kept up with that because otherwise if you fail the inner voice will start to say you're a failure, give up now and go and sell donuts on the street or something.

Kareena: [00:32:40] Because you think it might be easier (laughs).

Justine: [00:32:43] Yeah exactly (laughs). But at the end of the day failure is nothing to fear. Failure is growth. Failure is learning. I guess you've just gotta be open to the learning of what has happened and you know you do have to make sacrifices. For me social life and things for a bit there were skewed with. I've got a really good balance now but that's because I've got the support, but for a long time I didn't have that, and I was exhausted all the time trying to juggle everything. But I'm glad I did that, it's given me the thick skin I have today and the confidence to do what I do now and do it with integrity because I've done it the hard way and I've learned the hard way.

Kareena: [00:33:19] Integrity. This is one of Justine's brand values and a guiding principle for making decisions when it comes to herself and her business. Tune in to see just how Justine has built her strong and reputable brand over time.

Justine: [00:33:33] It's all about the integrity side of things and if you're doing something wrong by people, Karma does come back and bite you on the ass unfortunately. So, you can't dust that stuff under the carpet when there's millions of people watching what you're doing.

Kareena: [00:33:46] Absolutely.

Justine: [00:33:47] You've got to learn to deal with it.

Kareena: [00:33:51] How have you created your brand? Have you done it consciously or do you feel like it's just evolved organically over time?

Justine: [00:33:57] Well I think it's just happened organically. I think because I've got a lot of experience in a lot of different realms of the fitness space, wellness space and also life space. So, you know I'm only thirty-eight, I'm a Mum, I've been married, and I've hit rock bottom. I feel like at thirty-eight I've been reborn. But having lived such a busy

hectic first part you know with it from the age of twenty-five to now it was just all go.

Kareena: [00:34:24] Yeah.

Justine: [00:34:26] So you know organically it's happened, it's the real me. I mean I'm just a New Zealand girl who really is a free spirit. I'm very laid back very cruisy I love to have a wine and I love to have a good time. You know I'm not a stickler and I think people resonate with me because I always keep it real. They see me drinking wine, they see me if I've had a few too many the next day I'm like "Oh my God my hangover" and you know I'm living life and I'm showing people that you can have that balance. Of course, my life is different because I do train hard and I eat well, and I look after myself. So, you know I don't say to my clients you cannot drink. It's your choice to drink if you want to, go for it but don't beat yourself up for it the next day and get up and get on with it.

Kareena: [00:35:12] Well it's a choice.

Justine: [00:35:13] Yeah. Because you need to learn how to juggle that stuff in real life. You can't cut yourself off and I don't want anyone to do extremes because they are not healthy either.

Kareena: [00:35:12] And this hasn't happened overnight either. I think people forget that you've been on this path for a long time now.

Justine: [00:35:26] The journey has been huge. The growth has been huge yet but people watch it and they get it. It hasn't, it doesn't happen overnight. They've seen it, they watch the transition and you know.

Kareena: [00:35:35] Its the journey.

Justine: [00:35:36] It is the journey and that's what I love about I guess what I do the most is because I can just be myself.

Kareena: [00:35:42] So what do you think then has been the biggest contributor to your success?

Justine: [00:35:49] Gosh I don't know. That's a hard question. In what area of my life say business?

Kareena: [00:35:54] Let's say business.

Justine: [00:35:56] OK. I think consistency. Yeah being consistent and evolving and like we've spoken about not giving up when it gets hard, because you get you can get stuck in that space of the negative side of business when it's hard work. You know it's time consuming but if you don't do the hard work you don't you don't get to that space where you can pull back in and really enjoy the success of the hard work that you've

put in.

Kareena: [00:36:23] Well just as a final sign off. What advice do you have to our aspiring fitness health and wellness professionals or even moms that are looking to start their own business?

Justine: [00:36:32] So if they wanted to get into the fitness industry as such. I think if you're passionate about something like I said before do the courses, educate yourself, study. You know for me I've evolved through a lot of studies and mentors and coaching programs and all that sort of stuff and in many areas not just through the fitness and health space, but surround yourself with people that motivate you and inspire you to be your best. I think something I've learned is you know, you want everyone else to have your back for you but if you don't have your own back you can't really achieve the things that you want to achieve. And if you do, the wheels will fall off because you're not strong enough to deal with whatever is going to get thrown at you. So, you're having your own back, being proud of your own damn self, pat yourself on the back and saying those things to yourself instead of expecting validation from everyone else. Being able to support yourself and honor yourself and be proud of yourself every step of the way is super important. Having a plan in place, having people around you that support you and yeah just go for it like, life is so short and hitting rock bottom and having really tough times in my life has made me realize that life is so freaking short. If you spend it in a space where you're not happy and you're not fulfilled and you're not loving what you do, you need to get out of that space because tomorrow things could be different. And you just don't know what's around the corner. So yeah you only get one shot and just got to go out there and make the most of it.

Kareena: [00:37:55] Couldn't agree more really. That's fantastic.

Justine: [00:37:59] Yeah!

Kareena: [00:38:00] Well Thank you so much for joining us on the couch. It was a pleasure.

Justine: [00:38:01] Thank you!

Kareena: [00:38:03] And that brings us to the end of our interview Loopers, thank you so much for joining us. If you liked learning about Justine's journey you can continue following her via Instagram or her Web site. All links will be included in the show description so be sure to check them 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 content make sure you subscribe to our podcast, so you can get updated every time we release a new weekly episode. 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!

Podcast Episode 15: In the Loop

“Is it Propelling You Forward or Holding You Back?” | Interview with Justine Switalla

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