

Meathead Hippie Episode #81 with Morgan King USA Olympian in Weightlifting

Emily: Hello. Happy Wednesday for a Meathead Hippie podcast, and I'm stoked about this one because it's with Morgan King, who I've been following her journey for a while and we are just both meathead hippies. So she is an American weightlifter. She is somebody that is just good at sports and athletics and found her calling with Olympic weightlifting. If you're new to Olympic weightlifting or you don't really know what it is, it's a sport that involved the snatch and the clean and jerk, so when you compete, you go on the stage and you have three attempts at the snatch, three attempts at the clean and jerk, and that's it. And we'll talk about it a little bit, her experience, the emotional piece, the mental piece, the recovery piece, her finding her journey in this, the grief of when you fail a lift or you fail anything in life, right? Just having to grieve and then see if it's something that you wanna do again. Of course we talk about how to take care of yourself and the self-awareness piece that we love to talk about at Meathead Hippie, the Body Awareness, and then just the realness of it and I think you're gonna really really love it. This person made it to the Olympics in the 2016 season in Rio and she's on her way to do it again in 2020, and I just want you guys, please look at pictures and posts of her lifting. I mean just so fierce, the amount of weight this person can lift for the weight that she is is just mind-blowing. So regardless of if you're into Olympic weightlifting, I think you're gonna love this because Olympic weightlifting to me is truly a metaphor for life, like you feel like you nailed it and then the next lift is just so far from what you thought you could do. So it's just this constant battle internally and externally and so it applies to everything in life, and that's why honestly I love weightlifting and strength training, because it is so metaphoric, but for the most part I think you guys, regardless of if you like the sport or not, or are familiar with the sport or not, you're gonna love it. So Morgan King is our guest, and I don't have anything to talk about because we just had an insane Black Friday. We had just a great workout with Verizon at the gym for Black Friday, and then all online. I can't wait if you ordered tee's and EmPacks and the strength program, I'm so excited for you to use them. Please just keep tagging me when you listen to the podcast or when you try the strength program or a new lift for the first time. It's just so fun for me to see, so please keep doing it and when you get your EmPack of course that too. All things from me can be found on EmilySchrommm.com, www.EmilySchrommm.com. So if you're brand new to me, I'm a personal trainer, nutritional therapy practitioner, and serial entrepreneur and I just love helping people empower themselves. So that's kinda my mission in life. Wherever that takes me, I'm along for the ride because I just love what I do and I wanna keep doing it. So enjoy the podcast and I will see you next week.

I'm Emily Schrommm, the ultimate Meathead Hippie. Welcome to the show. (upbeat fun music)

Emily: How are you?

Morgan: Well, you know. I'm good, sure. I just woke up like 45 minutes ago.

Emily: Same, same. Same boat. Honestly, I feel like one, we're gonna be best friends, and two, I am just like today is one of those days where I'm just tired so if you're feeling the same way, we're on the same wave length.

Morgan: Ugh, so much. Yeah. Yesterday I literally got done with my working set of clean and jerks and was like, "Yep, this isn't happening," and I just packed up my stuff and left. (laughs)

Emily: Can I ask you about that? So I have so many questions.

Morgan: Totally.

Emily: Because this is just- One, I'm fascinated by Olympic weightlifting and I do think we need to explain it just in case someone is brand new to it because you know, I don't know. Honestly, since you are training. So right now, what are you training for?

Morgan: So I have a competition coming up actually next- well not this coming weekend, the next weekend. And that is for American Open finals, but then the ultimate goal is we have like a crazy, crazy qualification system now, so we have to compete internationally every three months for 18 months.

Emily: Wow. You have to compete internationally every three months? So where do you travel? Next weekend is where?

Morgan: Well, so this is the first kind of- Okay, so I bombed out my last meet, so I basically don't exist on paper right now. (laughs)

Emily: What does bombed out..?

Morgan: So, bombing out means you didn't make either a snatch or a clean and jerk. So you have three attempts and you have to make at least one of each in order to have a total. And so last meet, I didn't make a clean and jerk, so now in order to move forward and still be part of basically the qualifying procedure, I have to get a total and then I have to make an international meet by April.

Emily: Oh wow, okay.

Morgan: Yeah.

Emily: Question on the- So you have three attempts. Three attempts for the snatch, three attempts for the clean and jerk. And this is just what's so bizarre about this sport is that, I mean I love that they at least give you three attempts, but still it's only three attempts. Like that's it, and so much depends on the weight. So like when you, with the clean and jerk, can I ask what your process was, what happened with the meet?

Morgan: Oh, well um, so. There's always something wrong with me I feel like. So I was, I actually hadn't gone below parallel because I had hurt my knee really bad, for like three weeks before the competition, and then everything was kind of going fine and then I opened up at 93 or 94. I have terrible memory of all my meets, it's hilarious. I don't know what numbers I did or what.

Emily: You're just in the zone. You're just ready to go.

Morgan: Yeah. Tell me what to do. It's fine. But this is totally a horrible role model thing. So I missed my first one, and then I stupidly missed my second one, and then I knew on my third one- this is really horrible- that I wasn't going to make the World Team, like the total that I was gonna put up wasn't gonna make the World Team and I kinda got frustrated and I think I just kind gave up, which is definitely never an excuse, like I should not do that. But I was just kinda like, "Okay, well here's nothing." And then actually, I hit the bottom of my clean and jerk, or the clean really hard and I was like, "Oh my god, that hurt my hip so bad," and I just like walked off the platform and I was like, "Yeah I probably tore my labrum."

Emily: Oh my god. I did that in the bottom of a squat too. It's just excruciating.

Morgan: It is, and it's like, I have a torn labrum on my left side, so I've competed with that since 2014. In 2014, I competed on- which you should never do- a stress fracture in my hip, but I was like, "I am going to this meet. It doesn't matter and I don't wanna know what's wrong with me." I was like, "Oh I probably should have known what was wrong with me." (laughs)

Emily: Was it training that caused the hip labrum?

Morgan: Yeah, I just think, I don't know. I mean I feel like some women are just more susceptible to that kinda thing and I guess if you tear one, you're more than likely to tear the other.

Emily: That's what I was told as well.

Morgan: Yeah, so I'm kinda having issues with that right now, but I'm actually going to see a PT after this. So I'm pretty excited. She's so awesome and I'm so thankful. I'm in Atlanta right now, and I was working with her before I actually had my new coach who is in Atlanta. So I'm like, "Yay, it all works out, like everyone's together." (laughs)

Emily: I love that. Well cause what you said is so true. You're like, "This is horrible. It's not an excuse," but honestly Olympic lifting is so mental. So I just kinda wanna jump in with that. Is that why you're addicted to it?

Morgan: Yeah. You know, so I think I thought- I mean I really had honestly like the perfect, I mean I started and in four years I made the Olympics. So that's a pretty fairytale.

Emily: That's incredible. Can we talk about how that started?

Morgan: Yeah. I mean I was doing half marathons and triathlons and I was just kinda getting bored being by myself all the time in a pool, like there back, there back, there back. And my friend was like, "You know, you gotta meet this guy. He owns this gym, like he's super fit." And I was like, "Yeah, yeah. Okay, whatever." And then I met him and he put me into a CrossFit workout, and of course he put me with like ya know, the best guy there and I had just had so much fun. It was a partner workout too, so I mean you can't really go wrong with those. And so I got kind of- I kinda got that competitive edge back, because I knew realistically, like I'm five-foot. It's gonna be really hard for me in a triathlon to like make up some space on that. (laughs) Genetically I just didn't have it. And so I kind of got that feeling again that I had when I played soccer in college. Just like, "Oh I get to come in here every day and I can beat whoever I want." You know? I can try to beat everybody.

Emily: Totally.

Morgan: Which is like, I'm a highly competitive person.

Emily: No shit, Morgan? No shit. (laughs)

Morgan: Yeah, right. (laughs)

Emily: I love it. So you did play soccer in college?

Morgan: Yeah.

Emily: Oh, I love it. What position were you?

Morgan: I was an outside mid, and then I kinda played for a couple seasons, I played like right back just cause we played a really funky kinda thing where I could still run. I was basically a mid-fielder my whole life.

Emily: Yeah, I love it.

Morgan: Yeah, and so that was kind of the start of everything, and then I did a regionals and I just got really frustrated at that point. Like the judging wasn't really standard. it was just kinda like, "Okay this is what we're looking for," and everyone- like overhead squats were not overhead squats. You know, like, so I got really frustrated and- ugh, it was really frustrating. It's like still, like I'm still so bitter about it.

Emily: Let it out.

Morgan: Let it go. Let it go, girlfriend. We were like ahead in one of the 200 workouts, and we had a boxer who had all the like 200 double unders and I did the last like 28, and then we had a Marine that did almost all the pull ups. So we were doing like really good. Kettlebell swings and overhead squats, and they kept calling us out because we kept not completely- you know how you like overextend your hips. They wanted to see that back then.

Emily: Yes.

Morgan: Like over the top.

Emily: They were giving no reps.

Morgan: Right, and so it was just like super chaotic and I just remember walking off and I was like crying because I'm the most emotional person ever. And this guy, this judge, comes running up behind me and he goes, "Those were the best overhead squats I've ever seen," and I was like, "Ugh, leave me alone."

Emily: Aw.

Morgan: From then on I ended up telling our weightlifting coach or our strength coach, I was like, "You know, I really want to get stronger. Can you put me in a strength program?" And I was gonna go back to CrossFit and I was gonna get better, and then I found weightlifting and he showed me the jerk two days before like one of the competitions that we were gonna go down to. And I did the competition and Melanie Roach, who is our 2008 53 kilo Olympian, it was her coach. He comes up to me, and he goes, "You need to keep weightlifting. I haven't seen an athlete like this since Melanie." And I like, almost fell over.

Emily: Aw, that's so rad. It's just such your sport.

Morgan: It was just kind of like okay. At that point, you know I was just kind of like fumbling around trying to stay competitive. So yeah, that's how it all started.

Emily: I love that, and I have a question on the strong piece, because I'm fascinated by Olympic weightlifters and it's interesting because some of them, they just one, they just are athletes. They can pick up a skill very quickly, which I also see the other where they're just so strong. Like no matter what, they're able to squat a house and it's like, well let's put this to use and our technique is what we probably have to work on. But you were probably the athlete that just had to build strength and you were money.

Morgan: Yeah, I mean I think- I'm trying to remember it was close to 85 kilos like one of the first weeks in CrossFit that they had a max back squat. They were like, "I think you've got this."

Emily: You got the strength too.

Morgan: It was definitely, you know, obviously it took a lot longer to like build more strength, but my dad was super athletic. My brother's like 5'4" body builder status, so it's definitely genetic in my family. And then I mean, obviously being 5-foot obviously helps.

Emily: So talk to me about, I want to give people a point of reference. So kilos especially- This is funny, you'll appreciate this story. When I first decided to start when I wanted to open a gym, I was like, "Well I want it to be for people as soon as they hear it, they know what it means." So it was like, "I'm gonna name it Kilos," but then I started watching Narcos on Netflix. I was like, "This is a bad idea. This is maybe not the best." (laughs) So we ended up calling it, obviously, Platform Strength. Let's talk about kilos conversion. So the weight you compete at, and then the weight, whether it's your best or what you're gonna open with next week, so then we can convert it. I have a calculator- but you know it too, but I have a calculator out, because I want people to understand how talented you are for as small of a human you are. So what do you compete at as weight?

Morgan: So at the Olympics I competed at 48, but they've changed the weight classes, so now I'm 49.

Emily: Oh, when did they change that?

Morgan: About four months ago.

Emily: Oh wow.

Morgan: I still don't know all the weight classes. It's so terrible.

Emily: Well, it's okay. There's a lot.

Morgan: Yeah, and there's 10 now. So there used to be seven, question mark? Yeah, seven. So there will be 10 in a World Championship and any sort of championships, and then seven at the Olympics. It's kinda like wrestling does a little bit, where they take out weight classes, and it'll get- my weight class is actually an Olympic weight class, which works out pretty awesome for me, but there are girls that there's like a 71 kilo class, but in the Olympic there's only a 64 and a 76, which is insane. Like these poor girls.

Emily: So that would be me, cause 156- They would have to drop to- What was the one they'd have to drop to?

Morgan: 54.

Emily: Oh my gosh.

Morgan: Yeah. Isn't that insane?

Emily: They'd have to drop 15 pounds.

Morgan: And it's insane for weightlifters because we don't, like we obviously have to balance that strength and weight loss kind of area. For the most part you don't sit, I mean you sit roughly around 10% probably above for recovery reasons.

Emily: So you compete at 108 ish, but you are around 115?

Morgan: Well, I'm hoping. So like I'm 51.5

Emily: It's okay I have a calculator. So 113. So that's good that you can move that pretty easily I guess.

Morgan: Well, I hate talking about it.

Emily: There's so much I want to talk about. So exciting for me. Guys, I'm nerding out. This is like my favorite. I've wanted to know all of the things.

Morgan: This is awesome, and it's so funny cause it's such a lifestyle for my that it's second nature and I'm like, "Okay."

Emily: Totally. Okay, so you compete at 108 now ish, and so when you're opening next weekend or maybe like, I don't know, do you want to do your best ever that you've done as far as a clean and jerk?

Morgan: Yeah, sure.

Emily: Okay, so start with snatch.

Morgan: So my best ever is 90 kilos.

Emily: Oh my god.

Morgan: (laughs)

Emily: That's fucking- That's 200 pounds, everybody. That's so rad. Do you prefer snatch or clean and jerk?

Morgan: Yeah, and then my clean and jerk I've done 107.

Emily: Oh my gosh, okay everybody, that's 235 pounds.

Morgan: (laughs)

Emily: That's so much weight. That's insane.

Morgan: It's funny cause like obviously being the competitive person that I am, I'm like, "I should be doing those in an international competition so that I should be placing," but you know, when you drop weight it's a lot different and there's a lot of strategy that goes on and all that. You're vying for spots, like based on screwing people over in the back. You can change your weights and stuff for placement, so it's chaos in the back.

Emily: It's a game, like strategy total.

Morgan: Yeah, and you can screw the clock over. So somebody has to follow themselves, like a max lift within 30 seconds, like it's pretty crazy.

Emily: Oh my god. Well I've done two very small ones in Denver, very small weightlifting competitions. They were so intense, that seriously my onesie, Morgan, was a unicorn, like unicorn dragon onesie.

Morgan: (laughs)

Emily: And then I had one with a cat on it. It was amazing

Morgan: Oh my gosh. That is amazing.

Emily: But even in a small competition, where nothing mattered and awe weren't competing, it was excruciating to wait and think about it and practice and not overload, cause I had in my CrossFit competing, there was so many times you would one rep max a clean and jerk and it would just completely- like if you did it in the back, like the weight you wanted, like I learned my lesson very early on at my first competition. I was like, "I'm gonna get this weight on the floor. Let me do it in the back." And then I totally just destroyed myself and it felt so heavy. It's just so much learning. So for you. do you feel like you're in the groove? Do you feel like you feel like is it still a learning experience? Like with Olympic weightlifting or do you feel like- I just am curious how you feel? Is it always just a gamble?

Morgan: I mean, I have as of, we're 10 weeks in, I have a new coach and so I've been so lucky with all the coaches that I have gotten. Like I've had two world champions coach me. I'm so lucky for what I have gotten in five years or six years, whatever we're in. Where am I? But no, I still feel like I just started picking up the barbell yesterday. it is constant like, I learned something for the jerk- I don't know if you know this, but I'm like really terrible at the jerk.

Emily: I didn't know that.

Morgan: Really terrible, soon to not be terrible. Let's change that mindset, right? Soon to not be terrible. My coach has said something to me and I was like, "Oh, really?" And then I thought about it and I was looking at a couple of girls that like, I love to watch weightlifting and I'm like, "Oh my gosh, how did I never see that?" Like I watch weightlifting all the time. I don't understand. How did I not put two and two together? It's just stuff like that that I'm like oh my gosh, or like right now I'm working on pressure in my feet, and like where when I put the pressure in my feet the bar is gonna go a certain way, you know? And trying to bring the bar back into my body, but if I'm on my toes, it's gonna start to pull it out, and so it's just like, you know you're constantly trying to fight for those centimeters it feels like. Yesterday I was like, "Oh this feels great" warming up, and then I got up two kilos and everything falls apart. I'm like, "What is happening? That's like four and a half pounds, like let's be real." You know what I mean?

Emily: So the jerk specifically for you is- What do you feel, cause I know people are gonna nerd out about this. Our one ambassador, she's like so stoked I'm talking to you right now and she also loved Olympic weightlifting, so this is for you Dee. So with the jerk, what do you feel like are your weak points? I mean outside of it just being one of the- it's such an intense move, but I'm just curious what you feel like you're about to master?

Morgan: Yeah, exactly. I just get like severe anxiety when the bar is on my shoulders and I just get like, "Oh my god, get it off my shoulders." And I never ever think, "Oh my gosh, I can't stand up with this in clean." That's next happened to me. I'm like, "I could literally sit down here for five seconds and then front squat it up." So I've always been confident, but then it's funny, my fiancé who has been my coach basically. He's the one that actually got me into weightlifting and now is my fiancé.

Emily: Aww.

Morgan: Aw, so sweet, such a love story. (laughs) But he was like, "I don't understand. It's a rhythm thing. Like you have great rhythm, like you understand and you just, if you have a hard clean, I would bet all the money in the world that you wouldn't make it." He's like, "I don't know, like you get up there and you're like, 'Oh my god.'" And then I start thinking about my grocery list or something like that, like oh my god I have to get it off my shoulders, like I have to finish this lift. It's crazy.

Emily: That's so funny. Well, okay. At least you know it, like now you can tackle it with your coach that you have.

Morgan: Right, and it all too is like posture. So like me standing naturally, I have my shoulders rolled forward, like you know my back is overextended. I'm kind of anterior tilted.

Emily: That's kind of like a tell-tale sign of a former marathoner.

Morgan: Right, right.

Emily: Or triathlete.

Morgan: Right, exactly. So that is when it's on my shoulders, I'm naturally gonna drive it forward if my posture if I'm holding the bar wrong. So everything drives forward and you know, in weightlifting, you're fighting gravity so (laughs) if you know, you're an inch a little forward, like it's probably gonna go not where you want it to go.

Emily: Totally, yeah. With your training, you know, do you miss CrossFit workouts? Do you do them ever at all? Do you stick with, obviously right now you're in go mode, so does it vary much just clean and jerk and snatches and skills basically?

Morgan: Yeah, I mean we do, my new program we do a lot of accessory work, which is really fun to me. I've kinda realized that I really like working out in a gym.

Emily: It's just the best to do some bicep curls.

Morgan: It is! I'm like dude, I'm getting so jacked. And then I'm like, oh my god, Morgan, you're such a bro sometimes. (laughs)

Emily: It's okay. You're at home on the Meathead Hippie podcast. (laughs)

Morgan: Exactly. Like I was, my house is in Arizona and because you know obviously, I don't know if you know this, Arizona is a pretty hot state, so in the summer it gets like, you know, a 100 or so degrees. It's awful. So I went to a Lifetime Fitness because they have Oleiko platforms and great bars and stuff like that. So I was training, and it's funny because you have all the bros behind you and I'm like lifting on this platform and they're like, "What is this? What is she doing?" And I'm like, "Yeah I'm a badass, it's fine. Not a big deal," and then I'll go and do my accessory work with them and I'm totally the same person as them. I'm like, "Dude, I look so jacked. Look at my shoulders." I'm my oh my gosh, this is so embarrassing.

Emily: No, but that's so cool cause I mean really, Dmitry Klokov is you know, he's the one that's like, "You're only as strong as your accessory work." There's only so many cleans and jerks and snatches you can probably do, right? It's just about how everything else functions so it makes total sense.

Morgan: Yeah. It's funny cause like you beat yourself up with the snatch, the clean and jerk, the pulls, and then you go to do the accessory work to put your body back together. (laughs)

Emily: I love it, yeah. I love it. Question, let's talk about rituals.

Morgan: Oh god, okay.

Emily: So this is a question I got when I asked on Instagram do you have questions for Morgan. Like do you have- are you superstitious? I guess that's the question I want.

Morgan: I am. I am. It's funny because, so I have worn the same sports bra, same socks, same underwear to every meet since I started, and then like this after the Olympics, I'm like, "I'm retiring it. Like, Morgan, don't believe in superstitions. It doesn't matter what you wear. It's fine. It's just your mind." And then I did it, and I was like, oh my gosh I wasn't wearing the bra. And it's like this super old Target reversible bra that thank goodness I don't have big boobs because I don't know if there's any material left. You know? (laughs)

Emily: Totally, yes.

Morgan: And so it's funny cause I was like okay new coach. Nope going back to all the same stuff. I have, I don't know why, but it just started. I never really liked the color orange but then it turned in neon orange, and so my nails are neon orange when I compete. I have to put on my left side first. That started in college because we were on a winning streak, so I was like, "Okay all of my gear goes on the left side first," so yeah I'm a little neurotic about it.

Emily: No you should be. I mean it makes sense. It's routine and it's working, right? So that's good. Can you talk about your Olympic experience?

Morgan: Oh yeah.

Emily: So did you know, like as you were, was that the end goal? Like you started to do these qualifying rounds, like that was the goal was to get you to the Olympics?

Morgan: Yeah, and that was like- So when I first started weightlifting, Dean, is my fiancé's name, Dean was weightlifting too so we went out and competed to make a team called Muscle Driver, which isn't around anymore, and the goal was, he goes, "You know, you're 26." Well actually I was probably 27 then, I don't know. And he's like, "If you're gonna do this, you gotta do it. Like you can't just go half in." And I was like, okay. He's kind of that way with everything, which I love about him, and so he was like, "You know, you could potentially be really good." And like looking at the numbers, my first national meet I was like, "All I wanna do, I wanna be top five in the country." That was my first goal, and then we dropped me down a weight class thanks to my buddy Travis Cooper. He was like, "Where do you sit?" I was like, "Well 51," and he goes, "Well do you think you can drop some weight and maybe you could potential make the World Team in your first nationals." I was like okay. So I mean I was like totally just into weightlifting and didn't know any of the rules or anything. I was like, "Okay, I'm gonna gain weight and get into the 53 kilo class," but then looking at the numbers for qualifying it was just like okay you have to drop down to 48 you could potentially have a really, really good career and make the Olympics. And so that kind of- my first Worlds kind of put me on the map of, oh I could really do this.

Emily: Oh, I love that.

Morgan: Yeah, I don't think- I'm definitely one of those people who flies by the seat of my pants. Like my parents always laugh about that, like yeah you were never gonna work a 9-5 job,

like we knew it. I tried, like I really did. Cause I was like I've only been good at athletics my whole, and I was like I'm gonna do something different and then i was like I miss athletics.

Emily: What did you try to do? What was your come to corporate world?

Morgan: I graduated in graphic design and so I ended up working at Brook Sports as a receptionist, and then I wanted to- this woman, which I had no idea, she was a color theorist, where she basically got to follow the trends around the world, she just traveled around the world and followed like colors, which I'm like-

Emily: That is so cool.

Morgan: Yeah, I'm like oh my gosh this is what I want. So every lunch i would go back there and talk to her and she would tell me all about it. I was like this is it, this is it. And like life happened, and I ended up getting fired, which is funny cause I was like it's a receptionist job, Morgan. How can you do that? But then that kinda catapulted me into where I am now is that I would have probably stayed in that and i would have never been where I'm at, so I'm definitely like everything happens for a reason. And I've always been fascinated with the Olympics, like I remember vividly as a child watching it at my grandparent's house in the summers. I thought I was gonna be like a figure skater or a gymnast of course.

Emily: Oh, I could totally see you figure skating.

Morgan: Yeah, and I just, I don't know, I think that dream was always there and so I don't know if I like- well this is perfect because it's Meathead Hippie, it manifested it a little bit but like, you know, I felt like I was destined to do something awesome, and I still feel that way. I don't necessarily think the Olympics was my end goal of what I want to do in the world, but it's definitely a step in the right direction and having that experience is like oh my god, I was like a child at closing ceremonies. I was like, "This is literally everything I've seen on TV and I am under it," you know? I was like holy crap, cause I didn't get to go to Opening ceremonies cause I competed the next day, and I was really sad about that, but closing ceremonies I was like oh my god I can't believe this happened.

Emily: So I was curious about that with you, and sometimes in my big moments in life and never as big as Olympics mind you. That's the coolest. So maybe it's just a level of how badass it is, and that's why i have it, but even in those moments when I'm competing, whether it's with MTV shows or there's even a few moments, they're so silly, but I'm so competitive, that ever in the coolest surroundings when you're like, "Oh my god this is happening," it's really hard to be able to experience it because you're like focused. Do you feel like you struggle with that?

Morgan: Absolutely, like I mean I feel like I almost like black out when I lift, like it's this weird, oh my gosh what just happened. But I do remember talking to Melanie Roach. She was like the most wonderful mentor I could have had. She's 40 by the way and she went to the Pan Am Games, like she's a badass.

Emily: Oh my god.

Morgan: Yeah, and she told, she goes, "Make sure when you are walking out, like when they're about to introduce you and all of that," she goes, "Soak it in, like realize where you are." I just got goosebumps by the way, talking about that. Yeah, she's like, "Make sure you know where you are. Be in the moment cause once the competition starts you're not gonna remember it." And there's this pictures of me screaming after I made, I broke the American record and I don't- I couldn't even tell you, I don't even remember that, like it's crazy.

Emily: Dang. Yeah.

Morgan: It's so weird.

Emily: Well, you're all consumed, which you kind of have to be but then, it's probably one of the many like there's so many favorite photos of you that I have. I was like which am I gonna use for this podcast because it's so much passion, right? You make this lift and tell people, if they're brand new to Olympic lifting, of how quiet it is.

Morgan: Oh my gosh. You can hear a pin drop, like it's insane.

Emily: How many people are there?

Morgan: Honestly, I'm so terribly with numbers. Probably 500 maybe. I don't know. I mean there's a good amount of people there. At the Olympics they were so far from you, where usually at like national meet they're kind of like right there, so you really felt like you were on an island out there. You know, and there's obviously that big light out there that's on you and nobody else. I mean I can hear somebody rubbing their hands together. It's so quiet.

Emily: How do you stay focused?

Morgan: There's a lot of obviously self talk. I mean I'm basically having a conversation with myself. So I don't really hear much. You hear your coach cause obviously they're second nature to you. They're part of your world when you're in your head, but yeah I mean it's definitely an insane experience. And the cool thing about weightlifting, and I truly feel this, nobody wants you to do bad, because for the most part you're gonna go out and do lifts that you probably hit in training, and just especially in lighter weight classes, you hit more than what you're actually hitting in competition. And so I felt this way at Olympic trials too, again this is very hippie sounding, but the people that supported me are there almost helping you lift the weight.

Emily: Aw.

Morgan: I know, it sounds like so hippie, but they are so invested in what you do. My mom asked if she could not come to Olympic trials. It was Mother's Day first of all. I was like, okay either I'm gonna really need my mom or it's gonna be the best Mother's Day present ever.

Emily: (laughs)

Morgan: So you have to come, but now she doesn't like coming cause she's like, "Morgan, I'm gonna throw up. I hate this, like I can't. It's too nerve racking for me." I'm like Mom, it's gonna be okay. This is why i do it, like (laughs) I do it cause I'm slightly crazy.

Emily: Yup.

Morgan: But yeah, I mean it's a really really insane feeling and I think that's kind of what keeps me going cause I definitely could have been done and been totally happy with what I had done, but my last clean and jerk at the Olympics, I ran off the stage with two other American records. And so I just have- and still, I need to go and I think I have more now is, that like I don't feel like I ever lifted to my potential and so I'm like I wanna go out the way I wanna go out, but it hard. You know, how do you beat what I did in four years, you know what I mean? You'll never have that journey, but I also think all the struggles that you go through and everything that is hard makes it a little bit more worth it, not that my journey wasn't hard to the Olympics because I definitely worked my butt off. But I think I'm older, wiser, like I understand what it is and what

I've sacrificed and put my life on hold for now and that's probably being in my 30's now I'm like, yeah this is literally, I'm really living the dream right now.

Emily: I love that. Yeah.

Morgan: So it's definitely a different experience now for me than it was before.

Emily: Because you were just kind of seeing what you could do and now you know what you can do, and you're I got it, I'm gonna do it.

Morgan: Right, and the cool thing is like you know, juniors are doing what I did at my first senior nationals, you know? And when I showed up to my first senior nationals, people were like oh my gosh she's opening so heavy, like who is this girl. And now it's like I have four or five girls in my weight class that we're all doing very similar numbers. I'm no going to be able to, and I really truly feel this, lift to my potential because those girls are lifting me, you know? They're pushing me to become a better athlete cause you can't, you have only a certain amount of time to do the things you want to do. There's definitely a lot more pressure to it I think, but I also think it makes it a little more worth it, you know?

Emily: Do you- so your goal being 2020 Olympics, talk to people about the path to that.

Morgan: Oh yeah, so we- I don't know if you guys know this, but we kind of got in trouble for- we, I'm saying weightlifting in general- got in trouble for a lot of drug use.

Emily: Oh, no way. Really?

Morgan: Yeah, so we were kind of part of, that whole Russian thing where the country got banned from the Olympics. So we obviously kind of had trouble with that, because you know, it's a strength sport, and its' literally who can lift the most weight, and we ended up getting 96 spots taken away from us for the next Olympics.

Emily: Oh my god. Because there was so many people who tested positive?

Morgan: Yeah, yeah.

Emily: Did you always know that that was an issue? I'm sure it's-

Morgan: Yeah, and obviously it's like- being a clean athlete, it's frustrating obviously, but also I knew coming into weightlifting I knew that was an issue and being that competitive person, I'm like well I still want to beat you. It doesn't matter what you're doing. I want to be the best athlete I can possibly be and I'm going to beat you because I know I'm- you know. I just kind of had that mindset. But yeah, it's really frustrating knowing that it's government funded, you know what I mean, so a lot of these athletes from other countries don't have choices. It's do this or you're not on the national team. And they can really do that, but now with the new rules, if you have a certain amount of drug tests positive, you can take four men and four women to the Olympics and if you have a certain amount of drug tests positive, your number of being able to send starts to lower based on those positives. So I believe, like Russia only has one spot for one male, one female.

Emily: Holy.

Morgan: Can you imagine? In all of Russia, like their seventh or eighth girl in my weight class probably does that same amount of weight as I do, you know what I mean?

Emily: Wow.

Morgan: Losing those is gonna be crazy. So that works out for the clean countries because you know, we have to be, I think it's you have to be ranked top eight in the world in order to get an invite to the Olympics, but then you also have to complete three, or every three months in a drug tested meet, because a lot of the times what we would have is you'd never seen these people compete until a couple months before the Olympics and then all of a sudden they show up out of nowhere, and you're like wait a second. Where did you come from? We haven't seen you the last three years.

Emily: Yeah.

Morgan: And so that's kind of, and I think it's great because in America we have to do that anyways because our ranking system, so you know we're all pretty close that we're vying for certain, vying for 10-7 spot. So that makes it better for us as a country that they're getting basically the same treatment that we were getting in the United States, so that's cool. But then it's also, I mean it's a lot of money, it's a lot of traveling, so it's a whole different qualifying system. It's pretty crazy.

Emily: I think with the drug tests that Russia- I mean it's just insane cause it's, I don't know, and it's CrossFit too, it's always this weird thing where you kind of know it exists but it's just a matter of who can hide it.

Morgan: Right.

Emily: And I can only imagine how frustrating that is with putting the effort that you put into it and- but it's good that it's being- do you feel like it's being more managed? Is this working?

Morgan: Yeah, yeah. I think so and you know, we're- our CEO is really involved in the International Weightlifting Federation, so we're getting more clean countries like on the board, which helps a ton, and I think, you know, you're always gonna be fighting. It doesn't matter what sport you're in, like everyone's always trying to get an edge unfortunately and it's just kind of, I mean this sounds horrible, it's just kind of the way of life, you know what I mean? And you can definitely speak out against it. You can fight it and all of that, but in reality your only worry is yourself. You can only take care of yourself and you know, I can go to my grave knowing I did everything I possible could, I didn't cheat, you know what I mean? And so like that for me is enough and I have to be okay with that, but I mean some people it's really frustration for them which is totally understandable too. But I kinda roll with it. Is that what it is.

Emily: With a sport that is so mental, can we talk about how you take care of yourself mentally and how you make sure you are in a good mindset cause this a constant battle with yourself. Like I can only imagine that you talk to yourself in your head all the time and we all do, you know, we are always in our head and chatter, chatter, chatter, but especially with this sport maybe more than any other sport. What are ways that you take care of yourself mentally?

Morgan: Yeah, well so recently- well I would say after the Olympics, I kind of like- I mean this has been a really, really tough two years. I think just transitioning like I've moved my life several times in the past couple of years and just trying, you're always fighting for stability right? That homeostasis in your body and in your mind, and in weightlifting it's like everything's going good, everything's going good, and then it's like oh my gosh the world is ending, and it's constant like that and it's such a roller coaster ride. I started- you know I was really lucky, Andy Galpin.

Emily: I love Andy.

Morgan: Yeah, oh yeah. Oh my gosh. I love that we have. He's like you guys are gonna be best friends.

Emily: I know. We have like a clench Twitter feed, tweet feed.

Morgan: I was like oh my gosh, all of my circles are coming together. But so I got to do in 2015, I did his biopsy study with female weightlifters and finding out their muscle fibers and so from then I actually in both the Olympics and trials, my right, well actually it was my right leg for trials and my left leg for the Olympics, I cramped really bad. So I was basically lifting on one leg. (laughs) And so I was talking to him about that, and I was like you know, can you help me and da-da-da and so I started talking with him and I'm still working with him and I track every day of how I'm feeling, and one through ten how my body feels and it's been night and day. I've finally started to see trends, and like oh this is happening, this is happening, and that's really helped mentally for me. And then he was like I've got a buddy who is a sports therapist, so I've started to talk to him the last year and half I think, and you know I think in especially in weightlifting we hard-head everything, right, you know? It's like oh we're just gonna do the weight, it's fine, but then you go home and you completely break down and so learning how to manage those has been, is having Lenny there has been amazing because I just like- I didn't realize a lot of the things last quad what I was going through because I just, you know, I just kind of pushed it aside and I was like, "It's fine. I'm fine. I'm fine." And so I do that. I meditate. I do yoga. I have this app called Slumber, which I love that I listen to every night and it kinda calms my mind and I like fall asleep in five minutes which is usually not normal.

Emily: Yeah, go ahead. Sorry.

Morgan: No, you, go.

Emily: Well I was just thinking cause- with Andy it's all, back to muscle fiber stuff and what you've learned, what have been the things that you've implemented that have been really helpful? Cause you said you've seen such a difference, I'm just curious what that has been.

Morgan: You know, for me, this is like- I can't believe I'm 33 saying this right now, but I honestly have never tracked my cycle (laughs) and I'm like oh, that's when I'm getting it, oh this happens before, oh. And I'm like I gained two kilos the week before my period and I didn't know that, you know? And I'm like oh my gosh, I'm so fat. How am I gonna lose the weight? I have a meet in a week and you know mentally that just like screws you, and like you know that week I sleep for basically five days straight it feels like you know. And so knowing that oh my gosh sometimes when I walk out of a training session, i.e. yesterday, that oh this is why this is happening. You know, it's not just oh my gosh I'm crazy, you know, and I think being able to wrap your head around that and being very in tune with your body is so incredibly helpful. Andy was like, "How do you not know this stuff? Like you've been an athlete your whole life." I like I don't know. It just never occurred to me, and so like for that we're trying to minimize injury around those times and I know there were a couple of women before my time in weightlifting that they actually had to change their programming based on their cycle because of those things. So it's like learning your body and what cycle you're going through, whether you're a female or male, just learning that cycle in weightlifting is huge because you know, you've got really heavy volume days and weeks that you're like oh my gosh, okay I gotta get through this, and then there's days like this week for me is a lot lower volume but it's heavier. So now I have to mentally gear up being like, it's not I need to survive through this. It's I have to get my mind right exactly when I'm hitting those heavy lifts. And so that's really helped me with like, with Andy, is that just knowing when those things are gonna happen, and the best part is my coach now, Spencer Arnold, which he's part of Power and Grace Performance, he is basically, well he loves Andy. He's gonna totally be mad at me that I like totally called him out on this. He's like, "Oh my gosh,

you work with Andy? Oh I'm so excited." And so I've like put them together and like he'll send me my program and on the back it'll be- basically it'll show me, okay this week is a heavy volume, these are how many reps you're gonna have so then next week this is gonna happen, and then you can see the graph and you can see exactly how the cycle is going. I'm like oh my gosh, and so I can put those two together and then I can start seeing everything makes sense. I'm like oh this is why I'm feeling this way and I don't know if this is making any sense to you.

Emily: No, it is. It is, yeah. It's literally just body awareness.

Morgan: Yeah, yeah. And it's funny cause like I for so long and from 2012 to 2016, I just want to be an athlete. Don't tell me about the programming, just tell me what I need to do. Like I wanted to hard-head everything, and now it's like I've become just a big softie I guess and I'm like tell me what I'm doing. It's been night and day difference you know, having those things and realizing kind of what's going on and so you can be prepared for it cause it's a lot easier that way.

Emily: I love that. Well this is so fun. For me, I think it's so nerding out about being able to like know exactly where you're at cause that's the thing I struggle with when I- you're my favorite Olympic weightlifter, but it's hard cause there's not a lot- there's more and more exposure because of CrossFit but it is hard to know the meets, know what meet is the most important, like what it is. So can you give us a schedule so all of us as we following your journey, we can kind of cheer you on and help you move the weight as you said so?

Morgan: Yes. Oh my gosh, that would be awesome. Yeah, I know and that's the frustrating part. We're kind of the once every four year thing, right? And so people- it's hard to invest in somebody like that. We don't do like crazy things every year. I mean we have our World Championships, but it's definitely like a long haul sport, but for me it's American Open finals and then we have a qualifier in February and then the goal is we've got a Pan Am Championships and Pan Am Games in May and July. So goal is to go to one of those. And then- So all these qualifiers kind of pop up, like you just have to get approved, like you know obviously a certain drug testing protocol and a certain amount of lifters have to show up. So we've got a couple of girls who are going to Qatar in three weeks. It's crazy.

Emily: Oh wow.

Morgan: Yeah, so like I think after May or July, I'll have to do one more competition somewhere (laughs) in order to continue to keep qualifying, and then obviously Worlds in Thailand is next year in November I believe and that's a big one that obviously everyone wants to go to.

Emily: Yeah.

Morgan: I know, and I need to be a little bit better about telling people my competitions and I really should.

Emily: Well, I kinda get why you don't you know? Because it's- you gotta keep your head down and just do it and it's sometimes like, for me, if you're competitive, it's just external pressure and it's also you're just there to be an athlete, so I think that's why you have people like me and I'm just gonna post for you.

Morgan: (laughs) Yay. Yeah, and it's funny cause that was really my thing is you know after the Olympics you know you're all of sudden verified on all these social media platforms and it's like oh like who are you gonna be? What brand do you wanna post about? It's like all this external pressure of now that you've been there, who are you? And it's like I didn't- like I'm not done

with weightlifting. And so I was like I still wanna be an athlete but then I fought that. I fought it so much of like oh I need to monopolize what I'm doing and like you know, make money, but then I also was just like but I just wanna be a weightlifter. I just wanna do this. I wanna be good. I wanna love what I'm doing, but there's like that really fine balance of like, you know, who you are and what you wanna do. I don't have any sponsors anymore, you know. I just don't. I haven't really pushed that because I really wanna be an internationally competitive weightlifter again, so that's kind of like- I don't know. I do it because I love the sport and I'm super, super competitive. Like it's not- I don't know, I don't necessarily feel like I need to be famous, you know what I mean? I guess to people I am, but (laughs) I mean I'm known, but that wasn't obviously the goal. I just really want people to be inspired by what I do and know that by working hard you can achieve the goals that you set out for yourself, and if you don't make it, it's not the end of the world. There's another path that you can take as well and you can continue to be successful as well in whatever you do, so.

Emily: I love that. I could totally end it there, but I just got triggered with a question so I'm gonna ask this question. So it's similar to kind of the mind games, it's like so real with Olympic lifting, the chatter's probably more and what you're doing, and I just am curious how you quite literally, you know when you fail a lift, like do you have a process that you go through when it's like everything was on this lift, there's so much pressure, and you're just like, and it didn't happen. What is that process that you go through?

Morgan: Oh my gosh. It's a total grieving process. I'll be honest, like I mean the last time like I really wanted to make Worlds and I knew after I came off, and I held it together really good like you know, and everybody was like, "You're so inspiring." And it was nice and I was like, "Thank you." People were wanting to take pictures with me after I bombed out, you know, and I mean I totally went back to my room and balled my eyes out to Dean, and I was like, "I don't know if I wanna do this anymore." Like it's really tough, you know. Cause you put your whole life on the line and it's like, I don't know, it does feel like life or death in that moment and then you kind of- for me, and I'm lucky that I have the wonderful parents that I do, you know in the end it isn't life or death. Life goes on. You're gonna be okay. Like you have a pretty great life. You're literally chasing your dreams. You don't have to worry about where my next meal is coming from, you know? That kind of. And so I always bring myself back down to reality after I've like lose my shit.

Emily: Yep.

Morgan: Oh my god, everything is over. This is horrible. But you know, I think it's also healthy to do that because we do hold everything in because you don't- it's all that pressure, that internal pressure of yourself and then when it doesn't happen like you have to let it go, you know? And for me, I'm a cryer. Like I will cry over anything and it's funny because I was like oh, that totally makes me weak and then you know my therapist is like, "No, that's just who you are. Like you get frustrated and you cry. You get happy and you cry."

Emily: But it's so good because you release it, like that's probably why so many of us we don't ever- we don't grieve properly because it's just kind of like get over it, get over it, don't be a weak ass bitch, you got this. Like just get over it, and then we need to grieve. I love that you said that cause it's just so true. I've never had it like- I mean definitely disappointments with like attempting to get to Regionals with CrossFit but that was probably the extent of the most recent disappointment, but with business oh my god. Getting your heart, like you just have so much expectations and it then it just- it's like heartbreak. And then you just get over it, and you totally grieve and then you get over it I guess, and you do it again, or you decide if it's worth doing again and it always is.

Morgan: Yeah. It always is. you're so incredibly inspiring to me. It's like absurd. No, like you have no idea. Like what you do and how hard you work is so inspiring to me and I'm like I hope that like when I'm done I can do even half of what you do. It's so cool.

Emily: Now you're gonna make me cry. (laughs)

Morgan: And it's funny cause you know, and you talk about it a lot on your Instagram, it's like the community that you surround yourself with, and it's like when i started like following you and I was like oh my gosh, she's my person. I want her to be in my circle cause it's just so inspiring. You're so real, like you don't bullshit your way around like. You're like it's not glamorous. It is what it is. You fail. It sucks, but if you let yourself get really into that I'm a failure, I'm a failure, like you're ever gonna get anywhere. You kind of just have to be like ugh, shit that didn't work. Okay, what's next? And to see a business woman be able to do that, it's like okay. For me, cause I've always been like I'm terrible at school. I'm going actually back to go into sport psychology and I'm doing statistics right now and I'm barely passing, and I'm just like, oh my god I'm so terrible at this, and it's like buck up, Morgan. Like do you wanna do this or not? You know what I meant? Like you can do this. If you can get to the Olympics, you can take statistics. (laughs) You know?

Emily: Yeah. I love that you're doing that. Well thank you. I mean this is honestly why I'm obsessed with my podcast is you know, if I think about the people listening to it and like when I listen to podcasts that I love, I'm like oh my god this is like- I should care more about what I say. This is such a cool thing that all these people push play and they listen, and then I started overthinking it. I'm like no the only reason I podcast is because I have no idea that what- you know you seem some ripple effects and it's helpful when people are like telling you like, that was inspiring, Morgan, because outside of that I just feel like what I'm putting out there I don't fucking know. I don't know if people are relating to this cause I refuse to attach likes to quality, right? So when you have no idea if it is profound and you don't dictate if it's profoundness or it's impact by likes or by attention, then it really is just kind of throwing information out there and just hoping for the best. So you do not know how much that means, so I really appreciate that especially today, cause today is just- I'm just like wah today.

Morgan: It's the worst.

Emily: Oh my god.

Morgan: I know. My friend and i were talking about it. Yeah, 2018 can literally just go away and never come by. Like if I never see a year from 2018 again.

Emily: Oh no.

Morgan: But it's funny cause you know you're just like yeah well I made it through it. That's what I'm taking away from 2018 is like just trudging through this year, but yeah I mean it's so inspiring to have people like you and literally you are who are. It's genuine. It's authentic and I think you know the world needs more of that instead of this catered kind of out look on life on what you should be saying instead of just what you believe.

Emily: Yeah. I appreciate that so much, and I know you probably know this question. I'm not sure if you do. Do you know your spirit animal?

Morgan: I don't.

Emily: Do you have ay idea what you would be?

Morgan: I have no idea. I've never even been asked that.

Emily: Okay, so I'm gonna just take a gamble and do you relate- I'm trying to think. When people ask like well how do I even figure out my spirit animal, there's always like an animal that you like really really love and sometimes that animal is what you wish you were more like. For example, I'm obsessed with whales. I don't think I'm a whale, but also I'm obsessed with how calm and like I'm drawn to that, so that's what I want but not necessarily who I am. But is there any animal that you can think of that you're a little bit obsessed with? I feel like you're some sort of cat, like a- some sort of wild cat. Like I don't know if it's a-

Morgan: Oooo

Emily: It's not a lion. That's like my first guess.

Morgan: Oh my god, you know what's funny is actually that's what I thought when you said that.

Emily: Oh good. Cool. I'm gonna guess. I'm just gonna read one out there. This is from my book from Stephen Farmer.

Morgan: Okay.

Emily: This is- I don't know why but I think of bobcat.

Morgan: Bobcat. Ooo. I like that. We had a lot of bobcats actually where I grew up.

Emily: Okay well let's see. You ready? I will be so excited if this is you but don't feel like this has to be you. Be honest.

Morgan: Okay.

Emily: It's a long one. Okay. You're quiet and a great listener which is why friends are willing to share their secrets with you. You're able to shift back and forth between curious states of consciousness and every day reality, prepared to deal with practical matters as necessary. You're very adept at knowing when to speak, what to share, who to share with, and you use your utmost discretion in making this determination. You have powerful and psychic and intuitive gifts that you continue to develop including clairvoyance and psychometry. You're so sensitive and sometimes overwhelmed with sensory input and need to retreat, yet you are aware that it's not in your best interest to remain isolated and completely reclusive all the time.

Morgan: Uh, I'm pretty sure that's me.

Emily: Did I get it?

Morgan: I don't know.

Emily: You know what I did? This is so weird but I feel this is one of my gifts is to find people's spirit animals, so I just go through people, like your Instagram, like I was just like, "What does she remind me of?" And bobcat. I'm gonna screenshot and send this to you.

Morgan: Oh my god, yes, please do. Oh my gosh that's so funny. The only thing that might not be similar is Dean always tells me that, he's like, "You overshare too much. Like you need to think before you speak," but-

Emily: Well then let's also do lynx as well. So we're close. It's something in this realm of like small fierce cat, but not like my Griffindor cat, in the wild cat.

Morgan: That literally is basically me.

Emily: Oh I love it.

Morgan: Cause everyone's always like, "You're so hyper and like every time you meet-" You know like I'm obviously like probably the center of attention or just loud, but I like pick up on people's energy and so then I like, I've always had really quiet best friends cause I always bring out that kind of crazy size in them and that fun like outgoing, but then people don't realize that when I'm home by myself like I'm super chill like I mediate, I do yoga. Like that whole side I've always felt like I have that really big yin and yang of me that. I'm like y'all don't see that side of me.

Emily: Oh I love this. Well I looked up lynx and the first line, I'll just read the first line, but it's you have the gift of being able to see in others who they've kept hidden or aren't aware of.

Morgan: Yes, I like it.

Emily: That's so cool.

Morgan: Oh my gosh Oh my gosh, you have to send me those.

Emily: Okay I will. I will text you these. This is awesome. Well thank you, Morgan for your time. Are you training today?

Morgan: I am. I'm training tonight. I'm actually headed down to see my PT in Atlanta.

Emily: Well good luck. Good lucky for sure. And what's on your training agenda?

Morgan: Just kinda powers and squats today. Tuesday are a little lighter. Tuesdays and Saturdays, and then Monday, Wednesday, Friday's are double days and kind of heavier lifts, so.

Emily: Well I love it. I thank you for letting us into your world a little bit today and it's just so- I'm so excited that we are finally connected cause it's been way too long for us to finally make this happen.

Morgan: I know, and hopefully maybe in the next month and a half I will be living in Colorado so then we're just gonna have so many fun dates together.

Emily: I love it. Yes, we'll do all the things cause you'll in Colorado Springs, right?

Morgan: Um, I'm hoping to actually be Monument area so I'll be a little bit closer to you.

Emily: Aw, yay. Okay that sounds so fun. Let's be meathead hippies together.

Morgan: Oh please. Both of them.

Emily: Thank you Morgan so much for your time.

Morgan: Thank you.